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Second Reading Speech - Higher Education Support Amendment (2009 Budget Measures) Bill

The Hon Julia Gillard MP
May 28 2009

I move – That this Bill be now read a second time.

Mr Speaker, the Government is launching a reform agenda for higher education that will transform the scale, potential and quality of the nation's universities and open the doors of higher education to a new generation of Australians.

It is an integrated policy approach. An approach that provides for structural change and improves the financial sustainability of our universities. An approach that guarantees quality in a system that delivers funding for growth and participation by students from all walks of life and recognises the vital importance of research by our best and brightest.

The Bill amends the Higher Education Support Act 2003 (the Act) to implement the Australian Government's reform to the higher education system as announced in the 2009-10 Budget.

It responds to the Review of Australian Higher Education (Bradley Review) which affirmed that the reach, quality and performance of a nation's higher education system will be the key determinants of its economic and social progress.

The Bill also amends the Act to give effect to measures to address key findings and recommendations of the Review of the National Innovation System and the recent House of Representatives inquiry into research training and workforce issues. It augments the existing Research Infrastructure Block Grants (RIBG) Scheme and introduces new measures to address the gap in funding for the indirect costs of research.

This is one of a number of measures designed to provide the sector with certainty, to provide funding for both growth and improved quality and to reform an indexation formula that effectively cut public investment in the sector over time.

With this Bill a decade of under-funding will come to an end. The national scandal of declining public investment in higher education as a proportion of Gross Domestic Product will come to an end. The era of political interference and micro-management by Ministers and officials will come to an end.

A new approach to higher education funding is needed, one that acknowledges the primary importance of students and their learning. The Bill introduces the first stage of a new student centred funding system for higher education which will have an estimated cost of \$491 million over four years. For 2010 and 2011 the cap on over enrolment for Commonwealth supported places will be lifted from 5 per cent to 10 per cent in funding terms.

The limit on funding under the Commonwealth Grant Scheme for 2012 will be removed to reflect the fact that there will be no overall limit on the number of students that Table A higher education providers will be able to enrol from 2012 onwards.

These are crucial steps towards a higher education system with students at the centre, where there is a Commonwealth supported place for every eligible undergraduate student accepted into a course at an eligible higher education provider. The student centred system will include a range of measures to ensure quality, address Australia's skills needs and the broader public interest, and support achievement of our higher education attainment ambition. This ambition is that, by 2025, 40 per cent of all 25 to 34 years olds will hold a qualification at bachelor level or above.

The Bill introduces landmark measures to improve the rate of participation in higher education by students from a disadvantaged background.

The Bill amends the Act to provide for an increase in funding to address Australia's historically poor record in increasing participation by low SES students. The Government has announced a commitment to ensure that by 2020, 20 per cent of higher education enrolments at the undergraduate level will be of people from a low SES background.

This goal will be directly supported by the injection of additional funding for universities to support the low SES participation targets.

The major barriers to increased higher education participation by students from low socio-economic backgrounds include previous educational attainment, low awareness of the long-term benefits of higher education resulting in little aspiration to participate, and the need for financial assistance, academic and personal support once enrolled.

International experience shows that interventions or outreach in the early years of secondary schooling are highly effective in increasing the aspirations of students to attend university.

The Government has therefore allocated \$108 million over four years for a new partnerships program, to link universities with low SES schools and vocational education and training providers. The intention is to create leading practice and competitive pressures to increase the aspirations of low SES students to higher education. The Government is putting in place systemic reasons for universities to be engaged with improving the quality of school education.

Funding will provide schools and vocational education and training providers with links to universities, exposing their students to people, places and opportunities beyond the scope of their own experiences,

helping teachers raise the aspirations of their students. Programs might include scholarships, mentoring of teachers and students, curriculum and teaching support, or hands-on activities run by university staff in schools.

Once students from disadvantaged backgrounds have entered university the likelihood of them completing their course of study is broadly similar to that of the general higher education population. Often, however, they require higher levels of support to succeed, including financial assistance and greater academic support, mentoring and counselling services.

The Government has therefore allocated \$325 million over four years to be provided to universities as a financial incentive to expand their enrolment of low SES students, and to fund the intensive support needed to improve their completion and retention rates. The existing higher education Equity Support Program will be replaced and incorporated into these new funding arrangements.

Better measures of low socio economic status will be developed which are based on the circumstances of individual students and their families and performance funding will be based in part on how effective institutions are in attracting these students.

The steps to improve low SES student participation will impact on and benefit Indigenous students. They are significantly under represented in our universities and face distinct challenges. The Government will support a review of the effectiveness of measures to improve the participation of Indigenous students in higher education in consultation with the Indigenous Higher Education Advisory Council.

At the same time the Government is also introducing major reforms to student income support to assist the access and retention of low SES students.

The Bill amends the Act to provide funding for the continuing elements of the Commonwealth Scholarships Program. Existing Commonwealth Education Costs Scholarship (CECS) recipients will continue to receive the scholarships under current arrangements. CECS will be replaced by the Student Start-up Scholarship of \$2,254 in 2010 and indexed thereafter, which will be provided as an entitlement to all university students receiving income support and those under veterans schemes. The new scholarship will be funded under income support arrangements so funding is not included in this Act.

Existing Commonwealth Accommodation Scholarship (CAS) recipients will continue to receive the scholarships under the current arrangements. CAS will be replaced by a new relocation scholarship in 2010. This scholarship will assist Youth Allowance and ABSTUDY students at university who are dependents who have to live away from the family home for study as well as independent students who are disadvantaged by personal and relationship circumstances. The Relocation Scholarship will provide \$4,000 for students in their first year at university and \$1,000 in each year thereafter and will be indexed.

Indigenous students will continue to receive scholarships under the Commonwealth Scholarship scheme in the future.

A central feature of the reform agenda will be an increased focus on quality. This will be especially important in a period of expansion, when institutions will need to attract students who have not traditionally considered going to university. The Bill reflects the new arrangements for quality and standards which will be initiated during 2009-10, when work to establish a new standards-based quality assurance framework will commence. Funding under the Act for the Australian Universities Quality Agency will be replaced with new arrangements to support the development and establishment of the Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency by 2010.

Increased indexation will reap significant rewards in terms of participation and quality and will provide a valuable incentive to institutions to invest in their future development. It will also help to improve their financial sustainability. Revised indexation arrangements for all programs under the Act will commence in 2012, including grants for teaching and learning and research, the OS-HELP maximum loan amount and the FEE-HELP borrowing limit. Maximum student contribution amounts will be subject to revised indexation arrangements from 2011, which will deliver increased revenue to universities.

The Bill will amend the Act to increase the maximum annual student contribution amount for students studying education and nursing units from the current national priority rate to the Band 1 rate. The

increase will apply to commencing students from 1 January 2010. Existing students will continue under existing arrangements.

The Act already includes provision for the HECS-HELP benefit to reduce eligible graduates' HELP repayments. The HECS-HELP Guidelines made under the Act will be amended to extend this benefit to graduates of initial teaching and nursing degrees who go on to work as teachers or nurses. This will apply to people who graduate from second semester 2009 onwards.

The Bill will amend the Act so that from 1 January 2010 students who receive an OS-HELP loan will no longer incur a 20 per cent loan fee. The 20 per cent loan fee has limited the effectiveness of the loan program. The removal of the loan fee will assist universities in encouraging students to undertake part of the studies for their Australian qualification at an overseas institution. This will improve the productivity benefits to Australia of students undertaking overseas study.

To ensure that Australia's reputation for quality remains high, this Bill introduces new performance funding under the Commonwealth Grant Scheme. In 2011 this will be through conditional funding as a transition to increased indexation and new performance funding in 2012. It will ensure that Australia's reputation for quality teaching and learning remains high by providing universities with real incentive to ensure they are providing the best possible learning opportunities for students.

In 2010 the Government will work with the higher education sector to develop a robust set of performance indicators. The indicators will include measures of success for equity groups as well as measures of the quality of teaching and learning.

Universities will be required to negotiate and agree on specific performance targets that are challenging but appropriate for their circumstances and that will contribute to the achievement of system-wide goals for participation and quality.

From 2012 universities will receive performance funding if they meet their targets and agree to new targets for the forthcoming funding period. The Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency will provide an independent assessment of whether universities have met their targets.

The Bill also includes a new Structural Adjustment Fund to support continuing transformation in the sector. The Structural Adjustment Fund will be available to universities and will enable them to develop diverse missions. This funding will promote long-term sustainability in the sector by assisting individual universities in making strategic decisions about their future mission and ways to enhance their place in the new higher education environment. It will replace the existing Diversity and Structural Adjustment Fund.

In particular, the new fund will lay the ground work for the provision of more sustainable higher education in regional areas ahead of decisions being taken on a better model of longer term funding for regional delivery.

The higher education sector will need time to adjust to the new post-Bradley environment. The Government will undertake further work to better identify the issues facing regional provision, taking account of changes in the operating environment, including the impact of the move to a demand-driven system. The Government will consult with the sector in undertaking this further work.

Universities play a pivotal role in the national research and innovation system through generation and dissemination of new knowledge and through the education, training and development of world class researchers.

The Government will commit \$512 million over four years for a new Sustainable Research Excellence in Universities initiative to address the gap in funding for the indirect costs of research. The new measure will augment the existing Research Infrastructure Block Grants (RIBG) Scheme, with the aim of raising the average support for the indirect costs of university research to 50 cents per dollar of direct competitive grant funding by 2014.

A second measure, Joint Research Engagement will complement the additional funding for the indirect costs of competitive grant-funded research by transforming the existing Institutional Grants Scheme into

a funding stream more closely focused on collaboration between universities, industry and other end-users.

The Bill also amends the Act to increase funding for Australian Postgraduate Awards and Other Research grants. The Government has acknowledged the importance of supporting our best and brightest postgraduate students through its commitment to double the number of Australian Postgraduate Awards (APAs) by 2012. Building on this commitment, the value of the APA stipend will be increased by more than 10 per cent from \$20,427 in 2009 to \$22,500 in 2010.

The Bill moves funds currently delivered through the Improving the Practical Component of Teacher Education program to the Commonwealth Grant Scheme. This will increase the Commonwealth contribution amount for education units of study and remove unnecessary and time-consuming reporting requirements.

The Bill also moves funds from the Workplace Reform Program into the Commonwealth Grant Scheme base grant. This will increase the Commonwealth contribution amount for all funding clusters.

The Bill amends the Act to account for the cessation of the Learning and Teaching Performance Fund and the Workplace Productivity Program, which are being replaced by new funding arrangements.

Measures in the Bill are complemented by additional investments of \$2.1 billion from the Education Investment Fund for education and research infrastructure and \$1.1 billion for the Super Science initiative.

These reforms are designed to support high quality teaching and learning, improve access and outcomes for students from low socio economic backgrounds, reward institutions for meeting agreed quality and equity outcomes, improve resourcing for research and invest in world class tertiary education infrastructure.

These investments are a strategy for future prosperity, educational excellence, and social inclusion for the nation.

I commend this Bill to the House and present the Explanatory Memorandum.

http://www.deewr.gov.au/Ministers/Gillard/Media/Speeches/Pages/Article_090528_140538.aspx

International education – its contribution to Australia

Speech: The Hon Julia Gillard MP
May 26 2009

International education has made a significant contribution to Australia. It has grown to now be our third largest source of overseas earnings, generating \$15.5 billion in 2008 and supporting more than 125,000 jobs. In 2008, nearly half a million students came to Australia. It is the lead sector in terms of export earnings in Victoria and the second largest in New South Wales.

But international students do much more than contribute to our economy and create jobs. They build on Australia's long multicultural history that has created a friendly, tolerant and secular country.

International students enrich our society. They help to provide a diverse and rich education experience for Australians. This diversity enables our education institutions to offer a much wider range of courses and campus facilities.

People coming to Australia to study and Australians studying abroad promote cross cultural experiences that benefit us both now and in the future, building understanding that underpins tolerance and stability here and abroad.

The relationships formed by students support long-lasting diplomatic, research and business links.

From the early days of the Colombo Plan through to the current day Endeavour Scholarships, we have provided scholarship opportunities to students from across the Asia Pacific. Many have gone on to be

leaders in their own countries and the contacts and relationships they forged as young students have proved of invaluable benefit to us.

Australian Government support for international education

The Australian Government has provided significant support to facilitate the development and growth of the highly regarded international education sector we now have. We have done this through an integrated approach to policy, regulation, international engagement and promotion, both here in Australia and overseas, using our international network of counsellors.

In March 2009, I announced the Study in Australia 2010 strategy, a \$3.5 million drive to support Australia's international education and training sector in during the global recession. It is underpinned by four key themes: showcasing Australian education and training excellence; positioning Australia in the global market; enhancing the student experience; and supporting the Australian international education sector.

The Australian Government's 2009-10 Budget continues our drive for a world-class education system, planting the seeds for Australia's future growth and positioning Australia as an education leader, with modern facilities and high-quality teaching.

Australia has a long record of providing scholarships. Our Endeavour Scholarships are internationally competitive, merit-based scholarships providing opportunities for citizens of the Asia-Pacific, Middle East, Europe and the Americas to undertake study, research and professional development in Australia. Importantly, awards are also available for Australians to do the same abroad.

The Endeavour Scholarships have recently been enhanced by the Prime Minister's Australia Asia Endeavour Awards, a \$14.9 million initiative over four years that will further enhance the internationalisation of Australian education. These new Awards will develop internationally-aware, skilled future leaders in Australia, build human capital within Australian businesses and contribute to productivity gains and innovations, establish enduring educational and professional linkages and develop a network of people across Asia which have a strong affinity to Australia.

Moving forward – focusing on two key areas

Today I want to focus on two aspects of international education which I believe will be fundamentally important to the future of Australian international education: quality and the student experience.

To remain competitive we need to:

continue to enhance our quality education and training system and ensure that Australia's reputation for world-class education is maintained and strengthened; and further improve student experiences, particularly students' living experiences and safety.
Quality – a cornerstone

Australia needs a highly regarded, high quality and internationally relevant education and training system, one which provides students, both Australian and international, with the skills and knowledge they need to participate fully in our globally engaged economy and society.

The Bradley Review found that the future of Australia's higher education system rests on continuing to ensure its quality and reputation. In responding to the Bradley Review the Australian Government has committed to the creation of the Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency (TEQSA), which will oversee the new framework for quality assurance and regulation. It will accredit providers, carry out audits of standards and performance and streamline current regulatory arrangements and provide for national consistency. A national approach to regulation and quality assurance will mean Australia's knowledge and skills needs can be met in a more efficient and transparent way, enabling higher education providers to focus on what they do best – providing quality higher education.

Australia offers students a high quality education and a choice of education providers. Australia cannot afford poor quality provision of services damaging the international reputation of our education and training. The Government has developed a close working relationship with the State and Territories on

these issues. This strong relationship has resulted in initiatives like the recent program of targeted swift audits by the Victorian Government. We will work with other States to implement similar initiatives.

As part of a strengthened compliance regime, we are increasing our scrutiny of education providers. Our focus is to assist them to better understand their legislative obligations, through workshops and other educative material, at the same time ensuring that providers are fully aware that the Australian Government will not hesitate to use the full extent of its legislative powers to sanction those that breach the law.

To further enhance quality and protect students, the Australian Government will also review the Education Services for Overseas Act 2000 in 2010-11 in consultation with State and Territory governments, the sector and students. The review will make sure that the framework for regulation of overseas education meets world's best standards before it becomes the responsibility of our new TEQSA.

I am also working with my colleague, Senator the Hon Chris Evans, Minister for Immigration and Citizenship, on student integrity measures to support genuine students to come to Australia to realise the benefits of an Australian education.

Student experience – a cornerstone

I am aware of and am concerned about the reports in the media of international students' safety being compromised and of their having unsatisfactory experiences while in Australia. I am personally particularly disturbed by a recent violent incident which occurred in my own electorate.

Most international students report that they do feel satisfied with their social experience while in Australia. However reports of any violence or discrimination directed at international students can do much damage to our international reputation as a welcoming country.

The Australian Government is working with State and Territory governments, through its Joint Committee on International Education to enhance the student experience. This group is:

building on the learnings from the Victorian and New South Wales taskforces to improve the experience of international students nationally;
identifying and addressing gaps in support services and information for international students (including addressing the question of the performance of education agents); and
addressing key concerns around social inclusion, safety and accommodation, including by promoting greater diversity and raising Australians' understanding of the benefits of international education. Today I am announcing that the Government will invite international student representatives to participate in a round table to discuss issues affecting their study experience such as accommodation, welfare and safety. I will also be asking the round table to consider how the Government can best hear and respond to their views on these and other issues of vital concern to international students, on a continuing basis.

I will shortly call for expressions of interest from those wanting to participate in the round table. Participants will be selected on the basis of their ability to represent the views of international students. The roundtable will include participants from across all international education and training sectors, and all states and territories. With over 430 000 international students visiting Australia annually, it is important to me that their views and concerns are heard and addressed by government.

The outcome of this round table, along with other international education issues, will inform discussions with State and Territory education ministers at the inaugural meeting of the Ministerial Council on Tertiary Education later this year and we will agree on what more needs to be done to promote and protect Australia's reputation as a safe destination for top quality study and research.

Conclusion

I am committed to working towards a sustainable international education sector that delivers high quality, internationally recognised courses which maximise international students' experiences and outcome. I want international education to continue to positively contribute to Australia's productivity, participation and society.

In this Parliament today, I also want to send a message loud and clear that international students are very welcome in this nation and Australia will not tolerate discrimination against or victimisation of any of our international students.

http://www.deewr.gov.au/Ministers/Gillard/Media/Speeches/Pages/Article_090527_093411.aspx

Julia Gillard digs in over student support

The Australian
May 27 2009

THE federal Government has challenged the Opposition to find \$1.8 billion in budget savings to prove it is serious about blocking reforms to student income support.

As independent analysts backed the reforms yesterday, Education Minister Julia Gillard resisted pressure to delay an overhaul of the youth allowance to let a last cohort of gap year students qualify under the looser rules. She defended a tightening of the so-called independent category, often used by students from affluent families, as necessary to fund increased payments for scores of thousands of other students.

In parliament on Monday, Ms Gillard asked Liberal education spokesman Christopher Pyne "whether he was going to cut all these increased benefits in order to finance keeping the work test as it is, now knowing that some of the money goes to families who earn \$200,000 and \$300,000 a year".

Yesterday peak lobby Universities Australia joined other university groups in backing the youth allowance reforms.

