



For immediate release

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Peak student bodies unite to slam budget for failing on education policy

Tertiary students have again been given the raw end of the deal, with the 2019 Federal Budget entirely absent of policy for universities or anything substantial for vocational education.

The peak student bodies - the National Union of Students (NUS), Council of Australian Postgraduate Associations (CAPA), Union of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Students (UATSIS), and National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Postgraduate Association (NATSIPA) - stand together to condemn the Coalition Government for once again failing students.

With the funding freeze from the 2017 MYEFO still in place, universities are set to net a 5% decrease in funding by 2020. There is no plan to undo the damage of the Liberals' cuts to higher education and research during their term. Commitments to research funding are being cherry-picked by the government, and follow cuts of \$328 million over the last 18 months.

While the Government has promised \$525 million towards vocational education, this follows cuts of \$3 billion over the last six years. Furthermore, the Government cannot be trusted to deliver their vocational education apprenticeship scheme considering the momentous failure of their PaTH project from 2016, which saw serious workplace safety breaches and less than one sixth of the anticipated internship opportunities taken up.

Project funding for TAFEs and universities is paltry in comparison to the years of cuts, and reflects a last-ditch attempt at vote buying rather than any actual policy.

“Throwing crumbs at new projects in TAFEs and universities is just an attempt to distract from this government’s absent education agenda,” said NUS President Desiree Cai. “The last six years have seen successive cuts to VET and higher education. This is nothing more than electoral opportunism.”

“The Federal Budget reflects the Government’s total lack of vision when it comes to our nation’s future,” said CAPA President Natasha Abrahams. “The long-term dividends of university research are well established, but the Government wishes to forgo research investment in favour of tax cuts that disproportionately benefit those who need it least.”

“Almost \$11 million has been removed from the Indigenous Student Success Program (ISSP) in this budget. The result of these cuts means the ISSP has not had a funding increase for approximately 4 years,” said NATSIPA Vice-President, Dr Sharlene Leroy-Dyer. “This government is doing nothing to ‘close the gap’ on our educational disadvantage.”

“Education is the great enabler; we know that when our mob finish university, it is so much easier for us to move ahead in life,” said UATSIS President Braedyn Edwards. “Unfortunately, the Commonwealth Government has chosen to place greater emphasis on the budget bottom line and the great irony is this: while the Government’s budget is allegedly back in the black, they’re not backing us blacks.”

NUS, CAPA, NATSIPA, and UATSIS are willing to assist the Government to develop a tertiary education policy should the Government decide that they need one.

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