

## NUS POLICY 2008

### ADMINISTRATION AND DEVELOPMENT

#### **ADMIN 1: NUS Website**

##### Preamble:

The National Union of Students (NUS) needs a participatory website that allows for:

- \* the easy dissemination of resources and information;
- \* new ways to engage with students in both online and offline forms;
- \* activists to engage with each other and discuss issues and campaigns in a constructive manner; and
- \* students to provide feedback both to office bearers and the organisation itself on campaigns or any other issue.

As with any action taken by the union this should be done in a way that is consultative and combats all forms of oppression.

##### Action:

1. That a collective be established to investigate through consultation the best way to engage with the broader student community and to implement these changes.
2. That the NUS websites existing Joomla installation be expanded to allow community participation and involvement.
3. That assistance be provided to all state and national office bearers in order to fully utilise the new website and develop content specifically for the needs of their networks.

*M: Kris Gesling (Newcastle)*

*S: Talia Barret (Newcastle)*

#### **ADMIN 2: Student Representative Networks**

##### Preamble:

Representation for students at university and faculty level is often unsupported by the university. Most universities have different structures and methods of election to specific positions, but the principles of student representation are universal and the support structures needed for students in these roles should be facilitated by the university administration and campus student organisations. There has been a decline in quality representation since the introduction of VSU and the need for students to engage in higher levels of employment.

As key stakeholders within the University, students have a strong capacity to enhance the day-to-day running of the University and to positively influence

its future direction. Students have a vested interest in ensuring that they have a high quality education. Similarly, the University's success has a direct correlation to student satisfaction levels. For these reasons it is essential that student input occurs at every level of decision making within the University.

It should be a responsibility of the university and of student organisations to facilitate a coordinated support network that allows student representatives to feel they can properly engage in the meeting discussion, feel like their contribution is meaningful and listened to, have a full understanding of the meeting procedure and agenda set and have networks with other student representatives from other faculties or positions so they can share knowledge and experiences.

### **Platform:**

1. That the NUS support the creation of Student Representative Networks (SRN), to be coordinated by campus student organisations. This aims at increasing involvement of the general student population in University decision making structures, coordinating student representation to ensure that student voices and concerns are heard and that the nature of the issues facing students across the university are reported to all student associations; and provides support and funded centralised training, through the SRC, to student representatives throughout the entirety of their term.
2. That the NUS supports campus student organisations in their attempts to call on university administrations to provide adequate funding and induction training for the networks participants.

### **Action**

1. That the National education officer and National President encourage and assist campus organisations in the creation of student representative networks
2. That the state branches of NUS consider networking faculty and other student representatives from different universities so students have discussion forums where experiences and ideas for action can be shared.
3. That the NUS create a comparative study of universities in Australia that support student consultation and the student voice in the creation of university policy and academic issues.

That the NUS nationally organise induction-training resources and develop programs managed and maintained by the union to ensure sustainable national representation in the long term.

*M: Kate Laing (University of Sydney)*

*S: Pete Boyle (La Trobe Bundoora)*

## ADMIN 3: NUS Online 09

### Preamble:

1. The National Union of Students, its activists and departments, participate in many campaigns each year which target mobilising as many students as possible around one or several issues / demands.
2. It has been difficult to mobilise students in recent years due to factors out of the control of the National Union. In particular, poor income support and the high cost of living have pushed more and more students into greater hours of employment and less time on campus devoted to their studies and extra-curricular activity.
3. Despite spending less time on campus, young people are not apathetic and are interested and passionate about a range of political and social issues.
4. In this context, NUS can learn a lot from other progressive activist organisations that have organised successful campaigns and actions via online communication. The forms of online communication are diverse and constantly evolving and improving in effectiveness and cost efficiency.
5. NUS recognizes that there is a strong desire by NUS activists and office bearers to share information, events, photos and campaign ideas. Discussion over e-lists somewhat fulfils this need but more can be done.
6. NUS acknowledges that new students at university may have little knowledge of their National Union, and that knowledge of and engagement in the union strengthen the education movement and keep NUS accountable to students.

### Platform:

1. The National Union of Students rejects claims often made in mainstream media that young people are 'apathetic' and disengaged from political processes.
2. The National Union of Students is committed to involving as many students as possible in its campaigns and activities.
3. The National Union of Students, as a progressive activist organisation, should seek to be at the forefront of modern campaign techniques and strategies.
4. The National Union of Students has need for greater internal communication.

Action:

1. The National Union of Students directs the National President and General Secretary to re-evaluate the NUS website as well as the Demand a Better Future Campaign website, with a view to rework the website's general level of interactivity and engagement.
2. The National Union of Students will incorporate campaign organising into its website - including the ability to generate emails to campus and state office bearers, generate funds, direct online petitions to campaign targets, direct feedback / enquiries to relevant national, state or campus office bearers.
3. The National Union of Students will review its advertising of its website with the view to expanding access and interest in NUS Online.
4. The National Union of Students will fund and facilitate the building of a Demand A Better Future Campaign website that will contain;
  - a. Easily accessible information and statistic on student poverty in Australia
  - b. Details, ideas and interface on how to get involved
  - c. A summary of recent NUS wins and achievements
  - d. A blog of photos, media stories, and report backs from activists working on the campaign from across Australia.
  - e. A link to the NUS homepage
  - f. Films made by NUS activists
5. The National Union of Students directs the National President and General Secretary to appoint NUS Internal Media Officers for the duration of 2009.
6. The duties of the I.M.Os will be to assist the National President and General Secretary to;
  - a. Compile news, announcements, photos, campaign analysis and NOB reports from campus organisations across the nation.
  - b. Produce a fortnightly online NUS newsletter.
  - c. Ensure the websites are updated monthly.
  - d. Foster communication and content sharing between editors of elected student publications.
  - e. Organise a session at Education Conference specifically for the editors and student journalists of elected student publications.
  - f. Conceive, produce and host video and film media.

*M: David Barrow (NUS NSW President)*

*S: Matt Hilakari (NUS National Executive)*

## **ADMIN 4: NUS President's Summit and Office-Bearer Training**

### Preamble:

1. NUS recognizes the value of facilitating cross-campus communication and skill sharing. Under Voluntary Student Unionism (VSU), this is of particular importance as student organisations develop new strategies to fight for students' rights with limited resources. Under a new Rudd Labor Government this is also important in order to maximise campaign collaboration and the opportunities for policy reform.
2. NUS affirms the importance of National Office Bearers having regular and meaningful contact with campus activists and being accountable to those at the campus level who organise NUS campaigns and support NUS affiliation.
3. NUS understands the importance of tracing the success of its campaigns and activities, and reflecting upon the effectiveness of strategies and tactics across different campuses. This process is particularly important if NUS is to continue to be consultative and responsive to the concerns of its member campuses.

### Action:

1. In January 2009 NUS will hold another Presidents' Summit for all incoming campus Presidents. The Summit is to be organised by the National President. It will include sessions on:
  - a. The National Education/Welfare Campaign - directions & strategies
  - b. VSU updates and funding agreement strategies
  - c. Delegation of lobby-electoralates and Dial-an-MP weeks
  - d. Media training
  - e. Industrial training
  - f. The National Union - its policies, processes, structures and National Office Team
  - g. 2008 campaign debrief
  - h. Introduction to other higher education sector groups
  - i. Distribution of 2009 activist handbooks
2. Immediately prior to the January 2009 President's Summit, national office bearers and state presidents will meet for an orientation and planning day. It will include sessions on;
  - a. National Office functioning as a 2009 team
  - b. Campus visitation
  - c. Encouraging new Affiliates
  - d. 2009 Conference Schedule
  - e. New/alternative funding streams for NUS
3. The National President in conjunction with the National Education Officer will revise recently developed Activist training manuals with

material and strategies relevant to the National Education/Welfare Campaign and ensure that this pack is distributed to all member affiliates by Orientation Weeks.

4. Each National Office Bearer will be required to hold training & information sessions based on the NUS activist packs when they visit member campuses throughout the year. Sessions are to be reported to National Executive as part of the regular office bearer reporting process.

National Office Bearers in departments other than Education should tailor their training sessions to activists and activities relevant to their department.

*M: David Barrow (NUS NSW President)*

*S: Katherine Long-Davidson (La Trobe Bundoora)*

## **ADMIN 5: New Affiliates**

### Preamble:

1. NUS recognizes that it has reduced in size, income, active member campuses and affiliates since the introduction of VSU.
2. NUS concedes that this retraction has meant the de-prioritisation of state branches and state based activity. NUS state branches are best able to encourage new affiliates and encourage participation, as they are able to foster a high level of contact with sometimes-sparse activists and command a close following of campus-specific detail.
3. NUS acknowledges that successful growing unions continue to expand membership when faced with either challenges or victories.
4. NUS realises that current non-affiliates and non-participants may face internal, external and university based challenges in affiliating to the National Union, but that participation in the national Union is the best way in which to fight for accessible tertiary public education and empower students across the country.
5. NUS notes that many campuses do not have viable independent student organisations and that this is a considerable obstacle toward affiliation. Others have student organisations controlled by the university such as at Macquarie, SCU and Griffith University.

### Platform:

1. NUS believes it needs to grow in affiliates and active participants in 2009.

2. NUS believes that all students deserve viable independent student organisations. Where these do not exist, NUS believes it should be actively engaged in re-establishing student run representative structures.
3. NUS reaffirms its belief that all students deserve representation at a federal level through the national union.
4. NUS conference believes NUS state branches are the best able to co-ordinate affiliation and participation in most cases.

Action:

NUS conference directs State Branch Presidents to;

1. Prepare, in conjunction with presidents of campuses in each state, a strategy paper for President's Summit on where and how NUS state branch can and will improve affiliation and participation levels in their state. Noting strategies to;
  - a. Establish links with disconnected campus activists or student run organisations
  - b. Establish NUS campaign presence
  - c. Engage with administration of University and non-student run service organisations
  - d. Increase attendance of students and activists at NUS conferences (President's Summit, QSN, NOWSA, Education Conference, Indigenous Conference, Ethno-Cultural Conference, Annual Conference)
2. Provide a report to each National Executive on the affiliation and participation progress and status of campuses in their state.
3. Work in conjunction with the national office to create a handbook specifically for activists on non-affiliating and non-participating campuses.

*M: David Barrow (NUS NSW President)*

*S: Sarah Cole (NUS VIC President)*

**ADMIN 6: Convincing the Masses**

Preamble:

1. While student organisations continue to experience financial uncertainty, the financial contribution to support NUS is often seen as something that is 'desirable' but not 'essential' when it comes to drawing up annual budgets. Affiliation to NUS is often the first thing to be axed as student organisations struggle to remain solvent.
2. In a post-VSU environment, the value of supporting a national representative body for students is often acknowledged theoretically.

Yet when it requires a financial contribution, the 'value' fails to be justified where the objectives and activities of NUS are not considered relevant.

3. Too often than not, it is the management of student organisations that fail to see the value of contributing to a national representative body for students and this is what NUS is having to contend with in maintaining membership and affiliation.

Platform:

1. NUS believes that it is imperative that its objectives and activities must continue to remain relevant and of value to student organisations and students generally in ensuring that it continues to receive support, both financially and otherwise.
2. NUS notes that management of student organisations often fail to see the relevance and value of contributing to a national representative body.
3. NUS seeks to rectify these objections in an attempt to sustain and promote membership and affiliation of NUS.

