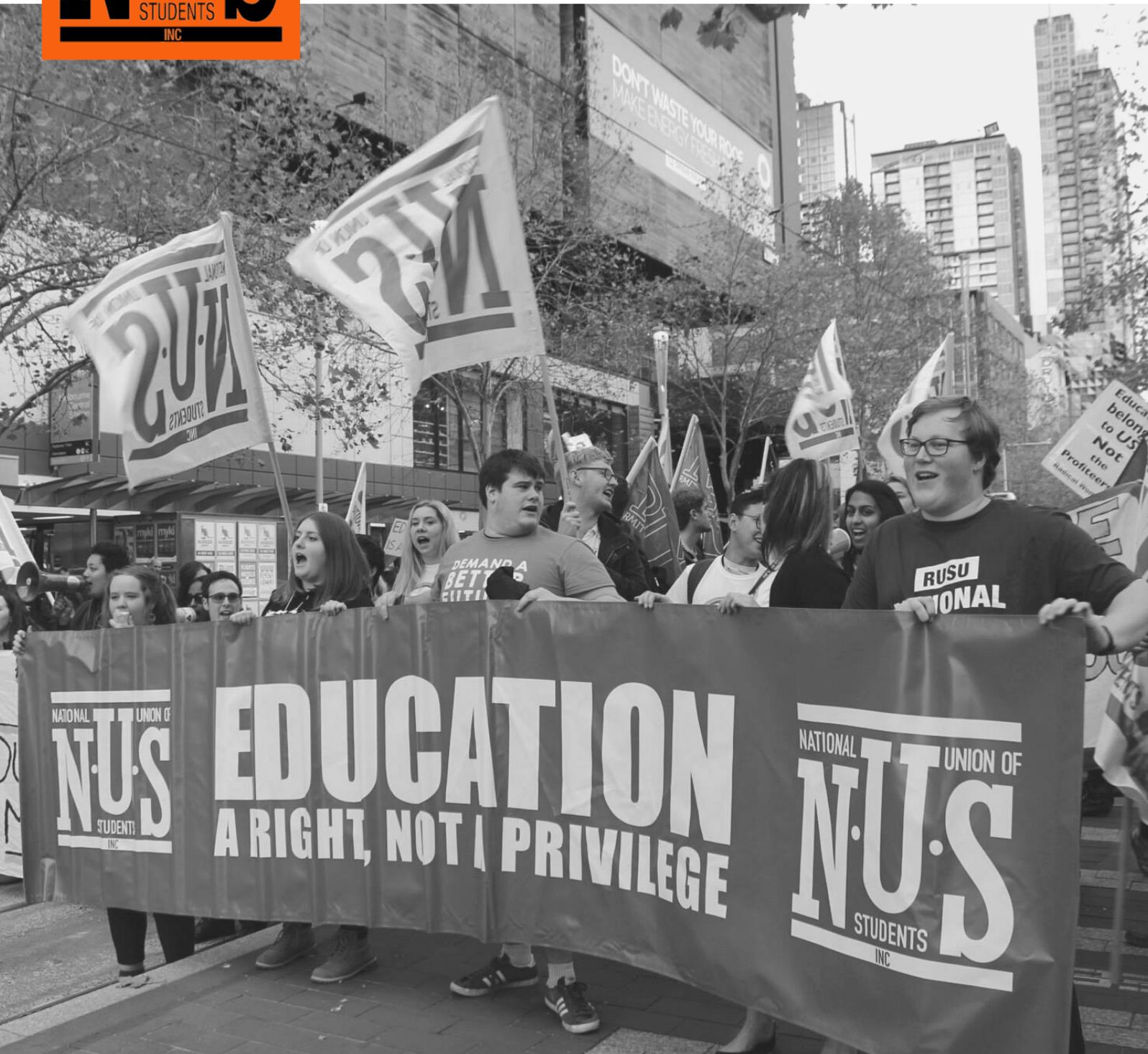
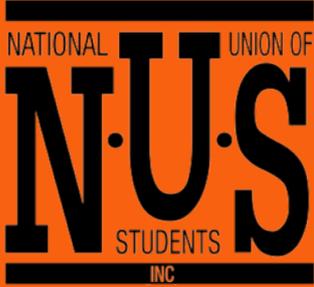


National Union of Students

EDUCATION CONFERENCE READER



ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF COUNTRY

The National Union of Students and the University of Melbourne Student Union acknowledges the traditional owners of this land, The Wurundjeri and Boon Wurrung peoples of the Kulin nation. Our conference takes place on this land and across the country online, we are the beneficiaries of uncompensated and unreconciled dispossession that occurred over 200 years ago, and that continues to this day.

Many of the descendants of those dispossessed live just down the road in abject poverty, and as young people, it is important to recognise how this history of dislocation and disenfranchisement has contributed to the inequality we observe in modern society.

We acknowledge both our privilege and our obligation to redress the situation as best we can: to remember the mistakes of the past, act on the problems of today, and build a future for everyone who now calls this place home, striving always for genuinely practical and meaningful reconciliation.





OVERVIEW

The NUS was founded in 1987 to represent all post-school students in Australia. We are a peak representative and advocacy body for almost 1 Million students. The NUS is established on the principles of student unionism and our primary objectives include working for the interest of students in improving quality of education, academic freedom, access to education, social security, health and welfare. they actually start reading it.

OBJECTIVE

Education Conference is an opportunity for students and young people to learn from activists, politicians, education professionals, and each other about the issues facing students today and into the future. We will be covering a whole range of topics, include the future for higher education in Australia, student welfare and wellbeing, climate action, tackling sexual assault and harassment on campus, and much more.

Workshops, panels, and plenaries will help attendees gain a better understanding of what they can do to create change through their student unions, on their campus and in the wider world.

MONDAY 12 JULY

TIME (AEST)

10AM	Acknowledgement of Country		
10:30	State of Higher Education Plenary		
11:30	Example of a Successful Campaign to Return to In-Person Learning	Need for a Student Community on Campus now more than Ever ?	How the pandemic is being used to restructure higher education, and why we need to fight the VCs all the way
12:30	The Road to 100% SSAF	Decorpratising the relationship between University and Student.	Disability Rights 101
13:30	Break		
14:00	Future of International Student Education in Australia Plenary		
15:00	Guest Pannel: Student Unionism Through A Looking Glass	Stakeholders within University Management	Evaluating NUS in the crisis so far - and what's next.
16:00	One in Five: The Missing Voice in Student Activism	Online harms: prevention, response and recovery within your university	Rejecting the Cold war with China
17:00	Close of Conference Day 1		

TUESDAY 13 JULY

TIME (AEST)

10AM	Welcome to Day 2		
10:30	My Record, My Rights - Queer Officers Plenary		
11:30	Student Safe Spaces: Challenges, Values and Implementation	Fighting local cuts in the pandemic - lessons from two campuses	Accessible Activism
12:30	Student Priorities for Campus Safety	Centrelink Independence - Change The Age.	Collectivism and COVID: the What, Why and How.
13:30	Break		
14:00	The Spectrum of Sexual Misconduct and Coping with a SASH filled news cycle	A duty of care from cradle to grave in education.	Stop the Liberals! No Menzies Institute at Melbourne University
15:00	Welfare and Womens Plenary - End Rape on Campus (EROC)		
16:00	Fighting for free speech on campus	Acknowledgement of Country: The Power of Words	Up the Regions: How to organise effectively on regional campuses
17:00	Close of Conference		

HIGHER ED SNAPSHOT

State Survey

This survey was conducted in June 2021 to determine the ongoing impact that the COVID-19 pandemic has had on student's experiences at university. The NUS distributed a survey to the presidents of student unions for responses.

Overall it seems that lectures were all mostly pushed online, with 80% of universities reporting that workshops and tutorials had also been conducted online.

All but two universities reported that the supplemental online information, course content and materials were not up to the same standard they would have received if classes were being conducted in person. This was due to recycled course content, cut contact hours and a lack of support from lecturers and tutors.

The majority of universities (80%) were not or have not been provided with a roadmap to recovery, leaving students in the dark.

30% of universities still have restrictions in place that are extended compared to what is required by their state.

100% of surveyed campuses have forced face to face students online when learning was safe to do so.

Q: Has your campus experienced forced online learning for Face to Face students?



COVID hit only the beginning:

The sharp fall in international students, the hits to university revenue, and an apparently unfriendly government have exacerbated an existential crisis.

Higher Education Cuts

Expenses under higher education are set to decrease by 8.3% from 2020-21 to 2021-22 and decrease by 9.3% in real terms from 2021-22 to 2024-25. This is from the cessation of additional funding (\$1bn) to maintain universities' research efforts in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. It also reflects the expenses of the forward estimates primarily from lower costs under the Commonwealth Grant Scheme as a result of the Job Ready Graduates higher education reform package.

- Overall, 10% decrease in higher education funding each year for the next 4 years. This will see an average of 250,000 jobs cut.

COVID-19'S IMPACT ON UNIVERSITIES

FINANCIAL HIT TO UNIVERSITY REVENUE



There are now 260,000 fewer international students living in Australia than before the pandemic.

GOVERNMENT CHANGES

- ⚡ \$1bn cut to the higher education sector.
- ⚡ Universities excluded from JobKeeper program.
- ⚡ 17,300 University jobs slashed in response.
- ⬆️ 113% hike to university student fees.*
- ⬆️ Forced online learning on the rise.
- ⬆️ Increased privatisation of university degrees.

Source: ABS, Department of Education, Skills and Employment (DESE), Department of Home Affairs, Mitchell Institute at Victoria University, Universities Australia

It's been 1 year since the Morrison Government told International Students to "go home" if they could not support themselves.

It was personally felt by students, that they'd been **tricked into feeling that they were welcome** as a part of an Australian community.



Source: ABS, Department of Education, Skills and Employment (DESE), Department of Home Affairs, Mitchell Institute at Victoria University, Universities Australia

PRESIDENTS REPORT

Zoe Rangathanan

The first 6 months of 2021 has seen the NUS kick off strong, with a cohesive team, management changes, a strong set of campaigns and increased member and stakeholder engagement compared to previous years. With help from the rest of the executive team, we've moved offices, hired new staff (including a communications and media officer in the next few months!) and made reforms to our management structure to make sure that the union is set up to run more efficiently in years to come. I'm proud to say that the NUS is back on track to fighting stronger and smarter for post-secondary students, and I can't wait to see this pattern continue for the rest of the year.

There hasn't been a more difficult time to be a student. With youth and study payments dropped after April, courses slashed and international students left without a plan for return, we're seeing a rapid move towards the increased corporatisation of our sector. Students are seen as customers who have signed up to a service online and nothing more. In order to fight this, the NUS is leading a nuanced and consistent fightback, based on *what we know* will be the most successful. Nothing was more evident of this approach than Budget week. We caused a bit of noise inside APH by knocking on every door of media, MPs and Senators and then caused a lot more noise outside, holding a protest for the #ChangetheAge campaign on Parliament lawns. We really can do both, it seems.

Orientation Weeks

Although COVID-19 was a blow to how much of the country we could travel to (sorry Queensland, I'll be up there as soon as I can get in!) OWeeks were still a great chance for NOBs to meet student representatives across the country, talk to them about what they need from the NUS this year and get the word out to first year students about their student unions.



