



National Union of Students Inc

Report of the National President

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1. The NUS campaign

- Housing

NUS has launched our 2010 Housing Campaign 'If you value our minds, put a roof over our heads'.

As outlined in the NUS Housing Project policy that was passed by National Conference Special General Meeting on the 30th of January, this report will rely on extensive consultation with campus student organizations, university housing services and on-campus colleges. An initial survey was kicked off two weeks ago to target the majority of O'Weeks – and we received around 900 responses.

Graham Hastings has begun work on this report already. He is currently calling Universities and visiting their websites to see what Information they offer students on housing options. This will be completed in the next week, and a housing discussion paper will be developed by NUS for campuses to respond in the next month.

Housing should be the focus of the National Day of Action.

I have spoken to University Vice Chancellors, the NTEU Universities Australia and Group of Eight about remedies to fix the student housing options:

1. Raising Rent Assistance
2. Creating policies similar to ANU – finding accommodation for Commencing First Year students
3. Lobbying for the creation of a fund to build student accommodation
4. Having university subsidized and run housing, rather than seeking out Campus Living Villages

Quality

The Quality Project is underway, with the Questionnaire reaching campuses in the next two weeks. We have been tweaking the questionnaire for a while now (please see **attached** questionnaire as the latest final copy).

Over the next two months I will be visiting the capital cities and regional centres to meet with campus presidents and education officers about the questionnaire and will be giving them a briefing on:

- What NUS will be focusing on in the Report
- How to target students and set a regular stream of focus groups
- How to arrange for a National Office Bearer to come to your campus to assist in this process

- Deadlines
- Research component for your campus: how to find policies and use your research officer.

We hope to have this compiled and finished and ready for media presentation by late August/September

Youth Allowance

As the NUS 2010 term started Youth Allowance was the prominent issue, and continues to be. NUS this year has continued to plug the position of NUS in 2009, supporting the Government's Youth Allowance reform, but continuing to ask for more money to be injected into the scheme.

I have spoken to Government ministers to see how NUS can break the Senate deadlock over Youth Allowance. There are lots of complicating factors:

- Greens Private Members Bill, proposing to split the scholarships from the bill – Greens have been unclear whether they will support the Government's package as is, and if it fail then put the Private Members Bill.
- Senator Fielding's (and Liberal) Amendment to split the bill, costing \$1billion

Other factors to be aware of:

If YA isn't passed by the 18th of March, the scholarships will not be available to students who would have ordinarily qualified under the new scheme. This is because the scholarships expire on April 1st.

YA looks to be back in the Senate the week beginning the 8th or the 15th of March.

Steps for NUS to be taking to help YA get passed (focus on Tony Abbott)

- Email jamming – sending constant emails to his inbox so he cant ignore them. Campus presidents and State branch Presidents should be co-ordinating this in the next two weeks.
- Calling Abbott's Office constantly
- Finding regional/rural students who would benefit under the new scheme (this is most important for NUS).

2. Government Submissions

- **Indicator Framework for Performance Funding**

This was a discussion paper released during National Conference in December, and Graham worked on it over January.

The Government is offering Universities a share of \$135million extra in funding if they are able to prove that they satisfy a set of what are going to be benchmark criteria which cover:

- Student Attainment
- Student Experience
- Student Participation and Inclusion
- Quality of Learning Outcomes

The Discussion paper suggested that a first year survey should be developed to measure the Student Experience on university campuses, and NUS has suggested that we take a constructive and leading role in the development of this survey.

The Paper also proposed we measure social inclusion on just the low SES targets, and NUS had proposed that a more rounded set of indicia are included: Indigenous, rural and regional as well as low SES.

Feel free to read the full report, which should be on the Website soon.

3. Tertiary Education Quality Standards Agency

• Framework and Structure

In 2009, the NUS President did a lot of work to ensure that NUS was at the TEQSA table – however the Department seems to have shut us out of a lot of the consultation process.

On the 25th of February I took part in a Stakeholder Focus Group on the new structure of TEQSA, where the work that DEEWR had done so far was unveiled for the first time. The structure raises a lot of problems from NUS, least of all the fact that we were not consulted.

The way the current proposed structure will operate will see student groups as a consultative group of a consultative group to the CEO of TEQSA, without being formally recognised in the structures of the new body. When I am visiting the state in relation to our Quality Report, I will give a briefing on how TEQSA will operate.

• Response:

From here, I am going to write a letter to the DEEWR Quality Branch Manager, Catherine Vandermark, expressing the concerns that NUS has with such a structure. This will include proposing:

- That the Expert Panel needs a student representative sitting on it, as is the case in England – as a best practice measure in the sector
- That it is NUS who represents students at this level, in the new body

- That NUS is written into the legislation that will go through Parliament when TEQSA is created as an Act of Parliament. This will ensure that if a Liberal Government takes over, NUS cannot be overlooked as easily.
- NUS is also concerned that the CEO of TEQSA will have too much day to day discretionary power over the direction of the body, and can only be appointed and removed by the Government

This is something that will be ongoing and I plan on keeping National Executive up to date on progress.