Action:

1. The NUS National General Secretary will develop and maintain a database of contacts for student organisation management.
2. The NUS National General Secretary, in conjunction with the NUS National President, will ensure that student organisation management are kept up-to-date on the activities of NUS and to facilitate feedback and gain support from management for these activities
3. The NUS National General Secretary will investigate the existence of organisations or bodies which seek to support student organisation management or student organisations in general (i.e. ACUMA, AACA, NTEU) and will endeavour, wherever possible, to seek collaboration or support for NUS and its objectives and activities.

The NUS National General Secretary, in conjunction with the NUS National President, will develop a resource which seeks to outline what campus organisations and students in general receive in return for their continued support and financial contribution.

*M: Simone McDonell (Adelaide University)*

*S: David Wilkins (Adelaide University)*

## **ADMIN 7: Sponsorship and Grant Opportunities**

Preamble:

1. With the election of the Rudd Labor Government comes a far more sympathetic and willing Government, acknowledging the need to support and include the youth sector and young people more broadly.

2. NUS's membership base is predominately made up of young people, and its objectives and activities are aimed at representing and engaging this membership base.
3. As NUS continues to remain solvent, this often results in many of our objectives and activities not being achieving or being achieving half-heartedly.
4. Thus, the election of the Rudd Labor Government presents opportunities where some of our objectives and activities can be met through the support and partnership of government and non-government organisations in the youth sector.

Platform:

1. NUS believes that achieving its objectives and activities to the fullest extent is imperative in ensuring that NUS remains relevant and of value.
2. NUS notes that its continued financial uncertainty impedes its ability to achieve its objectives and activities to the fullest extent.
3. NUS acknowledges that the election of the Rudd Labor Government presents opportunities to receive support and partnerships with government and non-government organisations in the youth sector.
4. NUS notes that the rejuvenation of the Federal Youth Portfolio and the youth sector broadly means that far more resources and support are available to NUS.
5. NUS may be able to broaden and increase its activities through the application of sponsorship or grants to support those activities.

Action:

1. That the NUS National General Secretary will investigate various funding opportunities through government and non-government bodies
2. That the NUS National General Secretary will co-ordinate project ideas from all other NUS National Office Bearers and NUS National Executive
3. That the NUS National General Secretary will investigate the costs associated with the employment of a sponsorship/grant writing employee to assist with this process
4. That the NUS National General Secretary, in conjunction with the NUS National President, engage with other government and non-government bodies to create partnerships with regard to particular events which achieve a common shared purpose.

*M: David Wilkins (Adelaide University)*

*S: James Wangmann (UniSA)*

**ADMIN 8: Meeting Deadlines**

Preamble:

1. Historically, NUS National Officers and NUS State Branch Presidents have failed to submit reports to the NUS National Executive by the designated deadline.

2. As such, meetings of National Executive are delayed while National Office Bearers and State Presidents frantically try to print enough copies for all attendees (and even then, its in a jumbled order, with missing pages and never enough to go around)
3. This shows a lack of respect for the organisation and for the members present which is unacceptable in a time where NUS must ensure it is relevant and professional in its activities.

Platform:

1. NUS believes that all NUS National Office Bearers and NUS State Branch Presidents should be held to a minimum standard with regard to the submitting of reports in an efficient and timely manner
2. NUS acknowledges that the numerous hours spent waiting for reports to be compiled demonstrates a lack of respect for the organisation and for members present, and indicates that the organisation isn't conducting itself as a professional organisation worth respecting or valuing.
3. NUS notes that in a time of financial instability, it is imperative that money spent is not wasted and is efficiently utilised to achieve our objectives.

Action:

1. That all NUS National Office Bearers and NUS State Branch President MUST submit their reports by the designated deadline
2. That the NUS National General Secretary will set the required deadline to allow for sufficient time to collate the reports and prepare packs for National Executive members
3. That the NUS National General Secretary will keep a record of those who fail to submit policy on time and will officially reprimand individuals who fail to do so on two separate occasions without sufficient justification

That the NUS National General Secretary will present this record to NUS National Conference, which will note who was the best and worst individual, with regard to meeting deadlines.

M: David Wilkins (UniSA)

S: Steven Ireland (UniSA)

**ADMIN 8: NUS E-Bulletin**

Preamble:

1. Informing our members and students of the activities of NUS is essential to ensure that continued support and relevance is maintained.
2. NUS has often failed to engage students in its activities and this has been demonstrated in the decrease in student participation of NDA's and other NUS campaigns.
3. Most students don't regard NUS as relevant, let alone know of the existence of NUS and its activities.

Platform:

1. NUS acknowledges that it must increase the awareness and relevance of the organisation and its activities in order to increase support and participation in its objectives.
2. NUS notes that it must employ all available strategies in ensuring that students are aware and engaging in our objectives and activities.
3. NUS believes that the utilisation of an e-Bulletin may assist in raising awareness and engagement among the broader student population.

Action:

1. That NUS State Branch Presidents will collate a database of emails of students who wish to sign up to the NUS e-Bulletin and submit this to the NUS National General Secretary
2. That the NUS National General Secretary develop a NUS e-bulletin which will be sent out via the email list to keep students updated about the activities of NUS
3. That the NUS National General Secretary will undertake relevant training to ensure that a professional publication can be produced and will develop a hand-over document for future office bearers to ensure the training is retained.

That the NUS National General Secretary will conduct an evaluation of this policy 12 months after its inception and will report the findings to NUS National Conference once completed.

*M: David Wilkins (UniSA)*

*S: Simone McDonnell (Adelaide University)*

**ADMIN 9: Strategic Planning, Financial Reporting and Performance Benchmarks**

Preamble:

1. There is a 12-month gap between the NUS National Conference, which is the peak decision-making body of NUS.
2. NUS National Conference is responsible for implementing policy, which outlines the direction that NUS will take in the upcoming year.
3. Often many individuals feel that there is a lack of inclusiveness and involvement in the implementation of the direction that NUS takes, and a lack of transparency and accountability of National Office in implementing that direction.

Platform:

1. NUS believes that time and resources need to be invested in preparing a strategic plan which will act as guidance for the National Office Bearing Team in the upcoming year.

2. NUS believes that reporting is essential to understanding the effectiveness and relevance of the National Office
3. NUS acknowledges that an understanding of the effectiveness and relevance of the National Office is critical to improving our activities
4. NUS believes that all relevant parties need to be involved in setting the national agenda to ensure that ownership of NUS and its activities is gained by all involved

Action:

1. That the National General Secretary will organise a National Strategic Planning Day in which all NUS National Office Bearers and NUS State Branch President will develop a strategic plan for the upcoming year.
2. That the National General Secretary will send the NUS Strategic Plan 2009 to all National Office Bearers, State Branch Presidents, members of National Executive, campus presidents and NUS Delegates for comment and feedback.
3. That the National General Secretary will prepare the annual budget in line with the strategic plan, outlining the financial expenditure of implementing the strategic plan.
4. That the National General Secretary will send the NUS Budget to all National Office Bearers, State Branch Presidents, members of National Executive, campus presidents and NUS Delegates for comment and feedback.
5. That the National General Secretary will develop a reporting framework in which all National Office Bearers and State Branch Presidents will demonstrate their achievement, or lack thereof, of performance benchmarks against the NUS Strategic Plan 2009.
6. That the National General Secretary will prepare a quarterly review of achievements in line with the NUS Strategic Plan which will be emailed to all National Office Bearers, State Branch Presidents, members of National Executive, campus presidents and NUS Delegates.

That the National General Secretary will prepare an annual review of the NUS Strategic Plan for presentation to the NUS National Conference.

*M: David Wilkins (Adelaide University)*

*S: Geoff Wakeford (University of Canberra)*

## **ADMIN 9: Affiliation to the International Union of Students**

Preamble:

Collectivism forms the basis of our campus student unions, our state networks and the National Union of Students. With expanding globalisation the fight for free education is taking place across the world. The cooperation and coordination of the neo-liberal agenda requires a similarly coordinated collective response.

Action:

1. That NUS affiliate to the International Union of Students.
2. That the National Education Officer seek to build links with groups in other countries that are committed to fighting for free and universal education.
3. That NUS and all affiliated bodies participate where possible in the next National Day of Action Against the Commercialisation of Education on November 5th.

*M: Talia Barret (Newcastle)*

*S: Rebecca Amery (Newcastle)*

## **ECONOMIC POLICY**

### **ECON 1: The world financial turmoil and the end of free market economics**

#### Preamble:

The world financial markets are entering their biggest crises in decades, and there is widespread speculation we may be entering into another depression like the 1930's.

For decades we have been told that the free market would self regulate itself, and was the most efficient way to run banks and social services such as health care and education. Neo-liberalism, which advocated attacks on unions and the privatization of social services was rigorously enforced. The crises on Wall St shows the free market is, as Alan Greenspan (former head of the US Federal Reserve Bank) has recently said, "flawed".

In response to this crisis we have seen massive state intervention by many countries to prevent banks and mortgage lenders from collapsing, moving away from the free market model.

The financial turmoil is having a massive effect on the lives of millions around the world.

In the US, millions are faced with losing their homes, and thousands have already lost their jobs in a wave of mass sackings. This is contrasted to the salaries of many CEO's, some of the highest on record, who are directly profiting from people losing their houses.

All around the world, governments are rushing to spend billions to save their banks, yet doing little to save the houses or jobs of people affected.

#### Platform:

1. NUS recognizes that free market economics has failed.
2. NUS believes the Commonwealth government should nationalize Australian banks and put them back in public hands
3. NUS believes in the right of everyone to live in a house and that greater public housing should exist.

4. NUS believes the Commonwealth government should end the privatization of social services such as health care and education, and should massively increase the funding to them.
5. NUS believes CEO pay is grossly high and should be cut.

### Action

1. NUS will lobby the Commonwealth government to:
  - i. Nationalize all Australian banks and stop home foreclosures.
  - ii. Provide greater public housing for all
  - iii. Stop the privatization of all social services and to increase their funding, particularly public education and public health care.
  - iv. Put strict limits on CEO pay.
2. NUS will promote greater student and trade unionism as an effective way to stop job losses and improve standards of living if recession hits Australia.

*M: Jacob Carswell-Doherty (UWS)*

*S: Tessie Crane (La Trobe)*

## **EDUCATION POLICY**

### **EDUC 1: Underfunding public education: How to deal with Labor and their missing education revolution.**

#### Preamble:

The legacy of the Howard government in higher education was one of a system hopelessly under-funded. To deal with this shortfall in public funding the burden was placed increasingly on students through measures such as increased HECS and a rapid rise in the intake of international students who are charged highly inflated full fees.

The student movement campaigned hard to remove the anti-student Howard government and for the election of a new government that promised a revolution in public education, with an understanding that the education revolution would bring about fundamental change starting with a massive injection of public funding and a fundamental shift away from the user-pays ideology placed on students.

Despite a massive budget surplus, so far the revolution has failed to materialise. Although welcome, the abolition of domestic full fees and the one off cash injection of \$500 million (shared by all higher education institutions) falls hopelessly short of what the high education sector needs to have a revolution as promised by the new government. This one off payment meant La Trobe University received \$14.3 million - not nearly enough to stop La Trobe cutting 230 jobs because the university is running at a "deficit". The La Trobe experience of mass sackings is being repeated across the country, a direct result of not enough funding from government.

### Platform:

NUS recognizes that the new government has been dishonest and betrayed the higher education sector and the student movement with their promised education revolution

NUS understands that the government does have the money to fund education, and make this revolution happen. This is evident by the large amount of taxpayer's money pumped into the financial markets and the increased military budget.