I travelled to ANU, University of Sydney, University of Wollongong, and heard from students how concerned they were about the JobReady Graduates package and the subsequent increase in fees, the inadequacy of Centrelink currently. Concerningly, a lot of first and second year students had a lack of understanding of what student union is all about; a show of how much individual students need to fight this year to 1) find a way to communicate to their members more and 2) increase their SSAF pool to make sure they have adequate resources to provide for students.

Campaigns: #ChangetheAge Campaign, NSSS & 50% SSAF

Quite honestly, I *love* the campaigns we're running this year. I'm so passionate about each and every one of them, and I think each contributes to a wider vision for the NUS in 2021 and beyond. The #ChangetheAge campaign has come leaps and bounds since Arabella and I first started planning it in January, with two petitions reaching 24,000 signatures total. This petition is set to be tabled in Parliament later this year. We are also in the process of setting up modelling of how the policy could be implemented if the Government is changed next year, which will be presented to the Government and stakeholders later in the year.

The National Student Safety Survey, the second iteration of the 'Respect. Now. Always.' survey in 2016 will be running in September. Many of us were still in high school in 2016, and don't remember the AHRC survey, so I've put a lot of time into briefing student leaders, women's officers and campus presidents into what the NSSS is, and what it means for their members. If you'd like to read a copy of the brief, click [here](#). We fought Universities Australia for a lot of changes to the survey to make sure it is trauma informed and survivor-centric. On top of this, we have secured funding for 3 representatives at each campus to undertake Vicarious Trauma and First Responder training, to make sure this cohort of students are trained to support survivors as best they can.

The 50% SSAF campaign is the hardest I've ever had to work on, with great attention needed to modelling and policy knowledge needed of Federal and State laws. We've made some fantastic progress however, with the policy position introduced into the Queensland government platform, NSW opposition platform, and the NT Government undertaking work into the policy now. This campaign is vital to the sustenance of student unions in this country - we need money for the movement, and so if there's one campaign you get around this year, it's this.

Member, Stakeholder and International Engagement

On member and stakeholder engagement, I'll keep it brief: we've smashed it. The NUS is talking to our member campuses more than ever, holding roundtable discussions and briefings, as well as skilling up Presidents and Executives with the delivery of NUS' first ever President's Guide - a shortcut to media, campaigning and a package of materials for OWeek flyering and postering too. We've assisted with grassroots level fightback on almost every campus across the country such as the protest against Alan Tudge at RMIT and the fight to prevent 12 week semesters at USyd - a fight I'm glad to say students won.

We've built better relationships with other stakeholders and NFPs across the country, including the Foundation for Young Australians, which has allowed us to benefit from their resources in accessing journalist databases and campaign assistance - a relationship that will greatly benefit the NUS if it is sustained over the long term.

Media

Our social media, TV, print and radio presence has grown this year as well with the launch of our Instagram page, where we're making an effort to communicate to our students all of our media releases and campaign updates. A shout out to Param for the incredible new website - we've improved transparency and accountability with our members by publishing media releases and NX minutes up there. The NUS has landed a spot in major NewsCorp press, we're on ABC radio at least once a fortnight and we've been on SBS TV, with an ABC TV special set to be filmed later this year. Of everything in Semester 1 that we've worked on in Semester 1 though, I'm the most proud of this story about VC of Uni Adelaide, Peter Hoj regarding sexual assault. So, so, many emotionally-charged hours on the phone and back and forth in emails between the reporter, survivors, EROC and myself were spent trying to get this story up, and I'm so glad that we finally did. Students won in holding a Vice-Chancellor to account - and I'll fight to do it all over again in Semester 2.



GENERAL SECRETARY

Param Mahal

Introduction

This year has been one of ups and downs. As student unionists, our best work is done on the ground by interacting with stakeholders, members and students. Unfortunately, a large part of these six months has been hampered by lockdown and closed borders between states. The NUS has however learnt from our experiences last year and kept innovating new methods of engaging students and student organizations. Under the current circumstances, the NUS team across the whole country has been agile in adapting to the new normal and I've been supporting them wherever necessary.

Handover

Outside of the NUS paid positions, there was a lack of proper handover continuity which we were hoping to overcome through a team handover before the President's Summit. Unfortunately, this year's NOB handover was marred by a snap lockdown in Victoria, the planned host for the President's Summit. In order to circumvent this, I organised the governance training to be delivered online to all the office bearers, state presidents and general executive members.

Website

The NUS website was outdated when I began my term and a refresh was one of the first things on the agenda. The previous website was hosted externally with a third party, who closed their business early in January contributing to a lack of transfer of the website's assets over to the NUS. I was able to get access to our domain and subsequently worked on creating the new website in house to ensure that we control every aspect of it moving forward. The website is capable of high traffic and is getting updated regularly as is fitting for an organisation such as ours.



Operations

The NUS went through a staff and office refresh this year. During the changeover between the staff, the NUS was without any paid employees for a month. During this period all the responsibilities of the Administration Officer were taken up by me. This included all financial, operational and administrative responsibilities.

As part of the staff refresh we've hired new Administration and Research staff, and we're currently in the process of hiring a new Communications staff member. The NUS Office has also moved closer to our member affiliates in Melbourne, in a bid to be more accessible to stakeholders and provide a better working environment for our employees.

The NUS is currently preparing to achieve charity status. This status will provide multiple benefits to our organisation by having access to tax rebates and exemption from certain payments. It will also give NUS the ability to be recognised as a national organisation operationally, as we are currently only registered with Access Canberra.

Events

Despite this year being a bit slow with in person events due to Covid regulations in most states, I've been able to attend a few while representing the NUS. The first most notable was in support of Burmese students protesting against atrocities committed by the military junta in Myanmar. This event was run in collaboration with Myanmar Students Association and NUS across the country. I was invited to speak at a follow up event organised by the Victorian Myanmar Youth which was a candlelight vigil for the martyrs of the movement. On the student activism front, I co-organised and spoke at an education rally with the RMIT University Student Union in response to the Federal Education minister's visit to the RMIT city campus, where he was due to speak on the future of international students in Australia. The rally was organised under the sentiment that the minister had failed to support international students during his term and was now pandering to businesses losing money due to a lack of overseas students. This rally was also in response to sexism and inappropriate behaviour by the federal government towards female staff in the parliament.

The last major event I attended was during the budget week, the NUS sent a contingent of office bearers to lobby on behalf of students for the upcoming budget announcement. During this activity, I helped organise and attended the Change the Age rally outside the federal parliament which was attended by student organisations and their members from different states.

International

As an international student, I've been working very closely with the NUS International officer on initiatives for the cohort. We jointly worked on a survey for international students on pathways to permanent residence in Australia, the survey data and research was then used by us to prepare a submission to the parliamentary enquiry around the future of the Australian migrant program. The submission had multiple recommendations and was accepted, currently we're waiting on the results of the inquiry.

I am currently working with member organisations to determine the viability of alternative healthcare schemes for international students, as the current structure is highly inefficient and obstructive. We're currently exploring viable lobbying avenues including research and submission.

I've also been working with the NUS international officer in preparing a campaign to bring back overseas students in a safe and secure manner which we will be launching during the conference.

Affiliations and Revenue

I've already reached out to the majority of our members to sort out their affiliations. Most have received their initial invoices and are in the process of filling out their fee review forms. The members yet to receive their initial affiliation invoices are largely due to the lack of the latest information on EFTSL within their universities.

As a whole the majority of our members have reacted quite positively to the process and will be affiliating for increased fees over last year, there is however the case of some universities suffering from a loss of SSAF revenue which I'm working through. The NUS has also lost a large chunk of revenue due to cancellations of in person President's Summit and Education conference. I am however still quite confident that the NUS will be able to make up for the loss of revenue through increased fees from our members.

The Future

As part of my future plans I'm looking forward to working on these projects:

- Updating the NUS EBA which was last negotiated in 2002, and is currently grossly outdated.
- Preparing a project in collaboration with the International Officer to run a training module for students in our member organisations to have access to a training module around road safety, worker rights and unionism for food delivery drivers.

EDUCATION OFFICER

Chris Hall

Induction & Handover:

Overall I am happy with the progress that has been made so far, although I am not in the NUS office in Victoria, I am managing my time well and have continued to roll out my campaigns for this year. It was great to attend the multiple O'Days at the WA universities. I am planning for the NUS to have a strong and positive presence here.

Defend Our Education Campaign:

Stand-Up for our Education, defending the rights of students and staff against university cuts. The campaign messaging included:

- Promotions throughout your university orientation, a campaign push for 3 to 4 weeks of the semester in lead up to the National Week of Action.
- That we stand together nationally against Staff Cuts, Course Cuts, Faculty Restructures, and Forced Online Learning.
- Examples of actions can include hosting a speak out against cuts on your campus with staff and students in attendance, you can also occupy your chancellery building on your campus in protest or host something on a state level.

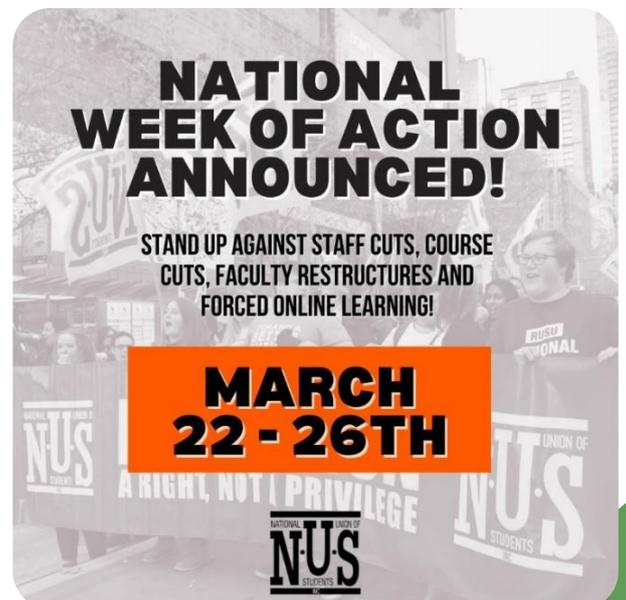
Thank you to everyone who was involved in organizing, promoting and participating in the national week of action for the education campaign. I was lucky enough to attend two rallies and one town-hall event in WA, it was also great to see actions happening in each of our member states. Although the NWA has ended, many campuses are still facing the same pressures that the campaign highlighted, so I have been encouraging member unions to continue the campaign in a different capacity, taking direct action throughout the semester to fight against any changes that impact staff and students, but also use this momentum as an opportunity to engage with more students and inform them of how their education is changing. I am excited to see that this campaign will also be repeated for semester 2.



Submission to Higher Education Morning Mail:

CISA and NUS – How has COVID-19 impacted student experience? The COVID-19 pandemic has had a huge impact on the student learning experience. This article is based on discussions with the National Union of Students (NUS) and the Council of International Students Australia (CISA). The engagement with both bodies provides insights into the experience of both domestic and international students during the COVID-19 pandemic.

