



**Feedback from QUT to DEEWR regarding
Amendment to Income Support for Students Bill**

2 October 2009

This submission contains feedback from QUT on the proposed amendments to the Social Security and Other Legislation Amendment (Income Support for Students) Bill 2009.

Queensland University of Technology welcomes the proposed changes and commends the following:

- a) Reducing age of independence to 22 over time
Schedule 1, Part 1, Division 1, Subsection 1067A(4)
- b) Workforce participation in gaining independence, with an allowance for students who completed secondary school in 2008 to be measured by the old rules if they commence study in early 2010 only if they are required to live away from home
Schedule 1, Part 1, Division 1, Subsection 1067A(10C)
- c) Increase the income threshold to \$400 and indexed to CPI
Schedule 1, Part 2, Division 3, 18 and 19
- d) Exemption of scholarships for income testing up to \$6,672 and indexed to CPI
Schedule 2, Part 2, Item 13

Queensland University of Technology would like to comment on the following:

- a) The Bill does not include information about the ABSTUDY student start-up scholarship payment or the ABSTUDY student relocation scholarship payment. It is not clear what the rules for the ABSTUDY Scheme will be nor how they dovetail with the Indigenous Access Scholarship program and related scholarships.
 - b) Whilst the increase in the income threshold to \$400 is welcomed, the delay of this measure until 2012 is unwarranted and should be reconsidered. The first indexation will not take place until 1 January 2013. If the increase is to be delayed until 2012, it should at least be indexed from the passing of the Bill.
 - c) Early payment and the incurring of debt if students do not continue their enrolment up to 35 days from their course commencement may have adverse impacts on students who may not be able to continue with their studies. It is unclear from the legislation whether students will need to apply for the Start-Up Scholarship, or whether they will be automatically paid. Students must be made fully aware of the impacts of receiving scholarship payment early, and should have a choice as to whether the payment is made before semester begins, or later.
 - d) The Relocation Scholarship is only being offered to students on ABSTUDY and Youth Allowance. This appears to be a major oversight of students on Austudy, who should also have the option of relocating for study. It holds an implicit assumption that regional and remote students over the age of 25 years have the financial capacity to relocate in order to study, an assumption which is not supported by our experience.
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