NUS believes the Commonwealth government should immediately move to fund education to a level that fundamentally changes higher education from a profit making, user-payers ideology to a system that has well funded public universities that offer a wide range of disciplines with good facilities and well paid staff.

### Action:

1/ NUS formally condemns the Commonwealth Government for breaking their "Education revolution" commitment to the student population and the higher education sector.

2/ NUS in 2009 run a serious campaign around the need for the Education Revolution in Higher education. In this campaign:

- i. A national day of action is organised by NUS with posters and leaflets, that criticise government for broken promise
- ii. Where possible centralised rally should happen to maximise message to broader population, to media and on Government.
- iii. NUS must work closely with campuses to make full use of the o'week and start of semester time to seriously build the campaign. This should involve all departments in unions and as many clubs and societies as possible.
- iv. Planning for on-campus activity for start of semester with on-campus groups should start well before O'week.

3/ NUS (though the President, Education and Welfare officers) must publicly (i.e. to media) enter the debate at every opportunity to criticise lack of spending on education and broken promise whenever the issue of government expenditure is being publicly debated.

*M: Colleen Bolger (Monash Clayton)*

*S: Danial Dadich (Swinburne)*

## EDUC 2: Demand A Better Future 09

### Preamble:

1. The National Union of Students (NUS) recognizes that after a year of hard campaigning, the Rudd government has not moved to ameliorate the inadequate level student income support. This is despite the 18-24-age bracket voting for a Rudd Government by close to 75 % (2PP) at the 2007 election.
2. NUS understands that in the 2009 NUS' agenda will be in competition with various other organisations representing community groups effected by the credit crisis particularly in the lead up to the May Budget. NUS's campaign messages and demands need to be clear and unified. The campaign, must be forwarded assertively but not dogmatically, across Australia by as many students as possible. NUS is keenly aware that without a mass activist campaign on the ground across Australia that builds on the intensity gathering on campuses, few goals of the union will be realised.
3. NUS acknowledges that it must continue to be seen to be as effective as possible to its member organisations and students generally.
4. NUS recognizes that in the name of continuity, it must celebrate the abolition of Domestic Undergraduate Full Fees, the introduction of an Ancillary Fees Audit and the first steps towards reforming VSU; while continuing to agitate for the implementation of the goals outlined in the **2007 NUS Federal Election campaign & 2008 Demand a Better Future Campaign**: No tuition fee increases & No student poverty.
5. NUS is aware of the Parliamentary processes which will impact on the direction and timeframe of formulating its main campaign in 2009 - primarily the second Labor Government budget in May and the ALP National Conference later in the year.

### Platform:

1. NUS believes that Australia's public universities are struggling to provide quality and accessible education after years of continued funding cuts from the previous Federal Government. NUS considers it unacceptable that while the average OECD nation has increased public investment in higher education funding by 48% over the past decade, Australia has decreased its public funding by 7%. NUS is committed to demanding from the elected Rudd Government a commitment to increased investment in Australian public universities.
2. NUS believes that the full-fee system was fundamentally unfair as access to it was based on wealth over merit. NUS recognizes that

supplementary funds provided by the Federal Labor Government did not adequately cover the losses felt by universities. NUS believes that in order to maximise the educational output of universities additional funding for universities is absolutely fundamental to the future of Australia, including funding the shortfall engendered by the abolition of domestic undergraduate full-fees.

3. NUS reaffirms its opposition to tuition fee increases and its 2007 demand to all political parties to commit to tuition fee reductions. NUS believes it would be hypocritical and unacceptable of a Labor Government to ignore tuition fee relief as a priority when Prime Minister Rudd chose to frame education in economic terms as part of his election campaign. Numerous studies indicate that mounting HECS debts have an adverse affect on the national economy, particularly in delaying university graduates' investment in home or car ownership due to the burden of their HECS debt.
4. NUS believes that student poverty represents a barrier to equitable access to University education in Australia and that the Youth Allowance system has to be reformed in order to more fairly allow students to focus on their education while at University. NUS reiterates its demands on Government to immediately take action to improve the rate and accessibility of Youth Allowance - including but not limited to;
  - a. Lowering the age of independence,
  - b. Lowering the income earned threshold for independence
  - c. Allowing students to earn a reasonable income before detrimentally affecting Youth Allowance payments
  - d. Loosening the restrictions in the parental means test to bring it into line with 2009 realities
  - e. Police university compliance with ancillary fee and course cost legislation.

NUS urges the Labor Government to act on Youth Allowance reform, in line with its aspirational commitment made at its 2007 National Conference and the expected results of the 2008 Bradley Review. NUS will prioritise the ***Demand a Better Future*** campaign in 2009. The campaign will recognise the wins on Domestic Undergraduate Full Fees, Ancillary Fees Audit while continuing to prioritise action on student poverty, the realisation of VSU reform and decreases in tuition fees.

5. NUS recognizes that to succeed in effectively placing these demands on the Government its strategies need to be flexible and creative. The ultimate goal should be not only the immediate implementation of our demands but also the involvement of as many students as possible in the campaign in order to sustain into future years a movement for change in higher education under Labor.

## Direction to the National Office Bearers and National Executive (Action)

In prioritising the *Demand a Better Future* campaign the NUS National Conference directs the National President to co-ordinate the National Office and National Office bearers to:

- Commence consultation with every affiliate / member campus regarding the effectiveness of the strategies, targets and tactics of the campaign undertaken in 2008. The consultation will prompt for improvements and changes that can maximise effectiveness in 2009. This consultation will include strategic campaign planning sessions between national office bearers in December, Presidents and state presidents at the President's summit in January and with activists across the nation during January and February at state organising meetings.
- Ensure that the campaign has unified and uniform branding across all material produced and distributed by member campuses / affiliates so as to maximise potential student engagement across Australia and support from the broader community.
- Create a briefing pack including posters & leaflets to distribute to every affiliate / member campus by February 1st. This material will highlight the recent successes of NUS in addition to raising awareness and prompting action on the remaining two agenda items.
- Ensure that all member campuses / affiliates are equipped with adequate resources to promote the campaign and build networks of activists supportive of the campaign and its demands.
- Instigate a nation-wide lobbying campaign where each university allocate themselves a number of federal MPs and senators. At the beginning of the year campus representatives organise a student delegation from each MP's electorate to make a visitation and press for change regarding student income support. Follow up visitations will be made on a tri-monthly basis. This will be in conjunction with a lobbying campaign by the national president in Canberra during the first sitting of Parliament.
- Prompt a nation-wide roster of campuses undertaking Dial-An-MP. Campuses will be encouraged to take certain days and weeks where it will be their sole responsibility to keep up the pressure by keeping the phones ringing. Students can demand the implementation of a fairer Youth Allowance system by phone. Nationally, this could mean the relevant MPs receive phone calls every day of the year. Depending on the turn of events, relevant MPs will be targeted for each week.

- Meet with representatives of minor parties, particularly the Greens, Family First, Nationals and Senator Nick Xenophon to encourage NUS' demands to be taken up in the Senate.
- Direct national office bearers to seek support from industrial trade unions and if forthcoming, to make their stance on student income support known to the Federal Labor government.
- Meet and liaise with sector groups including the NTEU, CPSU, CAPA, Universities Australia, AEU, Group of 8, ATN and others to garner support for the NUS campaign and collaboration of related research, lobbying and activism.
- Ensure that one decentralised National Day of Action (NDA) is co-ordinated for very early semester one. The aim of the NDA is to commence the 2009 campaign and to build for a following cross-campus semester 1 NDA. At both NDAs students will be making their demands public and reiterating their demands directly to the government and ALP. The dates of the National Days of Action are to be set following consultation with member campuses. This consultation process is to occur in January. Direction and consultation for the second semester NDA will occur at 2009 Education Conference. NUS National Conference views the optimum time period to have National Days of Action is in the lead up to the Federal Budget in May
- Produce an activist guide to the campaign, including details of various campaign techniques and tactics relevant to the 2009 campaign to sustain broad involvement of students in the lead up to the National Day of Action and following the National Day of Action.
- Commit to thorough and open reflection on the direction, demands, strategies and tactics of the campaign following the first National Days of Action and other activities in Semester 1 to ensure that the Semester 2 component of the campaign is as effective as possible.

*M: David Barrow (NUS NSW President)*

*S: Pete Boyle (La Trobe Bundoora)*

### **EDUC 3: Public Education Matters**

#### Preamble:

*“OECD research shows that if the average level of education of the working-age population was increased by 1 year, the economy would be 3-6 per cent larger, and the growth rate of the economy would be up to 1 per cent higher.”*

- OECD (2006) Education at a Glance 2006, p.157.

Many reports have been released this year that show how much public education is critically underfunded in our country, yet nothing concrete has been done to address the problems that need immediate solutions. Some of these reports include:

“Recognising the full costs of university research”

Discussion Paper- September 2008

Report to the Department of Innovation, Industry, Science and Research

“Reviewing the evidence: Issues in Commonwealth funding of government and non-government schools in the Howard and Rudd years”

Jim McMorrow, the Australian education union- August 2008

“Review of Australian Higher Education”

Discussion Paper June 2008

“The Impact of Voluntary Student Unionism on Services, Amenities and Representation for Australian University Students”

Discussion Paper- February 2008

Each report intricately outlines the issues in the specified areas of education, yet the unifying factor that comes through them all is the lack of investment across the board of the public education sector, be it primary, secondary, tertiary, research or support services. This has been a legacy of the Howard years whose focus on education was to see it as a cost to be cut rather than an investment into the future.

Research at Australian universities has been under funded by over 50%. This means more reliance of universities on private partnerships which have the potential to compromise academic freedom and take away public accessibility to research conducted, and also that universities are having to fund the shortfall by redirecting money away from teaching and learning.

The introduction of VSU saw the degradation of support services on campuses and attempted to foster a culture of disengagement and powerlessness, and unless this is dealt with student organisations across the country will be worse off in the long run.

The overall under funding and deregulation of HECS has shown that students are paying more than ever for less, and student fees are becoming unhealthily relied upon by university administrations. This leads to the exploitation of student groups (like international students and previously full fee paying students) and leads to a lack of focus on social inclusion because it does not encourage low SES or indigenous students to attend university.

Despite teaching 67% of Australian children, public schools only receive 35% of the federal funding allocation for schools, and with state funding every dollar spent on a public school is tied to having 25c spent on a private one. Based on current budget projections federal government schools funding

will be cut in real terms within three years if the Rudd Labor Government continues the Howard Government's funding model.

If this country and government is serious about social inclusion and equal opportunities, then why are we disadvantaging vulnerable communities in our society right from the start of their education, by creating tiered systems of funding and placing little to no value on the public system?

Investing in public education will make Australia a better place for all, and the investment will create a wealthier economy, which can help to find new solutions reduce poverty and adequately fund education, public health, the environment and the arts, and create equal opportunities for all children in Australia.

The national union of students is best placed to campaign on this issue of public priority, and considering the current political climate where a promised education revolution is still yet to eventuate, it should be a priority of the union to pressure the government to take this issue seriously.

Platform:

1. NUS recognizes that a fairer quality tertiary education involves supported and fully funded student organisations.
2. NUS recognizes that the social inclusion of low SES students should be a priority of the new government and that they have not done enough to address the equity imbalance. They must first look at funding inequities from secondary and primary public education to make it a priority.
3. NUS commits to campaigning against HECS increases and outlines the increase of student debt that will effect the economy in the long term.
4. NUS campaigns for more investment into research in Australian universities, and more overall funds directed towards learning and teaching.

