

Submission

to

Senate Employment, Workplace Relations and Education
References Committee

Inquiry into higher education funding and regulatory legislation

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To the Senate Employment, Workplace Relations and Education Reference Committee, the Murdoch Guild of Students tenders this submission to the inquiry into higher education and regulatory legislation with the following terms of reference:

Terms of reference

1. The principles of the Government's higher education package
2. The effect of these proposals up sustainability, quality, equity and diversity in teaching and research at universities, with particular reference to:
 - The financial impact on students, including merit selection, income support and international comparisons,
 - The financial impact on universities, including the impact of the Commonwealth Grants Scheme, the differential impact of fee deregulation, the expansion of full fee places and comparable international levels of government investment, and
 - The provision of fully funded university places, including provision for labour market need, skill shortages and regional equity, and the impact of the 'learning entitlement'.
3. The implications of such proposals on the sustainability of research and research training in public research agencies
4. The effect of this package on the relationship between the Commonwealth, the States and Universities, including issues of institutional autonomy, governance, academic freedom and industrial relations
5. Alternative policy and funding options for the higher education and public research sectors.

INTRODUCTION

Under-funding of Australian universities is causing a crisis in higher education. Universities lack sufficient funds to carry out teaching and research to the best of their abilities and this is leading to a serious decline in the quality of Australian education. While staff to student ratios are increasing dramatically and key areas of student support are being cut, woefully inadequate Youth Allowance and Austudy payments are forcing students to work more hours to keep their heads above water. These factors combined give students less time in class, less time to study and little or no help when it gets too much. The Murdoch Guild of Students does not believe that the higher education bills address this fundamental issue.

While the higher education bills are proposing an increase in funding for higher education over the next 10 years, the Murdoch Guild of Students does not believe that this increase is adequate. The increase in funding of \$6.9 billion over the next 10 years means nothing in real terms as funding to higher education has been systematically cut by \$5 billion since 1996¹. Considering inflation, universities will be funded less after this “increase” than they were 10 years ago

In the second reading speech of the Higher Education Support Bill 2003, Dr Nelson claimed that almost three quarters of the cost of providing university education is paid by the Australian taxpayer. This figure is a gross misrepresentation and it can be demonstrated that by the time any additional Commonwealth funding is added (in 2005), students will be paying approximately 40% of their course costs². The Murdoch Guild of Students does not believe that students, some of whom are already paying 81% of their course costs should be charged more for the pursuit of higher learning³.

The Murdoch Guild of Students believes that the current lack of funding for public universities is the result of a reckless pursuit of user-pays dogma in tertiary education. The principle is selectively applied though, with non-government schools on average received 54% of their revenue from the Federal and State Governments⁴. In contrast, university revenue from public sources in 2001 was only 45.5% of their total revenue⁵. This discrepancy needs to be cleared up before Australians can enjoy a quality education system. If this funding does not increase in real terms, the Murdoch Guild of Students believes that the state of higher education in Australia will continue to suffer.

¹ The Australian: Higher Education Supplement, 16th July 2003

² The Australian: Higher Education Supplement, 18th June 2003

³ NTEU, (2003) *Backing Australia's Future & the Impact on the Higher Education Contribution Scheme*, Available at: <http://www.nteu.org.au/freestyler/gui/files/file3eee59edab242.PDF>

⁴ 4. Australian Bureau of Statistics, *Year Book Australia 2002 Education and Training Centenary Article - Australian schools: participation and funding 1901-2000* Available at: <http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/0/A75909A2108CECAACA2569DE002539FB>

⁵ AVCC, *University Funding and Expenditure*, November 2002, Table A.21. Available at: http://www.avcc.edu.au/australias_unis/statistics/uni_funding_expenditure/index.htm

PRINCIPLES OF THE HIGHER EDUCATION PACKAGE

The Murdoch Guild of Students believes that there are two main points that are at the heart of the Federal Government's higher education package. These two points are:

- a) a desire to move away from state contributions to higher education and instead focus on individual contributions; and
- b) attacks on unions, both staff and student

Both of these positions are ideological positions that will not assist universities in the short, medium or long term. The positions do not stand up to scrutiny when considering the main goal of universities - education and training, or the problems that universities currently face, the majority of which can be attributed to a lack of funding.

