

\*\*\* Attention Education Journalists: Tuesday May 13<sup>th</sup>, 2008 \*\*\*

## 2008 Federal Budget: Promises Honoured, Opportunities Missed

The Council of Australian Postgraduate Associations (CAPA) has responded positively to measures announced today in the 2008-2009 Federal Budget, however a number of missed opportunities have marred an otherwise auspicious start on the road to an education revolution.

The Federal Government has honoured its election promise to double the number of Australian Postgraduate Awards (APAs) between now and 2012, involving expenditure of \$209M over four years, and to introduce the *Future Fellowships* scheme, involving \$326M over four years, offering better opportunities and support for early and mid-career researchers.

### **Relief for universities, no relief on the impact of VSU**

“The Budget also represents missed opportunities however, including the 30% adjustment to the APA needed to bring it back above the poverty line, and extending the duration of the award to four years to match the term of candidature. Continuing to under-resource the next generation of researchers only compromises our capacity for innovation and research over time,” CAPA President Nigel Palmer said.

“The most glaring omission in this budget are any measures that begin to address the impact of VSU on independent services and representation. Consultation on the impact of VSU conducted by Minister Ellis earlier this year proved one thing: the situation for the provision of student services and representation as it currently stands is not sustainable. Urgent measures are now required to address the devastating impact of the former Federal Government’s so-called “VSU” legislation.

### **Income support reform – maybe next year?**

“Australia’s domestic coursework postgraduates won’t have much to cheer about in this budget. We don’t need another review to tell us that improved access to income support for coursework postgrads is an area of critical need. The previous government opened the way to improvements in this area by allowing a very small number of coursework postgrads access to rent assistance and Austudy. *Genuine* equity measures in this area are now long overdue.

“We commend the Government for adopting a long term view in investing \$500M through the Education Renewal Fund, and \$11 billion through the Education Investment Fund to begin to address crumbling university infrastructure. There are however significant opportunities that have been missed: The need for better support for the next generation of researchers, and the crisis we have in sustaining quality student services on campus are still with us. Without commitment and vision from this government, problems like this will not go away,” CAPA President Nigel Palmer concluded.

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The Council of Australian Postgraduate Associations (CAPA) is the national peak body representing Australia’s 270,000+ postgraduate students.  
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