"Changing eligibility for student income support to ensure that students most in need are helped by the system is an important move," UA's new chairman, Peter Coaldrake, said. But "any changes should guarantee rural and regional students in particular are not unintentionally disadvantaged, and we support the Government's move for more support for more students".

An analyst of the youth allowance program, who asked not to be named, said the budget changes were "very positive" and returned the program to its original principles of access and equity, after a decade's dysfunction. But he said there was a case for making the relocation scholarship an "access payment", detaching it from means testing.

"This adjustment would make the scholarship available to all students who are geographically isolated from higher education."

Emmaline Bexley, a research fellow at the University of Melbourne's Centre for the Study of Higher Education, said youth allowance would be fairer after the changes, with better targeting of the needy. "But I would be surprised if these programs resulted in significant numbers of rural students accessing university, who would not otherwise have done so," she said.

On ABC's Triple J radio last week, confronted by angry gap year students whose plans have been "blindsided", Ms Gillard said: "Because of these changes, we're expecting almost 70,000 new recipients to qualify and we're expecting almost 35,000 existing recipients to get a higher payment."

Presenter Kate O'Toole told the HES the phones "went nuts" when her Hack current affairs program announced the student financing issue.

But in comments backed by higher education analysts, Ms Gillard said the changes to student income support reflected the recommendations of the Bradley review of higher education, which found the independent category was being "abused."

The review reported that 36 per cent of these recipients lived at home in families where household income was over \$100,000.

Yesterday Mr Pyne stood by his criticism that the change had "ended the higher education dreams" of rural and regional students who had used the work-for-independence rule to qualify for the allowance.

He told the HES that the Social Security and Other Legislation Amendment (Income Support for Students) Bill 2009 would be sent to the Senate education committee for examination.

"We will wait to see what the Senate committee says before we finalise any decisions about how to amend the bill and ensure that country people aren't given the rough end of the pineapple," he said.

The anonymous analyst, who in May last year gave the HES the first comprehensive figures showing the sorting of youth allowance, said speculation that the budget reforms would be harsh for rural and regional students was "more perception than reality".

"The proposed changes will provide better access to higher education for a greater range of regional and rural students through a substantially relaxed parental income test and the availability of start-up and relocation scholarships," he said.

<http://www.theaustralian.news.com.au/story/0,25197,25542338-5013871,00.html>

Quietly making the grade

The Australian
May 27 2009

CONTRARY to popular myths, Left and Right, indigenous students in mainstream society, representing the majority of indigenous children, are doing well at school, staying to year 12, and going on to professional courses at universities. The proportion of indigenous Australians who now graduate from universities is as high as the proportion of indigenous university graduates in New Zealand, the US and Canada, where they have had a head start. These achievements deserve to be acknowledged, not buried.

By the end of 2008, a total of almost 24,000 indigenous men and women had graduated from Australian universities, with nearly 1500 graduating annually. More than 90 per cent had bachelor or graduate degrees. A substantial body of professionally trained graduates are role models for future generations. Commencements, enrolments and graduations are at record levels. The indigenous students' annual retention rate is now more than 80 per cent. These are remarkable results for the first generation of indigenous university graduates.

Mick Dodson, of the Australian National University, points out that 30per cent of indigenous Australians are illiterate. These mostly come from separate "Aboriginal" schools that are heirs to generations of poor education in remote communities. In contrast, the more than 60 per cent of indigenous parents who work in the mainstream send their children to mainstream schools where they achieve similar results to non-indigenous children in similar socioeconomic circumstances.

Between 1998 and 2007, year 12 completions by indigenous students in South Australia rose five times. They are still rising. In the mainstream indigenous population, one in every eight adults is a university graduate. Two-thirds of the graduates are women, so that one in every six indigenous women in mainstream society is a university graduate.

It has been conveniently forgotten by both the Left and the Right that most indigenous girls and boys were rarely allowed to finish primary school a mere half-century ago. In South Australia, many of the first indigenous secondary graduates are still working.

Across Australia, few indigenous people enrolled in tertiary education until specific support programs were set up in the 1980s, which resulted in indigenous graduate numbers rising from a bare 200 in 1980 to 3000 in 1990 and 13,000 in 2000. By 2010, this number is expected to double and it is likely to double again by 2020.

But indigenous tertiary success is an orphan: few of the commentariat want to own it. The recent Bradley review of universities dismissed indigenous tertiary participation in a single page, concluding, erroneously, that enrolments were declining. The Indigenous Higher Education Advisory Council,

reflecting its dominance by Aboriginal studies academics, has regularly lamented the demise of indigenous undergraduate enrolments.

Academics at the Centre for Aboriginal Economic Policy Research, in a rare comment on indigenous university involvement, wrote in 2003 that "older indigenous people are actually more likely to be enrolled in a post-secondary course than their non-indigenous counterparts". The centre has said little since and nothing positive about indigenous university completions. In the mid-'90s, when I reported to an Aboriginal academic that there were already perhaps 5000 indigenous graduates, with another 500 new graduates each year, his response was a crestfallen "But it can't keep increasing, can it?" In fact, the answer to his question has been, is and probably will continue to be yes.

In the past 10 years, major changes have occurred. Indigenous enrolments at degree and postgraduate level have risen substantially, while enrolments in sub-degree courses and bridging courses have plummeted. External enrolments are withering away, despite many efforts to keep indigenous students off campus. Aboriginal studies' enrolments have gone into free fall. At one major university, they have declined from almost 50 per cent of indigenous enrolments in the mid-'90s to barely 5 per cent in 2007.

Indigenous children, like other students from low socioeconomic backgrounds, clearly need academic support in schools. Instead, their schools are often poorly maintained, classes are crowded, and teaching standards are low. It is amazing that so many indigenous children stay at school until year 12 and do so well at university.

The principal indigenous education policy challenges concern the children that leave school unable to read, write or count in remote communities. At present, only a handful of children from remote communities who are the fortunate recipients of scholarships to boarding schools may expect to go on to university. Effective adult education to tackle the backlog of illiteracy and non-numeracy in these communities is urgently required. Until all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children have the same curriculum and teaching standards as other Australian children, indigenous illiteracy in remote Australia will continue to be rampant. Equal rights in education is their birthright as much as it is any Australian child's.

<http://www.theaustralian.news.com.au/story/0,25197,25543151-7583,00.html>

More overseas students coming to Adelaide

Independent Weekly
May 27 2009

South Australia's education sector has defied the economic downturn with international student enrolments up 24 per cent in the first quarter this year.

Further Education Minister Michael O'Brien said the Government was now on target to have 32,000 international students in Adelaide by the end of the year.

He said a lower dollar had contributed to the increase in 2009, with the fall over recent months making it 30 per cent cheaper to study in Australia.

But the minister said the increase in the number of students coming to Adelaide was no accident.

"South Australia's university and training providers must be commended for their highly professional marketing and recruitment programs," he said.

"Our education providers are helping to teach the next generation of Asian leaders, which in turn enhances their understanding of our language and culture and fosters closer ties with South Australia."

Mr O'Brien said next week's state budget would also waive all primary and high school fees for the dependents of any students at local universities to bring South Australia into line with other states.

<http://www.independentweekly.com.au/news/local/news/general/more-overseas-students-coming-to-adelaide/1524674.aspx>

Gillard to scrutinise rogue colleges

WA Today
May 26 2009

THE Federal Government has promised to crack down on rogue colleges that teach foreign students, warning that Australia cannot afford to let them damage the reputation of its \$15 billion international education industry.

In a strongly worded ministerial statement in Parliament, Deputy Prime Minister Julia Gillard said yesterday the Government would scrutinise education providers and review the legislation that covers their responsibilities towards foreign students.

A round table of international students from throughout the country would also be established to discuss issues such as accommodation, welfare and safety, she said.

The announcement follows a series of recent reports in The Age about alleged rotting at private training colleges in Melbourne and violent attacks, sometimes involving racial abuse, on foreign students in Victoria, Queensland and NSW.

The move is the strongest indication yet that the Government holds fears that the reputation-sensitive international education industry could be seriously damaged if foreign students abandon Australia as a study destination because of concern about personal safety and the quality of education and training.

Ms Gillard said a more rigorous method of auditing being applied to 16 colleges that pose a "high risk" to students in Victoria could form the basis for auditing of all education providers in Australia.

"As part of a strengthened compliance regime, we are increasing our scrutiny of education providers. Our focus is to assist them to better understand their legislative obligations, through workshops and other educative material," she said.

"The Australian Government will not hesitate to use the full extent of its legislative powers to sanction those that breach the law. Australia cannot afford poor-quality provision of services damaging the international reputation of our education and training."

Ms Gillard said she and Minister for Immigration and Citizenship Chris Evans were working on "student integrity measures" to make sure only genuine overseas students came here to study.

Although most students reported satisfaction with their social experience in Australia, reports of violence and discrimination had the potential to damage our international reputation, Ms Gillard said.

A recent violent attack on an Indian student occurred in Ms Gillard's electorate of Lalor.

International education is Australia's third-largest source of overseas earnings after coal and iron. It is Victoria's biggest export earner, contributing nearly \$4.5 billion to the state's economy last year.

Last week, the Brumby Government bowed to pressure to crack down on rogue training colleges, announcing a rapid audit of colleges suspected of breaching regulations. The crackdowns announced by the Victorian and Federal governments come after repeated official statements playing down the extent of the problem.

Moves by both tiers of government follow claims in The Age last week that a Melbourne college had allegedly been taking cash payments to upgrade marks and employing unqualified teachers.

It is believed some colleges are exploiting foreign students' eagerness to secure permanent residency by selling certificates and bogus work experience references, both of which are required before an application can be lodged.

<http://www.watoday.com.au/national/gillard-to-scrutinise-rogue-colleges-20090526-bm3s.html?page=-1>

Extra points for university entry

Adelaide Now
May 25 2009

STUDENTS will have to achieve only a pass mark in Year 12 subjects to gain bonus points for entry to any course at the University of South Australia.

The scheme – a state first – will allow some students to enter courses for which their marks would previously have been too low.

The bonus points scheme is designed to better prepare students for their chosen degree and will likely boost school retention rates by providing an incentive for students at risk of dropping out.

Business leaders say the move is "a great marketing tool" likely to attract more applicants to UniSA. But they raised concerns it could lower graduate standards by giving applicants extra points they did not earn through Year 12 assessment.

The scheme will allow students to gain up to five bonus points towards their Tertiary Entrance Ranking (scored out of 100) if they score 10 or more out of 20 in subjects which are "matched" to their chosen degree, such as Year 12 Business Studies for a commerce degree.

All students who study English will receive two bonus points.

Adelaide's three universities have for some time offered bonus points for disadvantaged and rural students. This is the first time they will apply for all prospective students and to all degrees at one institution.

UniSA Deputy Vice-Chancellor Professor Peter Lee said the new arrangements were introduced to attract students who were better suited to and prepared for their degrees. "There will be students who will now gain entry because of the relevance of their (Year 12) study (to their university course) that might have just missed out in the past," he said.

Professor Lee said the scheme "acknowledges a TER score alone is not a complete indication of a student's potential to succeed at university". "It also recognises some of the latest research which shows students who have studied content at school which they then go on to study at university will have a smoother transition to university and greater success." he said.

UniSA previously awarded bonus points to students studying maths. The University of Adelaide offers bonus points to students who study specialist maths or languages. Flinders University offers bonus points to students who study science and maths and apply for science or engineering degrees.

Flinders will soon include languages in the scheme and is considering further expanding its bonus points offerings.

Business leaders hope the UniSA plan will encourage disengaged final year students to "stick it out" at school but are concerned those who may "just scrape in" to a degree program because of bonus points could lower the overall quality of graduates.

Business SA chief executive officer Peter Vaughan said the quality of tertiary graduates over the past 25 years had "significantly declined in terms of ability". "I would not want to see a further dilution of academic offering (because of this scheme)," he said.

Australian Institute of Management chief executive officer John Stokes said the scheme may encourage Year 12 students to "hang in" and see if they "might just fall across the line" for entry to university with the help of bonus points. "(But) if people just manage to scrape through it means the quality of the (university) students could be questionable," he said.

Professor Lee disputed the scheme would lower the standard of graduates, saying the maximum five bonus points were unlikely to benefit students who scored little more than 10 out of 20 for the relevant subjects over others who achieved higher results.

"What we're trying to say is 'You've done the Year 12 subject and passed it and we're acknowledging that as preparation (for university study)'," he said.

"You still have to achieve a (minimum) TER to get into that course. You've still got to be competitive."

Flinders University Deputy Vice-Chancellor Professor Andrew Parkin said bonus points schemes could "induce" students to make a decision about their preferred university course "much too early".

University of Adelaide Deputy Vice-Chancellor (academic) Fred McDougall agreed. "We certainly haven't considered it at all and probably wouldn't," he said.

<http://www.news.com.au/adelaidenow/story/0,22606,25532203-2682,00.html>

NZ: Chinese numbers on the rise

University World News
May 24 2009

The ongoing impact of past declines in the number of Chinese students has masked a rebound in enrolments by new international students in New Zealand's universities this year while increasing numbers of Chinese continue to flood into Australian universities.

For several years, New Zealand's eight universities have suffered the 'pipeline' effect of a dramatic downturn in Chinese enrolments that began about 2003-4. This year was no exception for many institutions, with five of the eight universities reporting that their start-of-year international student numbers had dropped 1-4% compared with the same time last year.

But two universities - Waikato and Canterbury - bucked the trend with increases of 7% and nearly 4% respectively. In addition, enrolments by new international students are understood to have increased at most universities.

Victoria University of Wellington, for example, reported an overall decline in international student numbers so far this year, but a 9% increase in new enrolments. Victoria's pro vice-chancellor (international) Professor Roberto Rabel said the university was also experiencing a 20% increase in applications for the second trimester, indicating the university's final figure could be close to that of 2008.

Within that growth, Rabel said there were positive trends. "For example, the number of international PhD students has risen by over 40% compared with the same time last year to reach almost 280."

The increase in new enrolments has been attributed in part to the low value of the New Zealand dollar, which is now worth US\$0.55, down from about US\$0.79 at this time last year. But universities have also worked hard to diversify their international student base in order to reduce their reliance on China as a source country.

Australia, however, has long been an attractive destination to students from China and last year they again comprised the largest group of international students, with nearly 52,000 of the 183,000 foreigners enrolled in higher education. The number of Chinese students increased by 5% in 2007 over the previous year and by a further 8% last year.

Overall international student enrolments grew by 5% because of a strong growth in commencements. Two source countries - China and India - made up more than 43% of all higher education enrolments, with the Chinese the most numerous and almost doubling those from India.

The international education export market was estimated to be worth more than A\$15 billion (US\$11.8 billion) to Australia last year - up nearly 24% on 2007. Some universities now generate a quarter to almost a half of their income from foreign student fees - a reliance considered highly dangerous should the market experience a decline.

That is possible should the global economic crisis continue to worsen but also because as Australia's competitors in the overseas student arena increase in number and in attractiveness to the Australia's major source countries.

<http://www.universityworldnews.com/article.php?story=20090521175856790>

A life lived outside the goalposts

The Age
May 25 2009

There's more to our culture than the exclusive field of sports.

BARNABY Joyce has said he will block a plan to reintroduce student services fees unless universities are restricted to spending the money on sport. This bizarre threat typifies a national obsession with sport that is exclusive and limiting, and can be linked to male sporting heroes feeling they can do whatever they like.

The statistics on who actually participates in organised sport in Australia make clear that if implemented, Senator Joyce's amendments are likely to result in the channelling of university money for students services to the people who need it the least. Joyce said "soccer, rugby, cricket, netball are directed at the greatest possible participation with no exclusion to anybody else". Rubbish.

ABS data from 2007 shows only a quarter of Australians participate in organised sport, and these people are most likely to be young, male, Australian-born or from English-speaking countries, and employed. So if we're talking about social inclusion, money for student services would be better spent rebuilding affordable child care, health services and welfare support, which were gutted by voluntary student unionism.

But this isn't only an issue about what gets funded on university campuses. This speaks to a broader theme about the status of sport in Australia, and what that means for our culture as a whole.

Sport can be a positive social and cultural force in many ways. It can create social inclusion — witness the participation of some young indigenous men in the AFL. It has obvious benefits for physical health. It can create social connections, and a sense of identity and belonging. But the exclusive support of sport is just that — socially and culturally exclusive. And our culture is saturated with it. Lengthy sports announcements at the end of every ABC radio and TV news broadcast inform us who won the footy, and what player is injured. Some of us don't care. Prime-time TV shows are devoted to footy and rugby hosted by men dressed in suits, as if it is a deeply serious and important activity. We have a former prime minister who was embarrassingly sycophantic to cricketers, and at least two cricketers who have been awarded "father of the year" (aren't those guys usually overseas?).

Sport is inflicted on us even if we don't want it, and we treat our male sports stars like gods. And some of them clearly think they can behave like gods — beyond the rules of the rest of us. Which, as the latest revelation of the sexual degradation of a woman by rugby players has shown, can have appallingly harmful results.

But back to the issue of student services at universities and Barnaby Joyce. When I was an undergraduate, before the introduction of voluntary student unionism, I benefited from a whole range of student services. I did plays and revues (in university-funded theatres), I did debating (in a university-funded competition), I did student politics (in the students' association). OK, so I was a geek, but I think I was lucky. I was young, had a casual job, and lived at home with supportive parents. I was educated on a university campus that was lively, argumentative and culturally rich.

Sure, university helped teach me how to think, but it also helped teach me how to live. My outlook on life changed at university. Certainly that might have turned me into someone who would never in a blue moon vote for Senator Barnaby Joyce. But contrary to his fears about university politics and student culture, not everyone at university thought like me, voted like me, or did what I liked to do — not by a long shot. That was the nice thing about it. Even in the small world of the university campus, there was a rich diversity of people, and an appreciation of that.

We need a greater imagination when it comes to Australian culture. Our culture isn't just about two teams of mostly white men clashing in violent adversity on the sporting field. Our culture is more than that. It's about stories and painting, music and dance, talking and listening and debate. It's about cooking and eating, and how we live with the land. It's about loving, and failing at loving, and bringing up kids. It's about looking after people, and being looked after ourselves when we need it. In short, it's about different things for different people at different times.

So let's see money for student services at universities and let's see it used in genuinely socially inclusive ways: services for less-privileged students, and money for arts as well as for sports. And let's see a bit more of that in our national culture too. Sport should have its place, but this should be in proportion. And maybe if we start getting that right, young men with social status might learn that there are lots of perspectives to a situation to respect, not just the one they like.