Action:

1. That the National education officer in consultation with state and campus education officers run a "public education matters" campaign, highlighting the disproportionate funding the sector receives in comparison to private education and international economies.
2. That the national education officer liaise with relevant trade unions such as the NTEU and the teachers federation to collaborate and share resources on such a campaign
3. That the NUS reaffirm its strong commitment to public education, and articulate the concerns to the Labor government that if they are serious about low socio economic status students have equal access to participate in the tertiary sector, then the funding inequities of

the public education system from primary, secondary and tertiary need to be reformed.

*M: Kate Laing (University of Sydney)*

*S: Petra McNeilly-Rutledge (UTS)*

## **EDUC 4: Equity in Schools**

### Preamble:

- The SES index funding system for private schools was introduced by then Minister for Education David Kemp on the 11<sup>th</sup> of May 1999 and took affect in 2001.
- The policy set up a system where private schools are funded based on the average SES score of the communities in which students live.
- However there was a 'no-lose' clause included in the policy, which was an assurance that no school would have their funding cut. This has meant that roughly half of private schools are funded according to the measures outlined in the policy.
- In December 2007 a report by the Australian Council for Educational Research found this system of funding had significant problems including:
  - It has led to the over funding of private schools
  - It has made public education more expensive to run.
  - It does not measure the schools existing resources or capacity to source private funding (including, but not limited to, fees)
  - Average SES score does not correlate with the individual student's SES.
  - The system is corrupted by the 'no-lose' clause.
  - Despite this report then Opposition Spokesperson for Education Julia Gillard pledged that if elected the Labor party would continue this practice of funding for at least 4 years until 2012 when a review would be undertaken.
- In government the Labor Party has maintained this policy even though Minister Gillard has called it "one of the most complex, most opaque, and most confusing in the developed world"

### Platform:

- NUS is opposed to the continued funding of private schools based on the SES index model.
- NUS calls on the Federal Government to discontinue this practice and immediately commence its proposed review into future funding models for private schools.
- NUS recognizes that funding for education is limited and all public education should be fully funded before private education is given any money.
- NUS calls on the government to phase out the Howard Government's over funding of private schools and redirect that money into the public school system.

## Action

The President of NUS for 2009 write to the Government and outline NUS policy Platform: on this matter

That NUS give input into any review of federal funding for private schools.

*M: Lucy Davidson (La Trobe Bundoora)*

*S: Katherine Long-Davidson (La Trobe Bundoora)*

## **EDUC 5: Back to Basics**

### Preamble:

The National Union recognizes that the student movement has suffered terribly over the last 5 years due to an extreme Liberal Government and the impact of VSU. NUS needs to get smarter in how it encourages students to get involved in fighting for their rights on campus and in the community.

This requires a dramatic change in the way the elected representatives of NUS operate. The Student movement is hardly a movement at all: It consists mainly of a cadre of students of all political shades who participate in student elections in order to win NUS delegate spots instead of campaigning on issues or encouraging students to get involved. This focus must change and it can be changed by the way NUS operates on the ground.

This is the moment where NUS must itself fight to regain its position as the legitimate peak body of Australia's students.

### Action:

NUS will run a community organising campaign in 2009 as their National Campaign. This will require the NOBs of NUS to work closely with their comrades on campuses to begin building the necessary infrastructure to rebuild a movement.

Such a campaign does not require a rally or shiny materials (although both of these may be suitable on some campuses), what it requires is a group of dedicated students from affiliated campuses of whom NUS works with to grow the collective political culture on their campus. The National Union could provide:

- \* A campaign building kit
- \* regular communication
- \* training (cf ASEN training camp, Change Agency)
- \* financial support (where appropriate)
- \* physical support (a visit from an NOB, State OB or Nat Exec member)

NUS must rebuild from the bottom up in order to give the NOBs the legitimacy at the bargaining table and the Union real strength in the community.

*M: Talia Barret (Newcastle)*  
*S: Rebecca Amery (Newcastle)*

## **EDUC 6: Education 29**

### Preamble:

The Federal Government in the 2008 Budget released the Education Tax Refund. There are many components of it but overall, Australians that are most likely to qualify it are also receivers of Centrelink payments. However, as it is a taxation refund, information can only be found and sort at the ATO.

### Platform:

NUS recognizes that for the Government to give such benefits and relief for Australian families and students that there must be a cohesive advertising strategy.

### Action:

1. That NUS lobbies and informs the Federal Government that for Australians to be able to benefit from the advantages of subsidies and tax refunds they must have a cohesive advertising strategy behind the policy.
2. That NUS calls on the Federal Government to see that the ATO and Centrelink and other Department of Human Services areas advertise the Education Tax Refund in a manner that as many people that qualify for the Education Tax Refund will become aware of it and use it.

*M: Chris Monnox (Wollongong University)*  
*S: Amber Stechell (UNSW)*

## **EDUC 7: Education 30**

### Preamble:

The Bradley Review is a review of the whole university sector. This is a time in Australia's history that an opportunity to better the Australia tertiary education system should be realised. Therefore, we should not be afraid to consider different teaching methods to ensure students are learning in the best possible way.

### Platform:

1. NUS recognises that there are many different teaching methods across the world.
2. NUS recognizes that in Australia, lately the compliment of tutorial and lecture is the common practice for most degree courses.
3. NUS recognizes that with the changing culture and technology in the country that there should be a consideration of trialing different teaching methods.

Action:

1. NUS should call on the Bradley review to consider different teaching methods if it is not already included in the recommendations.
2. NUS should call on the Bradley Review to consider trialing different teaching methods.

*M: Felicity Evans (UTS)*

*S: Ausseela Thanaphonsakron (UNSW)*

**EDUC 8: Education 31**

Preamble:

There are some university courses that require students to carry out voluntary internships and it can often be a compulsory part of the degree. While it can be a positive step that degrees are ensuring students are knowledgeable of the practical skills of the industry and or profession they are entering into, universities must acknowledge that this must be flexible as not all students can carry out volunteer work due to time restraints, work and family commitments.

Platform:

1. NUS recognizes that degrees that have compulsory voluntary internships should have an alternative for students that cannot carry out compulsory volunteer work.
2. NUS recognizes that it is positive for degrees to teach practical skills, however, it must be applied in a manner that is equitable for all.

Action:

1. NUS calls on all Universities to ensure that wherever there are compulsory volunteer internships that there is an alternative for students that cannot carry this out.
2. NUS calls on the Federal Government to legislate that there must be an alternative for compulsory volunteer internships in courses.

*M: Chris Monnox (Wollongong University)*

*S: Felicity Evans (UTS)*

## **EDUC 9: Education 32**

### Preamble:

Illegal course fees represent an unwarranted imposition on university students, whose financial situations are often already difficult. They are also an issue on which student awareness is absolutely minimal and open to being raised by an ongoing National Union of Student's Campaign.

### Platform:

- 1: The NUS recognizes the levying of illegal course fees as a widespread and important problem worthy of extensive attention.
- 2: The NUS considers the raising of awareness of the problem of illegal course fees among students to be a priority.

### Action:

- 1: The National Union of Students will continue the campaign against the levying of illegal course fees initiated in 2007.
- 2: This campaign should be flexible- leaving room for student organisations to focus on calling for more effective regulation of course fees or improved provision of free course materials at their campus.

*M: Chris Monnox (Wollongong University)*

*S: Ausseela Thanaphonsakron (UNSW)*

## **ENVIRONMENT POLICY**

### **ENVIR 1: Power Shift 2009**

#### Platform:

Power Shift is a three-day national youth summit on climate change organised by the Australian Youth Climate Coalition, to be held in Canberra in April 2009.

Power Shift aims to educate and empower Australian youth to act to avert climate change and lobby government for more stringent carbon pollution reduction targets.

Power Shift is a project of the Australian Youth Climate Coalition, of which NUS is a founding member.

#### Policy:

NUS supports Power Shift 2009.

NUS directs the environmental officer to promote Power Shift to University students as part of their campus outreach, especially during O-Weeks.

#### Action:

The National Environment Officer, together with NUS state and campus environment (or other) officers shall :

- \* promote Power Shift to NUS members;
- \* promote Power Shift to students on campus and;
- \* build support and excitement about Power Shift amongst youth in the public arena;
- \* publicise Power Shift at relevant opportunities with the consent of AYCC

NUS members will discuss Power Shift with their peers and encourage attendance.

NUS members will demand stronger action on climate change and the National President will speak at Power Shift 2009.

*m: Angus McFarland (NUS National President)*  
*s: David Barrow (NUS NSW President)*

## **ENVIR 2: NUS Short-Haul Flights**

### Platform:

At the last national executive a commitment was made to reduce the carbon imprint of NUS. A short-haul flights policy will help NUS to do this.

### *Financially Sustainable:*

- NUS is and may continue to be financially vulnerable. It is important for NUS to make changes to become more financially sustainable and reduce costs where possible. This policy could assist NUS in becoming more financially sustainable.
- Short haul flights are more expensive than traveling by more sustainable transport. With increased petrol costs and as competing companies raise their prices you can no longer get \$1 flights.
- An average flight from Melbourne to Sydney is \$130, while a train is Adult \$120, Student \$62. A Bus costs Adult \$65 and a Car is whatever petrol costs are.
- An average flight from Sydney to Brisbane is \$130 while a train is Adult \$120, Student \$65 a Bus Adult \$66 and a Car whatever petrol costs.
- An average flight from Melbourne to Adelaide is \$110 while a train is Adult \$59 single \$99 return, a Bus Adult \$55 and a Car whatever petrol costs.
- An average flight from Sydney to Adelaide is \$170 Sydney to Adelaide while a train is Adult \$129 single, \$199 return.

### *Environmentally Sustainable:*

- Flying is unsustainable.
- The transport sector contributes roughly one-third of Australia's greenhouse emissions.
- Globally, the aviation sector is one of the fastest growing sources of emissions and contributors to climate change.
- Oil, upon which the aviation industry depends, is an unjustified motivation for powerful governments to go to war.

- Demand for oil and its extraction displaces vulnerable communities and generates direct and indirect forms of environmental and social destruction such as deforestation, displacement, and repression.
- Peak oil is looming.
- The longer we utilise existing structures, the longer we delay building the necessary pressure and momentum for real solutions to climate change. The fossil fuel industry, including aviation, attracts perverse government subsidies in the order of billions annually, thus depriving and delaying the large-scale investment in sustainable alternatives (public transport, renewable powered transport etc).
- There are viable, safer alternatives to fossil fuels now. In addition to cutting greenhouse emissions and reducing environmental stresses, utilising these alternatives will create green-collar jobs, more community-oriented practices and greater accessibility (eg an equitable public transport system and other affordable options).

*Making change in our own institutions:*

- NUS is made up of young people who try to make positive change in our institutions and society. We are leaders in our networks and universities. By implementing a short-haul flights policy, NUS would be leading institutional change on climate change nationally as one of the first organisations in Australia to have a flights policy, in taking real action to reduce our carbon emissions.
- NUS could use this policy as an opportunity to gain positive media. The Greens were unable to pass a similar policy, as it did not include allowing long-haul flights. Positive media could of course impact upon other organisations, institutions and business to take similar actions on emission reductions.
- People in NUS aim to demonstrate a commitment to living the solutions to causes of environmental and social injustice. Individual lifestyle change can contribute to achieving broader goals of social and environmental sustainability and refraining from flying is one way of achieving this. We maintain that individual lifestyle change on its own won't create the change that is necessary, and that institutional change is also vital in making the changes necessary to curb climate change. This policy change of is institutional as well as individual.

