

*** Attention Education Journalists: **Tuesday August 18, 2009** ***

Student Services Bill Lost in Senate

The Federal Government's Student Services and Amenities Bill was defeated in the Senate today in a tied vote.

"This is a regrettable outcome for government, for universities and for students. This will mean the standards of services and amenities available to students will continue to decline" CAPA President, Nigel Palmer said.

"The defeat of the Bill comes at a time when universities have a diminished capacity to support student services from other revenue. It also comes at a time where the quality of the student experience, particularly in regard to international students, is being recognised as one of national importance.

"Postgraduate-specific services have been disappearing on most campuses since the onset of the former Federal Government's so called "VSU" legislation. We commend the Federal Government's acknowledgement of the importance of services and representation for all groups, including postgraduate and international students.

"We also commend The Greens for the principled approach adopted during Senate debate on the Bill. Clearly this legislation was not ideal, and many postgraduates have expressed concerns to us about revenue from fees collected under the Bill being administered by universities and not by students themselves. Concerns also remain about how robust the reporting and compliance obligations on universities will actually be under the proposed arrangements - concerns expressed in the Senate by both Senators Hanson-Young and Xenophon.

"The failure of this Bill will mean that student organisations at those universities where services are currently supported through university funding agreements will be under tremendous pressure. Postgraduates on campuses where the majority of services have disappeared in the wake of VSU will now have nothing to look forward to.

"We call on the government to bring this Bill back to the Parliament, and for all sides of politics to see beyond the rhetoric and look to the national interest in support of our universities, and their students" CAPA President, Nigel Palmer concluded.

Media contact:

CAPA President Nigel Palmer – 0425 823 144 or president@capa.edu.au

CAPA is the National Representative Body for Australia's 270,000+ postgraduate students. www.capa.edu.au