

The Hon Julia Gillard MP
Deputy Prime Minister, Minister for Education, Minister for Employment and Workplace Relations, Minister for Social Inclusion
PO Locked Bag 14
Werribee Vic 3030

Dear Deputy Prime Minister Gillard,

I am writing to seek clarification on eligibility criteria for the *Training and Learning Bonus* as part of the Federal Government's *Household Stimulus Package*.

I understand amendments to the Package passed by the Senate include a "mechanism to ensure all unemployed and students have access to the bonus payment".¹ I take the force of this undertaking to specifically extend access to Bonus Payments to those excluded from the Package as originally proposed, including an estimated 111,462 postgraduates.²

CAPA has received a large number of inquiries from postgraduates concerned about their eligibility for bonus payments under this scheme.³ It is clear to us that \$900 would make a significant difference to postgraduates struggling under the current income support arrangements.

Many of the inquiries we have received suggest that Centrelink, the primary agency for administering the *Training and Learning Bonus*, have not received advice regarding postgraduate eligibility under this scheme.

Particular concerns include:

- The proportion of the estimated 35,829 domestic internal postgraduates potentially eligible for Youth Allowance or Austudy that are not current recipients due to narrow eligibility requirements.
- The estimated 15,000 recipients of scholarship awards with tax-exempt stipends, including 6,500 Australian Postgraduate Awards (APA's), 1,500 Industry Australian Postgraduate Awards (APAI's) and approximately 7,000 postgraduates on university funded equivalents.
- The 96,462 domestic postgraduates (including part time and external students) who have no access to any form of student income support at all, and therefore look likely to miss out on the *Training and Learning Bonus*.

¹ Federal Treasurer Wayne Swan, in a letter to Senator Bob Brown dated February 12th 2009 (available at www.capa.edu.au/files/inline-files/Treasurer_letter_amendments_Greens.pdf).

² See "Stimulus Package and Bradley Highlight Inequities in Student Income Support" (CAPA Media Release), available at www.capa.edu.au/mediarelease/2009/Bradley_Stimulus_Package.

³ Examples of correspondence received by CAPA on this issue are included for your reference.

Many of these students won't be eligible to receive the *Tax Bonus*, as they often survive on very low taxable incomes.

It would be of great assistance to be able to confirm the details of the administrative measures that will ensure all students have access to bonus payments under the *Household Stimulus Package*, in order for us to be able to inform postgraduates regarding their eligibility under the scheme, and to promote the Government's efforts in this area.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'N Palmer'.

Nigel Palmer
National President, 2009
Council of Australian Postgraduate Associations (CAPA)