Policy

1. NUS will not fund people's flights unless:

- They are medium-long haul (more than three hours) within Australia  
OR
- If the persons' flight with reasoning for special circumstances is approved by the President and General Secretary according to the specific guidelines of Disability and medical reasons, Personal circumstances such as family tragedy etc, or Exceptional circumstances such as a short-notice meeting that the President and Secretary deem worth the flight etc.

Action

1. The General Secretary will encourage national office bearers to use their phone budgets. Phone cards are cheap to purchase, skype is free, and with video-conferencing you can even see faces! It is important not to underestimate the support given through regular phone calls to state office bearers and collectives. This can be more valuable than a one-off trip to a city.

2. The General Secretary will encourage people to stop in to other places when traveling in order to reduce travel time, eg stopping in Sydney for a few days when traveling on train from Melbourne to Brisbane, or stopping in Melbourne for a few days when traveling by bus to Adelaide.

4. The General Secretary will report all forms of travel that NUS subsidises at national executive meetings- this means that if there are any discrepancies etc, national executive is made aware of it, making decision-making more transparent within NUS.

*m: Celia Vagg (NUS National Environment Officer)*

*s: Chris Moore (UNSW)*

### **ENVIR 3: Making Big business pay to Fix Global warming**

#### Preamble:

To say that the environment is in a state of crisis is an understatement. Rising sea levels, melting ice caps, rapidly eroding environmental treasures such as the Barrier Reef and heavy pollution from greenhouse gases is to name but a few problems the world system is facing at the moment. Within the last decade we have witnessed an increased awareness around climate change, especially with reference to some areas of Government policy.

#### Platform:

Recognising that the world faces dramatic and disastrous consequences if serious action isn't immediately taken on climate change is not enough. As stated by the Australian Government National Water Commission: Agriculture, manufacturing, mining and other big industries consume a total of just under 79% of all Australia's water usage. However when it comes to action on climate change the burden is unfairly pushed onto that of ordinary people, within the same breath the report stated that household usage was around 11%. Recognising and demanding that big business assume increased responsibility for the current dire situation the world climate faces is one of the first steps toward achieving some kind of accountability. That fact that ordinary people are forced to pay for the destruction of the environment that has been entirely caused by the whims of big business is outrageous.

#### Action:

1. NUS should support, recognise and actively participate in any demonstration or action that calls for action on climate change.

In addition to this, any action that is taken that inadvertently supports action on climate change should be supported by the National Environment Officer and NUS, for example; calling for increased expansion and affordability of the public transport system.

2. In the event that the Federal or State Government attempts unfairly push the burden and responsibility of climate change onto the average household consumer NUS should formally criticise legislation or policy of this type, with reference to the above recognition that it is disproportionately big business and industry that is the primary source of the current environmental and climate crisis.

3. NUS directs the incoming National Environment Officer to

i. Actively promote and raise awareness around any activity or organisation that highlights the issue of climate change, i.e., the incoming National Environment Officer should ensure that *all* University Campus Office Bearers are fully informed of any demonstrations, organisation and opportunities that are available promoting action on climate change.

ii. Ensure that there are appropriate funds available to maintain such activity and an adequate intervention into any action of climate change.

*M: Michael Kandalaars (Swinburne)*

*S: Kyla Cassells (La Trobe Bundoora)*

#### **ENVIR 4: Environmentally Responsible University and Student Partnerships**

##### Preamble:

Environmental responsibility has been increasing over the last couple of years. Businesses and all levels of government are implementing environmentally responsible infrastructure and methods. There has been a growing trend to consider the triple-bottom line in accounting for businesses to ensure our environmental responsibility. This could also include universities. Whilst this should not be at the detriment of the resources for learning and teaching and the quality of education for students, it should be a consideration by university as leaders in the community.

##### Platform:

1. NUS recognizes that environmental responsibility today is important and that universities can be leaders in the community,

2. NUS recognizes that this is a growing area of need for skilled people in the area of environmental research.

Action:

1. NUS calls on Universities to consider their environmental impact and to have a strategy to reduce energy and carbon emissions. In doing this, NUS calls on universities to involve students in the process as this is a growing area of need for such skilled individuals.

*M: Chris Monnox (Wollongong University)*  
*S: Amber Stechell (UNSW)*

## **ENVIR 5: Ergonomic Teaching Environment**

Preamble:

The environment has encompassed by NUS in the past and currently has been to only consider the environment in the sense of the living environment. NUS could further extend the definition of the environment to that of the classroom.

Platform:

NUS recognizes that the ergonomic environment for students is important for OH&S reasons and for the ability to learn in comfort and with less RSI.

Action:

1. NUS calls on Universities to consider ergonomic designs in learning spaces to ensure the safety of all students.

*M: Felicity Evans (UTS)*  
*S: Ausseela Thanaphonsakron (UNSW)*

## **ENVIR 6: Green Referendum 2009**

Preamble:

1. NUS acknowledges that Climate Change is one of the most urgent environmental and social issues of our generation. We have a closing window of opportunity to act to avoid the devastating effects of Climate Change.
2. NUS recognizes that universities are both large enough to contribute heavily to Australia's greenhouse emissions and small enough to be at the forefront of cutting emissions. Universities

can be key players in making renewable energy markets more cost effective by adopting green energy in high percentages.

3. NUS credits those campuses, which have gone partially to Green Energy, and those who have mobilised mass student support for Green Energy through referenda.
4. NUS notes that campus referenda on Green energy initiatives help pressure administrations into action and can encourage students to get involved with on campus environmental campaigns.

Platform:

1. NUS believes in the importance of Universities adopting green energy as a matter of urgency.
2. NUS believes that if given the chance, students will vote for green energy in large numbers, further legitimising pro-environment generation claims and the validity of student elections for representative bodies.

Action:

NUS conference directs the State and National Office Bearers to;

1. In consultation with the NUS environment officer, formulate a template question stipulating the university's adoption of Green Energy to be put to referenda at student organisation elections in 2009.
2. Encourage all affiliate campuses to go to a referendum with the question on Green Energy, if a referendum on the issue has not already taken place.
3. Publish a report on the findings for the NUS 2009 Annual Conference and to communicate the findings to the media and all stakeholders.
4. Encourage calls for a national university pledge on climate change through high level talks with Universities Australia, sector groups and student organisations.

*M: David Barrow (NUS NSW President)*

*S: Rhiannon Newman (NUS SA President)*

## INDIGENOUS POLICY

### INDIG 1: NUS Community Partnerships: AIME

#### Platform:

The Australian Indigenous Mentoring Experience is a student driven national organisation that supports Indigenous students in high school through one-on-one mentoring for grades 9-12 students. It is a not for profit organisation with a real commitment to retention and graduation of Indigenous students. AIME provides positive role models for tertiary studies and supports real educational outcomes for its students.

#### Policy:

NUS supports AIME and partnering opportunities will be investigated with the NUS President, Indigenous Department and AIME executive officers.

#### Action:

NUS Indigenous Officer and research department will work collaboratively with AIME to produce best practice policies for Indigenous student support, retention and outcomes for high school to university students.

NUS Indigenous Officer will build on existing networks and contacts to support the national roll-out of AIME.

NUS Indigenous Officer will work with AIME to lobby universities for support of culturally appropriate school and university partnerships/pathways programs.

AIME will present to NUS Presidents Summit on the AIME program with a basic cross cultural awareness and understanding session for campus presidents who do not identify as Indigenous.

NUS Indigenous Officer will explore opportunities to establish a sustainable funding partnership between NUS and AIME.

*m: Sheena Watt (NUS National Indigenous Officer)*  
*s: Kate Laing (University of Sydney)*

### INDIG 2: NUS National Indigenous Students Conference

#### Platform:

In 2008, the first National Indigenous Students Conference was held at Sydney University in partnership with the University of Sydney Students' Representative Council Indigenous department. This conference was a great success culminating in university support, wider tertiary industry support

and delegates from more than 25 universities. The conference has formed the primary face to face meeting of the newly established National Indigenous Students network.

Policy:

NUS officially endorse the NUS National Indigenous Students Conference as the official conference of the NUS Indigenous department.

Action:

Out of the 2008 Conference and at the direction of the delegates the NUS Indigenous officer will to work to support the implementation of the recommendations out of the official NUS report titled Special Submission to the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations Review of Australian Higher Education.

NUS Indigenous officer to actively seek sponsorship/partnering opportunities for the ongoing sustainable future of the conference.

*m: Sheena Watt (NUS National Indigenous Officer)*

*s: Warren Roberts (UNSW)*

### **INDIG 3: Ending the Racist Northern Territory Intervention**

Preamble:

The Northern Territory intervention is a racist attack on Aboriginal communities and on the rights of indigenous people. This attack was launched in June 2007 by the Howard government, and has since been continued and intensified by the Rudd government. The objective of the Northern Territory intervention was to destroy Aboriginal communities in the Northern Territory, and to deny indigenous people the rights to practice their culture and to exercise sovereignty over their land. It was launched without consultation with Aboriginal people in communities in the Northern Territory, and has done nothing to improve the disadvantages they face as a result of 220 years of racist dispossession and discrimination. The racism of the intervention is such that the Commonwealth government had to specifically exempt it from the Racial Discrimination Act 1975 in order to make its implementation legal. Additionally, the government and the media have sought to justify the intervention on the basis of false allegations of “pedophile rings” operating in Aboriginal communities, as well as racist slander of Aboriginal men as drunks, child abusers, and perpetrators of domestic violence. Since June 2007, indigenous people have led a campaign to end the Northern Territory intervention. This campaign is part of the broader, ongoing struggle for the rights of indigenous peoples in Australia, and around the world.

Platform:

1. NUS recognizes that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have the right of sovereignty over their land, and that the Northern Territory intervention is a racist attack on this right.

2. NUS therefore opposes the Northern Territory intervention. It does so in line with its commitment to support indigenous rights, and in keeping with its opposition to all forms of racist violence and discrimination.

3. NUS rejects the racist lies, which have been used by the government and the media in their attempts to justify the Northern Territory intervention. False allegations of endemic child abuse in Northern Territory communities perpetuate racist stereotypes about Aboriginal men, and do nothing to empower Aboriginal women and children. Paternalistic attacks such as the Northern Territory intervention are neither wanted nor “needed” by the people whom they target.

4. NUS recognizes that the struggle for indigenous rights goes far beyond ending the Northern Territory intervention, and affirms its commitment to support all aspects of this struggle.

#### Action

1. NUS actively supports the campaign led by indigenous people to end the Northern Territory intervention. It will therefore support and endorse actions against the Northern Territory intervention called by the Aboriginal Rights Coalition.

2. NUS will lobby the Commonwealth government to immediately end the Northern Territory intervention, to restore the permit system to Aboriginal communities, to reinstate in full the Racial Discrimination Act 1975, and to cease the expansion of welfare quarantining and other paternalistic measures associated with the intervention.

3. NUS will work closely with student unions and Indigenous departments within student unions, in support of their efforts to engage students who want to actively oppose the Northern Territory intervention.

*M: Dayne Stevens (UNSW)*

*S: Joylon Minshall (UNSW)*

## **INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS POLICY**

### **INTL 1: Social Division Between International and Domestic Students**

#### Preamble:

A commonly reported problem affecting the experience of international students at Australian universities is isolation, and a social divide between international and domestic students that there are few opportunities to bridge.

