

Media Release:

UQU calls for the Federal Government to do better in their plan to address placement poverty

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

The UQ Union has been advocating to ensure that the issue of placement poverty is addressed, calling for the Federal Government to put an end to placement poverty and ensure that students who are required to undertake mandatory placements as part of their studies are paid for the work they are doing.

This week, the Federal Government recently announced that they will be introducing a new payment for teaching, nursing, and social work students as part of the Federal Budget. The UQ Union welcomes this announcement, however, is concerned with the fact that these Prac Payments do not cover all students who are undertaking mandatory unpaid placements, and that this payment is below the minimum wage and means tested.

UQU President Angus McRae says, "The announcement by the Federal Government to introduce a new Prac Payment for teaching, nursing, and social work students is welcomed, however, it is concerning that these payments do not cover all students who are required to take mandatory unpaid placements as part of their studies. Students who are studying Medicine, Speech Pathology, Occupational Therapy, Paramedicine, Dietetics, Physiotherapy, Psychology, Veterinary Science and Veterinary Technology, to name a few, are all missing out on these payments."

"The failure to include a payment for all students who are required to undertake mandatory unpaid placements continues to neglect the issue of placement poverty for students who will not have access to these payments and support. It should still be recognised that this is a promising step forward."

The UQ Union is concerned with the amount that is available per week for students to access as part of this payment as well as the fact that the payment is means tested.

UQU Vice-President (Student Rights) Jordy Duffey says, "Making the payment means tested continues to create barriers for students who will depend on accessing this payment. This payment should be available for all students who are undertaking mandatory placement as they deserve to be paid for the work they are doing."

"Students who are undertaking their mandatory placements continue to experience placement poverty and are financially burdened with out-of-pocket expenses that impact their ability to study, earn an income, and their health whilst also dealing with the cost of living. The weekly Prac Payment of \$319.50 that has been announced realistically is not enough to financially support students who are undertaking mandatory placements and continues to support the systemic issue of placement poverty."

The UQ Union is calling for the Federal Government to do the following to address placement poverty:

1. Ensure that the new Prac Payment includes all students who are undertaking mandatory placement as part of their studies;
2. Ensure that the new Prac Payment is accessible to international students who are undertaking placement;
3. Ensure that the new Prac Payment is increased and to be at least the minimum wage;
4. Remove the means test requirement as part of the payment;
5. Amend the Fair Work Act to make unpaid placements illegal.



The UQ Union is committed to advocating for the rights of students and fighting against placement poverty. We believe that no student should have to undergo the financial burdens and out-of-pocket expenses they have been experiencing while studying and completing their mandatory placements in their chosen profession. The Federal Government must do more to ensure that the systemic issue of placement poverty is addressed.

For media enquiries, please contact: student.rights@uqu.com.au