<https://bit.ly/2TwMCJJ>



State-Based Outreach and Campaigns:

I have been working on the Inform Renters campaign which has now ended. The WA rental moratorium was lifted so it was a priority to ensure that (in my case) University students were aware of their rights and how to seek support if being evicted.

I have been working with the state department of Education and Training to try and implement stronger education resources and teaching to secondary education students on Consent. Universities have taken up much of this responsibility, but it should come to university age to be taught about consent and the support out there for victims of sexual assault and harassment.

Submission to Higher Education Morning Mail:

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a huge impact on the student learning experience. This article is based on discussions with the National Union of Students (NUS) and the Council of International Students Australia (CISA). The engagement with both bodies provides insights into the experience of both domestic and international students during the COVID-19 pandemic.

AVETRA Conference and TAFE Engagement:

I have been working with AVETRA, Australia’s only independent association for research in vocational education and training. I have been trying to tap into the TAFE student experience more as their experience is changing rapidly after COVID-19 and there doesn’t seem to be much representation in this area. I attended and presented at the AVETRA national conference in April on higher education, student expectations and how TAFE’s and Universities can look to each other for support and development.
<https://avetra.org.au/>

State Survey

This survey was conducted in June 2021 to determine the ongoing impact that the COVID-19 pandemic has had on student’s experiences at university. The NUS distributed a survey to the presidents of student unions for responses. The responses are found in the Higher Education reporting of this document.

Leading up to semester 2:

The Education Department will be launching a campaign with the presidents of our member universities, calling on our institutions to “open up the doors” and resume face to face learning. This campaign will commence this week with several Campus Calls being made to invite all our campus presidents to a second round table meeting, to report on the current circumstances at their universities and what they would benefit the most from this campaign. This will also include follow up meetings with all the state branches to establish actions and demonstrations around the country.

The recent rise of forced online learning and the obvious shift to push international education online has raised concerns among university unions and students around the country, as they become more eager to return to the ‘way things were’. We will be developing scorecards from campuses to compare universities and then use this to help members lobby their own institutions. Some of the issues this campaign will target are:

- Bringing back face to face learning.
- Bringing back in person lectures.
- Equipping students for safe access of campus.
- Bringing back 24/7 Library Access.



WELFARE OFFICER

Arabella Wauchope

Orientation Weeks

During the start of 2021 there were several states impacted by COVID-19, the Welfare Department visited Adelaide University and Flinders University with the Change the Age of Independence Campaign. Using a QR code for the online petition reached hundreds of new signatures nationally during this period and conversing with Union Presidents on welfare concerns more broadly, the main concern being the Federal Government Covid-19 payments ceasing early 2021 and Centrelink in general returning to being under the poverty line.



Change the Age of Centrelink Independence Campaign Summary

- Megaphone Petition 12,024 signatures
- Petition Tabled to Parliament 13,360 signatures.
- Budget Week Protest of over 100 Students & NUS Supporters
- Change the Age Activist FB group with 158 members
- National FB event during O Weeks was successful in converting profiles to the Activist Network
- Commitment from the Greens if elected to review
- Apathetic meetings with both the Government and Labor
- Meetings with:
 - Bill Shorten Shadow Minister for Government Services and his Adviser
 - Linda Burney Shadow Minister for Families and Social Services – will determine Labor’s policy for the next election
 - Minister for Government Services Anne Ruston Senior Adviser
 - Amanda Rishworth Shadow Minister for Youth and her Adviser
- Media
 - ABC Radio Adelaide
<https://www.abc.net.au/radio/adelaide/programs/afternoons/calls-to-lower-the-age-of-independence-to-18/13389318>
 - ABC Radio Perth
 - Student media
 - Youth Allowance rate and requirements dehumanise young people – 23/03/2021

The Campaign is being run with assistance from the Megaphone Team at Trades Hall in Victoria and the Foundation for Young Australians (FYA). The campaign calls for reform to Centrelink and a review of how the system currently operates. The goal of independence at 18 encompasses demands that would ease the pain currently caused such as the use of statutory declarations to inform Centrelink of difficult family situations and recognition of independence once proof of living away from parents is received. These are the short term goals which will be fought for with the next federal election.

The campaign from this point will now focus on testimonies by creating the Change the Age Report, a survey will be released this during Education Conference, with an aim of at least 500 people participating. Once the Report is released there will be both public demand and evidence for the need to change the age of Centrelink independence. For future campaigns this year Megaphone is suggested as the ideal platform with access to an email list following completion of any petitions.

Centrelink & Welfare

The NUS Welfare Department has continued to work with ACOSS, the National Anti-Poverty Network and the Unemployed Workers Union when it comes to increasing Centrelink to a liveable wage. There was a meagre increase this year based off this lobbying, but nowhere near enough to have true impact. More stunts and media attention in this area created by students could be very impactful alongside the work these groups are already doing.

Budget Week

Budget week was well spent lobbying and we were able to meet a fair few Advisers and Shadow Ministers to discuss the state of student welfare in Australia. We also held our protest outside Parliament House with the attendance of students, student media and NUS members. This was successful in turnout but didn't secure media attention, highly recommend next year contacting Media way in advance of the week. From that week both myself and Chris Hall, Education Officer, had a promising discussion regarding the use of statutory declarations with Centrelink, so that parents will no longer be called. A recommendation to future Office Bearers is to make sure a Lobbying Pass is secured to move around Parliament House freely. There was nothing from the budget that was directed at young people, and no support to Universities to undertake this either. As an organisation we spent the week preparing media releases, working with other organisations for joint releases. Something I felt strongly was that all youth organisations should prepare together far beyond that week. I think there is great capacity for a national joint campaign to Fund Young Peoples future. We spent the week setting up meetings with members and senators from all sides of the political spectrum to discuss our demands on funding education and changing Centrelink.

Mental health & University Counselling Campaign



The demand on mental health services the last year and a half has been unprecedented, but the problem when discussing mental health is there is limited data that proves just how horrific it is for young people. Whenever mental health is discussed, a reference to University support is always made. In Semester 2 the Welfare Department will be running our Counselling Campaign, starting with a survey of every University in Australia and how they provide free counselling, what the wait times are, if there is anyone capable of dealing with specific traumas or mental illnesses on staff and the accessibility of it. This will be launched with the Disabilities Department after Education Conference and continue until the end of my term. A national survey of students may also be designed but only if designed to not cause harm/further trauma for vulnerable people.

PARLIAMENT PETITION

13,360
Signatures

NATIONAL UNION OF
N·U·S
STUDENTS

National Union of Students Welfare
Department

WOMENS OFFICER

Georgette Mouawad

This year's major focus for the Women's portfolio has been the National Student Safety Survey (NSSS). We advocated heavily for the survey to expand geographical considerations, offer questions that account for the effects of covid, and greater accessibility for students. We supplied women officers, resident halls, colleges, union executives & any other student reps with a brief on the survey to ensure informed representatives. Then training was organised for three relevant student representatives per university, typically women representatives and presidents, to receive training regarding the study and direct disclosures.



The survey was trialled successfully at the Australian National University and Charles Sturt University, allowing the survey to launch in September. Consequently, we are running our SASH campaign in September. Not only will services have increased support during this time, but this allows the opportunity to encourage students to submit accurate responses. Thus far, we have had three meetings with women officers and union presidents to begin mobilising for the September campaign and will launch shortly. State branch presidents have by now submitted protest permits for the 8th of September at 12:00pm.

This year, I have worked alongside the Australian Women Against Violence Alliance (AWAVA) to create another survey for young women and non-binary people experiencing sexual violence in and outside of educational spaces. This survey has expanded our perspective of the extent of the issue, which has been of massive significance due to the effects of COVID on the NSSS and various other geographical limitations of campus-specific surveys. The survey is also available in easy English so that it is as accessible as possible. The survey was sent to women's representatives in April so that they would share it via their networks. The results from the survey informed a workshop in June, and eventually, results will be collated in a report later this year to be used in policy recommendations.

This year Universities Australia (UA) have begun to model their silver certificate for Australian universities. I campaigned the UA to include criteria for acceptable SASH procedures and gender-based discrimination mitigation that universities must comply with in order to receive the certificate. I also attended the UA roundtable discussions and analysed the previous bronze certificate and the role of women in stem.

Another demographic facing significant strife outside of survivors of SASH is student mothers. After multiple meetings with a research group from Western Sydney University on a project regarding student mothers, I was welcomed as an advisor and co-investigator of the project. I have also organised a meeting with a student mother on how we may introduce student parent unions or initiatives at affiliated NUS campuses. We are now awaiting approval for a grant so that the research project may go ahead. Once we receive approval and more significant data is collected, beyond the current sample data pool that we have for UWS alone, we hope to provide recommendations for universities and governments alike.

Additionally, I provided feedback on a domestic violence survey with AWAVA concerning student mothers. This is in response to rising domestic violence during COVID yet constant cuts to services, which affects those who must also balance their studies worst of all. I later attended a meeting in regards to temporary visa holders experiencing violence pilot hosted by Harmony alliance and AWAVA. Australian government is seeking to introduce a pilot program to provide additional financial and legal support to women on temporary visas experiencing family and domestic violence - which is relevant to international students in particular.



Another focus this year has been on young working women. Hence, we have partnered with the Working Women Centre SA on a series of projects. Initially, I met with the WWC to discuss an online forum after June in which we would focus on upskilling and educating women on work-related matters. More recently, we have begun to correspond on a youth project to encourage women participation in policy matters. I have also arranged for WWC to run a workshop on women in work for the Education Conference and to speak at the SA branch of our September campaign. The other women workshops are about 'EROC', 'Trans and Gender Diverse Inclusion in Women's Spaces' and the 'Spectrum of sexual misconduct'. I also attended the Values and Purpose of ERA Member's Gathering 2021 as well as a series of workshops by the ERA which focused on the matter of gender equality and safety in the workplace. Additionally, I have worked alongside the Unemployed Workers Union on two occasions this year. First, as a part of the 'Protest Against Poverty' campaign as a voice for women and youth allowance recipients. Later, we worked together during budget week with our own response to the government's lack of support for students.

Besides focusing on specific projects and stakeholders, I have also attended a series of other protests and campaigns related to or organised by the NUS. These include NUS Budget week campaigns, the change the age campaign, course cuts and tariff increase campaigns and abortion access campaigns. Finally, I have approved the DUSU application for NOWSA, and they received their handover in June.



QUEER OFFICERS

Emily Boyce & Bridge Truell

This year the NUS Queer Department has been focused on campaigning for trans rights and to promote trans inclusion at universities around the country. Trans and Gender Diverse students at our universities are some of the most marginalised people and face discrimination from all levels of Universities.

Ending Transphobia in Our Unions:

This is the main campaign of the NUS Queer department for 2021. The campaign seeks to respond to attacks on Trans and Gender Diverse rights both in Universities and within Governments. The campaign is multidimensional and seeks to be responsive to government legislation and/or events that occur at universities that specifically target Trans and Gender Diverse students.

This campaign started with the department writing a submission to the NSW Government to lodge the Unions objection to Mark Latham's Education Amendment Bill that seeks to reduce the education provided to students around genderfluid people. The Bill is an attack on Trans and Gender Diverse people's rights and also an attack on all queer education. If the bill is passed queer education in NSW will be severely harmed and this bill will most likely be copied on national level or within other states. Fighting this bill includes assisting activists in NSW to protest the Bill. COVID-19 restrictions have meant that attending in person to these protests from the Queer officers is challenging so facilitating people in attending and organising people to go has been one way we can actively protest this bill.