An illustrative case of this can be seen at one Victorian campus where there are two main food outlets, both run by the same people and serving exactly the same food. Over time, one has become regarded as the international students refectory and one the domestic students refectory. The student community divides between them.

This has broader ramifications than simply negative social outcomes. Investigation into many issues disproportionately effecting international students, from unfair treatment in the workplace, the housing market or at university to basic safety issues and problems dealing with the police, have shown that in most cases international students get information on their rights and responsibilities in Australia from friends and family. If these personal networks are solely comprised of other international students the level of knowledge can be limited and misconceptions spread.

Attempts to bridge this gap have been made on various campuses, sometimes by universities (for instance encouraging tutors to ensure group work is done in groups including both international and domestic students) and sometimes by student unions (for instance through provision of social and recreational activities, mentoring programs and special grants for clubs and societies that engage both domestic and international students in events). But these efforts remain small scale and seem to exist on a minority of campuses.

Sadly, the fact that universities and other educational providers are competing within an international student market means that they are disinclined to share information about successful programs with their competitors.

#### Platform:

NUS believes that the benefits of an international education system can only be fully realised by creating inclusive university communities in which international and domestic students are not divided or regarded, by the university or by each other, as different kinds of student.

NUS opposes any multi-campus and timetabling arrangements that effectively divide students into domestic and international student groups. NUS recognizes that on many campuses, social and recreational activities, clubs and societies and support programs are largely provided through student organisations. Student organisations are therefore well placed to take steps to improve opportunities for social engagement between international and domestic students.

#### Action:

Research will be conducted into University campuses' experience of the domestic and international student divide, it's causes and effects. Programs or initiatives run by either student organisations or universities to address this divide and provide opportunities for social engagement and support. This would involve surveying student associations, international student representatives, counseling services, colleges, sport and rec providers and relevant university departments (international programs, equity and access, etc).

A report on the issue and a guide to different ways that various Australian campuses have successfully approached addressing it within student organisations and universities will be produced and distributed to member campuses, universities and relevant sector groups.

The aim of the report will be to provide a useful product for member organisations to use to proactively address this issue, potentially draw media attention to the issue and where applicable, to make recommendations to university administrations and to government.

*M: Sarah Cole (NUS Vic President)*

*S: David Barrow (NUS NSW President)*

## **INTL 2: International Students 2**

### Preamble:

NUS recognizes that international student welfare is an issue at Australian universities. Many international students experience poverty, feelings of alienation, depression and face exploitation in the Australian workforce. NUS recognizes that the neglect of international student issues will be exacerbated by the proposal of the Federal Government to increase the intake of international students.

NUS supports measures to ensure that our growing number of international students are not subject to ill treatment. These measures include language support services, housing support, advocating for international student concession cards and increased collaboration between the NUS Welfare Department and the relevant representative bodies for international students.

NUS is concerned about welfare issues relating to the social inclusion of international students at university. NUS will actively advocate for the increased provision of English language learning services. NUS acknowledges the increased need for organisations facilitating dialogue between local and international students.

### Platform:

1. NUS supports the increased expenditure of student union funds on international student welfare.
2. NUS supports the establishment of international student representative bodies at all affiliated campuses.
3. NUS supports the social inclusion of international students through the provision of appropriate services.

### Action:

NUS calls on student unions to increase the proportion of their budget spent on international student welfare. These finances should be directed towards international student representative bodies.

NUS calls on student unions to support international student welfare initiatives proposed by international student representative bodies.

NUS calls on student unions and the Federal Government to encourage efforts to include international students in university life.

*M: Hugh Mortensen (Swinburne University)*  
*S: Patrick Sheehan (LaTrobe)*

### **INTL 3: International Students**

#### Preamble:

Education is now Australia's third largest export industry. In light of the amount of revenue collected from international students by Australia's public and private sectors it is only right and proper that international students be afforded the same benefits as Australian students vis-à-vis public transport.

#### Platform:

- 1: The NUS notes the high cost of public transportation in many Australian towns and cities.
- 2: The NUS notes the importance of international students to the education sector and the Australian economy more generally.
- 3: The NUS is committed to working for the granting of public transport concessions to international students.

#### Action:

- 1: The National Union of Students will offer its fullest support to international students and their organisations campaigning for the extension of public transport concessions to international students.

*M: Chris Monnox (Wollongong University)*  
*S: Amber Stechell (UNSW)*

### **INTL 4: International Students 15**

#### Preamble:

International students are denied many of the welfare benefits accorded to Australian students and often find themselves earning low incomes. These factors often lead to international students being unable to obtain adequate housing while in Australia. university-provided accommodation can do much to alleviate this problem.

#### Platform:

- 1: The NUS recognizes the difficulty experienced by many international students in finding adequate lodgings while studying in Australia.
- 2: The NUS believes that universities have a vital role to play in providing affordable, adequate, housing for international students.

#### Action

- 1: The NUS urges all universities to increase their commitment to providing affordable, on-campus accommodation to the maximum extent feasible.
- 2: The NUS will support student associations campaigning against the closure of university-provided housing.

*M: Felicity Evans (UTS)*

*S: Ausseela Thanaphonsakron (UNSW)*

### **INTL 5: International Solidarity**

#### Preamble:

1. NUS recognizes the historical importance of international links with student unions around the world, especially in reference to the *Stop Apartheid* campaign and the International women's, public education, queer and environmental movements.
2. NUS attributes such links to a concerted effort by national office bearers to engage with representative student unions from around the world.
3. NUS recognizes that the context of higher education in Australia is similar to that of New Zealand, Canada, the USA, UK and Europe. National peak bodies in these nations face similar challenges and NUS Australia can both learn from their battles and help other national peak bodies by sharing our own experience.
4. NUS also recognizes the special relationship between Australia and its neighbours in New Zealand, East Timor, PNG, Indonesia and the Pacific and the importance of fostering peaceful mutually supportive links in these countries.
5. NUS understands that in a globalised world, links between like-minded organisations are crucial in overcoming global challenges.
6. NUS respects that some international organisations have motivations that are at odds with NUS's mode of operation and policy position and recognizes that links with such organisations would be detrimental to the reputation of the Union.
7. NUS recognizes the increased role of the international anti-poverty movement on campuses and reaffirms its longstanding

commitment to overcoming global injustice, especially in the realm of educational disparity.

Platform:

1. NUS believes it is necessary to forge links with likeminded student organisations in other countries, especially those facing similar challenges as NUS Australia.
2. NUS believes it is particularly important to foster links and connections with likeminded student organisations in the region, including but not limited to, New Zealand, East Timor, PNG, Indonesia and the Pacific.
3. NUS supports the International Anti-Poverty movement emerging on Australian campuses.
4. NUS urges the federal government to meet the aid target of 0.7% in line with the government's commitment to the UN Millennium Development Goals.

Action

NUS conference directs the National President to co-ordinate the National Office and National Office bearers to;

1. Establish new and continue current links with peak student bodies internationally.
2. Make specific inquiries into future partnerships and relationships between NUS Australia and the student organisations at the University of Papua New Guinea, University of the South Pacific and the national peak bodies of New Zealand and Indonesia.
3. Encourage affiliate campuses to provide resources and activist infrastructure for Australian students engaging in the 0.7% anti-poverty campaign.

Prepare a report for tabling at the 2009 NUS Annual Conference that demonstrates how progress of the above recommendations.

*M: David Barrow (NUS NSW President)*

*S: Kat Henderson (NUS QLD President)*

## MISCELLANEOUS POLICY

### MISC 1: Anti Muslim racism: Defending campus based Muslim Prayer rooms

#### Preamble:

At a number of universities across the country, there has been an astonishing move by administrations to either remove or restrict access to dedicated Islamic prayer facilities.

Such moves are occurring in the context of increased anti-Muslim racism throughout Australian society, particularly since the beginning of the so-called “War on Terror”. Such anti-Muslim racism has seen a marked increase in physical and verbal attacks on Muslim people, particularly women. Such attacks have also been increasing on university campuses. It has also seen official attacks on Muslims, including the racist scapegoating of Muslims through draconian “anti-terror” legislation, which has seen the victimisation of, amongst others, David Hicks, Jack Thomas, Mohammed Haneef and Mamdouh Habib.

At RMIT, the administration suddenly broke a longstanding commitment to replace the Muslim prayer rooms on the Swanston street campus (having closed the previous facility due to legitimate concerns over its size and safety). Just as the new Prayer Rooms were about to open, RMIT declared they had been recast as a “multi-faith centre”, despite such multi-faith centres already existing on the campus. This decision leaves Muslims with nowhere to practise their religion on the main campus of RMIT. Islam requires a dedicated prayer space, with specific requirements including dress and hygiene codes, and an absence of representations of idolatry. There has been such a space on campus for fourteen years.

In response to this decision, the RMIT Islamic Society has boycotted the new facilities and has courageously been protesting by holding the Friday prayers in public to raise public awareness of the issue and to protest against the university’s decision.

At its height, these protests have attracted over 700 people. The fact that, every week since the beginning of the university year, hundreds of Muslims have been attending these protests makes this the largest sustained student campaign on an Australian campus in years.

At other campuses, including Melbourne University Parkville and Deakin University Burwood, the on-campus Muslim prayer facilities have been shut down and replaced with off-campus facilities. This has caused both inconvenience and safety concerns for many Muslim students on these campuses.

#### Platform:

1. NUS recognises the alarming rise of anti-Muslim racism throughout Australian society and on Australian campuses.
2. NUS recognises that, despite the claims of re-establishing secularism on campus, the fact that it is almost exclusively the rights of Muslims which are

being attacked and that these attacks occur in the context of the broader anti-Muslim racism existing in Australian society, attacks on Muslim prayer facilities are racist attacks.

3. NUS recognises that multi-faith and interfaith centres do not necessarily cater for the needs of all religions using them and that, where such centres fail to meet the requirements of those forced to use them, students have a legitimate claim for dedicated facilities on university campuses. In particular, NUS acknowledges that such facilities are often inadequate for the needs of Muslim students.

### Action

1. NUS formally supports the right of Muslim students to have dedicated prayer facilities and will undertake the following:

- i. NUS, through the Ethno Cultural officer, contacts the national Muslim Student Association (MSA) and the Federation of Australian Muslim Students and Youth (FAMSY) to convey this support.
- ii. NUS, through the Ethno Cultural officer, contacts the bodies representing Islamic students on those campuses where access to dedicated Muslim prayer facilities has been reduced or eliminated and provide support, including information sharing and resources.
- iii. NUS, through the Ethno Cultural officer, collects and collates information about the state of Muslim prayer facilities at member campuses.

2. NUS acknowledges the broader rise in anti-Muslim racism on Australian campuses and actively supports initiatives such as Islamic Awareness Weeks, which are now held on a number of different campuses, as a way of raising awareness of such issues.

3. NUS, through the Ethno Cultural officer, contacts the RMIT Islamic Society and express support for their campaign to have the RMIT Swanston Street campus Muslim Prayer Room restored as a Muslim dedicated facility.

