

*** Attention Education Journalists: **Wednesday February 11 2009** ***

Government Moves to Restore Campus Services and Representation

Minister for Youth and Sport Kate Ellis presented the details of the Federal Government's proposed "VSU Response" to the Federal Parliament today. If passed, the *Student Services and Amenities* Bill will enable universities to charge students a compulsory fee as of July 1 2009. Students will have the option of deferring the fee to a HECS-style loan scheme (to be called "SA-HELP"), with the amount institutions can charge capped at \$125 for semester two this year and \$250 per year (indexed) from 2010.

Two additional legislative instruments will determine how the proposed measures will effect students: the *Student Services and Amenities Fee Guidelines*, expected to describe limits on the use of the fee revenue, and the *Student Services, Amenities, Representation and Advocacy Guidelines*, which will outline Benchmarks for student services and Protocols for student representation and advocacy.

"These guidelines will be all-important: They will determine what the revenue from the new fees can and cannot be used for, and what institutions will be required to have in place as a condition of Commonwealth funding," CAPA President, Nigel Palmer said.

"Students are entitled to expect something concrete in return for the additional \$250 they will be asked to pay. They are entitled to know exactly where their money goes and to have a direct say in how their money is spent. The best way to achieve this is for independent student organisations to administer those funds.

"We do have some concerns that the Guidelines may end up allowing universities to 'double-dip' – that is, use revenue from the new fee to support educational and administrative services that are already funded through other sources. The Guidelines need to be very clear that the new fee may only be used for student support services, including independent representation and advocacy.

"The measures outlined in this Bill allow institutions to charge a compulsory fee from July 1st this year. It is the Guidelines that will determine whether or not this new fee will go to support independent services and representation that are truly world class, or, will simply become another fee gouge with little demonstrable benefit to students. All eyes will be on the detail as it becomes available. We look forward to working with the Government on ensuring that this legislation meets its aims in restoring quality student services and independent representation and advocacy for all student groups" CAPA President, Nigel Palmer concluded.

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