The move to gain more university revenue from individual contributions is based on the notion that the individual is the one who benefits from their education. The Murdoch Guild of Students does not agree with this notion, as the public gain is greater than the private gain of education. Having more skilled people in the community means that work can be carried out more efficiently and in a more economically, socially and environmentally friendly manner. In this way, the training that universities offer their students is a public benefit to the community as a whole. With more trained professionals in the community, the demand on the relatively few trained professionals we have at the moment will also decrease. This means, for example, that doctors have more time for their patients, more legal aid lawyers can be provided for people from lower socioeconomic backgrounds and a greater number of environmental consultants can be utilised to reduce pollution, salinity and other environmental problems facing our society.

The increase in the number of skilled professionals in the community is also a great benefit to society for economic reasons. If people are properly educated or trained they are less likely to rely on welfare payments in the future (refer to Table 1). This decreases the financial strain of income support. As university graduates are more likely to get higher paid jobs, their tax contributions are likely to be much greater than if they hadn't been educated. For these reasons, it is clear that there is a significant public benefit in allowing greater access to higher education. If the number of people from lower socioeconomic backgrounds wishing to undertake higher education decreases, then the rich-poor divide will increase substantially and these people are denied the opportunity to greatly contribute to society.

Table 1: Education Attainment and Unemployment, 1996 ⁶

	Higher Degree	Undergrad degree	Skilled Vocational	Basic Vocational	Completed High School	Didn't complete high school	Average
Unemployment Rate (%)	3.8	5.2	5.5	8.6	10	11.3	8.4
Unemployment duration (weeks)	35.4	37.5	46.9	49.1	42.0	59.6	48.4

⁶ Australian Bureau of Statistics, *Transition from Education to Work*, Cat. No. 6227.0, May 1996

The attacks on unions are a more insidious part of these reform bills that, if passed, will devalue higher education in Australia. Forcing universities to accept the government's workplace relations reforms in order to receive extra funding is nothing short of blackmail. The acceptance of these reforms will result in a decrease in the level of rights and conditions for university staff (see "The effect of these proposals on universities-university staff ") and the services available to students (see "The effect of these proposals on students - Voluntary Student Unionism"). It has been reported that the abolition of compulsory student unionism will discourage international students from studying in Australia because the services that student unions are able to provide will be lost under voluntary student unionism⁷. As universities have lately been reliant on the intake of fee paying international students to make up for the lost revenue that has been cut from higher education in recent years, this will only make it harder for universities to survive.

The Murdoch Guild of Students believes that these parts of the reforms are not based on anything else but an ideological opposition to unions. While Brendan Nelson has claimed that "compulsion cannot be a valid basis for an organisation that purports to represent the interests of its members"⁸, it must be remembered that voting in Australia is compulsory and the State and Federal Governments claim to represent Australians. Surely this in itself goes against Dr Nelson's statement. In fact, the funding for student unions in Australia is fairer than the tax system in Australia. Students, at least West Australian students, have the choice as to whether or not their fees get paid to the university or to the student organisation and everyone who chooses to be a union member has the right to vote in the student elections. Our taxes get paid to the government, regardless of whether or not we support it, and since the onset of the GST, people who are not allowed to vote still have to pay these taxes.

THE EFFECT OF THESE PROPOSALS ON STUDENTS

UNIVERSITY PLACES

While the number of over-enrolments that a university can have has been increased from 2% to 5%, this still means that there will be less HECS places available to students as universities will be forced to cut their HECS-liable intakes. There will still be almost 16,000 HECS places at risk (refer to Table 2).