<http://www.theage.com.au/opinion/a-life-lived-outside-the-goalposts-20090524-bjgb.html?page=-1>

Issues: Bradley Review, student income support, employee share schemes

Press conference transcript: The Hon Julia Gillard MP
May 21 2009

JULIA GILLARD: Obviously, I've taken the opportunity today to make a speech about the Budget initiatives of the Rudd Government, in relation to education and, most particularly, higher education. One of the central features of the Budget was our response to the Bradley Review and Cutler Review, the Review of Higher Education and the Review of Innovation. Having received those reviews in the Budget, the Rudd Government has invested \$5.7 billion over the next four years in our higher education and innovation systems.

This is a major transformation of our higher education system for the future, so that it can respond to the demands of Australian students, so that we can lift the educational levels of Australians, so that we can reach a target of 40 per cent in 2025 of the number of young Australians with a university qualification, so that we can increase the participation of Australians from low socio-economic status backgrounds, from poorer households and disadvantaged communities in education.

It's a comprehensive set of reforms, involving new quality measures and also, a new system of student financing to invest Government dollars where they will do the most good. So I'm very happy to answer questions on any aspect of this speech.

JOURNALIST: You undertook much needed reforms of student financial support, as you say, but you didn't actually increase the fortnightly rates, which are below the poverty line, which are in need of an increase according to the Bradley Review. Do you think the rates are sufficient to cope with rising costs and, given that this has been referred to the Henry Review, will the Government have any plans to increase the rates in the future?

JULIA GILLARD: Obviously the Henry Review is looking at all aspects of our tax and transfer system, but the changes we made to student income support in this Budget are very significant. We made changes to better target support to those students who need it the most. We made changes to create a new Relocation Scholarship and the new Student Startup Scholarship, to help students with those costs at the start of an academic year, and to particularly help those students who need to leave home to study.

We have made some changes about the way part time work and student income support work together, so that students are able to earn more from part time work and still enjoy student income support. We thought that was an important change. On the question of the rate, that will be part of what is worked through in the Henry Review.

JOURNALIST: Minister, more broadly on the Budget; changes to employee share schemes. Hasn't that now created massive confusion across workplaces across the country? You've said you're now going to review the changes, but companies don't know where they stand.

JULIA GILLARD: My colleague, Chris Bowen, the Assistant Treasurer, will be consulting with companies and with those in the employee share ownership arena for the best way of implementing these changes. The purpose of these changes is clear; we obviously understand that many working Australians do want

to participate in employee share ownership scheme. However the evidence is fairly clear that the benefits have been most large at the upper income end, and consequently the Government moved, in the Budget, to address that. Issues have been raised about implementation and those issues will be worked through in a consultative way.

JOURNALIST: But Minister, was it a mistake, and if it was, how are you going to fix it?

JULIA GILLARD: I think the best way of ensuring any reform works is to consult with those most affected, so that when it's implemented, the implementation has been got right. That's what my colleague, Chris Bowen, will be doing.

JOURNALIST: So would you support a \$50 000 or \$60 000 threshold?

JULIA GILLARD: My colleague, Chris Bowen, is obviously going to be consulting and working on the implementation of the changes, so we will wait to hear back from those consultations. The measure in the Budget was clear; the policy intent of it was clear and Chris Bowen will now consult on the implementation of it.

JOURNALIST: A lot of students feel like they've had the rug pulled out from under them as a result of the changes to the workplace eligibility criteria for Youth Allowance. Would you consider changing the transition time for which these changes occur?

JULIA GILLARD: I think we need to be very clear about this. The Government announced on Budget Night, a new system of student income support, which is better targeted, will benefit more students, and will increase the amount of benefits enjoyed by many students.

The Bradley Review of Higher Education said to us, very clearly, that there was a problem with some very high wealth families, people who earn more than \$300 000 a year, very high wealth families, getting student income support, and the Bradley Review asked us to make changes that would better direct that support to the students who most need it, so the Government's changes are there for people to see; they're there because we want to direct student income support to students who need it the most.

We've made two very important, beneficial changes. We've increased the number of families and range of family incomes where people can get support. We'll bring the age of independence down from 25 to 22, and we have tightened up the work test.

Now, I note the Opposition Shadow Minister, Chris Pyne, and others are now out, playing an opportunistic game about this. On the one hand, Malcolm Turnbull, as leader of the Liberal Party in Canberra, rails against debt and deficit and says that the Opposition will pass the Government's Budget measures, apart from the private health insurance measure. On the other hand, Christopher Pyne is going around the country, promising all things to all people. There's a day of reckoning for Christopher Pyne.

This is a cost neutral reform, and if Christopher Pyne wants to change one part of it, then he needs to explain who is going to bear the burden of those cuts or he needs to own up and say he's going to blow the Budget, and if Christopher Pyne is going to blow the Budget, then the whole of the Liberal Party needs to explain how that can be possible in this system, with Malcolm Turnbull railing against debt and deficit. This is the same kind of political opportunism we're used to from the Liberal Party, where they say one thing in Canberra and one thing to local communities. It's quite clear that this is a cost neutral package. If Christopher Pyne wants to change it, who's going to get cut or is he going to blow the Budget?

JOURNALIST: So that's a no, the Government won't consider changing the state of its workplace criteria in order to ensure that no student who has deferred this year, but is actually (inaudible) Youth Allowance, won't miss out?

JULIA GILLARD: This is a cost neutral package that has been deliberately designed to put Government dollars towards families with income ranges where they do need assistance; to put Government dollars into changing the independence age; to put Government dollars into Relocation Scholarships and Student Startup Scholarships. We obviously believe it's the right package; that's why we introduced it in the Budget.

JOURNALIST: So, Minister, the complaints we're hearing are all from the rural areas where it's most going to bite. What's your message to them? Is it to say this is going to benefit more of the poorer students and, therefore, you've just got to live with it?

JULIA GILLARD: I don't accept the premise of your question, and I think the premise of your question is, as the result of a lot of scare mongering that's gone on from the Liberal Party in particular; the Liberal Party's been out in regional communities, pretending the only change in this package is the change to the work test for eligibility. Of course that's not the only change.

We've made some big differences in this package, to the range of families that can get student income support. We've made a big difference in this package with new scholarship arrangements. We've made a big difference with the commitment to change the age of independence. Now if you look at your ABS statistics, then they will generally tell you that rural and regional Australians tend to earn less income than big city Australians.

A package that better targets people who earn less income is a package that will therefore benefit rural and regional Australia, and overall, our Budget package for higher education is about growth. It's about diversity, it's about students from low SES backgrounds and that's very good news for regional universities, right around the country.

JOURNALIST: Just on what the Government's asking universities to do out of this Budget; you're asking universities to expand enrolments and you're asking universities to improve quality and you've backed that up with some improvement in funding, including indexation which they've long been looking for, but VCs at universities and commentators say that the money in the Budget is only going to stop the rot of the previous years and there isn't enough there for them to actually deliver the outcomes that you're after, in terms of maintaining quality and improving it as you expand. What would you say to that?

JULIA GILLARD: I'd say, firstly, this is a package that has received broad support from Australia's universities. It's received broad support because they understand this package has been delivered in circumstances where the global recession has wiped more than \$200 billion out of Government revenue, but even in the days of the global recession, we've been prepared to say we will invest \$5.7 billion more in our higher education and innovation systems, and this is a package that sets universities up for a better future; sets universities up with the incentive for growth; sets universities with an incentive to reach out to poorer families and Australians from disadvantaged backgrounds and seeks to bring them through, into higher education; with indexation arrangements, which means universities won't constantly watch the value of the dollars in the institution being corroded; with better support for research and with new quality arrangements and performance funding.

It's a package for growth, a package for opportunity, and one that we've delivered deliberately for the four years of the forward estimates and the years beyond, so that in 2020 and 2025, universities in this country will be stronger as a result of this package, arising from the Bradley Review.

JOURNALIST: To get those 2020 and 2025 targets, are we going to need another package in four years to improve the capacity of universities to meet those targets? Is this just a holding operation?

JULIA GILLARD: What you see in this package is, of course, revenue streams that will grow. You're seeing in this package, indexation; obviously that's a revenue stream that will grow and I displayed that during the course of my speech today. With our extra funding going into universities, with the funding there to support growth, that will make a considerable difference and we will be working with universities around the country to embrace this new vision of the future. It's a vision with more Australians getting the benefit of higher education, more Australians from disadvantaged backgrounds getting an opportunity to go to higher education, and better quality in our universities.

JOURNALIST: But are we going to get a second stage, do you think?

JULIA GILLARD: The \$5.7 billion package is there. That's a substantial amount of money and a substantial new investment and, as you would have seen when I talk today, a substantial difference in terms of the percentage of our national income going into higher education.

JOURNALIST: Ms Gillard, if you were a student at university living out of home, do you think you could survive (inaudible) a fortnight on Youth Allowance?

JULIA GILLARD: I was once a student at university, living out of home, in two cities, in Adelaide and then in Melbourne. I certainly remember moving to Melbourne and being shocked by the cold. They were days when it used to rain....

(TRANSMISSION BREAK)

JULIA GILLARD: ...competitive banking arrangements. Last one.

JOURNALIST: Just up the road, the NTEU is having a rally and there's a state wide strike (inaudible). You've announced, in the Budget, you've given the universities some certainty about future funding, but still, it's got to the point where industrial action to resolve a wage dispute that's already started elsewhere in the country. What would be your message to the universities in regards to that?

JULIA GILLARD: My message to the universities is no more or no less than this; we trust universities to get on with the business of managing their universities. Our approach is a completely different one from the former government. The former government tied funding to Work Choices in universities. It was on a path to take the power away from Vice Chancellors and university managers, and force extreme industrial relations into our universities.

We've set up a decent workplace relations system for everyone. We expect everyone in that workplace relations system to be co-operative, and to engage in good faith bargaining. We trust universities to get on with the job. We aren't going to micro-manage workplace relations for them, and we aren't going to impose our agendas on them. We are going to have them work within our new system, which is a system that's fair to working Australians, and a system that is better for business in that it's more streamlined and comes with less red tape. Thank you very much.

http://www.deewr.gov.au/Ministers/Gillard/Media/Transcripts/Pages/Article_090521_163431.aspx

Parents put on the heat over Youth Allowance

The Canberra Times
May 21 2009

The Federal Government's plans to cut Youth Allowance for 30,000 students seeking financial independence next year will be referred to a Senate inquiry as the Opposition and Greens threaten to block crucial Government budget savings worth \$1.8billion.

Federal Education Minister Julia Gillard faced intense pressure on the issue yesterday, taking talk-back calls from agitated parents who said the changes would prevent their children from ever pursuing a university degree as well as students who were distraught they would not be able to qualify despite having deferred their studies until next year.

Last Tuesday's budget revealed a plan by the Government to make \$1.8billion in savings by reducing the options for students who want to claim the independent rate of Youth Allowance.

From January 2010, students will no longer be able to claim independence after working 15 hours per week for two years or earn \$20,000 in 18 months.

<http://www.canberratimes.com.au/news/local/news/general/parents-put-on-the-heat-over-youth-allowance/1519047.aspx>

Senator wants student fees for sport only

ABC: The World Today
May 19 2009

PETER CAVE: The Labor Party's lack of numbers in the Senate may yet prove to be a headache for universities.

The National's Senate leader Barnaby Joyce is threatening to block the plan to reintroduce student services fees, unless universities are restricted to spending the money on sport.

Senator Joyce says the fees are open to abuse from university clubs which are a front for political activity.

Simon Lauder reports.

SIMON LAUDER: The Federal Government says the Coalition's introduction of voluntary university student union fees left universities \$170-million worse off.

It's trying to reintroduce compulsory student fees, but the Nationals Senate leader Barnaby Joyce says some of the money could end up in the hands of student activists.

BARNABY JOYCE: There's nothing to stop those with a political bent setting up a club or setting up an institution and using that as a mechanism of sort of ciphering funds to themselves.

SIMON LAUDER: When it was in Government the Coalition made student fees voluntary because too much money was going to student unions with a political bent.

Labor's Student Services and Amenities Bill would allow universities to charge up to \$250 a year for student services, including things like food, sport, clubs, child care and health care.

But it has guidelines attached to make sure the money isn't being spent on political campaigning, and universities would have to strictly administer the funds.

But Senator Barnaby Joyce says there's only one safe way to make sure the student fees are spent on activities which are open to anyone. He wants the bill amended so the fees can only be spent on sport.

BARNABY JOYCE: Soccer, rugby, cricket, netball are directed at the greatest possible participation with no exclusion to anybody else.

SIMON LAUDER: But if it's a compulsory fee, shouldn't the benefit of it be more general than sport?

BARNABY JOYCE: Well, it is general. There is no exclusion from anybody who wishes to play sport - it's quite open to them.

SIMON LAUDER: Senator Joyce went against his Coalition colleagues to vote against the bill that made student fees voluntary in the first place. His objection to the plan to make them compulsory again raises the prospect of another Senate fight for the Government.

Family First Senator Steve Fielding seems unlikely to give the Government his support.

STEVE FIELDING: Family First voted for voluntary student unionism last time the decision came up. Now all of a sudden the Rudd Government's saying, "Look, this is different to that".

And this is just a straight tax on students, now I'm not so sure that's the right thing to be doing in a global financial crisis when students are already under financial pressure.

SIMON LAUDER: The deputy vice chancellor of the University of Western Sydney, Professor John Ingleson, says campus services have struggled since the introduction of voluntary fees.

Professor Ingleson says he doesn't believe the new system would be open to abuse.

JOHN INGLESON: So we'll be in a position to ensure that the expenditure is on the broad range of student services.

SIMON LAUDER: Would it be acceptable to have Barnaby Joyce's compromise, which is that the money could only be spent on sporting facilities?

JOHN INGLESON: No, I don't think it is. I think that is a ridiculous compromise, because sporting facilities is fine - we do need sporting facilities, and students do need sport - but there's a whole range of facilities students need, of which sport is just one part of it. And most of which universities can't currently afford.

SIMON LAUDER: The chief executive of the group Universities Australia Glen Withers says universities need to be able to spend student fees on much more than just sport, but he's concerned it could come down to a game of political football.

GLEN WITHERS: The situation of the Senate, of course, is so finely balanced so it depends crucially on several independents and the possibility of some senators such as Senator Joyce playing a role in the Government's legislation.

We'd be very keen that he did support this legislation as well as those independents. But the balance of the Senate is such that yes, things can become political footballs, rather independently of the merits of what's going forward. There's all sorts of other agendas for which what is being debated can then be sidetracked and pursued apart from their intrinsic benefits to the country.

PETER CAVE: The chief executive of Universities Australia, Dr Glen Withers; he was speaking to Simon Lauder.

<http://www.abc.net.au/worldtoday/content/2008/s2574764.htm>

Interview transcript: The Hon Julia Gillard MP

ABC Statewide
May 19 2009

ISSUES: Student income support reforms, BER

KATHY BEDFORD: Federal Education Minister, Julia Gillard. Good afternoon, Minister.

JULIA GILLARD: Good afternoon, Kathy.

KATHY BEDFORD: Are you surprised by the reaction to this budgetary measure?

JULIA GILLARD: Well, I think there's a lot of misinformation out there, Kathy, and I'd like an opportunity to try and sort that out if I could. There are three ways in which people become eligible for student income support.

Number one, they become eligible because their family income sits within the eligibility criteria. And what we've done in this Budget is change the family income levels so it is much more generous and many more families will qualify. And to just give you a flavour of that, Kathy, if you were a family with two kids and those two kids had to live away from home to study, we've changed the family income eligibility so you would still be eligible for some support if you were earning almost \$140 000.

KATHY BEDFORD: But it starts at \$42 000 doesn't it?

JULIA GILLARD: Yes, whereas now, if I could just finish that sentence, you would still be eligible for some support if you were earning up to \$140 000, whereas now, you would cut out of eligibility at around \$75 000.

KATHY BEDFORD: But the start point to get the full amount for one student, you've got to be earning less than \$42 000?

JULIA GILLARD: That's right and at the moment, before we made this change, it was less than \$32 000.

KATHY BEDFORD: There's an SMS here. It just says is there anyone out there who earns \$45 000 and can afford to pay their mortgage, pay their bills, and send a child to uni? Then I'd like to meet them.

JULIA GILLARD: Well Kathy, can I just answer that question and can I just keep explaining, because I do think there's a lot of misinformation out here. Kathy, currently, if you were a family and on the family income test you wanted your student child to get the full rate of income support, you'd have to earn less than \$32 000. We are changing that so that the thresholds aligned with our Family Tax Benefit scale, which means you get full benefit with a family income of \$42 500 and you continue to get some benefit up to the income ranges that I've talked about. So this is a broadening of eligibility, based on family income. More students will get money as a result of their family income tests than before.

And Kathy, number two, the second way; so three ways people qualify for student income support; on their family income and we have relaxed that test so more families will qualify. Number two, people qualify because of their age. They are seen to be independent at a certain age. That age at the moment is 25. We are going to progressively bring that down to 22, so the second principal way people qualify for student income support, we have made easier.

Then, the third way that people qualify for student income support is that they demonstrate that they have become independent of the family income through their own work and we have tightened that up. And why did we do that? Because the Bradley Review into universities told us that the current tests for proving you were being independent because you had worked, yourself, had been misused and that benefits were flowing to people in upper income ranges, and we, of course, want Government dollars to go to support people in more need and in the lower income ranges.

KATHY BEDFORD: Okay, let's look at that.

JULIA GILLARD: If you add it all up, if I can just finish, if you add it all up, what's the outcome of our system? Well, next year almost 70 000 students who would not have got any benefit under the current system will get a benefit because of the changes. Almost 70 000 more, that's a lot of people and in addition to that, almost 35 000 more will get an increased level of benefit. So we're talking about more students receiving assistance, many students receiving more assistance in dollar terms than they otherwise would have, as a result of these changes. Family income testing has been relaxed, so more families qualify. The age of independence is being brought down, so more people will qualify and yes, there has been a change on the work criteria, but that was because of evidence that the work criteria system currently in operation wasn't benefitting those most in need. In addition to these, and let's get all the information out on the table...

KATHY BEDFORD: I think you have, pretty clearly, worked through the three key changes; let's examine them.

JULIA GILLARD: There's also two scholarship arrangements in play. One, a scholarship arrangement for kids who have to move in order to study, giving them \$4000 in the first year and then \$1000 each year after that; and then for everybody who qualifies for student income support, there's a Student Start-up Scholarship of \$2254. So there are these entitlements there, which will make a difference to kids at the start of the year, when they bear a lot of costs, and will make a particular difference to students who need to move in order to take up their places.