We have worked within Victoria to assist campuses such as University of Melbourne to campaign to End Transphobia in their Tutorials and remove transphobic tutors and lecturers from their campuses.



This is an ongoing part of the campaign to assist campuses that have Transphobic tutors, lecturers or other department staff to get them off campus. Universities have protected their transphobic and queerphobic staff for too long and helping campuses around the country protest them and get them off campus is essential to making universities safe for Trans and Gender Diverse students.

In the second half of the year, the NUS Queer Department aims to further the work of the Ending Transphobia in Our Unions Campaign and create a set of in-depth guides for campus office bearers to support them in their work at a campus level.

My Record, My Rights Campaign

Another important aspect of improving trans inclusion at a university level is ensuring students are provided with adequate and accessible processes for updating their student records. Where universities collect student information such as legal name, preferred name, gender marker, honorifics, pronouns etc, students need to be able to update this information if needed. To gauge the current processes at affiliated campuses, a survey was devised, circulated and will continue to be promoted to gather information on record update processes from Queer Reps at their universities.

A link to the survey can be found here <https://bit.ly/3Awy0L2>. The information gathered with this survey will be used to inform a best practice guide and assist any campuses who require action on their current processes (or lack thereof). Further investigation will be undertaken into TEQSA requirements for student information collection and whether there are any potential areas to target for advocacy.

Asexual Inclusion Awareness campaign:

The NUS Queer department has also created a short online Asexual Awareness campaign that aims to educate people on Asexuality and the experiences of Asexual people in the community. This campaign involved a range of infographics and will involve highlighting the issues within government anti-discrimination laws.

Queer Inclusion Resources:

We have also been developing a range of resources to support campus office bearers. These guides will include a national guide on Pronouns for unions and residential halls and a guide to help campuses tackle the issues facing the community including racism, transphobia, a lack of support for queer people with a disability as well as ways to ensure campuses are promoting voices of queer people that are not just white cis-gay men. Ensuring campuses know how to develop safe spaces for all queer people and not just white cisgender able bodied queer people is essential for queer support on campus.

We All Need To Pee:

In 2013, the We All Need To Pee campaign was launched by the NUS Queer Portfolio. Nearly 10 years down the track, this campaign is still much needed. Many stickers from the original campaign are still in place at campuses across the country, however many continue to deteriorate and be vandalised and individual campuses have been left to replace them out of their own budgets. We're currently investigating ways to revamp this campaign in a budget friendly way and provide appropriate resources and support for affiliated campuses who are advocating for bathroom safety and/or introducing all gender bathrooms.

WA Cross Campus Queer Network:

In collaboration with the WA Queer Officers, a Discord has been set up to bring together students from all five Queer Departments and help facilitate community building, networking, information and resource sharing, and hopefully lead to some fun events later in the year. Our initial post-exam picnic was unfortunately shifted online due to COVID restrictions, but we're excited to see what we can do with this group leading forward.

Awareness Days:

Significant awareness days relating to the LGBTQIA+ community have been promoted and celebrated on the National Union of Students Queer/LGBTI Facebook page through posts, images, digital campaigns, profile frames, and we'll be continuing to promote these days and related causes as they arise.

DISABILITIES OFFICER

Kit Sanders

While we all know 2020 was a year unlike any other, 2021 followed suit in its unpredictability. I started my term as Disability Officer naive to the struggles I would soon come to understand.

I believed myself experienced and knowledgeable, but my grasp of the discrimination in Australian tertiary education only scratched the surface, and the more I heard the more I was shocked. There are many months and years ahead of us in the fight to make university and TAFE safe and accessible for disabled students.

Online learning

Online learning and other accessible learning frameworks that were available last year during the peak of COVID are slowly being stripped away in an effort to return to 'normalcy.'

Disabled students have been asking for these educational platforms for years, and the second it is useful for able-bodied students it is made available. Disabled students deserve better.

In the rest of my term I will continue my efforts to halt the erosion of disabled students' rights to reasonable adjustment.

Australian Centre for Disability Law

This last couple of months NUS President Zoe Ranganathan and I have been working with the Australian Centre for Disability Law. We aim to promote a program where disabled students will be able to either call or meet in person with a solicitor to discuss and take action against ableism and discrimination within tertiary education spaces.



More to come

This year I have not yet achieved a fraction of what I hope to by the end of the year. As we all know, disability does not work to a schedule, and neither does a pandemic.

With multiple trips to aid campuses in their campaigns cancelled due to lockdowns, and many of my own campaigns cancelled due to health, this year has not been the roaring success of advocacy we may have wanted.

However, there are still six months left this year and an election is approaching. Now is the perfect time to strike against ableism and discrimination.

The next six months will be spent fighting for access to better welfare, better healthcare, and better rights for disabled students. "

INTERNATIONAL OFFICER

Varun Kale

January:

During the first month my focus was towards the crime occurred in Adelaide which involved an International Student who faced wage theft and physical abuse from the employer. We put out a Media Release which stated the support towards the International Students facing Wage Theft and other problems at their workplace. We reached out to the respective University Unions/Student Association to extend their help towards those students who need help regarding the same.



February:

After getting on with the wage theft submissions and work. The Federal Government were in talks on the Skilled Migration Program as they put out forms asking for suggestions on which area to be given importance. We worked out a plan to execute the submission on how we can get data and put up a strong submission.

March:

In this month we continued collecting data for the submission regarding the Skilled Migration Program. We put out a survey which was shared on every media NUS and Student Unions/Student Associations. We received significant feedbacks on the problems due to COVID-19 as to which the submission was a crucial task to work on. We put up a strong report which was submitted to the portal as a result many visas are now open as PMSOL list has been updated as per requirement at the National Level.

April:

During April we worked on the impact of Delivery companies on the Riders for respective companies. Deliveroo put out a news that the company is going to put out a trial version guaranteeing minimum hourly pay and rights for its delivery riders. This being the start point our focus is to provide a permanent solution to this problem as most of the international students work as part time delivery riders not knowing about their basic rights and not getting paid as per the hour. This project is still ongoing as we need more data to which we can further collaborate with TWU on the very same and get a positive outcome to this problem

May:

Start of May we put out a MR on Solidarity with Indian International Students when the COVID crisis was at the most in India. During May the budget month our demand for International Students was to focus on a secure and safe plan to bring back the International Students stuck in their home countries who are currently enrolled in the universities. Our second demand was to provide Financial support to the onshore students who are still having troubles to make an earning. The final demand was to get assurance for the returning students to assure them jobs, housing and free quarantine facility.

June:

International Students finally received something from the federal government after a year without any sort of support during COVID-19. A COVID disaster payment for the eligible students who were not able to work during the lockdown. Mid-month we finally received a great news where SA government put out a statement to bring back 250 International Students every fortnight which was passed by the Federal Government. We are still waiting on the exact details on the plan which has been passed out.

Plan for Next Half:

- 1) We are working on getting the plan from the SA Government on what exact are the plans and process for the International Students who would be getting back.
- 2) Delivery rider rights for the International Students
- 3) An idea for bringing a central medical insurance platform for the tax paying International Students and getting rid of the private health insurance companies which are just for name sake.

AT PARAFIELD AIRPORT

SOUTH AUSTRALIAN INTERNATIONAL STUDENT ARRIVAL PLAN APPROVED TO ALLOW 160 STUDENT RE-ENTRIES PER FORTNIGHT




NUS FEDERAL BUDGET DEMANDS

Support for International Students



[@nationalunionofstudents](#) [@NationalUnionofStudentsAU](#) [@NUS_President](#)




NUS FEDERAL BUDGET DEMANDS

Support for International Students

- A secure and safe plan to bring back international students
- Financial support to onshore international students
- International Student recovery plan to assure jobs, housing and free quarantine facilities

[@nationalunionofstudents](#) [@NationalUnionofStudentsAU](#) [@NUS_President](#)



FIRST NATIONS OFFICER

Keenan Smith

My name is Keenan Smith and I am a Wirangu, Mirning and Kokatha person from the far west coast of South Australia. I use they/them pronouns or you can refer to me as Tjana. I would like to acknowledge all traditional owners of this continent, and that our sovereignty has never ceded since the planting of the 'union jack' in 1788!

Like 2020, covid is still impacting our communities and creating further barriers for our First Nations students at university. I would also like to offer my apologies to my First Nations constituents, as I've been dealing with some personal health issues and has restricted my ability to achieve what I wanted during my tenure. But like the resilience of our peoples, I will still push forward for change for our peoples.

Things to pursue for the rest of 2021:

Decolonising the NUS

The decolonising of the NUS has been something that previous office bearers and fellow First Nations students have been pushing for. This is something that I have had discussions with other NUS office bearers and First Nations peoples, and is something that I am actively pursuing. What would the decolonisation of the NUS look like, however is something that needs further discussion and consultation.

The onus of this should not be the burden for First Nations peoples or myself being the current office bearer. Decolonising is the responsibility of all. Going forward I'd propose for a decolonising task force, made up of office bearers on the NUS and First Nations office bearers from our member university associations/guilds/unions, etc. What is it that we are wanting to achieve through decolonising and what genuine outcomes do we as First Nations peoples want?.



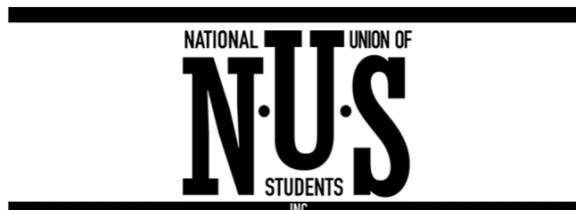
Autonomy for First Nations Office Bearers:

Through my own personal experiences, I have seen and experienced the harm of what campaigning for the First Nations position at my university's student council, can do to First Nations student communities at universities. I have seen these positions used as positions to maintain the majority on student councils, and not recognised for what the role is meant for, which is genuine representation for First Nations students!

Seeing the loop holes in election regulations and constitutions that student councils will use against First Nations students, to justify these actions! These regulations and constitutions were not made with our community in mind, and do not reflect the way in which our wider communities operate or expect. I would urge the NUS to promote the autonomy of First Nations office bearer roles at their member organisations. I am aware that there are universities that already have autonomous voting in place for this role, but there are also still quite a few that don't.

Autonomy is an element of decolonising, it will ensure genuine and culturally appropriate representation for our students, and more importantly, ensure cultural safety

SIGNIFICANT ITEMS 1.0



For immediate release

23/02/2021

Students will Starve under \$100 cut to Welfare

The National Union of Students says that the Federal Government's decision to cut the current income of 1.95 million people demonstrates a blatant lack of care for Australians hit the hardest by the pandemic.

This morning, the Government announced that the base rate of welfare payments will be increased by \$50 a fortnight, a net \$100 decrease to current amounts of welfare, as Prime Minister Scott Morrison declared that the country is 'moving into a new chapter'.