⁷ Sydney Morning Herald, 2nd September 2003

⁸ Dr Brendan Nelson, *Higher Education Support Amendment (Abolition of Compulsory up-front student union fees) Bill 2003 Second Reading Speech*, 17th September, 2003

Table 2: HECS places at Risk under new 5% Target (Theoretical)

University	2002 Marginal Load ⁹	5% Target Load (2004) ¹⁰	Gap between 2002 and target load
Charles Sturt	3907	455	3,452
Macquarie	1123	455	668
Southern Cross	364	255	109
Uni of New England	583	323	260
UNSW	1620	750	870
Newcastle	1748	575	1173
Sydney	2061	1030	1031
UTS	1037	578	459
UWS	659	855	0
Wollongong	926	370	556
NSW TOTAL	14,028	5,646	8,578
Deakin	762	650	112
La Trobe	1197	663	534
Monash	371	1005	0
RMIT	850	653	197
Swinburne	904	255	649
Melbourne	894	860	34
Ballarat	271	153	118
VUT	809	428	381
VIC TOTAL	6,508	4,667	2,025
CQU	531	325	206
Griffith	908	788	120
James Cook	809	393	416
QUT	2239	900	1339
Queensland	1386	940	446
USQ	1386	940	446
Sunshine Coast	234	108	126
QLD TOTAL	6,587	3,782	3,099
Curtin	1025	590	435
ECU	896	535	361
Murdoch	443	293	150
UWA	367	450	0
Notre Dame	24	20	4
WA TOTAL	2,755	1,888	950
Flinders	729	360	369
Adelaide	854	425	429
Uni SA	346	663	0
SA TOTAL	1,929	1,448	798
ANU	179	300	0
U Can	110	250	0
ACT TOTAL	265	550	0
U Tas	249	425	0
AMC	0	28	0
TAS TOTAL	249	453	0
NT TOTAL	191	115	76
ACU	644	293	351
NATIONAL	32,332	18,882	15,877

⁹ DEST, *Projected marginal funded places 2003*, DEST Question No: E90 03 and E662 03, 2003, Senate Additional Estimates Hearing

¹⁰ DEST, *2% of undergraduate 2004 target load*, DEST 2003-2005 Triennium Report

Due to this decrease, several universities are already planning on cutting HECS-liable places. In Victoria, up to 10,000 places may be cut next year¹¹ and more than 13,000 HECS places are planned on being cut in New South Wales in 2004. Sydney University, the University of Western Sydney, Wollongong University and the Australian Catholic University have announced cuts of 500 places, 450 places, 200 places and 200 places respectively, with Newcastle University planning on cutting 200 places if the reforms get passed¹². As preliminary data also seems to indicate that an estimated 10,000 HECS places have been lost this year, the increases in HECS places proposed under these reforms do not offset the losses encountered.

A total of 655 publicly funded nursing and teaching places will be offered at Avondale College, a private university that is dedicated to promoting Christianity. However, only a further 1,319 places will be offered to the 38 publicly funded universities. While this total is more than double the amount offered to Avondale College, it works out that on average public universities will only receive an extra 35 places, or 5% of what one private institution will receive. In the 2001 Census, only 60% of 18-24 year olds described themselves as Christians¹³. Offering such a large proportion to a private institution with specific religious affiliations is inequitable as 31% of the total population and 40% of young adults do not identify with that religion.

HECS

When HECS was first introduced, the rate was determined based on what point people from low socioeconomic status backgrounds would be excluded from pursuing higher education based on financial restrictions. After differential HECS was introduced in 1997, it has been shown that there have been significant drops in the number of students enrolling in universities¹⁴. Fees, such as HECS, are a barrier to students and the proposed 30% increase is likely to further discourage people from undertaking university education.

There is no restriction on the increase above HECS levels after 2005. This means that while students may have a maximum additional fee of \$2000 in 2005, this amount could increase dramatically in the following years. This decision is at the Minister for Education's discretion, so while the current Education Minister has stated that he would not allow universities to increase above this level, there is no guarantee that the current or future Education Ministers will not exercise this power. The Murdoch Guild of Students believes that this 30% increase in fees is not only going to discourage future students from undertaking tertiary study, but is also the thin edge of the wedge of charging students exorbitant amounts of money for their education.

¹¹ The Age, 20th September 2003.

¹² Sydney Morning Herald, 16th September 2003.