KATHY BEDFORD: Okay. Let's look at, first of all, the criteria to qualify for any Youth Allowance. There's nothing taken into account there that it costs an extra \$20 000 if you're relocating a child from a rural or regional area to a city campus.

JULIA GILLARD: What we've done here, obviously, is made sure more people qualify for income support, so we think that's a good move. I'd rather have more kids from regional Australia qualify for income support than less kids, that's why we've moved the system so that almost 70 000 extra students are going to qualify. Second, I understand that people need assistance with the costs of moving, which is why we have the Relocation Scholarship arrangements there to help people with those costs, including the \$4000 in the first year, when they move and they're needing to set up a new residence and those sorts of things.

KATHY BEDFORD: Okay. If you're suggesting, or the study that you've commissioned suggests, that your working families are rorting the system by kids going out and working a year to qualify for Youth Allowance; if students do still want to rort the system and do it for two years...

JULIA GILLARD: They're your words, not mine. They're not the words I use.

KATHY BEDFORD: Abusing the system, was that the expression?

JULIA GILLARD: That's not the words I used either. The Bradley Review said that if you looked at these independent criteria through working, there was evidence of misuse and there was also evidence that disproportionately, money was flowing to people with family incomes in the upper income range.

We take seriously our responsibility to get the Government dollars to the people who need it the most, so we've got here a balanced package of reforms. Three ways of getting Youth Allowance; family income, we've made that a more generous system, more people will qualify. Chronological age, we've made that a more generous system, more people will qualify; and, to balance that, we have tightened up the work test because of the evidence in the Bradley Review.

KATHY BEDFORD: Okay. If more families do want to misuse the system and work to qualify for the Youth Allowance and independent status, you're suggesting now they'll have to work 30 hours per week. Do you appreciate that finding a 30 hour a week job in a rural community, for unskilled young people, will be very difficult?

JULIA GILLARD: I appreciate that this is a tough time for people to be finding jobs. I also appreciate that in the design of this system, what that criteria is there for, is to demonstrate financial independence from families. What that would mean, if you are going to demonstrate financial independence from families, is that you were genuinely financially independent from your family and in order to be financially independent from your family, people are going to need to work full time, or very close to it.

KATHY BEDFORD: So you acknowledge that it is impossible?

JULIA GILLARD: What I would say to many people who are concerned that they thought they might qualify under those independence arrangements and now won't, is that they should look again, very clearly, and we can obviously help people with information here, about the family income test and I think many people who have been told, under the current system, that they aren't eligible for support will find under the new system, because of the more generous income threshold for families, that they will be eligible for support.

KATHY BEDFORD: The greatest level of anger is coming from regional students working this year in a gap year and hoping to take up a uni place next year. You're phasing in the reduced age to reduce independent status; why can't you phase in this measure? Why introduce it from January next year?

JULIA GILLARD: Kathy, I think some of that concern is arising because people are, and this is why I'm very keen to make sure people get the accurate information, is because people are thinking to themselves, the only way I can qualify for Youth Allowance is to meet these work tests and my message is, because of the way we have changed student financing, people need to look again because people who have been told, under the current system, their family earns too much money, may well find, on a proper examination of these changes, that their family now comes within the income thresholds, because we've made the income thresholds so much more generous.

KATHY BEDFORD: But the question was why not phase this in? You're phasing in the reduced age criteria, why do you have to introduce this as soon as January next year?

JULIA GILLARD: This is a balanced set of reforms, more generous in two ways and yes, we've toughened up on the work requirements. We've done that because we take very seriously the need to make sure that every Budget dollar is accounted for and that when we're putting in reform measures like these, we're obviously being prudent with the financing and the money.

And obviously what Denise Bradley and her review team has said to us is that when they've looked at this, they've become concerned that work test eligibility was leading to a circumstance where money

was going to families in upper income ranges, so not in the ranges which we would most want to assist, to make sure that they get to university.

Overall, more people are going to get student financing support, and more people are going to get more money in those circumstances. Can I say to people listening, I think these reforms deserve a good look from people who may, at first instance, have thought that they were going to be disadvantaged.

KATHY BEDFORD: Julia Gillard is with us, the Federal Education Minister. We've got Di on the line, in Shepparton. Good afternoon, Di.

CALLER DI: Hello, how are you?

KATHY BEDFORD: Good. Do you have a question for the Minister?

CALLER DI: I do. I'm just really concerned. You're saying it goes to \$140 000?

JULIA GILLARD: With the income ranges for families, I want to be very careful about this because I don't want to mislead anybody...

CALLER DI: What would be an average combined income for a family?

KATHY BEDFORD: To qualify for the full amount?

CALLER DI: No, just in Australia, what is the average income for a normal family?

KATHY BEDFORD: A working family, let's put it that way.

JULIA GILLARD: Working families come in all shapes and sizes, obviously, but I think you would find, on any of our income statistics, that people who are in over \$150 000 as family income are tending to be at the upper end of the income spectrum; I think that's certainly true.

CALLER DI: But I'm sure from the Census, that all those tests that are done, that you would have an average combined income that you would know. It's probably something between \$80 000 and \$100 000, something around there. I just wonder, if you've got a loan, you've got to pay for food, you've got to clothe your family; we have got one child that's deferred, and she's gone out and found her own job. We've gone to Centrelink; Centrelink have told us for her either to have a child, to go and live with her boyfriend for a 12 month period, or find work and earn \$19 500 in that 18 month period. She's actually gone and done that, she's gone and knocked on doors, with her resume at places that she'd like to work, and I'm very proud of her that she's gone and found her own job, and she's actually got two jobs, working part time to try and afford to go. She's working 48 hours a week and I am absolutely amazed that you would expect a family with three children, I've got one in year 12 now, to be able to afford to send them when it costs \$15 000 to \$20 000 a year per child, to go to uni. There is no way that we can even afford to send one.

JULIA GILLARD: Can I just be clear about this and why I'm being this cautious about the family income range is obviously, it depends on how many dependent children and all the rest of it you've got, but if I can just answer the question in the broad; if you are a family with a household income in the range of \$80 000 to \$100 000 a year, and you have three dependent children, then under our new eligibility criteria, it seems to me your daughter is very likely to be eligible for some support, because we have made the family income test more generous. If you have been a recipient of Family Tax Benefit, then that shows that you are in the income ranges and we would be happy to get very specific information to you. For families with two kids, with say, those two kids away from home studying; for those families, the old system, the system we're getting rid of, cut out support at a family income of around \$75 000. Our system is continuing support up to a family income of almost \$140 000. From what you're saying to me, you have been brought into our eligibility criteria...

KATHY BEDFORD: Unfortunately, Julia Gillard, local news is upon us. If you're happy to stay on the line, we're more than happy to come back to you after local news. On ABC Victoria, it's 5 30.

[LOCAL NEWS]

KATHY BEDFORD: Good afternoon and Julia Gillard, the Minister for Education, has decided that she can stay with us, so that's terrific. We can continue to take your calls, and I know there are a number of people at this time, very keen to get the weather forecast. We've got that lined up for you at 5 minutes to 6 00, so we'll have a weather forecast just a little later in the evening. Back to the Education Minister, and Ms Gillard, thank you so much for staying with us.

JULIA GILLARD: That's fine and I was going to say, if I could, Kathy, obviously for individual families that want to enquire about their circumstances, and might not want to talk about things like family income on the radio, which I can understand, they can ring 1 32 490 and that's an information line about Youth Allowance and Austudy, and people can obviously work through their own personal circumstances on that.

KATHY BEDFORD: Well, we certainly have a board full of callers very willing to talk about this. I just want to ask you if you do acknowledge that declining numbers of country students going on to tertiary studies is becoming a very serious social justice issue?

JULIA GILLARD: Absolutely and that's why we are engaging in a major investment and transformation of Australia's university system. The Bradley Review, which guided this reform and the Budget decisions, will invest \$5.7 billion into university education and innovation over the next four years. What is that all about? Well, it's about better support for universities, more money to assist them with their functioning and it's particularly about ensuring that students from low socio-economic backgrounds, many of whom are students in regional and rural Australia, get a better path into university. Indeed, there are dedicated funds in this package, so that universities will partner and work with out school systems, in order to get students through, to try and correct what is a major social justice issue.

KATHY BEDFORD: And are you confident that your changes, announced in the Budget, don't in any way, even inadvertently, disadvantage regional kids?

JULIA GILLARD: I'm confident this package of changes is better for regional students. It will make more of a difference for regional students. Regional Australia does not tend to be high income Australia. People in regions do it tough and because people in regions do it tough, the more generous family income tests will mean many more of them are eligible for support than otherwise would have been and then there are the Relocation Scholarships and Startup Scholarships to help students, particularly students who have to move to study.

KATHY BEDFORD: Which, of course, you have to qualify for the Youth Allowance to qualify for.

JULIA GILLARD: And more people will.

KATHY BEDFORD: Let's go to Rick in Warrnambool. Your question for the Minister, Rick.

CALLER RICK: Good afternoon, Julia. Sorry, but I think you've got it wrong. The social justice aspect of it for regional areas is, clearly it's not going to fit the criteria. What I'd like to ask is how much assistance would be available for families on say, an average income of \$100 000?

JULIA GILLARD: Families that; once again, I've just got to be careful because obviously families, how many dependent children they have, all of those sorts of things matter.

CALLER RICK: Families with two dependent children, for example; an average family, with an average income.

JULIA GILLARD: Families with two dependent children will qualify for some support under this package, because they would be in the family income test range.

CALLER RICK: Sure, but what is some support?

JULIA GILLARD: They would not have been in the family income test range if we hadn't moved the criteria.

KATHY BEDFORD: But the question is what sort of allowance would they qualify for?

JULIA GILLARD: Look, obviously it changes with family income but they would qualify...

CALLER RICK: I'm giving you an example to answer.

JULIA GILLARD: I'm working through the example with you. Obviously, they would qualify for some student income benefit. They would qualify if they needed to move, for the Relocation Allowance, which is \$4000 in the first year and \$1000 in each of the subsequent years, and they will qualify for the Startup Scholarships, which is in the order of \$2200. In terms of...

CALLER RICK: I believe the Relocation Allowance has also gone down from what it previously was, from ongoing, but that seems to be a lot less than what was previously announced.

JULIA GILLARD: There's the Student Startup Scholarship as well.

CALLER RICK: Do you understand that families in regional areas are reconsidering whether they're able to send children to university because of this, and it's not, as you can probably tell from all the number of people who are calling in today, it's a widespread, major issue for people.

JULIA GILLARD: I would reiterate, I think there's a lot of misinformation out there and I am talking about a system where more people are going to qualify for income support than before and where more people are going to get increased benefits than before. So more people getting support; some people who are getting support now, getting an increased amount of support. So, when you look at the system in terms of numbers of Australians assisted to study, more people will get assistance as a result of these changes.

KATHY BEDFORD: All right. Helen's in Bendigo. Good afternoon, Helen.

CALLER HELEN: Hi. Hello Kathy, how are you?

KATHY BEDFORD: Good. Your question for the Minister?

CALLER HELEN: I'm just a bit despairing. I'm a counsellor and I've had a lot of students and their parents in this week, or last week and this week; the not phasing in, these kids who already had a sense of their future and had put plans in place, who were working on this, you know \$18 000 or whatever it was, that qualified them to have their Youth Allowance that would pay their rent in Melbourne next year. They all feel like the rug's been pulled out from under them. They're very despairing, they're despondent. One mother rang me yesterday; her child that had worked so hard, and had been a cutter previously and had not done this for about six months, was a mess last night. You know, the mother found her with blood everywhere, just totally despairing because the future she had scaffolded herself with, has now been kind of taken away, and her parents earn, probably, around \$100 000. But with a child already at uni that they've paid, they rent for the whole time, encouraged this child to take a gap year. Now that future's all changed. It's too abrupt, it's too abrasive.

JULIA GILLARD: We obviously want to change the system so that more people benefit and I understand that there are people who are anxious. I think, in fact, many people are anxious because they've got part, not all, of the information. One of the things we're trying to do is to make sure that people get all of the information, and on the family income ranges you are talking about there, that is a family that would qualify for some support under the new arrangements, that would not have qualified on the family income test before. Now, obviously to get definitive advice for an individual family, we need them to talk to the information line and go through their circumstances.

KATHY BEDFORD: Minister, what about the simple fact that most university courses can't be deferred for two years, so those kids who were working this year, making the \$18 000 or whatever it was, to qualify for Youth Allowance to go back to university next year, they won't be able to defer for another year?

JULIA GILLARD: Some of them will qualify for benefits now because of the changes...

KATHY BEDFORD: Those who don't, they may lose their university place.

JULIA GILLARD: ...student income changes so, number one. I do want to keep coming back to that; I think part of the misinformation here, is people have proceeded on the assumption that somehow, the only

way someone qualifies for student income support, is through the independent work test. That's not the only way people qualify. Predominantly, people qualify on family income, or they qualify on age of independence and those things have been made more generous. For some students, I acknowledge that there will be a disruption and a change for them here, but we are aiming for a system that is going to assist more students and in a fairer way. We think that is a very important reform.

KATHY BEDFORD: So will you be talking to the universities, encouraging them to change their deferral policy, because a lot of students will need to defer now for two years?

JULIA GILLARD: We're obviously always happy to be talking to universities and to students about their individual circumstances. One of the big conversations we're having with universities at the moment is about our vision for the future of the university system. It's been neglected for a long period of time. Many regional institutions were very fearful about the future; they worried that unless something changed in Federal Government policy, that looking down the track, that their institution may become unviable, or have problems because of the pressures on them. We have now outlined a new vision for the university system, complete with new resources and a very strong future for regional universities. And if you talk to Vice Chancellors of regional universities about our vision for universities; one where there is more money in the system because they are teaching people from lower socio-economic backgrounds, where there is more support for the cost of research, where there is proper indexation of money going into universities, so they don't constantly find they're having to do more with less, where they can uncap the number of places that they can offer students and grow to meet local and community demand. This is a vision of the future that has found favour with regional institutions, who can see themselves growing and thriving as a result of it and strong universities in our regions mean a strong future for those students who want to study in regional Australia.

KATHY BEDFORD: It's my understanding that several of the Vice Chancellors of regional campuses in Victoria have raised concerns about this. James is on the line, in Devenish.

JULIA GILLARD: I think you'll find there's been very strong endorsement from Vice Chancellors and our university system, for the Government's Budget reforms for universities.

KATHY BEDFORD: All right. Perhaps they just had concerns with the criteria that have changed, but James is in Devenish. You're a year 12 student, James? Are you there, James? Good afternoon. Question or a comment for the Minister?

CALLER JAMES: I have a question. The catchcry of the Education Department of Victoria, every child at every opportunity, yet the Government's taking away the opportunity of many country kids, such as myself; it's impossible for me to qualify now, due to the fact that trying to work 30 hours over the two year period, while still going to university. Now, I've got an older sister who's currently at university and for my parents to try to put me through too, they would perhaps struggle to do it, but then I've got another, younger, sister coming up in two years and so it would make it impossible for my parents to put her through university as well. I'd just like to wonder where this 70 000, this magical number of 70 000 people or kids, applying for it come from when country kids are already underrepresented in universities and it will appear that it will just get worse?

JULIA GILLARD: James, I honestly can't agree with the assumptions of your question. There are no magical numbers here. There is the clear modelling of the impact of these changes and we are able to say as a result of these changes, that more students will get income support than otherwise would have and many students who currently get income support will get an increased amount of income support. And that is because we're making the system more generous, in terms of the number of families that qualify, with more generous income thresholds for support. We are changing the system so that the age of independence is going to be reduced and we have obviously been talking on the radio now, for a period, about one of the changes, which is tightening up the way in which people demonstrate that they are independent of the family income and we are saying if people are going to demonstrate that they're independent of the family income, then that would mean that they have worked pretty much full time, more than 30 years a week, for a period. So, more people getting support. Two of the three ways in which people qualify for support having been made more generous than the current system.

KATHY BEDFORD: Minister, we do have a board full of callers with similar questions but I think you've answered the last three calls with the same response, so perhaps we'll just direct people again to that number. 132 490, perhaps find out for yourself what the criteria are and whether or not you do

qualify. While I have you, if I can just go to another matter, the schools' infrastructure fund in the stimulus package; this money was supposed to be for creating local jobs, was it not?

JULIA GILLARD: It certainly is.

KATHY BEDFORD: We're hearing that many smaller schools in regional and rural Victoria have been told that they're getting portable buildings built elsewhere and trucked in. Was that the intent of the fund?

JULIA GILLARD: I'd be happy to speak to those schools but I...

KATHY BEDFORD: Interestingly, the schools aren't prepared to speak out. We've had several anonymous emails sent by principals, and they're not prepared to go on the record because they're fearful of missing out altogether, but if you go to the Education Department's website...

JULIA GILLARD: Can I just unpack all of those assumptions...

KATHY BEDFORD: No. One more thing, if you will let me finish my question. If you go the Education Department's own website, it details there, options for schools of less than 150 enrolments, their option is a relocatable building trucked in.

JULIA GILLARD: Right, Kathy, let me just go through those assumptions. Number one, that principals are somehow afraid to raise issues with the Federal Government. I, today, have been at a forum with around 60 or 70 principals in Melbourne. I've attended a number of those forums. I meet with principals face to face, all the time, from the state, the Catholic and the independent school systems. If anybody wants to speak to me, or speak to my office, or speak to my department, they're more than welcome to do so. I speak to so many principals. I find it odd that anybody would be worried about doing that. I speak to, literally, hundreds of them. I would have spoken to 60 or 70, myself personally, today. Assumption number two that you've made; I have not had it raised with me that any school is having a portable building trucked in. That has not been raised to me.

KATHY BEDFORD: Can I direct you to the Education Department's website Education.vic.gov.au

JULIA GILLARD: And it won't say portable building trucked in.

KATHY BEDFORD: It says relocatable building.

JULIA GILLARD: What is amongst the choices for schools are buildings that do have some prefabricated elements, but they are constructed on site. They are not the kind of portable, transportable buildings that were in schools when I was growing up. But if anybody is concerned about those things, I would certainly direct them; if the easiest thing for them to do is to email they should email ber@deewr, that's the name of my department, I know it's a funny one. BER, Building the Education Revolution at deewr.gov.au; and anybody with concerns about those things, we will work through those concerns. As I say, please don't be afraid to use the email. Don't be afraid to ring. We speak to principals, I speak to principals personally, every day, and I find it offensive, any suggestion that anybody would be discriminated against in any way. I would like people to raise complaints if they've got them.

