

## Staying There

Once in tertiary education, students should receive assistance in the form of income support and on-campus services providing the means to achieve full potential. Full potential can only be reached if students are able to maintain a healthy balance between work, study and leisure time.

### Key Issues

The key issues involved in student retention in tertiary institutions include the inadequate level of student income support and its detrimental impact, decreased resources for on-campus services and the difficulty balancing conflicting demands on time.

### Recommendations

The age of independence for Youth Allowance recipients should be reduced from 25 to 18 so that students are not assessed on the basis of their parents' income and assets.

The Youth Allowance threshold of earned income before penalty should be raised, to matched CPI indexation, from \$6000 to at least \$8000.

Scholarships providing financial support should not be included as accessible income when evaluating eligibility for income support.

The *What's Fair in Education?* forum will address these issues and recommendations, with an interactive workshop facilitated by Sally Skinner, researcher for Council of Australian Postgraduate Associations (CAPA).

The forum will be held on October 17, 2007 at 4:30 PM in building 20 (level 1, courtroom 2), RMIT University. (Corner La Trobe and Russell streets.)

### Economic

- About 70% of full-time undergraduates work an average of 15 hours a week during a semester - 39% believed their paid employment had an adverse affect on their studies.<sup>1</sup>
- One in eight students reported that they regularly go without food or other necessities because they cannot afford them.<sup>2</sup>
- The maximum Youth Allowance benefit that can be received by a student under 25 and living in a share house is 38% (\$245 per fortnight) below the poverty line (\$645.15 per fortnight).<sup>3</sup>

### On-campus Services

- A CAPA report found that at least four postgraduate student associations have been reduced to 5% of their pre-voluntary student unionism (VSU) funding, while their staff numbers have been cut by half.<sup>4</sup>
- Importantly, representation and advocacy services for students (often beneficial for students considering leaving their courses) have been severely curtailed.<sup>5</sup>
- Cutbacks resulting from voluntary student unionism are expected to negatively impact low-income and rural students. One university has been forced to halve its yearly \$10,000 budget for food vouchers and eliminate a textbook subsidy, while another has been forced to terminate its \$1500 interest-free loan scheme.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Universities Australia, Australian Students Finances Survey 2006, Final Report (August 2007)

<sup>2</sup>ibid.

<sup>3</sup>National Union of Students. *Your Rights at Uni - Your Right to Student Representation* (2006).

<sup>4</sup>Council for Australian Postgraduate Associations. (2007). VSU One Year On... <http://capa.edu.au/vsu-one-year>

<sup>5</sup>ibid.

<sup>6</sup>SRC. (2007). <http://www.src.usyd.edu.au>