

\*\*\* Attention Education Journalists: Wednesday November 25, 2009 \*\*\*

## Time for Parliament to get Serious on Student Bills

See-sawing on the Student Income Support Bill in Federal Parliament has continued, casting doubt on prospects for its passage this year, while the Student Services Bill still waits in the wings. With time running out for the current Parliamentary sitting, there is much at stake for Australia's universities and their students.

"CAPA calls on the Federal Parliament to focus on the task at hand, and enact positive reforms on behalf of students before the opportunity to do so is lost. This holds for both the Student Income Support Bill *and* the Student Services and Amenities Bill" CAPA President, Nigel Palmer said.

"The Government has brought to the table a well designed student income support package, with improved support measures for a range of student groups. For postgraduates, this includes access to Youth Allowance and Austudy for all masters by coursework students (as of 2012) and some improvements to income assessment arrangements for scholarship holders. More broadly, there are some basic equity measures included in the Bill which support significant improvements to the current student income support arrangements.

"While The Greens and Senator Xenophon have acted in good faith in working with the Government on amendments to the Bill, including improvements for scholarship holders, it appears debate on the Bill has degenerated to a point where Senators no longer have a view to positive reforms, with the welfare of students in mind. We are now at a critical point where students will pay the price for any delay in the passage of the Bill.

"While it is already too late for the Student Services and Amenities Bill to have an effective start date of January 1 2010, passage of this bill during the current sitting will still have an immediate and positive effect for students. Universities have been cutting back on their student services and support budgets for some time. The decline in the quality and availability of services and representation for students will continue until there is at least some certainty in the student services fee environment.

"The Student Services Bill should be put to the House of Representatives immediately so that the Senate can consider the Bill before Parliamentary sessions draw to a close for this year. This Bill is particularly important for postgraduate students, who have experienced a dramatic decline in the quality and availability of specialised support services available to them" CAPA President, Nigel Palmer concluded.

CAPA has launched its most recent survey on services and representation for postgraduates. The survey can be completed at: [www.capa.edu.au/postgraduate-services-and-representation-survey](http://www.capa.edu.au/postgraduate-services-and-representation-survey).

Full details available at: [www.capa.edu.au/mediarelease/2009/student-bills](http://www.capa.edu.au/mediarelease/2009/student-bills)

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