KATHY BEDFORD: I'm sure you would. I'll just quote form an email that I've received anonymously. Further to your discussion on Building the Education Revolution funding, I would prefer not to be identified on air as I am a recipient of some funds through the BER process and like the schools you discussed on air recently, do not want to bite the hand.

JULIA GILLARD: To the person if they're listening or if there's some way of getting a message back to them. Building the Education Revolution is there, we've got the guidelines for giving funds to people. We want this to be a process where people are engaged. If someone's got a comment or a criticism, my message to them is I would love to hear it. I would prefer to hear it. A good dialogue is fantastic, and no one should worry, in any way, any shape, any form, that somehow they will prejudice their school by raising a concern or a criticism. We're all ears. We want to hear any concern, any criticism people have got. We'll work through it with them and we'll thank them at the end for having raised that concern or criticism.

KATHY BEDFORD: Kelly's on the line, in regional Victoria and doesn't want to be identified any further than just that. Hi Kelly.

CALLER KELLY: Hi, how are you going?

KATHY BEDFORD: Yes, good. You have an issue for the Minister?

CALLER KELLY: I do. We have a recipient of one of these Building the Education Revolution grants. Our concern is that we're basically told that our school will be demolished and replaced by two separate buildings. Our question is, we could spend half the money on improving the school that we already have, rather than build a brand new school. We just don't see the point.

JULIA GILLARD: I'd be happy to work that through, Kelly. Obviously we'd have to have a direct discussion. There are, under the guidelines for the Building the Education Revolution, for primary schools we've got Primary Schools for the 21st Century, which is about major capital works and it is about constructing new buildings, including multipurpose halls and 21st century libraries and new classrooms. Then separately to that we have the National School Pride program which is about smaller scale infrastructure works and repairs. For any school community, we're obviously very keen to work with the school community. I don't know, from what you've said, whether your school's a state school, a Catholic school or an independent school, but we are working with state governments and the Catholic and independent school authorities to roll this program out and as I said, we're very happy to address individual problems and individual circumstances. I would really invite you to get in contact with us and we can see what we can work through.

KATHY BEDFORD: So Minister, what's your advice to the schools who have been told relocatables or nothing?

JULIA GILLARD: Obviously, I need the details of the individual schools, to work it through. If I could invite people, in the first instance, to send an email to that email address and we will work it through from there and please, the message is all ears, happy to hear from people. No one should worry about putting their name or their schools' name on it. We deal with these things every day. I talk to school principals every day. Someone just used the circumstance, biting the hand that feeds them or whatever; I'm really saying to people don't have that on your mind at all. We want to be working with school communities so this all works the way they want it to.

KATHY BEDFORD: Minister, when do the changes, the legislation that will require the changes to the Youth Allowance come before the Federal Parliament?

JULIA GILLARD: They'll be dealt with in the Federal Parliament during this Budget session, so we're not sitting this week, but then we're back for a number of weeks of Parliament in the Budget session and they'll be dealt with in that legislative timeframe.

KATHY BEDFORD: Thank you for joining us this afternoon.

JULIA GILLARD: Thank you Kathy.

http://www.deewr.gov.au/Ministers/Gillard/Media/Transcripts/Pages/Article_090520_163244.aspx

Joyce to back uni fees for sport only

The Age
May 19 2009

CHANGES to allow universities to charge compulsory fees to pay for campus services appear in doubt after Nationals senator Barnaby Joyce said he did not support the legislation in its current form.

The Federal Government has proposed to allow universities to charge students compulsory fees of up to \$250 a year to cover non-academic services such as sporting activities, health clinics and counselling.

The move aims to restore services lost from campuses as a result of the Howard government's voluntary student unionism laws.

With the Coalition vowing to oppose the changes in the Senate, Labor needs seven additional votes to get the bill through the upper house.

The five Green senators and independent Nick Xenophon are expected to support the changes, but Labor needs one more vote — from Senator Joyce or Family First's Steve Fielding.

Senator Fielding, who voted for the Howard government laws in 2005, hinted he was unlikely to support the changes.

Senator Joyce, who crossed the floor to vote against the Howard government changes, said he would propose an amendment to prevent the fee being passed to student organisations, and to restrict it to sport.

"A university should have a capacity to cover the cost of things in its precinct pertaining to sport," he said.

<http://www.theage.com.au/national/joyce-to-back-uni-fees-for-sport-only-20090518-bcqx.html>

Unis call Joyce a bad sport over funding

Brisbane Times
May 19 2009

BARNABY JOYCE has alarmed cash-strapped universities by saying he would only support a compulsory fee for students if it was restricted to funding sport on campus and nothing else.

The announcement by the Nationals senator horrified many universities, which have had to dip into their teaching and learning budgets to prop up campus services.

They are urging him to think again before next month's Senate vote on the introduction of a student services fee.

Since the Howard government abolished compulsory student union fees in 2006 campus sporting and social services have atrophied.

The acting vice-chancellor of the University of Sydney, Professor Don Nutbeam, said the university had subsidised student services by \$30 million since compulsory fees were scrapped.

"These scarce funds have been diverted reluctantly from core teaching and research activities and a commitment of that size cannot be continued indefinitely," he said.

The Federal Government has legislated to introduce a maximum \$250 fee, collectable from July 1. Unlike the old student union fee, it could not fund political activity and would be given to university administrations, not student unions, to administer.

In 2006 the Family First senator, Steve Fielding, voted to abolish compulsory fees while Senator Joyce crossed the floor because of the impact it would have on regional campuses.

Senator Joyce and some fellow Nationals had been expected to break ranks with the Liberals this time and support Labor's bill. Labor even delayed the vote beyond the Queensland election in March to facilitate Senator Joyce's actions.

However, Senator Joyce, a Queensland, told the Herald yesterday that he would support the bill only if the fees funded sport and no other services.

He said universities were not just learning factories but had a role to "develop the person as a whole". Sport was sufficient to achieve this, he said.

"The primary mechanism of social introduction is sport. It makes Bill Smith kick the ball to Mohammed who kicks it to Deepak," Senator Joyce said. "Every time we talk about something else, it has the capacity to grow into something political."

The Minister for Youth and Sport, Kate Ellis, said Senator Joyce's demands were unacceptable because other services such as health, child care and legal assistance were of equal importance.

The Liberals will not budge. Senator Fielding, although undecided, said he was worried about the pressure a new fee would have on students who were already feeling the pinch.

The chief executive of Australian University Sport (AUS), Don Knapp, said he appreciated Senator Joyce's concern but other campus services were equally important. "It's the philosophical position of AUS that a range of student services are essential components of a full life education."

Dr Glenn Withers of Universities Australia said counselling, health services and employment referrals would be in great demand over the next one to two years, especially on regional campuses.

"Sport is important regionally and in metropolitan areas, but so are support services. We hope that the Nationals senators who previously indicated their strong support for this sort of legislation wouldn't impose conditions that block it, because we need it crucially."

<http://www.brisbanetimes.com.au/national/unis-call-joyce-a-bad-sport-over-funding-20090518-bcp1.html>

Billions more for universities - but when?

University World News
May 17 2009

Before the government handed down its budget last week, its spin-merchants had convinced the nation's higher education leaders they could expect little. So when the money appeared to be gushing towards them last Tuesday they were overjoyed and only later did they realise it would be years before they saw the flood of cash - if then.

The second budget to be presented by the Labor Party since it took office in November 2007 promised additional spending of more than \$5 billion (US\$3.8 billion) to expand student numbers and boost research. The first \$2.6 billion will be allocated to university and vocational college infrastructure, with additional money flowing to counter the effects of inflation on university budgets and to meet more of the indirect costs of research.

By opening the floodgates to prevent Australia collapsing into a full-scale recession and an unemployment rate in double figures, the government will build up a deficit of \$57 billion over the next two years. Part of its new commitments to higher education follow on from a review of universities it commissioned last year that called for an additional \$6 billion to be allocated.

In response to this and its promise of an "education revolution" in universities and schools before the 2007 election, the government will provide almost \$500 million to increase university enrolments by 50,000 and another \$400 million to help universities prepare for a new deregulated environment where they will be required to target student numbers according to demand.

More than \$100 million will also go to encourage universities to form closer links with schools and increase the proportion of students from impoverished backgrounds.

The reaction from the higher education community to this apparent largesse was ecstatic and unprecedented, at least since the days of the last big-spending Labor government in the early 1990s.

"Universities Australia applauds the government for delivering real outcomes for Australia through the university sector," declared the chief executive of the vice-chancellors' organisation, Dr Glenn Withers. "The government has acted responsibly and in the nation's interest by increasing funding for teaching and learning with improved indexation from 2012, which will ensure teaching quality is maintained and enhanced."

The Group of Eight research intensive universities were likewise gratified, saying, "The Rudd government has recognised the importance of investment in higher education and university research to stimulate and sustain economic growth. A number of well-directed budget initiatives will underpin excellence and concentration in university research, enlarge access and equity in higher education, promote structural change and lift Australia's competitiveness."

Education unions joined the chorus with National Tertiary Education Union President Dr Carolyn Allport similarly welcoming the budget outcomes: "Universities will be better placed to provide a quality education for the next generation of highly skilled workers, a critical part of the nation building agenda. It means the Australian economy will reap the rewards of increased investment in higher education," Allport said.

The devil, of course, was in the detail and the greater part of the \$5.3 billion will only come on stream over the next four to six years. Increases in funding to meet some of the indirect costs of research, including equipment and salaries, for example, will not appear until 2014 while additional spending to make up for inflation rises will be three years away.

By the end of last week, the realisation began to sink in that these timelines meant a different government could be in power or that grim financial conditions might not evaporate as quickly as the government had forecast. Vice-chancellors began noting sadly that their ever-rising reliance on fees from foreign students to support their operations would continue well into the future.

As University of Melbourne Vice-chancellor Professor Glyn Davis told reporters, "The move towards full funding by research by 2014 is an important initiative although it will be some years before universities feel its full impact. Likewise, much-needed indexation for salaries is very welcome although it will not take effect until 2012..."

Postgraduate students acclaimed the increase in the stipend rate for those lucky enough to receive a government scholarship. The Council of Postgraduate Associations described this as "an important step toward ensuring the sustainability of Australia's capacity for innovation and for Australia's universities".

But, as Dr Rebecca Smith writes in our Research and Commentary section in this issue, PhD students have been forced to live below the poverty line for years and the increases the government has promised will not change that. "A \$22,500 a year PhD stipend (tax-free) is not an adequate financial inducement for talented students who could earn double that amount, and more, by entering the workforce directly after their bachelor's degree," Dr Smith writes.

<http://www.universityworldnews.com/article.php?story=20090515110900825>

First ever online Youth Budget Statement

Media Release: The Hon Kate Ellis MP
May 15 2009

Minister for Youth, Kate Ellis, today released *What's in it for Youth?*, the first ever online Youth Budget Statement.

This innovative online tool provides information on the range of Budget initiatives which impact on and are of interest to young Australians.

Ms Ellis said: "The Government is in the business of creating and supporting jobs, apprenticeships and training – now and for the future. We are also creating the nation building infrastructure that we will need for tomorrow's economy while creating jobs for today – including for young people.

"The \$277 million Compact with Young Australians will keep young people at school or engaged in further education and training and will prevent many from experiencing long-term unemployment.

"The \$5.7 billion investment in higher education and innovation, and \$3.8 billion support for apprenticeships and traineeships will secure the jobs of the future and long-term prosperity.

'Reforms to the Government's \$618 million investment in youth transitions and careers programs will create a stronger safety net for young people.

"These important measures will ensure that all young Australians can participate in our nation's economic future."

There are many other diverse areas across the Budget relevant to young Australians, ranging from clean energy to high speed broadband to paid parental leave – an idea discussed at the Youth 2020 Summit last year.

As part of the Youth Budget Statement, Treasurer Wayne Swan and Minister Ellis also provided online videos to outline the key priorities for young Australians in the Budget.

The Youth Budget Statement again demonstrates that Government's ongoing commitment to actively seeking out the views of young Australians on the things that matter to them.

What's in it for Youth? is available at www.youth.gov.au.

http://www.deewr.gov.au/Ministers/Ellis/Media/Releases/Pages/Article_090515_154343.aspx

Australia sets up helpline for Indian students after assaults

AFP

May 15 2009

MELBOURNE (AFP) — Authorities in Australia will launch a telephone helpline Friday for Indian students who have been the target of a wave of violent attacks in the southern city of Melbourne.

Victoria state police said the helpline, which will have operators who speak both Hindi and English, had been established after consultation with the local Indian community.

It follows a series of assaults on students from the sub-continent in Australia's second largest city, which the Federation of Indian Students in Australia (FISA) says were at least partially racially motivated.

"Discrimination is always there," FISA president Amit Menghani told AFP.

"Indian students are being targeted and attacked. The level of crime is increasing and it's a concern for the student community."

Police estimate Indians make up 30 percent of robbery victims in Melbourne's western suburbs and set up a community liaison group in January to examine the issue after an armed robbery in a convenience store left an Indian man in a coma.

They have also boosted numbers on a robbery taskforce in Melbourne's western suburbs and are considering sending officers to Indian cities to educate Australia-bound students about how to minimise the risk being attacked.

But police have played down any racial motive for the attacks, saying the Indian students, who often work late shifts to support their studies, were often in the wrong place at the wrong time.

"While Victoria Police acknowledges the Indian community are over-represented as victims, there is no evidence to support Indians are targeted or vilified because of their ethnicity," Inspector Scott Mahony said at the launch of the community liaison group in January.

"Sometimes, it is just a combination of timing and chance.

"A number of offenders are opportunists who take advantage of time, circumstances and opportunity. An example of this is targeting people when they are alone, particularly late at night."

Mahony angered Indian students in February, when he suggested they should not talk loudly in their native language in public or travel around with expensive items such as mp3 players on display.

Menghani said the comments implied Indian students brought the attacks upon themselves and accused police of failing to do enough to curb the assaults.

He was doubtful the helpline would improve the situation.

"It's too little too late," he said. "If someone calls the helpline it means that they've already been attacked.

"If they were really serious they would do something about it when it occurred. The attacks are not just happening in one suburb now, it's all around Melbourne and they're not doing anything about it."

He said Indian students were seen as easy targets for thieves because "we're humble people and we don't carry any weapons".

Menghani predicted Indians would look at studying elsewhere if the attacks continued.

http://www.google.com/hostednews/afp/article/ALeqM5jfaD3h0vzL93mX_2Grz6LqI9Kk_Q

Higher education sector welcomes investment in universities

Transcript: ABC PM
May 13 2009

MARK COLVIN: The Federal Government's used the Budget to release its response to the inquiry into higher education and it's been generally well received.

The Government has announced that it will invest almost \$3 billion in the university sector over the next four years, with the main aim of attracting more young students.

Through the new policies, it's trying to change the shape of higher education by making the background of students more diverse; allowing institutions to specialise; and providing funding for innovation and research.

MICHAEL TURTLE: At Sydney University today, campaigning for the annual student union election was in full swing.

MICHAEL TURTLE: While these students were fighting for a place on the union's board, the Government was out spruiking its new higher education policy, which will see more places at university itself.

JULIA GILLARD: This is a transformation of our university system so that it can lead this nation in the knowledge economy of tomorrow for the jobs of tomorrow, whilst we deliver on providing support for Australian jobs today.

(Hear, hear).

MICHAEL TURTLE: In response to the Bradley Review into Higher Education, the Government has announced it will get rid of the cap on university places, moving to a demand-driven model.

The Budget has almost \$500 million in it to achieve this aim, and it's estimated it will lead to an extra 50,000 students within four years.

The chief executive of Universities Australia, Glenn Withers, thinks it's a good move.

GLENN WITHERS: We don't like the micro-regulation, we don't like the Government telling us exactly how many students to take and what areas. We like to be able to be flexible to adjust on that basis and deliver performance that the Government can judge.

MICHAEL TURTLE: The Government wants many of those new places to be taken by young people from low socio-economic backgrounds; such as regional areas or Indigenous communities.

Many universities already have programs to increase enrolments by those people but more than \$400 million has been allocated to be used as financial rewards for those institutions which can attract and retain them.

The president of the National Union of Students, David Barrow, believes it's an important policy.

DAVID BARROW: Last night's measures in the Budget basically mean that a lot of those students will now be able to go to university, with the new expansion of the Bradley Review expanding the places. It's going to mean that we can make universities, instead of being a bastion of privilege, a bastion of equality.

MICHAEL TURTLE: At the Sydney University union election, a band was playing perhaps a timely song for the day after the Budget.

But the Federal Government clearly believes money can make life at university easier. For years, student groups have been campaigning for changes to the Youth Allowance scheme, and now that's paid off.

The criteria for qualifying for benefits will be relaxed for many people. The age of independence will drop from 25 to 22, and the amount parents and students can earn before benefits are cut, will go up.

Students seem to have welcomed the changes.

STUDENT I: If the Government brought these changes in today, I would almost certainly be able to take some of the hours that I'm working and use that; you know quit one of my jobs and start studying a little more.

STUDENT II: For me personally, just having an extra \$20 to \$30 a week would make a huge difference, it would basically double my income at the moment.

MICHAEL TURTLE: There was also a surprise announcement in the Budget, of scholarships for all students who get income support. There's a start-up scholarship worth more than \$2,000 a year and a relocation scholarship worth \$4,000 for people who have to move away from home for study.

Overall, the president of the National Union of Students, David Barrow, believes students will be much better off because of the changes.

DAVID BARROW: Look we began this campaign in 2005 because there were students who were sleeping at uni, skipping classes because they were working, students who were missing meals. Student poverty was a real issue. And since 2005 it's only got worse.

MICHAEL TURTLE: The higher education sector is getting a huge funding boost. More than half a billion dollars extra will go to universities over the next four years to improve teaching standards, reduce class sizes and enhance research opportunities. Plus there's hundreds of millions of dollars for infrastructure projects as well.

The Federal Government clearly sees education, research and innovation as crucial to the future development of the country. The Treasurer referred repeatedly to "nation-building" in his Budget speech.

And many believe the building blocks, and the builders themselves, will come from within Australia's higher education institutions.

<http://www.abc.net.au/pm/content/2008/s2569686.htm>

Student mix changing in \$5b funds overhaul

Brisbane Times
May 14 2009

THE student profile of Australia's universities will change irrevocably with a \$5.3 billion overhaul of higher education over the next six years.

An extra 50,000 students - particularly from disadvantaged and mature age backgrounds - will start university by 2013 as outlined by the Federal Government .

Many academics predict the pre-eminence of the Universities Admission Index (UAI) as the main means of entering higher education will wane dramatically after course numbers are uncapped in 2012. The UAI is a ranking based on the aggregate of scaled year 12 marks.

