



For immediate release

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## **Students welcome contract cheating legislation, but advise law should only target commercial cheating companies**

The Australian Government has proposed legislation to target providers of contract cheating services in a series of amendments to the Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency (TEQSA) Act.

While the legislation is a positive step forward in combating the issue of contract cheating with a particular emphasis on organised commercial providers of contract cheating services, students are wary that the broad scope of the legislation may target individuals who could breach academic integrity by providing assistance to their friends.

The peak student bodies - the National Union of Students (NUS), the Council of Australian Postgraduate Associations (CAPA), the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Postgraduate Association (NATSIPA), and the Union of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Students (UATSIS) - call on the government to amend the proposed legislation so that it only targets organised, commercial cheating providers.

“This legislation needs to target contract cheating services specifically and exclusively. Individual students who breach academic integrity should not be liable for a two-year prison sentence, even if that won’t be enforced against them,” said Desiree Cai, NUS National President. “We need a multifaceted approach to tackling contract cheating, and taking on commercial services requires targeted legislation.”

“Cheating that occurs with the assistance of family or friends should continue to be dealt with through university academic misconduct processes, supported by an educative strategy to prevent cheating,” says CAPA President, Natasha Abrahams.

“It is vital to have legislation targeting commercial cheating providers to ensure academic integrity. However, we should be vigilant in guarding against laws that could be unintentionally harshly applied to individuals, particularly Indigenous Student Success Program (‘ISSP’) tutors,” says NATSIPA President, Jahmillah Johnson.

“Laws can have unintended consequences, and in this case, we are concerned about the potential impact the current drafting may have on individuals. The Commonwealth Government should be concerned with the predatory commercial operators in this area, not students,” added UATSIS President, Braedyn Edwards.

NUS, CAPA, NATSIPA and UATSIS have provided feedback to the Department of Education, outlining solutions to these issues in the legislation.

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