It is clear that this so-called new chapter is one of **renewed disregard for students and young people**. This announcement prioritises the amount of cash in the pockets of the top end of town, with Minister Ruston stating that the welfare system must be 'fair and sustainable... for the taxpayers who pay for it'.

Since 2006 the NUS along with ACOSS has been continuously asking for permanent increases to the rate of Newstart to keep students out of poverty. The Government has heard these demands, yet has tokenized them with a demeaning increase of less than the price of a bus ticket. It is indeed, as ACOSS CEO Cassandra Goldie described it, 'a heartless betrayal'.

An increase of \$3.50 from pre-pandemic support amounts won't lift students out of poverty. It still places students only just over **50% of the Henderson Poverty Line**. This Government is knowingly keeping Australians well below the poverty line all in the name of their obsession with achieving a budget surplus in the hardest year for our economy in a decade.

This increase fails to recognise the research from the ANU and University of Melbourne which clearly outlines that the only way to reduce poverty is by increasing the rate of welfare support payments substantially - and that this increase will improve workforce participation rates, contrary to the rhetoric being pushed by the Coalition.

NUS President, Zoe Ranganathan states that, 'this increase fails to recognise how students have suffered throughout the pandemic. Mental health effects, housing insecurity, job losses - these realities won't vanish at midnight on the 1st of April.' There are eight Australians on JobSeeker for every job vacancy. Effectively, **the Government is ensuring that 243,750 people are institutionally kept in poverty**.

If the government agrees that people can't live on \$40 a day, how do they expect \$43.50 to make any difference? \$3.50 isn't a raise, it's an insult.

For further comment:

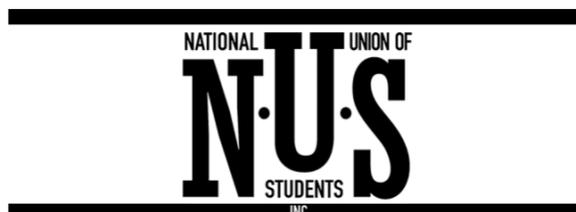
NUS National President

Zoe Ranganathan

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SIGNIFICANT ITEMS 1.1



For immediate release

27/04/2021

Federal Government 'Out of Tudge' with Universities

On Monday, the Victorian government announced a push to take an extra 120 overseas Australians as part of its hotel quarantine program. The scheme would see international students as a large component of the proposed economic stream of international arrivals into Victoria's quarantine program.

This announcement has been heralded by major universities as a move towards vital assistance for our struggling universities and students - one of the sectors impacted the most by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Instead of responding with a plan of action, words of assurance, or a concrete timeline, all the Minister has to say is that he is "very cautious".

NUS President, Zoe Ranganathan has stated that "this timid approach from Tudge is not the style of leadership that students need from the Government right now." She continues by saying that "regardless of whether International Students are allowed back into Australia next month or next year, students need clear communication from the Government in this time of crisis."

This is even more evidence that the Morrison government is failing to plan for the future of higher education. Ranganathan states,

"First, they locked us out of JobKeeper. Then universities slashed our courses and staff. Now, they don't even care enough to have a plan for the education and welfare of a quarter of our students. They're completely out of touch. The higher education system is failing."

The NUS calls on the Federal Government to formulate a plan for the return of students, when COVID-19 safe, in consultation with student representatives and staff. It is integral that this plan includes post-arrival care, with funding set aside for students who no longer have housing and jobs in Australia. NUS International Students officer, Varun Kale states that "universities and international student bodies need to be involved at every stage of this process so that students can be assured that they will have a home to live in, a job to go to, and medical support in the country."

If the Government can afford to spend \$747m on a defence package, why won't they lend a hand to students?

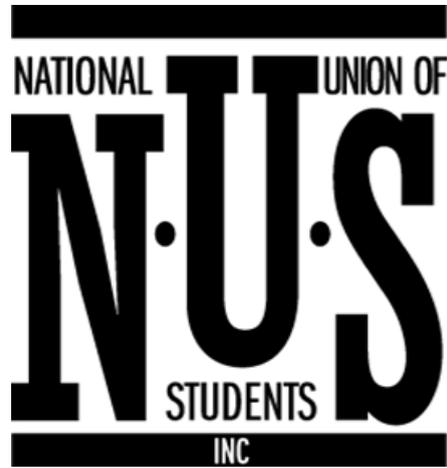
The NUS calls on a formal response from the Federal Government.

What *is* your plan to save universities Minister Tudge?

For further comment:

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International Students Officer
Varun Kale
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A submission to the Australian Treasury

for the

Pre-Budget 2021-2022

Presented by NUS National President Zoe Ranganathan

Prepared by NUS Research Officer Lauren Carter

January 2021

NUS welcomes the opportunity to present a brief submission for the 2021-2022 Budget.

In this submission, NUS has chosen to focus on two fundamental issues that students face. NUS recommends as we slowly try to recover from the impacts of COVID-19 that we support young people and students to start their careers without huge financial burdens and with the skills necessary to join and thrive within the Australian workforce.

NUS recommends the following:

1. To permanently increase student income support (including rent assistance) to \$750 a fortnight.
2. To continue to increase the student income support to 75% of the Henderson poverty line (including rent assistance) by 2025.
3. To incrementally lower the age of independence to 20 by 2024.
4. To continue to incrementally lower the age of independence to 18 by 2027.
5. To implement a federal international student crisis assistance program to support international students in emergency situations.
6. To extend the validity of graduate visas to allow COVID-19 impacted international students the ability to attain PR requirements.
7. To conduct an independent review on the Permanent Residency program to evaluate the accessibility, affordability, and achievability for previous international students.
8. To remove subsidies on fossil fuels to hold practices that contribute to climate change accountable.
9. To implement a 10% flat tax on gas companies for the next ten years.
10. To fund free education from the removal of Fossil Fuel Subsidies and 10% flat tax on gas companies.
11. To raise the HELP repayment back to \$55,874 and raise as cost of living rises.
12. To implement measures in increasing communication between the ATO and those with HELP debts, reimplementing discounts, and financial literacy programs.

Student Income Support

Current levels of student income support with the Coronavirus Supplement range from 35.9% to 63.8% of the Henderson poverty line for those living at home and 52.6% to 66.0% for those living away from home. Since the supplement, student support has decreased in percentages. Before the Bradley Review into Higher Education in 2008, students were closer to the poverty line (61.8% in 2008; see Appendix A). Appendix A shows the differences in poverty levels for individuals in 2008 (pre-Bradley Review), and 2014 (figures from previous NUS student income support submission). Even with the Coronavirus Supplement poverty levels, only Abstudy for those over 22 and living away from home sits within an adequate range of the poverty line (80.3% with the coronavirus supplement). It is great to see the federal government supporting First Nations peoples, but it is a basic step towards providing the reparations needed. However, after April, we will see student support average around 51.3% of the Henderson poverty line. A report by Universities Australia (UA) in 2017 showed that 82% of domestic students are in paid employment with full-time students working a median of 12 hours a week. Therefore, for students who are working and/or receiving student income support are still facing poverty, we as a nation need to address the low-income realities that Australian students face. From this NUS believes that to support students out of poverty, we need an increase in student income to provide a solid foundation for their studies.

Universities Australia Survey findings

- One-third of domestic undergraduate students have estimated expenses exceeding their estimated income. This figure is slightly higher for low socioeconomic status (37%) and regional (38%) students. Some 43% of Indigenous students have income that does not cover their expenses.
- Most domestic undergraduate students (58%) are worried about their financial situation. Low socioeconomic status students are more likely (63%) to be worried about their finances, as are regional students (64%).
- Nearly three-quarters (72%) of Indigenous students are worried about their finances.
- Only 38% of domestic undergraduate students feel they are in control of their financial situation. This falls to 35% of low socio-economic status students and only 27% of Indigenous students.
- Some 15% of domestic undergraduate students regularly go without food or necessities because they cannot afford them. Again, the figures are slightly higher for low socioeconomic status (18%) and regional (19%) students.
- More than one in four Indigenous students regularly go without food or necessities.
- More than four in five domestic undergraduate students (82%) are in paid employment. Full-time undergraduate students who work do a median of 12 hours per week.
- Nearly a third (30%) of full-time domestic undergraduate students work more than 20 hours a week and more than 10% work more than 30 hours. The share of students working more than 20 hours has increased steadily since earlier surveys.
- More than one-quarter of full-time domestic undergraduates regularly miss classes because they have to work. 41% report that work has a negative impact on study.
- 36% of part-time domestic undergraduates regularly missed classes to work with 52% reporting that work has a negative impact on study.
- Only 35% of students who work believe that their work/study balance is satisfactory and 39% of domestic students report that their work has little value to them apart from the money.
- A third of domestic undergraduates receive student income support (Austudy, Abstudy or Youth Allowance).

- 42% of low socioeconomic status students and 45% of regional students receive student income support. Nearly half (49%) of Indigenous domestic undergraduates receive student income support.
- Most of the debt for domestic students is made up of tuition fees deferred through the HELP scheme. Full-time domestic undergraduate students' median estimate of their debt at graduation is \$38,200. For full-time domestic postgraduates, the median estimate is \$54,100.

These statistics show students struggling with costs and income while trying to study, to the degree where more than one-quarter of students miss classes and 41% of students report work having a negative effect on their studies. There is a trend in these figures that show students have to work just to get by. The right to an education should not be a contributing factor to poverty for young people.

Henderson Poverty Line

The Poverty line is a calculation completed by the University of Melbourne every quarter, the most recent is from June 2018 and used as an estimated comparison for student income support maximum rates. The comparison in Appendix A uses the rate for a single person. The maximum amount for an individual with the coronavirus supplement living away from their parents or guardians on Student Support receives 67.0% of the poverty line. This is much higher than without the supplement at 53.6% of the poverty line. Australian National University researchers Ben Phillips, Matthew Gray, and Richard Webster argue that increasing Newstart is vital to reducing poverty.¹ The UA report shows that one-third of undergraduate domestic students exceed their income in day to day living. There is a great concern for the level of poverty students experience.

Part-time and holiday work has been a part of undergraduate life for many decades. However, the long term historic decline in student income rates as a percentage of the Henderson Poverty line (from 75% under TEAS in the 1970s) has led to an excessive reliance on paid work at the expense of student development. Research has found that some part-time work is beneficial to student development. However, students trying to juggle full-time study with more than approximately 12 hours a week paid work, reported increased difficulties with maintaining study commitments and fewer opportunities to participate in enriching campus activities outside the classroom.