Deputy vice-chancellors from 38 Australian institutions met in Canberra yesterday to discuss enrolment strategies.

Under the budget announcement, universities will receive \$325 million for the achievement of the Government's enrolment targets over four years, with estimates of \$1000 extra loading for students from disadvantaged backgrounds by 2012.

A further \$108 million will be handed over in the next four years to develop partnerships with schools and vocational education and training providers, to reach students who might not have otherwise considered higher education.

Universities Australia's chief executive, Glenn Withers, said the targets set by the Government would challenge the sector.

Dr Withers said working harder with disadvantaged students at school to create a pathway for them into higher education had been acknowledged already, but greater importance would be placed on mature-aged students being given recognition for prior knowledge and work experience. Studies with workplace learning components also would increase as institutions formed partnerships with business.

The University of Western Sydney vice-chancellor, Professor Janice Reid, said the UAI obsession needed to end.

"The UAI is a great mass sorting system," she said. "It isn't, however, really a good predictor of a person's capacity to study or complete a degree.

"Universities and schools use it as a measure of prestige and standing. Yet we are all going to have to come to grips that more flexible and discriminatory methods of measurement will be required.

Professor Steven Schwartz, vice-chancellor at Macquarie University, said he would be happy for the reliance on the UAI to end, with other methods used to measure potential for university study.

"The UAI is like the koala, it only exists in Australia," Professor Schwartz said. "The only value it holds is it's cheap."

Professor Denise Bradley, who led the review into higher education last year, said: "I'm pleased to see that the Government has committed itself to implementation of our framework in a very difficult budget environment."

<http://business.brisbanetimes.com.au/business/student-mix-changing-in-5b-funds-overhaul-20090513-b3ep.html>

Higher education budget a flop: Pyne

Sydney Morning Herald
May 13 2009

The federal coalition says university funding announced in the budget is only a third of what the government's own Bradley review recommended.

Opposition education spokesman Christopher Pyne said Labor had promised a revolution in higher education but failed to deliver.

"They have failed to seriously address the concerns held by the sector," Mr Pyne said in a statement.

"The government's claim that they are planting the seeds of future growth by supporting world-class universities is ridiculous."

Mr Pyne said the new funding was "about a third of what the Bradley review recommended".

He criticised Labor for abolishing full-fee places for Australian students and "raiding" the Education Investment Fund to pay for sustainable energy initiatives.

But he's at odds with the country's vice-chancellors and student representatives, who all praised the budget on Tuesday night.

Universities were hoping to receive \$6.5 billion over four years, as recommended by Professor Denise Bradley in December.

Instead they got \$5.3 billion over six years.

ANU vice-chancellor Ian Chubb was "delighted" with that outcome.

Group of Eight chair Alan Robson said the move to fully fund research was "a serious commitment" and Labor should be commended for its overall "long-term vision".

Meanwhile, both undergraduates and postgraduates welcomed increases to student support and stipend rates.

The Rudd government released its official response to the Bradley review on Tuesday night.

The measures contained in the response, called Transforming Australia's Higher Education System, were spelled out in detail in the budget papers.

<http://news.smh.com.au/breaking-news-national/higher-education-budget-a-flop-pyne-20090513-b35b.html>

Universities get big slice of Budget pie

ABC News
May 13 2009

There are some big changes to higher education in the Federal Budget, mainly aimed at attracting more students to universities.

As it came into office, the Rudd Government was promising an Education Revolution. The rhetoric was right, according to those in the sector.

But ultimately the test of the Government's resolve was always going to be how much money it was prepared to commit.

The Bradley Review into Higher Education pointed the way and gave the Government a path to follow if it really wanted to prioritise the issue.

For many months now Education Minister Julia Gillard had been promising to respond to the review in the Budget. It meant Treasurer Wayne Swan's speech to the Parliament was going to be keenly watched by students, educators and administrators.

It seems, on initial impressions at least, the Government has followed the signposts in the Bradley Review and the main players in the higher education sector are pleased with what's been announced.

Universities Australia, the group which represents the country's universities, says "the Government has acted responsibly and in the nation's interest by increasing funding for teaching and learning".

The National Union of Students believes the Budget "puts much-needed cash above and beyond the Bradley Review's modest recommendations for student income support".

So what are the main aspects of the package?

At the heart of it all is a commitment from the Government to increase the number of young people who go to university. To do this it will gradually lift the cap on the number of public university places until there are no restrictions at all. That means institutions will be able to offer a place to all eligible students.

This comes at a cost of \$491 million over four years and, according to the Government, means "universities will be able to pursue diverse missions and better meet student choice, helping to create a higher skilled and more productive workforce".

The Government is predicting this will lead to an extra 50,000 places by 2013.

There's also a hope that many of those places will be filled by people from low socioeconomic backgrounds, who have traditionally had trouble enrolling in a higher education course. These include people from poor backgrounds, regional areas or Indigenous communities.

The Government will offer \$325 million in rewards to universities which are able to attract and retain students from those backgrounds. There'll also be \$108 million for institutions to achieve this goal by building partnerships with schools and local communities.

Many universities have pre-empted this announcement and have already begun programs to attract a diverse range of new students.

Also within the Budget details is one of the most highly-anticipated announcements - changes to the Youth Allowance scheme.

The eligibility criteria have been tightened for students who have worked previously. Now, to be defined as independent, students will need to have worked for at least 30 hours a week for at least 18 months in the previous two years.

But the savings from that change will be passed on to other students who will benefit from some relaxation in the criteria.

The Parental Income Threshold will rise from \$32,800 a year to \$42,559. The age of independence will fall from 25 to 22. And the Personal Income threshold will rise from \$236 to \$400 a fortnight.

These changes will be brought in gradually over the next four years, but it's anticipated more than 100 thousand students will be better off.

The changes have been welcomed by the National Union of Students (NUS).

"After 12 years of nothing from John Howard, students are happy that Labor has made a first step to restoring our underfunded education system even if it will trickle down slowly and is not everything we would have hoped," says the NUS President, David Barrow.

A surprise announcement which will also help struggling students is for new scholarships.

Every person at university on income support will get a Start-up Scholarship worth \$2,254 a year. And for students who have to move away from home, there's a Relocation Scholarship, worth \$4,000 in the first year and \$1,000 in every subsequent year.

More broadly, the Government has also committed almost \$600 million extra over three years to improve the quality of teaching and learning at universities. It's hoped this will help reduce class sizes and fund more research.

It's a positive development, from the educators' point of view. Dr Carolyn Allport from the National Tertiary Education Union says "universities will be better placed to provide a quality education for the next generation of highly skilled workers, a critical part of the nation building agenda".

"It means that the Australian economy will reap the rewards of increased investment in higher education," she says.

The Federal Government clearly sees education, research and innovation as crucial to the future development of the country. Wayne Swan referred repeatedly to "nation-building" in his Budget speech. Many believe the building blocks, and the builders themselves, will come from within Australia's higher education institutions.

The changes announced to university enrolments, student income support and education funding are just part of the solution. Almost \$1 billion from the Education Investment fund will go towards infrastructure and another \$2.5 billion has been committed to research and innovation at universities and other specialist organisations.

The details will be analysed over coming days. But at the moment, the general consensus seems to be that the Education Revolution is heading in the right direction.

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2009/05/13/2568704.htm?section=australia>

2009 Budget outlines education's far horizon

The Australian
May 12 2009

THE Rudd Government is to plough \$5.3 billion into tertiary education and research over the next six years to significantly expand student numbers and boost research, but much of the money will be staged for later years as the government tightens its purse strings.

In a continuance of the government's philosophy in schools, funding increases will be closely linked to performance measures to be overseen by a new regulator, while universities will be encouraged to enrol students from poor backgrounds by a new loading payment worth \$325 million over four years.

In line with the government's focus on stimulating the economy, near term money is to be ploughed into new infrastructure for universities and the vocational sector to the tune of \$2.6 billion over four years with an emphasis on university and science projects.

In a big win for the sector the government has laid out a pathway for increasing recurrent funding for teaching through better indexation and moves to cover the indirect costs of research.

However, much of that money is back ended towards the 2011-12 and 2012-13 years, which means that in the next year or so universities are likely to remain cash-strapped on recurrent funding and reliant on the buoyant international student market. But according to the government it is about "planting the seeds for future growth" once the economy recovers.

"Australia's recovery depends heavily on the quality of our human capital, on our ability to educate our people and to innovate in business," Prime Minister Kevin Rudd said.

"The government is determined to give opportunities for talented Australians to participate in higher education no matter what their background, consistent with the recommendations of the Bradley Review

in our higher education system." Last year's Bradley review recommended a more than \$6 billion funding boost including a more immediate boost to recurrent funding.

<http://www.theaustralian.news.com.au/story/0,24897,25470612-12332,00.html>

University of Southern Queensland wary of inland campus

The Australian
May 13 2009

ANY new national university of inland Australia would have a significant effect on the key distance education model of one of the country's largest distance educators, University of Southern Queensland vice-chancellor Bill Lovegrove said this week.

As backers Charles Sturt and Southern Cross universities opened a tender for a feasibility study of the Bradley review project last week, Professor Lovegrove revealed that USQ had considered but rejected joining the push for the inland university.

The Bradley review recommended that the Government fund an inland university to the tune of \$80 million a year to help reverse entrenched and significant under-representation of rural, remote, poor and indigenous people in higher education.

The \$2 million Charles Sturt and Southern Cross feasibility study calls on the successful tenderer to explore sustainable models for regional delivery, including a special mission regarding distance education and e-learning.

CSU vice-chancellor Ian Goulter has said a condition of Education Minister Julia Gillard's backing for a commonwealth university of regional Australia was that the merger include a third university, but one from outside NSW.

Professor Lovegrove told the HES his university's council had considered joining the joint NSW university push, but had so far rejected it because "there's an absence of compelling reasons to be in it".

"We aren't ruling out (joining the inland university) at this stage," he said. "We are interested in following the feasibility study but wouldn't expect to be part of it. It has implications for us."

Professor Lovegrove said USQ had invested scores of millions of dollars in its distance education operations over the years, to the point where about three-quarters of its students were educated by distance, and almost half of those were overseas students.

"If there was to be a major investment in new capability for a national distance facility our approach to distance education would have to be reconsidered," he said. "All distance educators have different models. We have a model based on the internet and online interaction. If they went the same way, we'd have to work out a new market strategy given the nature of the new competition."

Professor Lovegrove made the comments as his counterpart at Charles Darwin University in Darwin, Barney Glover, called for a new funding model for regional and remote education based on regional Australia's distinct needs. Professor Glover recently spent three days visiting community groups across central and northern Australia, where he discussed his university's role with local stakeholders.

"Staff are spending considerable time chasing funding streams that don't recognise the value of teaching in communities, which our research proves is critical to closing the educational gap," he said.

Their comments come as National Tertiary Education Union data showed Australia's 14 regional universities employed 20,000 staff, who spent about \$1.6 billion in wages and costs locally.

In a separate development, regional Victoria's Deakin University is planning to boost support for and development of its casual or sessional staff, who account for the 23 per cent of its academic workforce.

"They tend to be very focused on teaching rather than a wider academic role," higher education research chairwoman Marcia Devlin said. Deakin was one of eight universities invited to participate in a

national project to develop better qualitative measures of teaching and learning, and chose to concentrate on student engagement.

Professor Devlin's report on her university's experience has just been published in The Journal of Higher Education Policy and Management.

"It's a two-way street: students have to become engaged, but we have to provide an environment conducive to that. Deakin has a history of distance learning and online learning, with a lot of off-campus students. And we know people are less engaged because they are studying at night and they have family responsibilities."

Proposed measurement includes use of the Australian Survey of Student Engagement, an instrument endorsed and recommended by the Bradley review, and developing and refining some of its questions.

<http://www.theaustralian.news.com.au/story/0,24897,25468048-12332,00.html>

Universities thrilled with budget boost

The Age
May 12 2009

Australia's universities might not have got everything they wanted in the budget, but they're pleased enough with the package for the Group of Eight to label it "visionary".

Universities were hoping to receive \$6.5 billion over four years in this year's budget, as recommended by the Bradley review into higher education.

Instead the entire sector will share \$5.7 billion.

ANU vice-chancellor Ian Chubb says he's "delighted" with that outcome.

"Grumblers will say there should have been more, but let's be realistic here," Prof Chubb said.

"An investment of more than \$5 billion in higher education and research is to be celebrated."

In particular, Prof Chubb welcomed performance-based funding and a move towards funding the full cost of research, at \$512 million.

That call was echoed by Group of Eight chair Alan Robson.

"A serious commitment to move progressively to cover each university's indirect research costs ... is vital to the quality and competitiveness of Australia's universities," he said.

The federal government also increased the indexation rate for universities to cover teaching, learning and research costs.

That will involve spending \$578 million over three years from 2011.

Universities Australia chief executive Glenn Withers said that would "ensure teaching is maintained and enhanced".

Students have got what they wanted - increased access to income support.

The parental income threshold will jump from \$32,800 to \$42,559 next year.

The age of independence will be progressively lowered from 25 to 22 by 2012, and a new start-up scholarship means those on support will receive \$2,254 for education costs.

Country students will get a new relocation allowance of \$4,000 in their first year at university and \$1,000 each year after that.

Students will also be able to earn \$400 a fortnight from 2011 before losing benefits, up from \$236.

But it's not all good news for students.

The government is tightening the criteria to prove independence.

In the past, students who worked 15 hours per week part-time or earned \$20,000 over 18 months qualified for support.

From 2010, they'll need to work full-time for at least 30 hours a week.

Postgraduates have done well too.

Council of Australian Postgraduate Associations president Nigel Palmer said extending access to Youth Allowance and Austudy to 40,000 postgraduate students was a great result.

An increase to the stipend rate for postgraduate award holders was also a plus, he said.

"This budget will be welcomed by Australia's quarter of a million postgraduate students and it contains reforms that are long overdue."

Labor has also put money behind key structural changes announced earlier this year.

Uncapping student places from 2012 will cost \$491 million.

Then there's \$57 million over four years to establish a national regulatory agency to oversee the new deregulated system, and \$437 million over four years to help meet the goal of enrolling an additional 55,000 students from disadvantaged backgrounds by 2020.

As expected, there's big dollars for buildings too.

Successful projects from round two of the Education Investment Fund (EIF) will receive \$934 million over four years.

A further \$750 million will be set aside for future rounds.

A sustainability round of the EIF will see \$650 million go to clean energy and climate change research infrastructure.

While the funding is more staggered than Bradley suggested, universities know that they've done well in tough economic times.

"In a difficult budgetary environment ... (Labor) is to be commended for its long-term vision and commitment to Australian higher education," Prof Robson said.

<http://news.theage.com.au/breaking-news-national/universities-thrilled-with-budget-boost-20090512-b1rs.html>

More support for students

Media Release: The Hon Kate Ellis MP / The Hon Julia Gillard MP
May 12 2009

In response to the Bradley Review of Australian Higher Education, the Rudd Government has introduced a package of significant reforms to student income support and expanded eligibility for scholarships. These reforms are cost neutral over the next four years.

In these difficult economic times, the Government understands the importance of supporting young people to enhance their skills for the future.

A key aim of the Government's Education Revolution is to raise the aspirations of students who would previously never have considered going to university.

To support participation in higher education, particularly amongst low SES students, the Government will reform the student income support system to better target and boost the level of assistance to those in need.

These reforms will increase access to student income support and provide stronger and more equitable assistance for the students who need it most.

To increase access to income support, the parental income test for dependants under Youth Allowance and ABSTUDY will be increased from \$32 800 to \$42 559 (for 2009-10). This aligns the income test with the maximum rate of Family Tax Benefit Part A.

In 2010 this measure is expected to benefit 67 800 new recipients who will now qualify for student income support and a further 34 600 existing recipients who will receive higher payments.

The age of independence for the purposes of receiving student income support will also be progressively lowered from 25 years in 2009 to 22 years in 2012.

In 2010, a new Student Start-up Scholarship of \$2254 will also be introduced to replace the current Commonwealth Education Costs Scholarship.

Unlike the existing Commonwealth Education Costs Scholarship, the Student Start-up Scholarship will be available to all higher education students receiving student income support through Youth Allowance, Austudy and ABSTUDY.

An additional 146 600 university students will receive the Student Start-up Scholarship. Existing Commonwealth Scholarships recipients will be grandfathered.

The Government will also introduce a Relocation Scholarship of \$4000 in the first year of study and \$1000 in later years, to assist eligible university students receiving Youth Allowance or ABSTUDY with the costs of moving for study. This would replace the current Commonwealth Accommodation Scholarship and would support students who need to relocate for study, wherever they live.

This will benefit thousands of dependent students who have to move away from home to study and support disadvantaged independent students who are unable to live in the family home.

These new scholarships will also help ensure students from low income backgrounds have the assistance they need for textbooks and specialised equipment.

Students will no longer need to wait to see whether they have been offered a Commonwealth Scholarship via a university. Instead, they will apply for, and receive, their scholarship through Centrelink.

The package of reforms will also assist students by:

- relaxing the personal income test to \$400 per fortnight and indexing this to cost of living increases so students can earn more from part-time work before their income support payments are reduced - this measure will apply from 1 January 2011
- extending student income support to all masters by coursework programs from 1 January 2012
- relaxing the means testing of equity and merit-based scholarships provided by universities and philanthropic organisations (this means that scholarships awarded by universities, up to the combined value of the Commonwealth Education Costs Scholarship and the Commonwealth Accommodation Scholarship will not affect student income support payments)
- removing the OS HELP loan fee to provide more support to Australian students who study abroad.

As part of these measures, the workforce participation criteria for independence under Youth Allowance and ABSTUDY will be tightened in line with the recommendations of the Bradley Review, which found that 49 per cent of student income support recipients come from families with incomes of more than \$80,000.

Students who have worked full-time for a minimum of 30 hours a week on average for at least 18 months in a two-year period since leaving school will still be considered independent – but students who have undertaken part-time work or earned over \$19 532 over 18 months will not.

This change will ensure that only students who are genuinely independent can receive student income support. The other individual circumstance criteria are not being changed.

http://www.deewr.gov.au/Ministers/Ellis/Media/Releases/Pages/Article_090512_182631.aspx

Student demand to drive university funding

Media Release: The Hon Julia Gillard MP
May 12 2009

The Rudd Government is making an historic change to the way universities are funded.

Through the Education Revolution, the Rudd Government is investing in the jobs of today and the jobs of tomorrow to build a stronger, fairer and more productive Australia in the long term.

From 2012, Australian public universities will be funded on the basis of student demand.