4. Conferences

- **Bologna Policy Conference**

I have been invited by the Australian Government to represent Australian Students at the Bologna Policy Conference that will be taking place in Vienna from the 8th-13th of March.

As many of you will be aware, Bologna Education is a system of education that looks to create internationally transferrable and recognisable degrees of similar structure and qualification. The Government has committed to introducing Bologna to Australia, and we have already seen incarnations of this in the Melbourne Model and in the Future Frameworks at the University of Western Australia.

- **European Students Union Conference**

I have been in touch with the European Students' Union, and they have invited me to speak at the ESU's pre-Bologna Conference. As some you know may know, Bologna is causing a stir in Europe and students are generally unhappy about the direction it is taking their education: notably in Germany, Austria and Greece. I will be giving a presentation on how Australia is dealing with Bologna implementation.

I will write a report on both of these conference for NUS National Executive for the next meeting.

- **Universities Australia**

I was invited to and spoke at the Universities Australia 2nd Annual Conference on the topic of "Making a more inclusive Higher Education Sector". This Conference was between the 3rd-5th of February.

I was also pleased to see that quite a few campus presidents came to the conference.

At this conference, DPM Julia Gillard announced the My University website. NUS responses can be found on the website under media releases.

- **Tertiary and Higher Education Conference**

I will be speaking on the importance of funding student services.

5. **Strategic Housing Lobbying**

As it is an election year, NUS is going to try to get some wins for students in Housing. We believe there is enough of an outcry and we are mounting a good media case for housing to become an issue in most capital cities. We need the help of campus presidents and NUS Exec members from regional campuses to help us generate a media interest in housing in the coming months too.

NUS is going to be targeting not only DMP and Housing Minister Tanya Plibersek but also state housing ministers. Students have been responding well to the ANU policy of finding accommodations for relocating first year students, and NUS would like to explore the idea of freeing up land for universities to build more housing on campus. NUS is also arguing that on-campus housing is a great way to link students to the campus, provide affordable and available housing and enhance the student experience.

Over the next week I will be in touch with State Branch Presidents about meetings with their State Housing Ministers. It is important that we target State Minister as well, as they hold the land that NUS wants for housing!

This year, I hope the NDA will focus on housing to bring much-needed media attention to an issue that I feel positive that we can get some traction on.

- **Sector Group Support**

I have approached the Group of Eight and Universities Australia, as well as individual Vice-Chancellors about the state of housing at universities and in the rental markets around universities.

As part of our Housing Project, students on their campuses need to meet with their Vice-Chancellors and discuss the merits of investing in student accommodation. I hope to eventually meet up with all Vice Chancellors on this issue. Particular support for this issue has come from Sandra Harding, Vice Chancellor at the James Cook University.

6. **International Student Representative Body and Baird Review**

I would hope that Lily has put in a report about the progress made for the new International Student peak group. In brief, this new group will begin operation from April this year after an inaugural meeting of the group.

Membership will consist of national International student groups, with NUS and CAPA playing a part on that Board. The group will not be seen as a

definitive representative group of international students, but as a consultative group for Government.

- **Baird Review**

The Baird Review into the ESOS Act will be released this week. Two weeks ago I was invited to an In-Camera Brief of recommendations that would be presented to the DPM.

Although bound by the confidence of the Baird Brief, I will note that most of the recommendations of NUS have been followed and will be happy with the acceptance of the report if it carried out in the manner which it was presented to NUS.

7. Education Conference

I would like to formally open expressions of interest for campuses to register with me for holding Education Conference 2010.

Recommendation:

That NUS National Executive opens expressions of interest for holding Education Conference in 2010.

These expressions should be directed to the National President.

Expressions will be closed in two weeks (20th March).

Campuses who are interested are expected to produce a prospectus of Education Conference to the next National Executive meeting.

8. Establishment of Constitutional Working Group

After the NUS National Conference at the end of 2009, there has been some concerns that the Constitution must be amended to ensure that such situations that NUS was faced with would not occur again. After consultation with NUS affiliates, I have decided that NUS National Executive needs to create a working group of the Executive body to consult our Affiliates about the best way of engaging them on this issue and to change NUS's regulations and Constitution for the better.

At this stage, I would like NUS National Executive to pass the following recommendation:

Recommendation:

That NUS National Executive endorses the creation of a working group of NUS Executive in 2010 to operate as a forum for consultation on Constitutional change.

NUS Executive empowers the National President and the National General Secretary to create a framework for this committee in consultation with interested groups.