

Briefs...

TAFE butts out

There are no butts about it – Kangan Batman will officially become a completely smoke-free zone as of January 1, 2010. The new non-smoking policy applies to all campus grounds, and all students, staff and visitors. CEO Ray Griffiths says the policy will not only bring the Institute in line with many other Australian TAFES, but will also go a long way to making campus life much healthier and enjoyable.

Study demand up

Student demand is outstripping supply in the university sector as the job market tightens, with official numbers revealing that 18,500 eligible applicants missed out on a place this year, up from 12,600 last year. While this is below a peak of 36,100 in 2004, there are warnings that the real number of students missing out is much larger. Monash University demographer Bob Birrell

said low levels of student financial support, limited subject availability and long travelling distances to campuses were probably turning off more would-be students than figures reflect. The federal government is boosting funding to the sector and from 2012 will uncap university places in a bid to increase the number of Australians with degrees. But Professor Birrell said more needs to be done to encourage students to study.

Call for new union

The federal government has asked international students to form a representative body to promote their interests. A spate of assaults on Indian students in Melbourne and Sydney earlier this year triggered public protests that led to a belated crackdown on exploitation and rorts in the overseas student market. Representation is at present split across different bodies and ethnic groups.

Call to end scholarship delay

“The failure of parliament has left students lost and confused”

The student union is demanding the federal opposition stop using its numbers in the Senate to block government attempts to introduce new youth allowance scholarships.

These scholarships include \$4000 relocation scholarships for every student on youth allowance who must move away from home to go to university as well as \$2546 start-up scholarships to pay for text books and university supplies at the start of each year.

President of the National Union of Students David Barrow said students nationwide would be outraged if these scholarships were blocked.

“Australian taxpayers and parents have resoundingly

(backed) support for struggling students to go to university. Students from regional and metropolitan backgrounds will benefit from these scholarships even if structural issues concerning regional and rural access remain.

“The failure of the parliament to pass legislation last week has left students lost and confused,” he said.

“Students in year 12 who are planning their first university year are yet to know if they can get the (scholarships). These students are restless and worried about their future, when they want to focus on their final exams,” Barrow said.

“Students have already been disappointed that the rise in the personal income test from \$246 per week to \$400 per week was put back 18 months. To cut the scholarships, new dependency rates or age of independence would be a step in the wrong direction.

“The Coalition is proposing to cut these scholarships and

have claimed that the new youth allowance changes are unfair. However they did nothing during their term in government to make it easier for students to go to university.

“Unless they have the guts to argue for more funding for student income support, they should vote for this package,” he said.

“NUS supports greater funding to youth allowance as called for by the Greens and by Senator Steve Fielding. However students will be heartbroken and disappointed if political wrangling in the Senate results in these scholarships not being passed,” he said.

“If one accepts the Labor and Coalition position of needing a budget neutral package for youth allowance, which students do not - we believe the Government’s set of recommendations on student income support will make it the fairest it can be within those constraints,” he concluded.

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