There is an ongoing trend of student support payments decreasing each year in relation to the Henderson poverty line. This means that as the cost of living increases, government support for students continues to decrease (see Appendix A). The additional support provided during COVID-19 has gotten closer to the provisions needed for students to survive while studying. The Senate Select Committee in the First Interim Report advised for maintaining the support payments to stay around \$750 a fortnight.² This is also in line with the Grattan Institute's argument to continue and permanently support our financially vulnerable.³ This amount is still lower than the advised 75% of the Henderson Poverty line, but even the increase to \$750 a fortnight would be a step in the right direction. The increase in the base rates for Youth Allowance, Austudy and Abstudy will improve student access and retention rates for disadvantaged students. It will also allow students more time to participate in experiences outside the

¹ Phillips, B., Gray, M., and Webster, R., 2018, Cut the pension, boost Newstart. What our algorithm says is the best way to get value for our welfare dollars, available at <https://theconversation.com/cut-the-pension-boost-newstart-what-our-algorithm-says-is-the-best-way-to-get-value-for-our-welfare-dollars-108417>

² The Senate, 2020, Select Committee on COVID-19: First interim report, available at https://parlinfo.aph.gov.au/parlInfo/download/committees/reportsen/024513/toc_pdf/Firstinterimreport.pdf;fileType=application%2Fpdf

³ Coates, B. 2020, Household Finance Program, Grattan Institute, 28 of 42 Hansard, 2 July 2020, p. 21.

classroom that will lead to the development of the more rounded graduates that employers are calling for. Making the increase permanent would provide an equitable step for supporting students.

Recommendation: permanently increase student income support (including rent assistance) to \$750 a fortnight.

Recommendation: continue to increase the student income support to 75% of the Henderson poverty line (including rent assistance) by 2025.

Age of Independence

The government pushes a discourse of independence and supporting oneself, yet the current age of independence for Australia's young people is four years later than the legal adult age, at 22. Those under the age of 22 must be supported by their parents, even if they move away, or specifically apply for independence. This is a long and grueling process for many young people. Currently, the criteria to be eligible for declaring independence is extensive and complicated. It discourages Australia's young people to relocate to another area to go to university to study the area of their choice. Many parents struggle to support students that need to relocate for any reason unless their child can show they can work and earn enough money. Yet as the UA report shows, students in general struggle financially already. Further, for students that are fleeing unsafe home situations, the current Age of Independence leaves youth unable to prove financial independence locked out of the welfare system. The need for students to work and yet still live in poverty is where the federal government fails them. Instead, lowering the age of independence would support more of our young people.

Education is vital for our changing economic landscape. Many officials, such as Senator Michaelia Cash, have advised the Australian population to upskill so that they can be employable in a post-COVID-19 landscape in response to the work shortage.⁴ Education is vital to fill the front line worker roles within Australian society. The Australian Government has predicted health and social assistance, Professional, Scientific and Technical Service, Education and Training, and construction sectors are going to be in high demand in the future. Three out of four of these industries were vital for Australian society to continue during lockdown and continue to be important to keep Australia running. Moreover, the same three out of four often require a higher education degree and there is little support for our young people to do so. As we have already discussed in this submission, students are already struggling financially and with their mental health. These sectors are also areas that create great benefit for our society. Therefore, removing financial barriers from encouraging our young people to take these paths is the next logical step.

Recommendation: incrementally lower the age of independence to 20 by 2024.

Recommendation: continue to incrementally lower the age of independence to 18 by 2027.

⁴ Cash, M., 2020, Fact tracking the upskilling of Australian workers on Covid-19 safety, available at <https://ministers.dese.gov.au/cash/fast-tracking-upskilling-australian-workers-covid-19-safety>

COVID-19 and International Students

We all have faced hardships through 2020 due to COVID-19 and Australian citizens were offered some financial support. Yet support for some of our most vulnerable people - International students is notably lacking. In 2019, education was Australia's third highest export, bringing in \$32.3 billion dollars.⁵ This dropped during COVID-19, partially due to the closure of the Australian border but also due to the lack of support given to International students. Given the high level of financial benefit that international students provide Australia, it is confusing as to why the federal government would not provide emergency relief so that students feel welcome and can afford to stay in the country.

NUS conducted a survey for international students in April 2020 - the prevailing concern found was the lack of support for international students and being forced to go back to their home countries. Many international students were working in industries that had to close quickly - such as hospitality and retail. Even with the cash reverse all international students require to obtain student visas, COVID can add extra financial pressure with day-to-day living. It is no surprise Australia has a lower number of international students coming to study here in 2021. The federal government has not supported them through this crisis. States such as Victoria, South Australia and Queensland set up funds to support International students during this time while the federal government told them to look after themselves. Now Australia is seeing issues in its tourism and farming industries because migrants are not able to come into the country. This is understandable given the circumstances of COVID-19. However, what is not understandable is the lack of concern and support given to International students that were already in Australia, and those who were forced to return overseas due to financial pressures.

Recommendation: implement a federal international student crisis assistance program to support international students in emergency situations.

Permanent Residency

Even with the high amount of income that international students bring to Australia, it is very difficult for students to reach Permanent Residency. They study, work, and live purely on the basis of their own funds and potential support from their families. They do not benefit from any of the support networks that the government provides, even when it has been desperately needed during COVID-19. Applying for PR is extremely time consuming, costly, and inaccessible to many people who want to live in Australia. These barriers mean that many people, who were originally international students, wait many years to know if they are eligible for PR status. Costs associated with applying for PR as an international student, \$25,000 for the application alone, systemically locks the most vulnerable students out from gaining residency. These barriers need to be evaluated and investigated to ascertain how necessary they actually are. The points system asks an untenable amount from those applying for PR, to a point where many graduating students report feeling overwhelmed and unworthy of Australian residency.

Recommendation: extend the validity of graduate visas to allow COVID-19 impacted international students the ability to attain PR requirements

Recommendation: conduct an independent review on the Permanent Residency program to evaluate the accessibility, affordability, and achievability for previous international students.

⁵ Australia Expo 2020, 2020, Education is Australia's third biggest export category, available at <https://www.australiaexpo2020.com/news/education-australias-third-biggest-export-category>

Education Funding

NUS supports free education for Australian domestic students. Removing this payment will remove systemic barriers to education and set Australians on a solid path for life. AlphaBeta Future skills report indicates that the growth in technology by 2040 will require Australians to spend 33% more time in education.⁶ Moreover, a report by the Foundation for Young Australians (FYA) estimates that 70% of students will need reskilling due to automation or redundancy in skills.⁷ This means that Australians will see themselves needing to upskill more frequently than current or previous demand. It is due to these changes in the workforce and the level of debt that students encounter that providing free education would remove. New Zealand's fees free education model presents a slow rollout case for the benefits of fees free education.

New Zealand Fees Free Education Model

In 2018, New Zealand implemented free education for the first year of study. The model is planned to first cover the first year of study (capped at \$12,000 for the year) and be expanded to the second year in 2021 and third year in 2024.⁸ The model has been implemented to increase accessibility and remove pre- and post-tertiary education barriers for university and vocational training courses.⁹ Free education benefits students by not only allowing for more students to enter tertiary education but also set students up with \$5000 more in the first four years.¹⁰ Estimates in repayments range from 8 to 10 years, setting graduates with debt while trying to find work, save for their future, and move out of poverty.¹¹ Free education would allow graduates to save money once they have found work (see Appendix B). Appendix B shows the range in savings for the first four years ranging from \$500 for early childhood educators to \$10,500 for Nurses. NUS believes that education should be free for Australians and funded through the Australian Greens proposition of ending Fossil Fuel Subsidies and making gas companies pay taxes.¹²

Funding

As students grow more concerned about climate change, as seen from recent school strikes and the preliminary NUS student values survey, defunding subsidies and taxing fossil fuel and gas companies is a welcomed change. The survey showed Climate Change as the highest concern for respondents with 68.2% believing climate change is a big issue that the Australian Government needs to address. The funds used to subsidise the fossil fuel industry should be used to fund education. With 15.6% of our GDP or \$278 billion in tax credits for gas companies, there are places of concern that could fund education reform.¹³ Moreover, implementing a 10% flat tax rate to gas companies for the next ten years so that Australia can actively tackle climate change as a major problem and use the funds to further educate and support Australian students.

⁶ AlphaBeta, 2019, Future Skills, available at <https://www.alphabeta.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/google-skills-report.pdf>

⁷ Foundation of Young Australians, 2019, Future Skills Framework 2030, available at <https://www.fya.org.au/futureskills/>

⁸ Tibshraeny, J., 2017, Government's \$339m first-year fee-free tertiary education policy expected to attract 2000 additional students or trainees next year, available at <https://www.interest.co.nz/news/91232/governments-339m-first-year-fee-free-tertiary-education-policy-expected%2%A0-attract-2000>; Office of the Minister of Education. (n.d.). Making tertiary education more affordable: fees-free education in 2018, available at <http://education.govt.nz/assets/Documents/Ministry/Information-releases/Making-tertiary-education-more-affordable-fees-free-education-in-2018-...-pdf>

⁹ Tertiary Education Commission, 2018, What fees-free study means to students, available at <https://www.tec.govt.nz/fees-free-information-for-teos-what-fees-free-means-to-students/>

¹⁰ Faruqi, M., 2018, Fee Free University and TAFE: Greens Launch Transformational 5 Point Plan for Higher Education, available at <https://mehreen-faruqi.greensmps.org.au/articles/fee-free-university-and-tafe-greens-launch-transformational-5-point-plan-higher-educatio>

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¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Ibid.

Recommendation: remove subsidies on fossil fuels to hold practices that contribute to climate change accountable.

Recommendation: implement a 10% flat tax on gas companies for the next ten years.

Recommendation: fund free education from the removal of Fossil Fuel Subsidies and 10% flat tax on gas companies.

HECS threshold

The current system of education funding in Australia is the Higher Education Loan Program (HELP), where students are able to access HECS-HELP (undergraduate students) or FEE-HELP (postgraduate students). When the HECS system was originally introduced in the original *Higher Education Funding Act* 1988 as an alternative to the free education model that was previously in place. A key principle that this funding model was established under is that the individual student would only have to pay back a portion of their university fees only if or when they reaped the personal benefit of their education. That is, when they had a personal taxable income above that of the Australian average.¹⁴ In 1988, the average income was \$25,636 a year,¹⁵ with the minimum repayment threshold was set at a 1% rate for income above \$22,000.¹⁶ Today, the Australian average income is \$1,206.90 a week, \$62,758 a year.¹⁷ The lowering of the HECS threshold from \$55,874 to \$44,999,¹⁸ which is substantially lower than the average income from 1988. In 1988, the threshold was 85.8% of the average income, when today, the threshold is 71.7% of the average Australian wage. This only places the pressure on low-income workers, furthering financial disadvantage.

Tracey West from Griffith University suggests the threshold be raised back to \$55,874 and instead implement policies that are more gentle on those with HELP debts, such as showing repayments on payslips, communicating to those with debts and providing financial literacy programs.¹⁹ Considering the UA report showed only 38% of domestic students feel they are in control of their financial situation, financial literacy and support is more sorely needed than the lowering of the HELP threshold. NUS supports this suggestion as the lowering of the threshold only hinders low socioeconomic households, families and individuals in being able to live, save, or plan for their futures. The lower threshold also creates a barrier for young people to try and to enter the housing market. Mark Warburton from University of Melbourne asserts that the lowering of the threshold will not assist students in paying off their debts any quicker but instead will have long term effects on living standards.²⁰

Recommendation: raise the HELP repayment back to \$55,874 and raise as cost of living rises.

Recommendation: implement measures in increasing communication between the ATO and those with HELP debts, reimplementing discounts, and financial literacy programs.

¹⁴ Jackson, K., 2003, The Higher Education Contribution Scheme, available at https://www.aph.gov.au/About_Parliament/Parliamentary_Departments/Parliamentary_Library/Publications_Archive/archive/hecs

¹⁵ Queensland Government, 2018, Average weekly earnings (a)(b), Queensland and Australia, 1981–82 to 2017–18.