*M: Azlan Mclennan (VCA)*

*S: Jo Mettam (RMIT)*

## **MISC 2: Defending Noel Washington and abolishing the ABCC**

### Preamble:

The Australian Building and Construction Commission is the most extreme aspect of Howard's WorkChoices. The ABCC has been specifically designed to break the strength of trade unions on construction sites. Its existence means that construction workers face severe punishment for exercising their democratic rights. The ABCC has the power to record your conversations covertly. It has the power to compel anyone to attend secret interrogations where you have no right to silence, and no right to have legal

representation of your own choosing. Anyone who chooses to remain silent or does not produce documents can face fines or 6 months imprisonment! This draconian body, which denies building and construction workers even the most basic rights, such as freedom of assembly and freedom of speech, is now continues to operate with the blessing of the Rudd Government. Rather than condemning this reprehensible body and restoring construction workers' rights, Julia Gillard instead stated that the government favours having "A tough cop on the beat".

Now, in Rudd's Australia, we could see the first union official to be jailed since Clarie O'Shea in 1969. The ABCC is pursuing Noel Washington to question him over a union meeting held at a Bovis Lend Lease site in 2007. Noel Washington has been a CFMEU official for 27 years and now faces 6 months jail time for nothing more than defending workers' rights to have a private discussion.

It is clear the existence of the ABCC is destroying workers' rights on construction sites, and threatens union rights for everyone. Since the ABCC has been in operation, there has been a marked increase in deaths and injuries to construction workers on the job.

#### Platform:

- 1.NUS supports the complete abolition of the ABCC immediately.
- 2.NUS condemns the Federal Labor Government for allowing Noel Washington, a trade union official, to face possible jail time.
- 3.NUS supports the complete dropping of all impending charges against Noel Washington

#### Action

- 1.NUS formally supports the Your Rights On Site campaign against the ABCC
- 2.NUS endorses any actions to support the defence of Noel Washington and will ensure no NUS events occur at same time as anti-ABCC union action is taking place. NUS will encourage member organisations to do likewise.
- 3.NUS will produce material aimed at students to explain opposition to ABCC and advertise actions to defend Noel Washington.
- 4.NUS will publicly lobby for the complete and immediate repeal of the Building Industry Improvement Act 2005 (ABCC)
- 5.The NUS national office will endeavour to provide assistance needed by member student organisations in their efforts in conjuncture with the Your Rights On Site campaign

*M: Damian Ridgwell (Swinburne)*

*S: Mystery Dellar (UWS)*

### MISC 3: Federal Labor and Workchoices-lite

#### Preamble:

11 months after the election of the Rudd/Gillard government the Labor Industrial Relations Bill was introduced to parliament. But instead of tearing up all of Howard's anti-union laws, Julia Gillard announced 'Workchoice-Lite'. A package, that has more in common with WorkChoices proper than differences.

Federal Labor's policy still gives bosses freedom to sack workers without warning if you have been employed for less than 12 months in a company with fewer than 15 employees. In firms of over 15 employees, workers can be sacked without warning within the first 6 months of employment. Even outside of this period, an employer only has to give one warning before firing someone, which does not have to be in writing.

Labor's 'Workchoice-Lite' maintains harsh penalties for strikes and work bans. Labor will inflict mandatory fines upon any worker deemed to take 'unprotected' industrial action. Under Gillard and Rudd's laws not only would the marches that occurred against WorkChoices in 2005-2006 be illegal, but so would the campaigns against the asbestos manufacturer James Hardy, and the campaign to save the MUA in 1998.

Although banning the signing of any new Australian Workplace Agreements (AWA's), for the 5% of workers who are already on AWA's the Labor party has done nothing to restore their rights for collective bargaining.

Labor has maintained the majority of Howard's agenda to undermine workers' rights, and their rights to organise in unions, despite the fact that the majority of Australian workers are still hostile to it.

#### Platform:

1.NUS believes that Federal Labor's 'Forward With Fairness' is a 'Workchoice-Lite'. NUS support the full repeal of Howard's WorkChoices.

2.NUS believes that workers have the right to strike, and is opposed to any laws which persecute them for exercising their basic democratic right to withdraw their labour.

3.NUS recognizes that workers are entitled to claim unfair dismissal compensation at any point during employment.

4.NUS supports all workers currently on an AWA being offered a collective agreement.

5.NUS agrees that workers have the right to negotiate over the use of labour hire and contractors to defend their conditions.

6.NUS supports the rights of workers to have access to union representation at their workplace. NUS condemns remaining laws which block or interfere with union representatives entering workplaces.

## Action

1. NUS formally supports the continuation of the Australian Council of Trade Union's Your Rights At Work campaign and will undertake the following:
  - i. NUS endorses any actions in the ACTU's Your Rights At Work campaign
  - ii. NUS will work closely with unions/community groups in this campaign
  - iii. NUS will design posters/leaflets aimed at students to promote these actions
  - iv. NUS will ensure no NUS events are organised at same time as ACTU campaign rallies/events and will encourage student unions to do the same.
2. NUS will publicly lobby for the complete and immediate repeal of the Workplace Relations Amendment 2005 (WorkChoices) and the Workplace Relations Amendment 2008 (Transition to Forward with Fairness)
3. The NUS national office will endeavour to provide any assistance needed by member student organisations in their efforts in promoting and participating the Your Rights At Work campaign.

*M: Katie Wood (RMIT)*

*S: Michael Goldborough (Monash Caulfield)*

## **MISC 4: Ethno-Cultural General Principles**

### Preamble:

1. Ethnically, culturally and/or linguistically diverse students are part of the community within universities and are part of the multicultural community of Australia.
2. People who identify as ethnically, culturally and/or linguistically diverse may have different needs, expectations or perspectives and could or have experienced racism and/or discrimination in all areas of life.

### Platform:

1. NUS is opposed to racism and discrimination of all kinds.
2. NUS believes Australia should be a multicultural society that is accepting of people from a diverse range of backgrounds.
3. Ethnically, culturally and/or linguistically diverse students should feel included in all activities, events, conferences and campaigns of NUS and their student organisations.
4. Ethnically, culturally and/or linguistically diverse students and people should feel included at university and in society generally.

## Action

1. That Conference directs the NUS Ethno-Cultural Officer to:
  - a. Encourage student organisations and state branches to create or appoint an equivalent of an Ethno-Cultural Officer position with the responsibilities of ensuring students are treated fairly and equitably in terms of their ethnicity, race, culture and/or religion.

- b. With the support from the equivalent of an Ethno-Cultural Officer of the student organisation where present, encourage, lobby, campaign or ensure universities implement and maintain culturally inclusive practices.
2. That all mid year conferences associated with NUS run inclusiveness, anti-oppression or similar workshops.
3. That all conferences associated with NUS provide prayer spaces.

*M: Andrew Looi (UNSW)*

*S: Phuong Au (National Ethno-Cultural Officer)*

## **MISC 5: National Student Broadsheet**

### Preamble:

Last year, NUS passed a motion agreeing to assist in the organisation and co-ordination of student media, which has been decimated across the nation post-VSU. In particular, NUS was viewed as an ideal place for the many student media co-ordinators with no resources or support to communicate and network with other student media co-ordinators in similar position. This would then assist them in facilitating and developing student media on their respective campuses.

The 2008 editors of Farrago (UMSU's student magazine) have developed and produced a collaborative cross-campus newspaper entitled 'The Worm'. Edition 1 of the 'The Worm' was released on XXXX, and contains contributions from Monash, RMIT, Latrobe and Melbourne University students. 'The Worm' aims to facilitate cross-campus awareness and debate, and in the future, seeks to cultivate links with Victorian universities where independent student media is not currently not feasible.

While currently a Victorian endeavour, 'The Worm' aims to be a starting point for student media co-ordinators around Australia to develop similar projects in order to counter-act the devastating impact of VSU.

### Platform:

NUS, having recognised the importance of student media and state of student media post-VSU, supports the continued production of a Victorian cross-campus newspaper.

NUS recognises the potential it holds for facilitating and encouraging such projects around Australia.

### Action

That NUS upholds it's motion in 2007 and help facilitate networking between student media organisations via e-lists for the purpose of developing cross-campus publications.

That NUS support in principle, assistance in funding of 'The Worm' and similar projects around Australia.

*m: Noah White (Sydney University)*  
*s: Sarah Cole (NUS VIC President)*

## **MISC 6: Miscellaneous 9**

### Preamble:

Building a sense of shared interest among Australia's university students is integral to the aims of the National Union of Students. The sharing of articles written by students among publications at different campuses can help to accomplish this, while promoting diversity of content within and increasing the exposure offered to talented writers by student publications.

### Platform:

- 1: The NUS recognizes the importance of communication between campuses at all levels.
- 2: The NUS considers the sharing of articles and other content between student publications to be a positive practice deserving of the National Unions support.

### Action

- 1: The Executive of the National Union of Students be charged with establishing a content sharing facility on the NUS website and appointing individuals to administer this facility.
- 2: This facility will be open to all student publications operated by affiliates of the NUS.
- 3: All publications drawing from the content sharing facility be required to post notification of which articles they are re-publishing and when.
- 4: All publications re-publishing content drawn from the content sharing facility be required to incorporate acknowledgement of both the original source of the content (author, publication and campus) and the content sharing facility in their publication.

*M: Chris Monnox (Wollongong University)*  
*S: Amber Stechell (UNSW)*

## **MISC 7: NUS Presence on the ACTU Council**

### Preamble:

Currently a position exists on ACTU National Council for the President of the National Union of Students.

This position provides an opportunity for greater solidarity between trade unions and student unions on a national level, and also allows for youth and

student interests to be addressed by the chief decision-making body of the Australian trade union movement.

#### Action

NUS National Conference calls on the President of NUS to take advantage of this position and attend ACTU National Council on a regular basis, and to represent youth and student interests at these meetings.

*M: Chris Monnox (Wollongong University)*

*S: Ausseela Thanaphonsakron (UNSW)*

### **MISC 8: Union Solidarity**

#### Preamble:

The National Union of Students recognizes the importance of collective organising on behalf of groups and organizations.

#### Action

The National Union of Students stands in solidarity with all formal and non-formal union groups across Australia that stand up for the rights of students, employees and other systemically disempowered peoples.

In particular, NUS National conference recognizes the role played by the Australian Trade Union movement in advocating for the rights of Australian workers on a range of employment, and non-employment related issues, including social justice.

NUS National Conference also stands in solidarity with all tertiary student organizations across Australia, and organizations which may not be registered trade unions, in advocating for, supporting and organising workers, specifically these include The Scarlet Alliance, who represent Australia sex-workers, and UNITE, who represent fast-food and retail workers.

*M: Rebecca Amery (Newcastle)*

*S: Danny Bolous (Newcastle)*

### **MISC 9: Understaffing At Newcastle University**

#### Preamble:

The drastic staff cuts which took place at the University of Newcastle in 2005 have resulted in an increase in class sizes and therefore, a significant reduction in the availability of staff for students, both academic and administrative.

#### Platform:

1. NUS believes that the exorbitant fees paid by students each year should entitle them to help when it is needed.
2. NUS notes that larger classes often results in a reduction in the quality of learning for students.
3. NUS does not support the online learning facility being the dominant form of communication and often the only avenue to seek help. This does not provide a supportive learning environment for any student.

Action:

NUS will assist in the campaign to increase the numbers of administrative and academic staff members, therefore improving the learning experience for students

*M: Deahna Richardson (Newcastle)*  
*S: Kris Gesling (Newcastle)*

## **PART-TIME AND MATURE AGE POLICY**

### **PTMA 1: Part-time Student Concession Cards**

Preamble:

In every Australian state and territory part time tertiary students are not eligible to be transport concession card holders. Many students are forced to go part time due to the financial pressures that come from full time study and the lack of government and university support to assist these students. Part time students are also not eligible to receive any Youth Allowance from the government forcing many part time students below the Henderson poverty line. By providing access for part time students to travel concession rates will alleviate some of the financial pressures these students face.