¹³ Australian Bureau of Statistics, *Year Book Australia 2003*

<http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/0/9658217EBA753C2CCA256CAE00053FA3?Open&Highlight=2,religion,2001>

¹⁴ Aungles, Buchanan, Karmel and McLachan, 2002, *HECS and Opportunities in Higher Education*, DEST.

STUDENT INCOME SUPPORT

With the exception of the HECS-free scholarships, all of the scholarships offered to students are considered as income by Centrelink. This means that any student in receipt of these scholarships will potentially have their welfare payments threatened by receiving these scholarships. While the scholarships in themselves are not enough to affect their welfare payments, the student in receipt of them will be limited in their ability to carry out part-time work because it could easily put them above the maximum income allowed. This will place an extra financial burden on those students, which defeats the purpose of the scholarships. The Murdoch Guild of Students believes that all scholarships offered to students for educational purposes should not be deemed as income by Centrelink.

The Murdoch Guild of Students believes that while it is a good move to increase the HECS repayment threshold to \$30,000 this does not go far enough. The HECS repayment threshold was \$28,495 in 1996 but was dropped to \$20,701 in 1997¹⁵. Based on inflation, had HECS not been decreased in 1997, the repayment threshold would be almost \$39,000 by 2005-06. The Murdoch Guild of Students believes that the HECS repayment threshold should be increased to correctly correlate with the average starting wage for a university graduate.

VOLUNTARY STUDENT UNIONISM

Student guilds and unions are having to take over many essential student services formerly provided by the universities. While satisfying the ideological imperatives of the current government, the Higher Education Support Amendment (Abolition of Compulsory Up-front Student Union Fees) Bill will decimate student associations, removing any semblance of life and vibrancy from universities and somethingsomethingsomething none of the support that students desperately need to excel at university.

Despite claims to the contrary in the second reading of the Higher Education Support Amendment (Abolition of Compulsory up-front student union fees) Bill 2003, students already have freedom of choice and freedom of association in today's universities, they have the freedom to opt in or out of the student union. You can still obtain your degree if you choose to not be a member of a student union for the entirety of your degree. It has been our experience at the Murdoch Guild of Students that current students in Western Australia, who have recently undergone the change from Voluntary Student Unionism to Compulsory Student Unionism, do not object to the supposed lack of freedom of choice, but instead object to paying more fees.

The abolition of Compulsory Student Unionism (CSU) restricts student choice, as previous examples where CSU has been abolished has shown that this results in a complete lack of services that are offered by student guilds, or at the very least severely limits these services (see Appendix 1). Student Unions, amongst other things, provide students with help appealing against unfair marking or problems with Centrelink, which helps to achieve two goals of the higher education reform package. Firstly, by assisting

¹⁵ Aungles, Buchanan, Karmel and McLachan, 2002, *HECS and Opportunities in Higher Education*, DEST

students appeal against unfair marking in assessment, student unions ensure that the service students receive from universities is equitable. Secondly, by assisting students with their appeals in areas of academia and welfare, student unions help to guarantee students are not forced to spend greater amounts of time at university, which is another thing that the Higher Education Bills are trying to limit.

If Compulsory Student Unionism is removed, the Australian Campus Union Manager's Association (ACUMA) estimates that more than 600 jobs will be lost in Victoria alone. They also estimate that regional student organisations will be completely wiped out, leaving regional students with no student organisation to turn to if they need representation or assistance in university. This is discriminating against students who choose to study at small or regional universities, because of the complete lack of services they will receive during their studies.

THE EFFECT OF THESE PROPOSALS ON UNIVERSITIES

UNIVERSITY STAFF

Only allowing universities access to additional funds if they enact the government's workplace relations reforms is adding restrictions on universities, rather than allowing them "greater flexibility"¹⁶, which was claimed as one of the original intentions of the reforms. Not allowing this funding is blackmail for universities, and is currently affecting workers because universities are hesitant to enact any changes that may go against these proposed restrictions.