This will enable an additional 50 000 students to commence university studies by 2013 and produce 217,000 additional graduates by 2025.

The Rudd Government will provide Commonwealth supported places for all domestic undergraduate students accepted into an eligible, accredited higher education course with a recognised public higher education provider.

This reform will ensure universities cater to the needs of students and deliver a quality education. Universities will no longer receive funding for places they do not deliver.

The new system will reward universities that are able to attract students.

This will lead to improvements in quality across the board.

To ensure that universities have time to prepare for the new demand-driven system, the current funding floor for universities will be maintained for the years 2009–11. The current cap on over-enrolment will be raised from five to ten per cent from 2010. The cap will be removed in 2012.

The move to a student-centred system is estimated to cost \$490.6 million over the next four years and will result in a substantial increase in student numbers in the higher education sector.

This change is fundamental to the Government's plan to increase the proportion of 25-34 year-old Australians with bachelor level qualifications to 40 per cent by 2025.

The new system will be balanced by a new quality and regulatory agency. In addition the Government will act to support students and universities to undertake and provide studies that are critical to the needs of the economy and that are in the public interest.

The new direction responds to the Bradley Review of Australian Higher Education recommendation that a more student-focused system was necessary to improve the level of higher education attainment of the Australian population.

Through the Education Revolution, the Rudd Government is putting in place the long-term reforms necessary to ensure that the Australia of tomorrow is better educated, higher skilled and more inclusive.

http://www.deewr.gov.au/Ministers/Gillard/Media/Releases/Pages/Article_090512_182600.aspx

Delivering fairer indexation for universities

Media Release: The Hon Julia Gillard MP / Senator The Hon Kim Carr
May 12 2009

The Rudd Government is delivering a fairer indexation rate for Australian universities to help them meet the cost of quality teaching, learning and research.

The new indexation arrangements are one of the most profound reforms in the Rudd Government's higher education package and will result in a significant increase in base funding for higher education providers.

Increased indexation will deliver \$577.5 million over three years from 2011 and continue to grow to provide a sustainable base for higher education over the next decade.

The Bradley Review of Australian Higher Education found that current indexation arrangements were inadequate, making it difficult to maintain the real value of funding, and undermining quality and sustainability.

The new arrangement will provide valuable support to institutions to improve student-to-staff ratios, boosting the quality of learning and providing students with better access to teachers.

It will enable universities to raise the quality of courses, improve facilities, and allocate increased funding for core teaching, learning and research activities.

The new indexation arrangement will help the Rudd Government meet its objectives of ensuring that more students complete their degrees and that 40 per cent of Australians aged between 25 and 34 years have bachelor level qualifications by 2025.

All grants, including teaching, learning and research grants, will be indexed by the new formula from 2012.

In addition, conditional funding will be made in 2011 through facilitation payments to higher education providers who agree to teaching, learning and student engagement targets. The achievement of these targets will continue to be rewarded through a new performance funding stream for the sector from 2012 onwards.

This investment reflects the Rudd Government's commitment to ensure that the sector makes a successful transition to a new student focused system commencing in 2012.

The Rudd Government understands the importance of investing in education for the long term prosperity of the nation.

The Rudd Government has set out a higher education reform agenda that will serve Australia well into the future.

http://www.deewr.gov.au/Ministers/Gillard/Media/Releases/Pages/Article_090512_182748.aspx

A new era for Australian universities

Media Release: The Hon Julia Gillard MP / Senator The Hon Kim Carr
May 12 2009

Building on the Education Revolution, the Rudd Government today announced a \$5.7 billion package over four years to deliver unprecedented reforms across the higher education and innovation sectors in response to the Bradley Review of Australian Higher Education and the Cutler Review of the National Innovation System.

Investing in higher education and innovation is a key part of the Government's Education Revolution and productivity reform agenda. This investment in higher education and innovation is an investment in the

jobs of the future. By investing now, the Government will prepare Australia for growth beyond the global recession with that growth driven by high skilled and environmentally sustainable jobs.

This new era for Australian universities is part of creating a stronger, fairer and more prosperous nation able to compete successfully in the global economy.

These reforms include:

- a move to a student centred system underpinned by a national regulatory and quality agency, which will enable an extra 50,000 new students to commence a degree by 2013;
- substantial resources to promote equity and performance funding tied to quality;
- a landmark increase to university indexation;
- a phased move to addressing the gap in funding for the indirect costs of research;
- major reform to student income support, to better support our most needy students and an increase to postgraduate stipends;
- major investment in higher education, research and VET infrastructure, through the Education Investment Fund totalling \$3.0 billion dollars; and
- additional recurrent funding of \$2.2 billion over the forward estimates for higher education teaching, learning and research.

These reforms represent a transformational change in the way Australian higher education operates and is funded.

The reforms being introduced by the Rudd Government will enable Australia to chart a new economic direction based on excellence in skills and the development of knowledge-centred products and services.

These reforms will drive a greater focus on students and their needs, an increased emphasis on quality teaching and learning and increased participation by students from disadvantaged backgrounds. These changes will allow more Australians, irrespective of their socio-economic circumstances, to access a quality higher education qualification, enabling an additional 55,000 enrolments by students from lower socioeconomic status backgrounds by 2020.

Research funding will be based on quality and transparency, driving excellence across the system and helping universities focus on their areas of research strength.

There will be less red tape and micromanagement for universities and improved facilities for teaching, learning and research.

The Rudd Government understands that by investing in higher education, vocational education and training, and research the nation is investing in the jobs of the future and long term prosperity.

http://www.deewr.gov.au/Ministers/Gillard/Media/Releases/Pages/Article_090512_182815.aspx

Investing in quality teaching

Media Release: The Hon Julia Gillard MP
May 12 2009

There is nothing more important to the quality of our schools, than the quality of our teachers. Teacher quality is the single greatest influence on student engagement and achievement making it critical that university courses are of the highest quality.

The Rudd Government will improve the quality of teaching courses and reduce HELP repayments for students who enter the teaching profession through changes to the way teaching courses are funded.

As recommended in the Bradley Review of Australian Higher Education, the Government will increase the maximum student contribution for education units of study for students who commence in 2010, from the national priority band to Band 1 (currently \$4162 and \$5201 respectively) to better support universities to provide high quality teaching courses.

This measure will deliver an estimated additional \$108 million over four years to universities to encourage them to offer quality teaching courses.

To offset this additional cost for students, the Government's incentives for mathematics and science graduates will be extended to new teacher education graduates who go on to teach, to encourage more students into the teaching profession.

Higher Education Loan Program (HELP) repayments will also be reduced for education graduates (by up to \$1536 per year for 2009-10) to encourage them to take up and remain employed in teaching. This is similar to the Government's approach to mathematics and science graduates.

Students who graduate from education courses from Semester 2, 2009 will be eligible to receive the reduction if they go on to pursue a teaching career. Similar arrangements will also apply to nursing graduates as recommended by the Bradley Review.

A student who starts their education degree in 2010 will have increased student contributions of around \$3,500 over a three year degree. If they take out a HECS HELP loan, this will be the extra that they will borrow. When they start working as a teacher and their income reaches the threshold for making compulsory repayments (\$41 595 currently) they will be able to claim the HELP payment reduction. If their income for a full year's work as a teacher is \$50 000, for example, their repayment will be reduced from around \$2250 to around \$700. For the full period of 260 weeks they can claim, they will save more than \$7500 – making them \$4000 better off.

Taking steps to encourage universities to improve teacher education courses and to encourage students in to teaching, builds on the Government's \$550 million Smarter Schools – Improving Teacher Quality National Partnership.

This important reform targets critical points in the teacher lifecycle to attract, train, place, develop and retain quality teachers and leaders in our schools and classrooms by:

- encouraging the best and brightest graduates into teaching through Teach for Australia
- lifting the quality of teacher training and professional development
- develop and enhancing the skills and knowledge of teachers and school leaders throughout their careers
- building professional pathways for Indigenous people and Indigenous education workers who wish to progress to teaching
- improving reward structures for teachers and leaders who work in disadvantaged, Indigenous, rural/remote and hard-to-staff schools
- empowering principals to better manage schools and achieve improved student results
- improving the quality and availability of teacher workforce data.

This investment in quality teaching recognises the pivotal role of teaching and learning in our schools to the nation's future jobs, competitiveness and productivity.

http://www.deewr.gov.au/Ministers/Gillard/Media/Releases/Pages/Article_090512_182918.aspx

Charles Sturt University gets budget research facility

ABC Rural
May 13th 2009

In a rare bit of good Budget news for agriculture, Charles Sturt University in south west New South Wales will get almost \$35 million for new research facility.

The state-of-the-art science centre at Wagga Wagga will be a hub for agricultural research for south east Australia.

The vice chancellor of CSU, Professor Ian Goulter says it's great news.

"This is a very exciting new teaching and research science complex that ensure Charles Sturt University is at the centre of Australia's efforts to increase food production, manage water more effectively, and

reduce the risks associated with the spread of animal and plant disease through climate change and global trade," he says.

<http://www.abc.net.au/rural/news/content/200905/s2568832.htm>

Rudd Government to introduce paid parental leave

Media Release
10 May 2009

The Rudd Government will deliver an historic Paid Parental Leave (PPL) scheme to support Australian families and prepare Australia for the economic and social challenges of the future.

This government-funded scheme will provide the primary carer with 18 weeks post-natal leave, paid at the adult federal minimum wage (currently \$543.78 per week).

The cost of the scheme - approximately \$260 million per annum - is a vital investment in improved productivity and workforce participation.

The scheme will not commence until 1 January 2011, giving the community and businesses time to prepare.

Paid Parental Leave will be delivered in a responsible and sustainable way which takes into account the impacts of the global recession.

The scheme will come into effect when the economy is expected to be recovering and the economic outlook improved.

To ensure the scheme is delivered in an affordable way, it will not mandate paid paternity leave at this time and employers will not be required to pay superannuation on Paid Parental Leave entitlements.

Currently, Australia is one of just two OECD countries without a national statutory paid parental leave scheme, along with the United States.

This historic Paid Parental Leave scheme will encourage women to stay connected to their jobs.

This will boost workforce participation which will be essential in meeting the economic and social challenges of an ageing Australian population.

Paid Parental Leave will help Australian families find a better balance between work and caring responsibilities and will allow mothers to spend vital time with their newborn babies.

The scheme is a huge step forward for all mothers and especially for low and middle-income earners who generally have less access to employer-funded parental leave schemes.

In 2007, less than one quarter of women on very low wages had access to paid maternity leave, compared to three quarters on high wages.

The government-funded scheme will be based closely on the recommendations of the final report of the Productivity Commission Inquiry into Paid Parental Leave: Support for Parents with Newborn Children, which will be released with the 2009-10 Budget.

However, the scheme will be targeted so that taxpayers' funds go where they are most needed.

To ensure the scheme is responsible and sustainable over the long-term, high income primary carers earning over \$150,000 will not be eligible.

The Baby Bonus and Family Tax Benefits will continue to be available for mums who choose to stay at home. A stay at home mum with a partner on average earnings will continue to receive around \$12,000 in government assistance in the year after the birth of their baby.

However recipients of the Government's Paid Parental Leave scheme will not be eligible to also receive either the Baby Bonus or Family Tax Benefit Part B.

The Rudd Government is proud to work with Australian mothers, families and businesses to meet the challenges of the 21st century.

http://www.deewr.gov.au/Ministers/Gillard/Media/Releases/Pages/Article_090511_082250.aspx

How a university ditched its spoilt-kid image along with its namesake

Brisbane Times
May 11 2009

Twenty years after it opened, Bond University is being aped by some of its critics.

The day Alan Bond opened his eponymous university on the Gold Coast 20 years ago, he was asked why a wealthy entrepreneur who hadn't gone to uni would bankroll a tertiary institution.

"I've always dreamt of starting a university that could take a person such as myself and give them an education which would stop them making the mistakes I've made, without blunting the entrepreneurial nature of the body," Bond replied.

To Bond University's inaugural vice-chancellor, Don Watts, this was the essence of Australia's first private not-for-profit university: an innovative tertiary environment in which ambitious, entrepreneurial people could be educated to be "work-ready".

Modelled on Yale and Harvard, Bond's trimester academic program means students enter the workforce more quickly, and classes are confined to 10 students per teacher. It styles itself as an international university, aiming to gather half of its student population from overseas.

But in the late 1980s the "innovation" of Bond University was controversial. The establishment of Australia's first private university was roundly attacked by academic and student unions, and even some vice-chancellors from public universities.

"One section of the media said this university was never going to have high standards because it was designed for the dumb children of the rich," Watts recalls. "It would never have quality staff because they would never go to an institution that was perceived to be rich. The combination of those factors meant this university would never have credibility."

As it celebrates its 20th anniversary this weekend, Bond claims to have been at the forefront of the changing face of higher education in Australia. Critics have largely been silenced as the venerable sandstone universities ape Bond: offering full-fee paying places, actively recruiting overseas students, introducing accelerated course programs and copying its multimedia facilities.

"I think Bond did really make other universities in Australia sit up and look and listen, and, in many cases, try to emulate us," current vice-chancellor Robert Stable says. "Part of our role is to help drive the agenda for higher education in Australia."

Yet the university's growth has been dogged by its association with Alan Bond. Questions were raised about the notorious businessman's influence on the institution he founded and of which he was a board member. But all ties were severed in the 1990s when Alan Bond went bankrupt and was jailed. The collapse of then-owners Bond Corporation and the Japanese investment group EIE threatened the university's viability.

The university managed to survive, later buying its own land and buildings and is in the black. After Griffith and the University of Southern Queensland also opened campuses on the Gold Coast, education is a big contributor to the local economy.

Enrolments at Bond have grown from a first intake of 322 to 4200. They have been boosted by the extension of the Government's FEE-HELP loan scheme to private students. Overseas students comprise 40

per cent of enrolments, and the university restricts each foreign nationality to 5 per cent of the total student body.

Centre for Independent Studies researcher Andrew Norton says Bond is now a "mid-range" institution.

"The fees are still at the expensive end of the market, despite not having the high prestige names of the older unis," he says. "[Bond] has really had to sell itself as an added-value kind of experience."

Lawyer Derek Corbin, 37, remembers how daunting it was to be one of the first students to enrol. "There were suggestions [Bond] students drove Porsches and dined at fine restaurants ... at other unis they burnt effigies of Alan Bond and there were chants of 'free education now'."

Corbin was more concerned about how graduates would be perceived by employers.

Norton says Bond has a "very good name" among employers, and the Good Universities Guide has given it a five-star rating. One Bond graduate is second-in-charge to Virgin's Richard Branson; Bond law students recently won the international mooted competition at the Hague, and the university is credited with the first use of the word blog (in 1996).

Since becoming vice-chancellor in 2004, Stable has sought to lift Bond's profile and forge stronger links with business. To differentiate itself from public universities, Bond will limit itself to 5000 students.

<http://www.brisbanetimes.com.au/national/how-a-university-ditched-its-spoiltkid-image-along-with-its-namesake-20090510-az7r.html>

Student demand reduces cheap rent options

Adelaide Now

May 11 2009

UNIVERSITY students struggling to find accommodation could reduce affordable housing options in Adelaide.

Real Estate Institute of South Australia president Robin Turner believes the state is not equipped to cope with a predicted surge in university students and country, interstate and overseas pupils will be forced to look outside the CBD and city fringe for accommodation.

"It's all well and good to have a target of how many students you want and we welcome them with open arms but if more student accommodation is not built, it will be a drain on other available properties and that's stretched as it is," he said.

"We already have vacancy rates that are too low to have a good market balance and this problem will be exacerbated by students."

Last year, more than 27,700 international students came to study in SA, with predictions this number could reach 62,000 by 2014. Student Living Australia director Ian Doolette agreed SA would struggle to provide beds for future students.

"There's a lot of negativity from developers; they're thinking, 'What if the student market collapses?', but there needs to be a positive frame of mind," he said.

Toop & Toop managing director Anthony Toop expected "surplus housing not specific to students to be soaked up by the shortage".

Education Adelaide chairman Bill Spurr said 10 student accommodation projects had been completed in the CBD since 2001, housing 1630 students. Public relations university student Brendan Stevens, 23, believes he was "lucky" to find a rental property in Adelaide after moving from Victoria. "The flatmate that I now live with said about 40 students came to have a look at the place in a pretty short time."

Mr Stevens moved from Geelong in November and now rents a property in Mile End.

<http://www.news.com.au/adelaidenow/story/0,22606,25458169-2682,00.html>

Unis Focus of Education Budget but Not Expecting the Earth

The Epoch Times
May 06 2009

CANBERRA—Universities were told not to expect too much in last year's federal budget because the government was waiting on the results of a review it had commissioned into higher education.

Now they've been told they may have to sit tight again, this time because of the global recession.

That's despite Labor's own Bradley review recommending a funding boost of up to \$6.5 billion over the next four years.

Still, higher education will be the focus on budget night, with schools - the big winners last year - taking a back seat.

The states and territories have already agreed to accept \$1.4 billion over four years for government schools.

Private school funding of \$28 billion over four years was secured in December.

In February, the Rudd government announced \$14.7 billion would be spent erecting and upgrading school buildings as part of its second stimulus package.

So universities have every right to expect some love next week.

But how much will they get?

Universities Australia argues the economic downturn is a reason to implement all of the Bradley review's recommendations - not delay them.

A KPMG study it commissioned found injecting \$6.5 billion into the sector would boost Australia's gross domestic product (GDP) by \$40 billion annually within 20 years.

The Bradley review suggested at least \$490 million be injected in 2009/10.

Universities Australia chief executive Glenn Withers is "optimistic" about getting that first instalment.

"In this budget, what we would look to is exactly what Bradley recommended, which is around \$500 million (in 2009/10)," Dr Withers told AAP.

He also hopes there will be up to \$500 million to get the ball rolling on research funding reform.

That's \$1 billion in total.

Not everyone is confident the funds will be forthcoming, but most agree there will be good news on the infrastructure front.

The government doled out \$2.4 billion for building projects last year.

In February, it fast-tracked the second-round applications to the Education Investment Fund.

The successful universities and TAFEs will be announced on Tuesday night.

Dr Withers said the sector could receive \$1 billion.

Universities were a worthwhile public investment, as opposed to "sugar hits", he said, and the government needed to display leadership "not simply populism".

Commentators also expect movement on student income support.

Australian National University education analyst Bruce Chapman is "relatively confident" income support will get attention because it's been seriously neglected for so long.

The Bradley review recommended reducing the age of independence to qualify from 25 to 22.

It suggested increasing the parental income threshold from \$31,400 to \$42,559, and allowing students to earn \$400 per fortnight instead of just \$236.