¹⁶ Jackson, K., 2003, The Higher Education Contribution Scheme, available at <http://www.qgso.qld.gov.au/products/tables/average-weekly-earnings-qld-aus/index.php>

¹⁷ Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2018, 6302.0 - Average Weekly Earnings, Australia, May 2018, available at <http://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/allprimarymainfeatures/7F76D15354BB25D5CA2575BC001D5866?opendocument>

¹⁸ Parliament of Australia, 2018, Higher Education Support Legislation Amendment (Student Loan Sustainability) Bill 2018.

¹⁹ West, T., 2018, Lowering the HELP repayment threshold is an easy target, but not the one we should aim for, available at <https://theconversation.com/lowering-the-help-repayment-threshold-is-an-easy-target-but-not-the-one-we-should-aim-for-94910>

²⁰ Warburton, M., 2017, Five things senators (and everyone else) should know about changes to HELP debts, available at <https://theconversation.com/five-things-senators-and-everyone-else-should-know-about-changes-to-help-debts-84843>

Appendix A: Student Income Support comparison with Henderson Poverty Level (June 2020)²¹

All figures are shown per fortnight.

Payment Type ²²	Base Rate ²³	Maximum rate of Rent Assistance	Maximum Total (Without and with Coronavirus Supplement)		Payment Henderson Poverty line ²⁴	Total Benefit as a % of the poverty line				
			Without	With		2021		2020	2014	2008
						Without	With			
Youth Allowance, over 18, single, living at home	\$253.20	n/a	\$253.20	\$403.20	\$1,122.44	22.6%	35.9%	28.7%	27.6%	31.3%
Student Support, ²⁵ single or partnered, living away from home	\$462.50	\$139.60	\$602.10	\$752.10	\$1,122.44	53.6%	67.0%	56.7%	4.4%	61.8%
		\$93.07 (house sharing)	\$555.57	\$705.57		49.5%	62.9%	52.3%	50.2%	57.1%
Abstudy, single, dependant, aged between 18 and 21, living at home	\$304.60	n/a	\$304.60	\$454.60	\$1,122.44	27.1%	40.5%	23.9%	27.6%	
Abstudy, single, over 22, living at home	\$565.70	n/a	\$565.70	\$715.70	\$1,122.44	50.4%	63.8%	52.8%		
Abstudy, Single, aged between 16 and 21, living away from home	\$606.50	\$139.60	\$746.10	\$896.10	\$1,122.44	66.5%	79.9%	56.7%	54.4%	
		\$93.07 (house sharing)	\$699.57	\$849.57	\$1,122.44	62.3%	76.6%	52.3%	50.2%	
Abstudy, single, over 22, living away from home	\$612.00	\$139.60	\$751.60	\$901.60	\$1,122.44	67.0%	80.3%	65.8%	66.3%	
		\$93.07 (house sharing)	\$705.07	\$855.07		62.8%	76.2%	61.4%	62.0%	

²¹ Austudy and Abstudy do not have comparisons to 2008 as those programs did not exist.

²² 'Home' refers to not living with their parents or guardians.

²³ Australian Government, 2020, Abstudy; Australian Government, available at <https://www.servicesaustralia.gov.au/individuals/services/centrelink/abstudy-living-allowance/how-much-you-can-get/maximum-rates-dependent-students-and-australian-apprentices>; Australian Government, 2020, Youth allowance, available at <https://www.servicesaustralia.gov.au/individuals/services/centrelink/abstudy-living-allowance/how-much-you-can-get/maximum-rates-dependent-students-and-australian-apprentices>; Australian Government 2020, Austudy, available at <https://www.servicesaustralia.gov.au/individuals/services/centrelink/abstudy-living-allowance/how-much-you-can-get/maximum-rates-dependent-students-and-australian-apprentices>; Australian Government, 2020, Rent Assistance, available at <https://www.servicesaustralia.gov.au/individuals/services/centrelink/rent-assistance>.

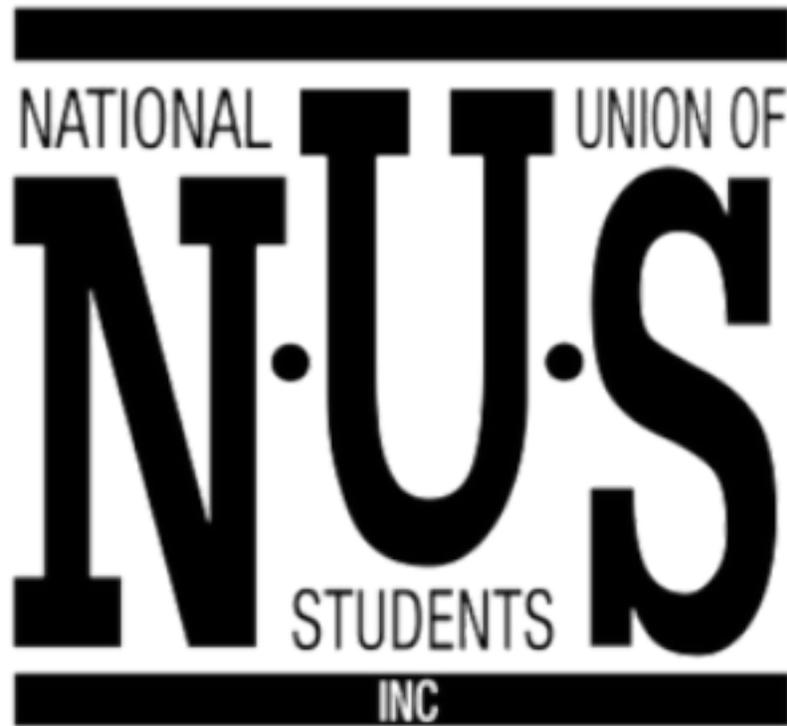
²⁴ Calculated from the weekly estimate of poverty under a single individual, who is head in workforce calculation, sourced from University of Melbourne, 2020, Poverty Lines: Australia: June Quarter 2020, available at https://melbourneinstitute.unimelb.edu.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0011/3526877/Poverty-Lines-Australia-June-2020.pdf.

²⁵ Student Support includes Austudy and Youth Allowance as they are the same rates.

Appendix B: Example of HELP debt repayments²⁶

Graduate earning average graduate salary	Current years it takes to pay off their debt	Savings on cost of qualification (to nearest thousand)	Their savings in the first four years after graduation
Female teacher	13	\$20,000	\$6,000
Female teacher	11	\$20,000	\$6,500
Female nurse	10	\$20,000	\$7,000
Male nurse	7	\$20,000	\$10,500
Female social worker	10	\$20,000	\$6,900
Male social worker	12	\$20,000	\$5,000
Female early childhood education and care worker	18	\$8,000	\$1,500
Male early childhood education and care worker	20	\$8,000	\$500

²⁶ Faruqi, M., 2018, Fee Free University and TAFE: Greens Launch Transformational 5 Point Plan for Higher Education, available <https://mehreen-faruqi.greensmps.org.au/articles/fee-free-university-and-tafe-greens-launch-transformational-5-point-plan-higher-education>



NUS FEDERAL BUDGET BRIEF
MAY 2021

Prepared and presented by NUS National President, Zoe Ranganathan and NUS Research Officer, Grace Sixsmith

Authorized by Zoe Ranganathan, NUS National President, 740 Swanston Street, Carlton 3051 VIC

PRESIDENT'S STATEMENT

Australia is not coming back, not with this budget and not without higher education.

There has been a 10% cut to the higher education sector in this year's Federal Budget delivered by Treasurer Josh Frydenburg.

The NUS strongly condemns the \$9.4million to private institutions to deliver course content online. This scheme will give a green light to low quality courses, and perpetuate the treatment of International students as cash cows.

Despite the sector being on track to lose \$19 billion over the next three years, the allotted \$26 million to support short course places at non-university higher education providers will only translate to a lacklustre 5,000 placements across the country.

The extension to the failed JobTrainer scheme and so-called 'Women's budget' is yet another demonstration of how out of touch Scott Morrison is with the needs of Australia's most vulnerable people.

JobTrainer has failed to meet its target of 450,000 jobs, with only 0.24% of the goal reached. Funding for women equates to only \$6.90 per woman per year. Spare change isn't enough to save us from sexual assault.

The government's target to return International students in 2022 is logistically unsound, with no funding for specialised quarantine centres in the state with the most students. That higher education is our fourth largest export appears to bear no concern for this government, providing no concrete plan for International university student revenue recovery.

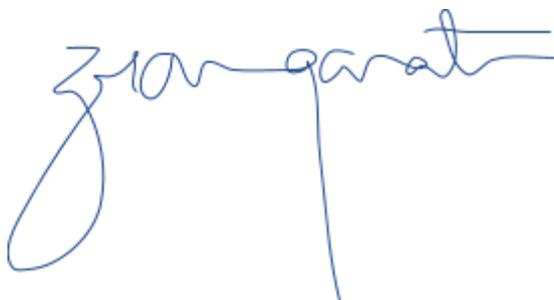
Overall, the 2021 Federal Budget sets the higher education sector up to fail. Universities will close, more staff will be cut, and students will be left with HELP debts and no degree.

NUS National President

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OVERVIEW

The 2021-2022 budget is a huge blow to the higher education sector. Students and Young People have been left behind yet again, and Morrison and Frydenberg continue to show contempt for the future of both our tertiary education institutions and the younger generations.

RESEARCH

The government is making further cuts to the research sector. In an attempt to refocus all education related activities with jobs, \$1.1 million has been allocated over two years from 2020-21 to boost financial incentives for universities to enrol students in 'Industry PhDs'. This is to encourage students to undertake an industry placement while they undertake their PhD. The government is to fund this commitment with \$11.4 million over four years from the Higher Education Support program.

Further cuts to research are occurring from the cessation of additional funding to maintain universities' research efforts in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. This blow will be further funded by lower costs of education under the Commonwealth Grant Scheme as a result of the *Job Ready Graduates* higher education reform package.

EDUCATION

Short Courses and Online Microcredential Courses

5,000 Commonwealth supported short course places will be provided to non-university higher education providers.

Higher Education Cuts

Expenses under higher education are set to decrease by 8.3% from 2020-21 to 2021-22 and decrease by 9.3% in real terms from 2021-22 to 2024-25. This is from the cessation of additional funding (\$1bn) to maintain universities' research efforts in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. It also reflects the expenses of the forward estimates primarily from lower costs under the Commonwealth Grant Scheme as a result of the *Job Ready Graduates* higher education reform package.

- Overall, 10% decrease in higher education funding each year for the next 4 years. This will see an average of 250,000 jobs cut (NTEU estimates).

Women In STEM

To further grow the pool of women in STEM, the government is investing;

- \$42.4 million over seven years to support more than 230 women to pursue Higher Level STEM Qualifications.
 - These scholarships will be provided in partnership with industry, to build job-ready experience, networks and the cross-cutting capabilities to succeed in modern STEM careers.
 - This program will complement the Women in STEM Cadetship and Advanced Apprenticeships Program announced in the 2020-21 Budget, which targets women to enter industry-relevant, pre-bachelor study.