The guidelines universities must meet in order to have access to the additional funds could easily result in a decrease in standards for university staff. The provision for Australian Workplace Agreements to prevail over collective agreements will remove the power of these collective agreements, which set minimum standards for staff. To remove these minimum standards will only result in a decrease in the standards that staff can expect, leading to decreased staff satisfaction and hence a decreased standard in the work that is carried out. In the long term, the new arrangements will displace all current agreement and awards. This move will put at risk current provisions relating to:

- Academic Freedom
- Termination
- Misconduct
- Redundancy
- Limitations of contract employment
- Maternity Leave

Minimum collective limits on casual employment are completely ruled out, leaving casual staff with an absence of minimum standards and conditions of their employment.

¹⁶ *Backing Australia's Future, Policy paper*, page 22. 13th May, 2003.

ACADEMIC QUALITY

Since 1988 there has been a steady increase in the student to academic staff ratio in universities¹⁷. At that time the ratio was on average 12 students to 1 academic teacher. In 1999 that ratio had increased to 18 students on average to 1 academic teacher¹⁸. Some universities, for example Swinburne University and Central Queensland University, have more than 25 students to 1 academic teacher. The only two higher education institutes that have a student to academic staff ratio that is less than 10 are the Australian Defence Force Academy and Avondale College, both of which are institutions given special treatment by the government.

In a report produced by the Senate Employment, Workplace Relations, Small Business and Education References Committee it was found that there was "strong evidence to demonstrate that many subject disciplines in many universities had experienced declining standards in recent years"¹⁹. The reason given for this decline in standards was stated as a lack of funding forcing universities to choose between providing excellence in teaching and the imperatives of surviving financially. The Committee's first recommendation was for the Government to significantly expand the public investment in higher education. The Murdoch Guild of Students agrees with this sentiment, as the resources available in universities are at extremely low levels.

FULLY-FUNDED PLACES AND THE LEARNING ENTITLEMENT

In the 2nd reading of the Higher Education Support Bill 2003, Brendan Nelson mentioned a "move to lifelong learning" where it could no longer be expected that one degree would be sufficient for the next 40 to 50 years. Yet, this lifelong learning is hampered by restrictions on time given to complete degrees. The Commonwealth Learning Entitlement assumes that the government can make a broad decision about the education rights of all individuals. The people who study at universities is the decision of each individual university, a broad government policy ignores the differences inherent between individuals.

The reasons behind having less time to complete a degree if you are undertaking a longer degree were also not made clear. A student studying a 3 year bachelor degree will have up to 5 years to complete their degree, but a student undertaking a 5 year degree will only have a maximum of 6 years to complete their degree. This is especially unfair when considering that some degrees, such as medicine and veterinary, require you to repeat the entire year if you fail a single unit. This only leaves room for a student to fail one unit

¹⁷ Australian Bureau of Statistics, *Australian Social Trends 1997 Education - Education & Work: Academics* Available at: <http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/0/DD091F79D0D8AC5ACA2569BB00164F6B?Open&Highlight=2,private,school,public,university,funding>

¹⁸ DEST, *Characteristics and Performance Indicators of Higher Education Institutions* Available at: http://www.dest.gov.au/archive/highered/statistics/characteristics/23_studentstaffadminbusinesslaw.htm

¹⁹ Senate Employment, Workplace Relations, Small Business, and Education References Committee, *Universities in Crisis- A Report into the Capacity of Public Universities to meet Australia's Higher Education Needs*, 2001

once in their time at university, or else face full-fees to complete a degree. This is inequitable because it ignores the hardships that students face in their daily lives that make studying difficult or even impossible at certain times. It could also lead to litigation of universities over assessments since such large sums of money are at stake.

The cap of \$50,000 for a full-fee paying student loan is not adequate as universities are free to charge more than that amount for a degree. As both undergraduate and postgraduate study is expected to be covered by this loan, students may not be able to access postgraduate courses because they have reached the limit on their loan, even if they are completing their degree(s) in the shortest possible time. Charging interest rates on these loans is also inequitable, because students do not have the option to pay off this loan before their non-interest bearing HECS-HELP loan. The interest accumulated can reach almost \$70,530 not including CPI. This means that in real terms, students may have to pay more than 40% more than they received for their education. The financial burden that students face is already in a crisis, with the student debt currently reaching \$9 billion and set to increase to \$11.5 billion by 2006²⁰.