Those three changes would cost \$1.94 billion over four years.

National Union of Students president David Barrow says making support more accessible will stimulate the economy because students spend rather than save whatever they receive.

"We're hopeful - we don't want to be disappointed again," he said.

In responding to the Bradley review, the government has refused to talk dollars, except to suggest funding may be staggered because of the economic downturn.

But Education Minister Julia Gillard has moved on key structural recommendations.

She has promised to uncap student places from 2012 and establish a national regulatory agency to oversee the deregulated system.

The minister has also set targets of having 40 per cent of people aged 25 to 34 holding a bachelor degree by 2025, and enrolling an additional 55,000 students from disadvantaged backgrounds by 2020.

However, Dr Withers said without additional funds those goals can't be met.

"If they don't start the investment now they'd better start moving the targets out a year each time."

The Australian Education Union wants TAFEs to receive extra funding following last week's Council of Australian Governments (COAG) agreement that will see jobless under-25s guaranteed a training place.

"It was a bold announcement and we support the thrust of it ... but it needs to be properly funded," president Angelo Gavrielatos said.

<http://www.theepochtimes.com/n2/content/view/16435/>

Top universities bleeding millions as investments savaged

The Australian
May 06 2009

AUSTRALIA'S biggest universities have been ravaged by the global financial crisis, with the University of Melbourne reporting a \$245.7 million loss in the value of its investments and the University of NSW an \$87 million writedown.

The University of Western Australia lost more than \$100 million from its investment portfolio, resulting in a \$63.9 million loss for the institution.

Victoria University said it fell into an underlying deficit of \$140,000 last year. While the net result was a surplus of \$17.4 million, down from \$21 million a year ago, it said that surplus was largely the result of one-off capital grant funding.

The crash of the universities' financial reserves, which will reduce their ability to fund building projects, scholarships and research, will add pressure on the federal Government to boost funding in next week's budget to the cash-strapped sector.

But the demands have emerged as Treasury has warned Wayne Swan that the budget will not return to surplus before 2015-16.

"There's no doubt the temporary deficit will last longer as a consequence of revenue downgrades imposed on this country by the rest of the world," the Treasurer said. Government revenues are expected to fall by \$200 billion over the next four years, \$85 billion more than losses predicted three months ago.

Government sources have warned that the collapse in revenue, and the Government's commitment to deliver pension reform, are forcing it to implement difficult saving measures to rein in unsustainable long-term spending in a way that does not jeopardise the necessary stimulus and investment required to kickstart the economy.

Melbourne University higher education professor Simon Marginson said the "disturbing" financial results underlined the crucial importance of full research funding as recommended by two recent reports to the federal Government.

"It is more difficult for the sector to address an expanded participation agenda when an important second-level source of income has gone into red figures," he said.

The global financial crisis has savaged the value of UNSW's investment holdings, which have dropped by \$68million, while superannuation obligations have increased by \$46 million. The university also lost \$40 million from depreciation of its campus infrastructure.

UNSW's revenue increased over the reporting period, boosting its operating result from almost \$39 million in 2007 to \$51 million last year. But the impact of the investment losses contributed to a fall of \$67 million in net equity.

UNSW vice-chancellor Fred Hilmer said the reduction in equity had been offset by the announcement last December of \$75 million from the Commonwealth Higher Education Endowment Fund.

He said the university accounts contained a simple message for the federal Government ahead of next week's budget: "Keep (the infrastructure money) coming."

Melbourne University accumulated a portfolio of cash, stocks, property and other holdings worth about \$1.4 billion at the end of 2007, and the dividends from these investments helped to fund scholarships, chairs, research and many services to students and staff.

But last year's global financial crisis reduced the value of Melbourne's investment portfolio by about 22 per cent - the first negative return in six years. The university will report a consolidated loss for last year of \$245.7 million.

Melbourne vice-chancellor Glyn Davis said: "This bottom-line result is due entirely to falls in the value of the investment portfolio." He stressed, however, that this was a paper loss, and that the university recorded an operating surplus of \$21.6million last year thanks to rising revenues.

At the University of Western Australia the fall in investment income has eaten into reserves and forced it to cut back on capital spending.

On hold are several infrastructure projects including new engineering and science buildings and an arts precinct. Investment revenue last year was down \$11.4 million to \$33.9 million.

"Should the investment portfolio not return sufficient income, the remaining reserve funds will be inadequate to support the budgeted level of allocation to the budget," UWA director of financial services Scott Logan said. "As a result the university will reduce capital and other activities funded from investment income, as required. There is no anticipated impact on the quality of the teaching."

At Wollongong University, revenue was up by 44 per cent on the 2007 figure of \$341million. Enrolments were stronger although some of the revenue increase reflected a government guarantee of a superannuation actuarial loss. The operating surplus fell almost 40 per cent to \$5.6million.

Wollongong reported a \$23.6 million impairment of assets, compared with none in 2007. "It recognises the loss on our long-term investment portfolio as a result of the global financial crisis," said deputy vice principal Damien Israel.

Wollongong's portfolio had lost about 21 per cent of its value during 2008.

The University of Technology, Sydney, had the good fortune to pull its money out of the market in April last year before the financial crisis took hold. Unhappy with the performance of funds and doubtful of any short-term improvement, UTS decided to sit out and wait, according to deputy vice chancellor Patrick Woods.

"We're in a very good position (overall)," Mr Woods said.

UTS lifted its operating surplus from \$34.7 million in 2007 to \$48.4 last year.

<http://www.theaustralian.news.com.au/story/0,25197,25436119-601,00.html>

Student services reforms vital for sport on campus

May 06 2009

Media release: The Hon Kate Ellis MP

Minister for Youth Kate Ellis today released the final guidelines that will underpin the Rudd Government's student services reforms.

Minister Ellis was visiting the University of Queensland to witness the severe impact of the previous government's approach on university sport.

Ms Ellis said: 'The previous government's approach resulted in \$170 million worth of cuts to student services and amenities at universities across Australia.

'Australian students have been literally paying the price for this loss through reduced services, 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

'Here at the University of Queensland, there have been significant cuts to sports funding – which has had an adverse effect on student participation, particularly among females.'

Ms Ellis was joined by UQ A/Vice Chancellor, Professor Michael Keniger, UQ Sport CEO Kim Guerin and Australian University Sport CEO Don Knapp.

Representatives from the regional University of Southern Queensland, University of the Sunshine Coast and University of Southern Cross were also in attendance.

UQ student and Olympic Rower Sam Conrad also met with Ms Ellis.

Mr Conrad said: 'About half of the Australian Beijing Olympic Team had university links in 2008, making it vital that university sport is strengthened in the future.

Ms Ellis said: 'The Rudd Government's student services reforms will help to rebuild vital university sport services by supporting the role they play in Australia's sporting performance.

'As well as boosting student services, these reforms will help to sustain university sporting teams and facilities – allowing them to foster the next generation of Australian sporting champions.

'University sport also helps to improve the health and fitness of students, and assists students from interstate, rural and remote areas to build social networks and become part of their university community.

Student services are important not only to campuses all around the country, but also to the Australian economy – building a productive and well rounded workforce into the future.

'This legislation is listed for debate in the Senate next week and given the importance of the Government's student services reforms, I urge the Senate to pass the legislation quickly.'

The release of the Guidelines today follows comprehensive consultations with the university sector and a broad range of stakeholders.

For copies of the revised content for the guidelines, visit
<http://www.deewr.gov.au/higheredstudentservices>

http://www.deewr.gov.au/Ministers/Ellis/Media/Releases/Pages/Article_090506_162248.aspx

TEU Tertiary Update (New Zealand) - Vol.12 No.14

Scoop.co.nz
May 07 2009

MINISTER CALLS FOR MARKET DRIVEN EDUCATION

"High on our agenda is simplifying the funding system and lowering compliance costs. We also want less central planning – in other words, the needs of students and the economy should drive the provision of tertiary education."

Those were the thoughts of minister of education, Anne Tolley, in a speech last week at the New Zealand Tertiary Education Summit. The summit, which many in the sector did not hear about until after it was reported in the media, gave some indication of the new government's thinking around tertiary education ahead of this month's budget.

On the question of the EFTS cap funding shortfall, which appears to have grown in many tertiary institutions following significant roll growth this year, Mrs Tolley signalled that the government intends to limit its fiscal liabilities:

"I know that the question on everyone's lips will be whether there is going to be additional funding available to ease some of those enrolment pressures. I'm not going to talk about what's in the Budget today, but what I can tell you is that, while we do appreciate the issue, right now is a time when our imperative has to be to constrain overall Government costs."

Meanwhile, after earlier in the same speech having called for less central planning and lower compliance costs, Mrs. Tolley also stated her desire for a higher level of publicly available reporting on tertiary education institution performances.

"We need meaningful and robust public reporting. A current example is a comprehensive, aggregate report on tertiary sector performance that sets out full-year 2008 progress of publicly-funded tertiary education providers against quantitative performance indicators, which cover student enrolments, retention and completions."

ALSO IN TERTIARY UPDATE THIS WEEK:

1. Student concern at upcoming budget
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STUDENT CONCERN AT UPCOMING BUDGET

Student representatives, along with staff representatives, were not invited along to the 'tertiary education summit' where Minister Anne Tolley gave her speech on the contributing to the nation's future, but they were concerned nonetheless.

Sophia Blair, the president of NZUSA was philosophical about missing out on the conference: "Maybe they just forgot to invite us. The cost to attend was quite high."

However she was less sanguine about the minister's upcoming policy direction:

"The minister's speech effectively said there would be no new money for the tertiary education sector. I'm worried about quality. With the importance of dealing with the recession and investing in education, no new funding effectively means a cut in quality."

Blair is concerned that the end result of this signalled policy direction could see an end to the fee maxima next year. "We believe education is a right, and it needs to be better funded so that students are not turned away. It would be really terrible if we were to come out of this recession with fewer tertiary educated people that we started with," said Ms Blair.

Jacqueline Poutu, Tumuaki of Te Mana Akonga (TMA), the national Maori tertiary students' association, expressed similar concerns:

"If funding is not increased, institutions may have to cap enrolments due to increased demand for tertiary education, or may be given greater flexibility around student fees to allow the option of increasing student fees higher than the current fee maxima policy," said Ms Poutu. "Maori students are underrepresented in terms of participating in tertiary education and any such moves will serve as an additional barrier to them accessing education," Ms Poutu added.

GOVT PULLS PLUG ON OTAGO DESIGN SCHOOL

The government has withdrawn an offer of capital funding to Otago Polytechnic to help build the proposed Otago Institute of Design. The institute had been widely supported locally as a collaborative education proposal that would support 800 students and staff.

The previous government had agreed to a suspensory loan of up to \$12.5 million. Now the current government has withdrawn that offer, saying that Otago Polytechnic failed to agree to certain terms and conditions.

"Otago Polytechnic did not accept a key condition of the funding offer made in 2008 by the previous government," said tertiary education minister Anne Tolley. "The polytechnic requested that this condition be varied, and Cabinet considered this request. However, after careful consideration, the government has decided that it is not willing to vary this condition and therefore the offer has been withdrawn."

However the polytechnic and former government minister involved Pete Hodgson have disagreed with Mrs. Tolley. Otago Polytechnic Chief Executive Phil Ker told the Otago Daily Times that the disputed condition of the contract was a requirement that the polytechnic agree to the appointment of a Crown manager to oversee its financial transactions.

He said this condition contradicted an earlier verbal agreement with a TEC staffer that the polytechnic would get the money if it agreed to a lower-level Crown observer being appointed to ensure the building project had no negative financial impact on the rest of the polytechnic's operations. Ker said a crown manager would be unacceptable to the Polytechnic.

Mr Hodgson said he had been assured before last year's announcement that the polytechnic and TEC had agreed to the level of Crown involvement in the polytechnic's financial affairs.

"Otago Polytechnic was not, and is not, in a severe financial state . . . but some financial supervision seemed appropriate... My suspicion is the Government has simply reopened the dispute over Crown management as an excuse to walk away."

WANANGA NEGOTIATIONS NEAR THE END

TEU members at Te Wananga o Aotearoa are poised to vote on whether to accept a new collective employment agreement after nearly seven months of negotiations and a period of mediation. Prior to the mediation, TEU members at the wananga conducted an industrial action ballot to break the negotiating impasse.

Negotiations between TEU and the wananga have been hindered by the presence of an in-house union established by the employer. The wananga had offered different pay and conditions to the two unions, and before Christmas 2008 settled with its own union, TUIA, for a 3.8 percent pay increase and a lump sum of \$1 100 per TUIA member.

After several months of negotiations and mediation, the wananga has now agreed to offer TEU members 3.6 percent and the same \$1100 lump sum. In the meantime TEU members continued to challenge other employment conditions, including compulsory drug testing and performance-based remuneration that TUIA negotiators have purportedly agreed to.

TEU branch co-president, Te Aroha Lemke is pleased that a potential settlement may now be within reach:

“He timatanga tenei - this result gives us a starting point, something to build on, and it shows that a strong, nationwide union that grows its local membership can make its presence felt, even when the employer starts off not wanting to listen.

“Sadly, at the wananga the biggest problem we have is that you can see two kaimahi working beside each other, doing the same mahi, but paid differently because of their union affiliations,” Ms Lemke concluded.

Voting on the recommended settlement will conclude on 15 May.

PARENTS RETURN TO WORK FOR LESS MONEY

Parental leave is working well for women and children, but also for the retention of workers in the workforce.” That’s the view of TEU women’s vice president, Sandra Grey, upon reading a released recently study that suggests most mothers who take up paid parental leave return to the workforce within a year.

The Work Patterns after Paid Parental Leave study was produced by Statistics NZ, and funded by the Department of Labour. Since 2004 working mothers have been entitled to 14 weeks paid parental leave, and up to 52 weeks of employment-protected parental leave (transferable to fathers).

The legislation aimed to encourage greater female workforce attachment, and gender equity in the labour market and within families, It also sought to support families by providing income replacement, ensuring the health and wellbeing of new mothers and families, and improving New Zealand’s compliance with international human rights policies that provide for paid maternity leave.

The study found that three-quarters of recipients returned to work within 12 months of starting parental leave, and two-thirds of those returned to work after taking six months leave or less. Most people who returned to worked within 12 months of starting leave returned to the same employer, while one-fifth started a new employment relationship.

Many people reduced their earnings after returning to work, with around one-third earning considerably less than before. Those who did not return to the same employer, but started a new job, were much more likely to have reduced earnings.

Dr Grey says it is important we know why women are returning to less pay – whether it is related to returning to part time work, changing to more flexible jobs, or moving to places that better support their childcare needs, or factors like transport.

“New Zealand still has to figure out how to help workers with childcare and other return-to-work costs that are really impacting on low paid women who this study shows are less likely to return to work,” concludes Dr Grey.

SCIENTISTS CONCERNED ABOUT FREE SPEECH

The New Zealand Association of Scientists (NZAS) says that the business model of management in place in government-funded science institutions, such as Crown Research Institutes (CRIs), needs examination.

This follows the dismissal of Jim Salinger, one of NIWA's principal scientists and a leading spokesperson on weather and climate issues.

NZAS president, associate professor Kathryn McGrath, says that scientists need to be able to speak freely in their areas of scientific expertise without inappropriate corporate constraints or threat of dismissal:

"Communicating scientific advances to the public and commenting publicly on relevant science issues is an essential part of the scientific process, particularly in non-commercial areas supported by the taxpayer."

NZAS is a nationwide association of practicing research scientists spanning the universities, technical institutes, crown research institutes, government departments, industry, museums, and other scientific organizations.

"All of us, as scientists, believe it is essential that the general public have access to good scientific comment and information," said Dr McGrath. "Without science the New Zealand economy and social infrastructure is weakened, so it is in the public interest to have freely accessible information that allows politicians, the ordinary public, and funding providers to make good decisions. That requires us to feel that we can comment when we need to or are asked to do so."

"The requirement of scientists to act as communicators to a broad range of people should be a fundamental right, and an expectation even. Not just a right that we choose to use or not, but a professional expectation that all of us should aspire to live up to," concluded Dr McGrath.

You can listen to the full interview on scientific free speech with associate professor McGrath (1.2mb MP3 file – with some background student noise!)

NEWS FROM AUSTRALIA

Major investment losses by Australian tertiary institutions has added pressure on the federal government to increase funding to the cash strapped sector in its upcoming budget. Several of Australia's best known universities have been ravaged by the global financial crisis, with the University of Melbourne reporting a \$245.7 million drop in the value of its investments, the University of NSW acknowledging an \$87 million writedown, and the University of Western Australia losing more than \$100 million from its investment portfolio.

The impact of these losses on these universities' financial reserves will reduce their ability to fund wages and salaries, building projects, scholarships, and research.

But the vice-chancellor at the University of Sydney has managed to find savings in an unexpected place. Under a new employment agreement offering a 15 per cent pay rise over three years to regular staff, the casual teaching workforce is predicted to shrink.

It is the first agreement to reflect the National Tertiary Education Union's nationwide industrial campaign to reverse the Howard-era trend towards increased numbers of casual teaching staff. The NTEU's Sydney branch president Michael Thomson said that under the new agreement casual teaching hours in a faculty must not represent more than 5 per cent of the hours taught by academics from lecturer through to professor level.

"My guess is that (the casual teaching percentage) is quite a lot more than that," he said. The University of Sydney would have to create permanent positions where casual teaching exceeded the limit, and casuals could apply for these jobs.

Education minister Julia Gillard surprised TAFEs (equivalent to NZ polytechnics) last week when she announced an "earn or learn" policy that requires young people under 20 to be in training in order to receive the Youth Allowance, a ruling that is expected to affect almost 60,000 young people.

This is despite already near-record student-staff ratios at many universities and TAFEs, in a system already stretched by the overseas student boom. Unsurprisingly TAFEs and universities are looking for more details about the government's proposed new scheme.

Ms Gillard also said that under-25s will receive a guaranteed learning entitlement in the form of a training place, so that they can upgrade their qualifications and best position themselves for the jobs of the future.

Universities likewise are concerned that they will struggle to meet the government's targets on boosting numbers of students from poor backgrounds. University of Melbourne vice-chancellor Glyn Davis warned that Victoria's universities were unlikely to be able to meet the target unless they poached from each other, because there simply were not enough young people in the state who met the government definition of 'poor'.

The Government has set a goal of raising the proportion of students from poor backgrounds at university from 17 per cent to 20 per cent by 2020, a total increase of about 55,000 students.

<http://www.scoop.co.nz/stories/ED0905/S00035.htm>