



**Bond University Exchange Club**  
Bond University  
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**Submission Number: 06**  
**Date Received: 13/03/2013**

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Secretary of the House Standing  
Committee on Education and Employment  
Parliament House, ACT  
<ee.reps@aph.gov.au>

13 March 2013

**Submission: Higher Education Support Amendment (Asian Century) Bill 2013**

Dear Secretary,

It is with great privilege that the Bond University Exchange Club writes this submission to the House Standing Committee on Education and Employment.

Benjamin Franklin once remarked that "an investment in knowledge pays the best interest". As identified in the Asian Century White Paper, along with both the Gonski Review and the Bradley Review, this quote could not be more relevant. Education is the key to securing our nation's economic and social progress. It is *the* weapon that lies at the heart of our social, political, cultural, and legal institutions.

OS-HELP is an excellent educational policy. It provides direct support for students to broaden their educational experience; undertake collaborative research; develop specialised language skills; and build genuine international relationships. In a financially sustainable manner, it will help ensure that Australia has a highly-skilled and internationally-competitive workforce.

In spite of its intentions, however, OS-HELP remains restricted. *At present, not a single domestic student of Bond University is eligible for OS-HELP.*

As an independent university, Bond is not eligible for Commonwealth supported places; a current requirement of OS-HELP. Whilst we acknowledge this as one of the unique characteristics that distinguish Bond as an independent provider, it does not justify the restriction of the loan scheme. We submit this proposition on two grounds:

1. Loan schemes exist to support domestic students; they should not discriminate between universities. Similar to other developed nations, Australia's education system is shared between public and private institutions. From primary schools, to high-schools, to universities, private institutions ease Commonwealth funding pressures and provide greater benchmarking and flexibility. To deprive Bond students of this initiative limits the diversity of our workforce and the potentiation in the strength of our economy.
2. Domestic Bond students currently have access to both FEE-HELP and SA-HELP. If similar loan schemes of similar intention are available to Bond students, then why restrict OS-HELP? Government support for loan schemes should focus on supporting domestic students at approved higher education institutions, regardless of public-private nomenclature.

The exclusion of domestic Bond students from OS-HELP represents an inequitable legislative anomaly. With the cost of an exchange being the greatest barrier to participation, this anomaly precludes students from experiencing an international education. Despite the high level of interest that the Bond University Exchange Club receives every semester, only a very small percentage of Bond students are in a financial position to study abroad.

Diversity in Australia's education system will position our nation to be at the forefront of global changes over the coming century. It will fuel a more prosperous, robust and competitive economy. The Hon. Julia Gillard MP could not be more right in saying

that to win the economic race, we must first win the education race. It is therefore vital that Parliament maximise the effect of this well-intentioned policy.

We propose that the Higher Education Support Amendment (Asian Century) Bill 2013 (Cth) be amended to extend the eligibility of OS-HELP to domestic Bond University students.

If, however, Parliament seeks a broader expansion of OS-HELP, we propose that the legislation be amended to extend the eligibility of OS-HELP to domestic students of Table B Higher Education Providers.

To document the scope and importance of this issue we are currently conducting a petition within the Bond University community. We will present this petition directly to the Standing Committee on Petitions.

Thank you for reviewing this submission.

Kind regards,

Christopher Land

Treasurer | Bond University Exchange Club