In the second reading speech of the Higher Education Support Bill 2003, Dr Nelson stated that a student should be able to choose to take up a full fee paying place if they missed out on a HECS place with an entry score of 99. Last year, out of 27 universities only 15 courses out of the almost 2,000 courses had cutoffs above 99, with the average cut off score being under^{21,22,23}. This proves that the scenario mentioned above is quite a rare occurrence and hence increasing the number of full-fee paying students in a course to 50% of the total course load is not appropriate in this scenario. In fact, as fewer people would be able to access HECS places for their courses, this situation would only worsen, with higher cut off scores and hence, more potential students missing out on places. It must also be noted that no student is *forced* to take a place in a course they do not want to be in.

Despite a proposal to increase the number of Domestic Up-Front Fee paying (DUFFs) places at universities, the reforms package does not outline any measures to ensure that those people who take up these places are doing so because they are capable of studying at university. Currently some universities allow DUFF students to enter university with marks 20 points below the HECS cutoffs. With no way of controlling this, the discrepancies between the marks of HECS students and DUFF students are likely to increase.

²⁰ Brendan Nelson, *Media release - HECS Helps Millions to Access University*. MIN 296/03. 5th March 2003.

²¹ Universities Admissions Centre (NSW & ACT) Pty Ltd., 2003, *UAI Cut-Offs for HECS-based courses Main Round of Offers 2003 Admissions* Available at: http://www.uac.edu.au/pdf/2003_uai_coffs_hecs_m.pdf

²² Tertiary Institutions Service Centre, 2003, *2003 Cut off Ranks* Available at: <http://www.tisc.edu.au/>

²³ Victoria Tertiary Admissions Centre, 2003, *2004 Course Index* Available at: http://www.vtac.edu.au/library/guide/course_index.pdf

SUSTAINABILITY OF RESEARCH

In the second reading speech of the Higher Education Support Bill 2003, it was mentioned that academics are getting promoted based on their ability to secure research activity rather than their ability to teach. This situation will only worsen under the new reforms, which increased competition between institutes for the elusive research funding that makes universities more “attractive” in the market place.

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE COMMONWEALTH, STATES AND UNIVERSITIES

The legislation gives the Minister for Education and DEST power to dictate the academic profiles of universities down to a discipline level. The Government also has considerable power in determining the internal allocation of university places. This removes the individual autonomy of the universities to determine their academic profiles based on university goals or community desires. As a lot of the details of funding and the Commonwealth Grants Scheme are contained in guidelines, it is unclear exactly what is planned for the funding of universities. This could be seen as misleading Senators, universities and the Australian Public about what is in store for higher education in Australia.

ALTERNATIVE POLICY AND FUNDING OPTIONS

While more trained teachers and nurses are needed to meet the shortages in these fields, this is merely a band aid solution to the real problem. The shortfalls are in the large part due to the government not considering education and health as something that needs fixing. If the government truly wants a long-term solution, then it should address the problems within these sectors as well as training more nurses and teachers to encourage students to take on these careers.

It is a fallacy to claim that students currently pay between \$100 and \$559 a year in compulsory union fees as a condition of enrolment. Students at the Rockingham Campus of Murdoch University pay \$70 per year in their service and amenities fee, not more than \$100. Also, with the proposed 30% increase in fees on top of HECS, which will be covered by HECS-HELP, students have to pay between \$0 and \$1,928 per unit that they study. As the cap of 30% is only in place for 2005, this amount could increase extravagantly over the first few years after implementation. While students have the option of deferring these fees, they are much more likely to discourage students from entering higher education institutes. In order to make student union fees more equitable, a more logical answer would be to give students the option of deferring payments on these too.

It was mentioned in the second reading of the Higher Education Support Amendment (Abolition of Compulsory up-front student union fees) Bill that students are already struggling to meet their daily living expenses. We at the Murdoch Student Guild believe

that the solution to this problem is to increase welfare payments to students, rather than increasing the financial burden on students.

