

## Briefs...

### Beating the tax office

University undergraduates will be able to claim educational expenses as a tax deduction after a former student had a landmark win in the full Federal Court late last year.

Symone Anstis, a former Australian Catholic University student, was successful in her bid to claim \$920 as self-education expenses after fighting the Taxation Office through a number of jurisdictions over three years.

While studying full-time to be a primary teacher, Anstis worked as a part-time sales assistant for retail chain Katies, where she earned \$14,946. She also received a youth allowance of \$3622 during the 2006 income year. She claimed education expenses including travel costs, supplies for children during teaching rounds, student administration fees and depreciation of her computer.

The Tax Office rejected the claim, so Anstis and her father, who is a qualified solicitor, fought it all the way.

This month the Tax Office launched a High Court bid to try and overturn the decision, saying it had the potential to cost up to \$80 million in annual revenue.

### Transport concession call

A bipartisan Federal Senate report has criticized the Victorian Government for denying transport concessions to international students. Victoria and NSW are the only parts of Australia that do not extend transport concession to foreign students.

### Denial on racial attacks

Australia is in denial on racially motivated attacks against international students and has failed to take action to deal with the issue, internationally respected Melbourne University academic, Professor Simon Marginson has told the World Universities Forum meeting in Switzerland.

### Poor student incentive

Universities are likely to have a significant financial incentive to enrol poor students as the Federal Government's loading for low-socioeconomic status students increases to about \$1500 a student by 2012.

# Union shames universities

*"There is great difference between different campuses"*

**T**he National Union of Students has named and shamed universities that fail to adequately support student representation and services.

It named Swinburne and Southern Cross, in its "Condemned" category. The category lies just above the NUS's "Fail" category, which all universities managed to avoid.

Significantly, it was the country's wealthiest universities that secured the highest "Approved" category, led by Melbourne and Monash.

NUS outgoing president David Barrow said financial support for student representative bodies was key to promoting constructive dialogue between management and students over issues such as course quality and dispute processes. Such funding he said allowed student

bodies to better research student attitudes and issues rather than simply protest.

"You don't necessarily need funding to make your point politically, but what it does affect is the ability to make meaningful, mainstream, change," he said.

The rankings are based on assessments by about 100 student representatives at the various universities.

Deakin and University didn't participate, either because their student associations are non-affiliated with the NUS, don't have identifiable representatives or for political differences refused to be involved.

RMIT was ranked in the "Room to Improve" category but close to making the top category.

"We found that there is great difference between different campuses," Barrow said.

"RMIT and Melbourne have both improved since the ratings in 2007 and while VU and Latrobe were rated low on the ratings they are campuses that show energy and a healthy attitude towards the student body and are likely to quickly improve over the next year," he said.

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