Cyber Security Funds

The Digital Infrastructure and Skills Fund invests in projects to improve the quality and quantity of cyber security professionals in Australia.

- \$22.6 million over six years from 2021-22 to establish the Next Generation Emerging Technologies Graduates Program to provide up to 234 scholarships in emerging technologies areas.
- \$16.4 million over three years from 2021-22 to establish a Peri-Urban Mobile Program to improve

- mobile phone reception in peri-urban fringe areas that are prone to bushfire.
- \$10.7 million over three years from 2021-22 to trial up to four industry-led Digital Skills Cadetship pilots to develop new and innovative pathways to increase the number of Australians with high level digital skills.
- \$7.7 million over four years from 2021-22 for the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission to continue and extend the Measuring Broadband Australia program.

WELFARE

There have been no further changes to the rates of payment for Centrelink inclusive of youth allowance and Austudy. The government's newly introduced youth specialist employment service, 'Transition to Work' will receive \$481.2 million over the forward estimates. The government has also increased the income free area to \$150 per fortnight for JobSeeker payment and youth allowance (other), allowing recipients of these payments to earn more income before their payments taper. The eligibility criteria for JobSeeker Payment and Youth Allowance (other) will also be expanded for those required to self-isolate or care for others as a result of COVID-19 until 30 June 2021.

There have been broad discussions of enhancing the mutual obligation requirements for centrelink yet no discussion of what these could entail. Increased mutual obligations may look like the trialled new employment services model which includes points for both study and job applications. National rollout of the trial has not been confirmed.

Abstudy

We will see an increase to the base rate of working-age payments by \$50 per fortnight from 1 April 2021. This increase applies to JobSeeker Payment, Youth Allowance, Parenting Payment, Austudy, ABSTUDY Living Allowance, Partner Allowance, Widow Allowance, Special Benefit, Farm Household Allowance and for certain Education Allowance recipients under the Department of Veterans' Affairs Education Scheme

EMPLOYMENT

JobTrainer

The Federal Government has a track record of being out of touch with young people. We've seen this continue with the government's announcement of \$1 billion for the JobTrainer scheme. This scheme does not give enough to students, apprentices and trainees. Worryingly, this will see our sector become second rate and out of touch with other first class education nations.

Raising youth allowance, lowering the age of independence and funding tertiary and vocational education is what young people need to ensure that they are able to support themselves until they can find a job or finish their training.

JobMaker

JobTrainer will be supporting JobMaker, the government's failed scheme to create Australian jobs. Despite claims that JobMaker would create 450,000 jobs, only 1,100 have been created.

The 2021-2022 budget has seen the government commit to \$111.0 million over five years to provide quality servicing to Community Development Program recipients who have lost their job as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic and develop a new Remote Jobs Program pilot in selected regions across Australia. The new

program will replace the CDP and be co-designed with Indigenous Australians to support remote communities by targeting job creation and skills development.

ENVIRONMENT

The government is still yet to commit to the 2050 no emissions target under the Kyoto Protocol. There is a stark lack of discussion around renewable energy in this budget, instead preferencing a gas and technology angle to attempt to combat climate change. \$1.6 billion will be spent on “low emission technologies”. The technologies that have been proven to work - wind and solar - receive nothing in this budget.

This government has also failed to consider funding for Indigenous lead fire and disaster prevention strategies. Instead, a large sum of \$1.2 billion over 5 years is being allocated to land management without consulting the traditional custodians of this land.

MENTAL HEALTH

Over 25's

A new network of mental health clinics for Australians who have aged out of Head Space - over 25s - will be established across the country with \$487m allocated for that.

- \$2.3bn will be spent on mental health in total, including a national suicide prevention office. There is no extra funding for additional mental health sessions. We know this is what the sector has been crying out for, but this is not happening.

Specialist Services for Adults

The government will invest to improve access to in-person community based, multidisciplinary adult mental health services. This includes \$487.2 million to establish a network of specialist Adult Mental Health Centres, including a central intake and assessment phone service. *These Centres will be opened in partnership with states and territories.*

- For young Australians aged 12 to 25, \$278.6 million is being made available to enhance and expand headspace centres across the country.
 - For children under 12 years, the government will invest \$46.6 million to support parents and early intervention, and \$54.2 million to establish child mental health and wellbeing hubs with the states and territories.

Medicare Additions

- A further \$111.4 million is being provided to expand the Better Access Program helping more people access psychiatrists, psychologists and general practitioners through Medicare, including new sessions for patients’ family members and carers, and additional provisions for group therapy sessions.
 - \$111.2 million is being provided to expand and improve high-quality, free and low-cost digital mental health services.

Suicide Prevention and Elimination

To achieve its commitment of working towards zero suicides, the government is expanding the services available to Australians experiencing suicidal distress and their loved ones.

- Through a National Agreement with states and territories, the government will provide \$158.6 million to ensure that every Australian discharged from hospital following a suicide attempt is offered at least three months follow up care.
 -

- A further \$22.0 million will be provided for postvention support for the family and friends of people who die by suicide. A
 - National Suicide Prevention Office will also be established as a central point of coordination for a national approach.

Recovery for Eating Disorders

To deliver better treatment services for people living with eating disorders and their families, the government is making an additional \$26.9 million available to a range of coordinated care providers from early intervention through to recovery services.

Culturally Diverse Communities

\$16.9 million over four years from 2021-22 to provide mental health services and support to Australians from culturally and linguistically diverse communities, including for survivors of torture and trauma.

FIRST NATIONS

Despite a number of band-aid solutions to combat issues faced by First Nations communities, there is nothing from the government to combat systemic racism and institutional prejudice. The government has also made no attempts to implement the recommendations from the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody, which has just passed its 30th anniversary.

Aged Care, Health, Education and Safety

This Budget contains funding for improved outcomes for Indigenous Australians in aged care, health, infrastructure, education and women's safety.

- The government will provide \$243.6 million over five years from 2020-21 to improve economic, social and education outcomes for Indigenous Australians.
- This includes \$128.4 million for a new Indigenous skilled employment program which will better prepare people for the workforce.
- It also includes \$36.7 million for native title Prescribed Bodies Corporate to boost their capacity to take up economic development opportunities.
- The government is providing \$57.6 million to work with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities to break the cycle of violence through culturally safe, community-driven, evidence-based and trauma informed solutions.

Jobs

This Budget provides an \$84.9 million increase to the Community Development Program. This will assist job seekers in remote parts of Australia to get back into work as the economy recovers. The government is creating job opportunities for Indigenous Australians with;

- a \$13.1 million pilot of a new remote jobs program, co-designed with Indigenous Australians, and by investing \$28.1 million in the Indigenous visual arts industry.
- The government is providing increased access to culturally appropriate mental health support and quality aged care.

Government Regional Services

The government is providing \$99.3 million over four years to deliver face to face servicing in remote locations. This program provides people in remote Australia with direct access to payments and government services.

K-12 Schooling

The government is investing \$63.5 million over four years from the Indigenous Advancement Strategy to support Additional Places in girls academies.

- The proposal would provide an additional 2,700 places by 2023 and is expected to generate up to 50 new jobs in the first year and up to 135 new jobs by 2023. Girls academies provide culturally appropriate support to girls and young women to achieve year 12 attainment, and in their transition to employment or future study.

WOMEN

The government has an appalling track record with women. This was exposed earlier this year, and since then there has been a never-ending attempt to try and win back female voters. However, this budget seemingly defines 'women' as those who are married with children, leaving young people out of the picture entirely.

In yet another blow to Australian women, funding for the Office For Women has been slashed by \$7.1 million, highlighting exactly where the government's priorities lie. This equates to only \$6.90 per woman, per year.

Child Care

The proposed child care subsidy will see \$1.7 billion injected into the sector to allow for second and subsequent children to be covered under the scheme. This is a part of the government's attempt to bring more women back into the workforce. However, this does not contribute to the necessary systemic change needed to improve the economic security of Australian women. Over 750,000 families will miss out on this subsidy, and no one will receive the benefits of this until 2022. The government must commit to investing in early childhood education, which will boost female workforce participation.

Women's National Health Strategy

The government has also put money towards a seemingly positive Women's National Health Strategy, spending \$16.6 million. However, this only comes to about \$6.70 per woman across maternal, sexual and reproductive health. Gynaecology services will now be funded by Medicare, with \$22 million slated for the new addition.

Domestic Violence

The government has committed \$261.4 million for frontline domestic and family violence over two years from 2021-22 under a new National Partnership Agreement to be negotiated with the states and territories. It's good to see that the government is attempting to make up for its horrendous budget last year, and is spending more on legal assistance for women facing domestic violence than was spent in the entire women's economic security statement last year. However, support for women fleeing family violence is \$5000, with only \$1500 as cash-in-hand for those leaving domestic violence victim-survivors in financial limbo. This funding falls short of protecting vulnerable women and children.

Respect@Work

The government's lacklustre response to the workplace sexual harassment Respect@Work report has also received similarly unimpressive funding. \$9.3 million over four years has been to support their implementation of the report's recommendations and the Council Secretariat.

INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS

Again, the government has failed International Students. There is no clear plan for International Students to be able to re-enter the country until 2022, unless they are coming from Safe Travel Zones. Currently there are small phased programs to bring International Students into the country from late 2021, gradually increasing into 2022. While this gradual arrival of International Students will support economic growth, particularly for the education sector, but this will be too late. By this time, universities will have seen the end of government provided research funding designed to support universities incomes while the country locks out international students.

A further \$53.6 million has been spent to support Australian education providers most reliant on international students. Grants of up to \$150,000 will be available for eligible private higher education and English Language Intensive Course for Overseas Students providers to invest in staff expertise and new teaching solutions.

International students who are in the country will have the current fortnightly limit of 40 hours of work scrapped, allowing them to work for longer hours to support themselves.

This government has also failed to plan logistically for the return of International students. With no funding to specialised quarantine facilities, the NUS expects the government to struggle to return students to Australia, particularly those with low income.

SUPERANNUATION AND YOUNG PEOPLE

The Federal government has raised the First Home Super Saver Scheme limit from \$30,000 to \$50,000. The scheme allows first homebuyers to make tax-free deposits to their super accounts for withdrawal later to buy an owner-occupied home.

The scheme is designed to help home buyers scrape together a deposit faster by saving money inside their super funds. The government is encouraging Australians to dip into their superannuation for reasons other than the very specific, uncomplicated purpose for which the 90s-era arrangement came about. Incentives such as the first home buyers scheme (introduced to offset the effect of GST on home ownership) have often had the entirely predictable effect of driving up house prices. Withdrawal of Super can leave young people unable to sufficiently support themselves in their later life, disproportionately affecting young people and women.

The \$450 per month threshold for compulsory superannuation will be removed, meaning employers will have to pay super to low paid workers, such as part-time staff and casuals. The federal government's recent retirement income review estimated such an initiative would see about 300,000 individuals receive additional super guarantee payments each month, 63 per cent of whom are women.

These changes will however not be beneficial to individuals who are underemployed, are paid cash in hand or in the current climate stagnating wage growth. There have been no provisions brought in by the government to address these issues.