

Media Release:

HECS indexation reform is not enough to ensure cost of living relief for students: UQU calls for the Australian Federal Government to do more

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

In the lead up to the Federal Government's budget, it was announced on Sunday 5 May that the Federal budget will be reforming HECS indexation and wiping out over \$3 billion in student debt that was accrued due to indexation last year. The UQ Union welcomes this announcement and the reforms to come, however, is concerned with the Government's message that this is to offer cost of living relief to anyone that has a student debt.

UQU President Angus McRae says, "The \$3 billion in student debt being wiped out is very welcome news, however, can't be considered a complete solution to a complex problem. Students and recent graduates have cost of living pressures that need to be eased now, with many students yet to pay back their ballooning HECS debts. University students around Australia are being disproportionately impacted by the current cost of living crisis, and they need more substantial debt relief than these measures provide."

"This announcement represents the first step in addressing the larger problem of a fairer and equitable higher education system for all students to access. Students are experiencing a cost of living crisis where food insecurity and financial stress continue to be a debilitating reality whilst they are studying. If the Federal budget intends to offer cost of living relief, it will have to ensure that no student undergoes financial hardship whilst they are studying. No student should be left behind in an inequitable system."

Earlier this year, the UQ Union conducted a cost of living survey with over 875 responses from students. Over 85% of respondents indicated that they had been impacted by cost of living pressures recently. The survey indicated that the cost of housing, rent, food, and groceries were the main worries in consideration to cost of living pressures for students at the University of Queensland.

UQU Vice-President (Student Rights) Jordy Duffey says, "Whilst a reform of HECS debts was a key recommendation of the Australian University Accords towards ensuring a fairer and equitable higher education system, the wipe out of the HECS indexation debt accrued from last year is not offering the cost of living relief that students need now."

"If we are talking about a cost of living budget and offering any glimpse of hope and relief for all students, the Federal Government will ensure that all students are provided with cost of living relief that includes providing them with the necessary financial support to help alleviate the costs of living pressures they are experiencing whilst they are studying."

The UQ Union believes that there is a need for higher education to be fairer and more equitable for all to access. To address this, it is imperative that the Federal Government addresses the cost of living pressures that students are experiencing in the Federal budget, as no student should have to undergo such hardships while studying. We are committed to advocating for the rights of all students.

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