Also in the second reading of this bill, it was mentioned that students are the ones who are best placed to know their own financial priorities. For this reason, it should be the students who should push the universities to charge them more, not the Federal Government, especially those members who did not get charged for their degrees. However, it has been our experience that students are asking to NOT be charged this extra funding for universities, rather than requesting they be charged more.

CONCLUSION

If Australia's higher education system is ever to recover from the funding cuts of the last 7 years, it needs more support. Submissions to the Crossroads review were almost unanimous in their call for more Commonwealth funding. The government has chosen to ignore this call and opt for deregulation, education for the rich and union bashing.

Under-funding universities to the extent that many of their core services and amenities are provided by the student guilds, and legislating to destroy those student guilds to satisfy an fanatic urge is not sustainable.

Steadily increasing staff to student ratios, lowering standards to allow students who can afford full fees, and blackmailing universities to implement anti-worker reforms in order to get an increase in funding smacks not of quality, but cost-cutting and anti-union rhetoric.

Restricting the length of time a student can take to complete a degree, increasing Commonwealth support for private universities, encouraging universities to enrol more wealthy full-fee paying students does not demonstrate a commitment to equity.

Tying the academic profile to market demand, robbing university communities of the right to decide their own future and giving the minister the power to chop and change what a university teaches restricts choice and penalises diversity.

Sustainability, quality, equity and diversity are noble ideals indeed. It's a crying shame that the only use this government's package has for them is to doctor the spin.

APPENDIX 1.
THE EFFECT VSU HAD ON GUILDS IN WESTERN AUSTRALIA

Murdoch Guild of Students

- Personal advocacy for student appealing university decisions was reduced and the access to this service was restricted to Guild members.
- A resourced parenting room had to be closed
- Funding for sports services and inter-varsity sport was lost
- A Guild Service centre was closed
- Twenty four hour, Three hundred and sixty five day personal accident insurance for students was cancelled
- Guild staff lost their jobs

Edith Cowan University Student Guild

- The Guild was insolvent and placed under administration
- All twenty eight staff lost their jobs
- All Guild activities ceased for a time
- Losses included campus activities, student newspaper, student advocacy services, student welfare services, no funding for clubs and societies, no funding for activities of sporting clubs
- Guild bookshop closed
- Guild service centre closed
- Twenty four hour, Three hundred and sixty five day personal accident insurance for students was cancelled

Curtin Student Guild

- Guild Education Office staff reduced from seven to two, substantially reducing education research, grievance conciliation, advocacy, Austudy advice, financial counseling, housing information, tenancy advice and legal and taxation advice services
- Funding for international student council, education council, activities office, sports, and media office was substantially reduced
- The Sports Officer, Activities Officer and Media Officer lost their jobs
- Twenty four hour, Three hundred and sixty five day personal accident insurance for students was cancelled
- Guild Education Council grants to support students on field trips or placements were cut
- Funding for the Postgraduate Students Association was significantly cut
- The Guild's contribution to the provision of child-care services on campus was cut
- The Guild's provision of out-of-hours childcare, and exam period child-care was cut

- Fourteen staff lost their jobs

The University of Western Australia Student Guild

- The sexual assault referral centre- a valuable and vital student welfare service that included a trained professional staff member- closed down
- 28 jobs lost, including: Guild Education Research Officers, Sexual Assault Referral Officer, and Finance and Administrative support jobs
- The total representative budget was slashed from \$135,000 to \$25,000 on the introduction of VSU
- Student welfare budget cut from \$70,000 to \$45,000
- Severe cuts to campus activities budget including a 45% reduction in funds for clubs and societies
- Textbook subsidy scheme cut substantially
- Guild computer lounge shut down
- Guild sports division became a separate organisation funded by the University
- Funds for maintaining Guild property fell from \$320,000 to \$120,000, making the guild increasingly reliant on the University for the development of any new services for students
- Twenty four hour, Three hundred and sixty five day personal accident insurance for students was cancelled