



Living Expenses Loans Scheme For Tertiary Education Students

The Government needs to put in place a decent and comprehensive living expenses loans scheme for tertiary education students in Australia. This applies to both TAFE and university students. The loans could be paid back after students have graduated, got a job and are earning a substantial salary, in the same way that the HECS system operates.

Currently the Austudy system is very tightly targeted, so that many students are not eligible for Austudy payments, whilst still facing financial difficulties. This can be difficult for their parents. Also, many people who do receive Austudy payments find that the money they get paid is not enough to meet their living expenses.

There is a lot of attention paid by politicians and the media to rising university fees, but the need for a living expense loans scheme is actually far greater than the need to limit university fees. The difficulty in financing living expenses while at university is a greater barrier to engaging in tertiary studies than university fees, because the cost of living expenses must be met upfront, while university fees do not have to be paid until students finish their studies and earn a substantial income.

It is surprising that Australian Governments have not addressed this issue up until now. The need for a scheme to help students fund their living expenses should be given a high priority.

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