



**THE HON KATE ELLIS MP
MINISTER FOR YOUTH
MINISTER FOR SPORT**

MEDIA RELEASE

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Securing the future of university support services

The Australian Government today circulated proposed new regulations for the Australian University sector that aim to help restore important student services and to ensure that students have representation on campus.

Kate Ellis, the Minister for Sport and Youth, said that the new regulations supported a robust and balanced new way forward.

The proposed regulations include the Student Services and Amenities Fee Guidelines which specifically outline what the previously announced Student Services and Amenities Fee (capped at a maximum of \$250) can be used for, should a university choose to implement the fee.

The Guidelines make it clear that universities can only use the fee to deliver much needed student services such as health and welfare, food and beverage services and sport and recreation.

These Guidelines complement the legislation, introduced in Federal Parliament last week, which prohibits the use of the fee to support political parties and candidates in elections.

The Government has also proposed national benchmarks that will, for the first time, require all universities to provide information on, and access to, a range of basic support services, including health, welfare and financial services.

National protocols for student representation and advocacy will also ensure there are opportunities for the interests of enrolled students to be considered in institutional decision making and that independent advocacy services are available to all enrolled students.

The Government's approach is about restoring basic, necessary and important services and amenities to students and it does not allow a return to compulsory student unionism.

Consultations revealed last year that the previous Government's approach to university

services stripped close to \$170 million out of university funding resulting in the serious decline and in some instances complete closure of vital health, counselling, employment, child care and welfare support services.

“Australian students have been literally paying the price for this loss, through increased costs on campus and the redirection of funding out of research and teaching budgets to make up the shortfall of funding for campus services”, said Ms Ellis.

“We believe that the regulations announced today will enable universities, students and the government to work in partnership to rebuild important student services and ensure student representation and advocacy on campus”, said Ms Ellis.

The proposed regulations are being released for public discussion and consultation ahead of the final legislation moving through the Parliament.

The Government has also asked the Senate Education, Employment and Workplace Relations Committee to prepare a report on the Bill, and this will be tabled in the Senate on 10 March 2009.

This builds on the wide consultations that have occurred with a range of stakeholders, including students, universities and peak bodies.

On finalisation, the regulations will take the form a Disallowable Instrument that will be tabled in both houses of Parliament.

The legislation and regulations require the support of the Parliament to ensure that arrangements can be in place for the start of second semester, on 1 July 2009, so we can see services restored across the country.

“I call on all Members and Senators to support this practical and sustainable approach and to make sure services can start to be restored as soon as possible,” said Ms Ellis.

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