

Union fees return

"Funds won't be handed over to student organizations"

Students enrolling from July 1 this year will pay up to \$250 each year to restore student services gutted by previous Howard Government laws banning compulsory student union fees.

The Federal Government is expected to release guidelines next month on how money can be spent, though has already announced that university administrations and not student unions will administer the funds.

Payment of the fee can be deferred, by adding it to a student's HECS debt.

The reintroduction of student service fees has been widely welcomed by university and student organizations.

It will be used to fund sporting facilities, child care, counseling and other student services.

Melbourne vice-chancellor Glyn Davis said the university experience was broader than just that received in the classroom.

"Today's universities provide services around housing, part-time and permanent employment, counselling, health, financial aid, child care, and academic support.

"But they also provide sporting facilities and access to a wide range of clubs and societies to allow students to gain a range of additional skills and competencies," he said.

"The new services fee means

we will be able to rebuild these essential non-academic student services."

Deakin spokesperson Andrew Kilsby said the administration was consulting with the student association but needed release of the government guidelines before proceeding further.

National Union of Student's president, David Barrow said he was encouraged that sporting, welfare, cultural, medical and advocacy services would soon be returning to campus.

"However we are disappointed that the additional \$250 fee will not be handed over to student organisations. Instead universities will have executive power to stop our organisations from representing students," he said.

"We believe that students

should control student's money, not universities, it is student control of student affairs," Barrow said.

"Universities can be out of touch with student needs and will always prioritise teaching and learning over representation, student life and student welfare. There are conflict of interest issues," he said.

"NUS is also concerned that "broader political purposes" (that will be banned from being funded) may mean that resourced representation will not be funded. Meaning only volunteers from affluent backgrounds will be able to sit on internal university boards and committees."

Bill Calder

Rudd's \$900 pay handout

The majority of undergraduate students should receive a \$900 handout this year as part of the Rudd Government's \$42 billion economic stimulus package.

About 440,000 students and people returning to study will be paid the one-off cash bonus, though most postgraduate students – being excluded from student income support – will miss out on the bonus.

The Government said the cash payments would immediately support jobs and strengthen the economy during the global financial downturn.

The \$511 million training and learning bonus will be available for recipients of youth allowance, Austudy and Abstudy, as well as those receiving Sickness Allowance or Special Benefits.

National Union of Student's president, David Barrow said students are the perfect demographic to be 'pump primed'.

"NUS studies show that students overwhelmingly spend extra cash they receive on educational materials such as text books and laptops.

"Extra money for students through either increases in Youth Allowance or one off grants is good economic policy."

Barrow said students across the country "breathed a sigh of relief" at the announcement of a one off payment for educational costs, however they know that the long term financial hardship they face remains.

"In this announcement the Government has shown they recognize the everyday struggle students face, however the time has come for them to follow through on their promise of an education revolution."

"It is time for the government to support students in these uncertain times, and though the Rudd Government appears to be heading in the right direction there is still much to do with the current student income support system."



Marry just for the money

A 'getting hitched for Centrelink' demo was held over the summer break as part of the National Union of Students campaign to improve Austudy payments.

An announcement is expected shortly by the Federal Government following the release late last year of the Bradley Report into higher education

It recommends increasing the personal income threshold for Austudy to \$400 a fortnight and reducing the age of independence from 25 to 22 years.

The Australian Council of Social Services backed the Bradley Report to assist disadvantaged and financially needy students.

"We want students to study, not struggle to survive financially. Current payments of \$178 a week for students not living at home are inadequate," ACOSS CEO Clare Martin said.

"Boosting Youth Allowance and Austudy payments as well as allowing students to earn \$200 a week instead of \$118 a week without it affecting their payments is a good start."

The Rio Tinto Scholarships (NTRB Two-Year Commitment)

Two scholarships are offered annually to lawyers working or are interested in working at Native Title Representative Bodies (NTRBs) or Native Title Service Providers (NTSPs) around Australia.

Successful candidates will undertake a one-year Master of Laws (LLM) in Mineral Law and Policy at the CEPMLP, University of Dundee. The scholarships are open to any Australian resident with a law degree and require a post-scholarship commitment to working at an NTRB or NTSP for 2 years.

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