Platform:

The NUS supports concession cards for part time students.  
The NUS directs the welfare officer to campaign for part time student concession cards.

Action

The National Welfare Officer, together with NUS state welfare and campus part time student representatives and welfare officers (or other) shall:

- \* promote awareness of this issue to NUS members;
- \* promote the issue to students on campus;
- \* lobby the relevant government representatives on this issue and;
- \* lobby the relevant university bodies to assist in lobbying the government changes in concession card policy

*M: Kathleen Studdert (University of Sydney)*  
*S: Kat Henderson (NUS QLD President)*

## **PTMA 2: Distance Education Ancillary Fees**

### Platform:

Similarly to their on campus counterparts, distance education students suffer the financial burden of paying unfair ancillary fees for their courses. Furthermore, the financial burden from ancillary fees for distance education students is often greater than their on campus counterparts. Many distance education students are required to pay for the postage, telephone and transport required to undertake their course and it is not uncommon for distance education students to incur a fee for to sit their exams if they are unable to attend the exam venue for on campus students.

### Policy:

The NUS believes that all ancillary fees incurred by distance education students should be covered by their course costs (ie. CSP/HECS)  
The NUS directs the National Welfare Officer and the National Small and Regional Officer to campaign against the charging of distance education for ancillary costs.

### Action

The National Welfare and the National Small and Regional Officers, together with their NUS state counterparts and on campus officers (or other) shall:

- \* \* promote awareness of this issue to NUS members;
- \* promote the issue to students on campus;
- \* lobby the relevant government representatives to take action against the charging of distance education students for ancillary fees;
- \* lobby the relevant university bodies to stop charging distance education students ancillary fees.

*M: James Morgan (UTS)*  
*S: Kate Laing (University of Sydney)*

## **PTMA 3: Public Transport Concession Reform**

### Preamble:

Many of the regulations in place concerning eligibility for public transport concessions seem to be informed by the presumption that part time students and mature age students are necessarily better off than other students. In the latter case especially, this is not necessarily the case.

### Platform:

- 1: The NUS notes that many part time students are not financially well off and are in need of assistance when it comes to essentials such as public transportation.
- 2: The NUS notes that mature age students are not necessarily wealthy.
- 3: The NUS believes that public transport concession regulations that distinguish between students on the basis of age are not appropriate.

#### Action

- 1: The NUS will push state governments to extent their public transport concessions program to part-time students.
- 2: The NUS will also urge the Government of New South Wales to enter in negotiations with private public transport providers with the aim of removing the limitation of concessions on regional and rural bus networks to students under thirty years of age.

*M: Chris Monnox (Wollongong University)*  
*S: Amber Stechell (UNSW)*

#### **PTMA 4: Mature Age Student Representation**

##### Preamble:

Mature Age students, as a group, have a unique range of concerns and priorities. It is important that student organisations take account of these priorities when formulating campaigns and policy. The most effective way to achieve this is through specific mature age student representation on student associations.

##### Platform:

- 1: NUS recognizes that mature age students are an important group of students with a unique set of concerns.
- 2: NUS believes that specific mature age representation within student organisations has a positive impact on the inclusiveness of such bodies.

##### Action:

- 1: The NUS Executive will urge all affiliated student organisations, especially those considering restructuring, to include a mature age students representative.

*M: Felicity Evans (UTS)*  
*S: Ausseela Thanaphonsakron (UNSW)*

## QUEER

### QUEER 1: Repealing the Commonwealth Same-Sex Marriage Ban

#### Preamble:

The campaign for same-sex marriage rights has been a significant international civil rights campaign for much of the previous decade. The campaign has had major victories in numerous countries such as Canada, Spain, South Africa and the United Kingdom to name a few. In the United States a handful of states have legalised same-sex marriage the most recent in Connecticut and after a mass campaign, California.

The campaign has involved many thousands of people, including large sections of the GLBITQ community, but also wide layers of the wider community, who see this as a basic human rights issue. In Australia, the demands for full legal equality including same-sex marriage rights has been the major demand from the overwhelming majority of community groups that represent sections of the Queer community. Since the Commonwealth ban on same-sex marriage in 2004, public opinion continues to grow in support for equal rights including same-sex marriage rights for same sex couples, this was reflected by the success of the 2008 NUS Equal rights petition signed by over 30 000 people. With overwhelming support for change in Australia and the fact that same-sex marriage rights is becoming the norm around the world, the Commonwealth government should support same-sex marriage rights and move to repeal the same-sex marriage ban immediately.

#### Platform:

1/ NUS recognizes that the demand for same-sex marriage rights is a basic human rights issue. Support for the choice of same-sex couples to marry fits in with the NUS position of being against all homophobic discrimination and oppression.

2/ NUS recognizes that the fight against homophobic discrimination is broader than legal equality. However without winning full legal equality, which cannot occur without same-sex marriage rights, the elimination of homophobic oppression will never be achieved.

3/ NUS believes the Commonwealth government should immediately move to overturn the 2004 Marriage Act amendments which excludes same-sex couples from marriage rights.

#### Action

1/ NUS formally supports the campaign for Same-Sex marriage rights and will undertake the following:

- i. NUS co-sponsors/endorse the annual national day of action for Same-sex marriage rights.
- ii. NUS (through the national Queer Officers) work closely with key community/lobby groups who are involved in this campaign. To enable a more effective campaign that shares information and resources and which reaches out to as many students as possible.
- iii. NUS (through the national Queer officers) design an NUS poster/leaflet aimed at students for the national day of action.

2/ NUS (through the national Queer officers) will lobby the Commonwealth government to immediately overturn the 2004 Marriage Act amendments.

3/ NUS (through the national Queer officers) will work closely with queer/sexuality departments and/or student unions to keep campuses informed of the campaign and distribute information. The national office can help local campuses connect up with national and state based Lobby/community groups.

*m: James Vigus (NUS National Queer Officer)*  
*s: Rebecca Leeks (QUT)*

## **QUEER 2: Support For Gender/Women's, Queer and Cultural Studies Departments**

### Preamble:

The National Union of Students recognizes the academic and political significance that Gender/Womyn's, Sexuality and Cultural Studies departments hold within Australian tertiary institutions.

These departments form an essential component of a comprehensive, reflexive and critical tertiary curriculum.

Gender/Women's, Sexuality and Cultural Studies departments provide an essential space for feminist, queer and cultural theories, expose and critique the heterosexist, patriarchal and capitalist nature of Australian society, and help to recognise and empower gendered, queer and other marginalised identities.

### Action

The National Union of Students strongly objects to the under-funding, de-funding or abolition of Gender/Women's, Sexuality and Cultural Studies departments, and calls for their continued funding and support as stand-alone departments within Australian Universities.

*M: Talia Barret (Newcastle)*  
*S: Danny Bolous (Newcastle)*

## **SMALL AND REGIONAL CAMPUSES POLICY**

### **SMR 1: S & R Policy**

#### Preamble:

The distance between many Small and Regional campuses and campuses in urban centres often results in a lack of awareness of National Union of Students campaigns on these campuses. Visits to Small and Regional campuses by State Executives can play an important role in remedying this situation.

#### Platform:

- 1: The NUS recognizes the importance of developing an effective and visible presence for the National Union on Small and Regional campuses.
- 2: The NUS recognizes that state branches have the potential to act as vital points of contact between Small and Regional Campuses and the National Union.

#### Action:

- 1: That NUS State Presidents and General Secretaries will ensure that State Executive meetings are held on Small and Regional as well as metropolitan campuses.
- 2: That NUS State Presidents will keep the National Small and Regional Officer informed as to the position of the National Union on Small and Regional campuses in their state.

*M: Chris Monnox (Wollongong University)*

*S: Amber Stechell (UNSW)*

### **SMR 2: S & R Policy**

#### Preamble:

Regional universities are often characterised by large catchment areas. This leads to significant numbers of students having to leave home and pay for increasingly expensive accommodation in regional centres. The Commonwealth Accommodation Scholarship provides important financial support for students from regional and remote areas living away from home in order to study. 15639 such scholarships were made available by the Federal Government in 2008. This represents a commendable commitment to student welfare, but more can be done and this program is worthy of expansion.

#### Platform:

- 1: The NUS acknowledges the importance of Commonwealth Accommodation Scholarships in supporting students from regional and remote areas.
- 2: The NUS believes that the number of these scholarships should be increased to facilitate better access to tertiary education for these students.

Action

- 1: The NUS will strongly urge the Federal Government to increase the number of Commonwealth Accommodation Scholarships available to students in 2010 and subsequently.

*M: Felicity Evans (UTS)*

*S: Ausseela Thanaphonsakron (UNSW)*

**SMR 3: S & R Policy**

Preamble:

Public transport at its best provides a cost-effective and environmentally friendly means for students to travel to university. In many regional areas, however, public transport services arrive and depart at irregular intervals. Synchronisation of public transport and university timetables is just as much an issue as the frequency of public transport at many campuses.

Platform:

- 1: The NUS recognizes the value of readily available public transportation services to all students.
- 2: The NUS is aware that the quantity of public transport services in many regional areas is highly deficient.
- 3: The NUS notes that in an environment where public transport services are less frequent, synchronisation of public transport and university timetables becomes a serious issue.

Action:

- 1: The National and State Executives of the NUS will work with regional campuses to pressure State Governments and privately owned public transport providers into providing more frequent services to regional universities.
- 2: The National Small and Regional Officer and State Executives will consult with student organisations at regional campuses about their public transport needs.
- 3: The National Small and Regional Officer and State Executives will render assistance to these organisations in pressing for better synchronised public transport and university timetables.

*M: Chris Monnox (Wollongong University)*

*S: Felicity Evans (UTS)*

## **SMR 4: S & R Policy 20**

### Preamble:

The Federal Government's proposal of the return of the compulsory services fee for universities may also see the introduction of benchmarks for services that should be supplied at universities.

### Platform:

NUS recognizes that many rural and regional universities go without core services such as legal help, welfare support and other services due to a lack of funds.

NUS recognises that rural and regional campuses have a lower student population to the metro campuses and therefore have a smaller pool of funds to draw on to provide services.

### Action:

1. NUS calls on the Federal government to ensure there is a minimum requirement for all universities to provide adequate legal, welfare and other needed support services for students.
2. NUS calls on the Federal government to help fund such services if the collection of compulsory services fees does not meet the costs of such services for rural and regional campuses due to their lower student population.

*M: Chris Monnox (Wollongong University)*

*S: Ausseela Thanaphonsakron (UNSW)*

## **STUDENT SERVICES POLICY**

### **STUD 1: Privatisation of Student Services**

#### Platform:

Under VSU, student organisations across the country have lost control of student services and amenities. Consequently, some services have been privatised, some maintained in a reduced capacity, and some lost. This trend is one of the primary drivers of the decline in campus culture and the erosion of links between students and their campus. Extra-curricular activities, which were a bridge between academic and social life on campus, have been gutted. Additionally, some students are now unable to access services or amenities because of prohibitive costs or closure.

#### Policy:

- NUS opposes privatisation of student services and amenities

- NUS supports provision and control of student services and amenities by campus student organisations.

Action:

2. The National Welfare officer, in partnership with campus Presidents and Welfare officers shall:
3. Promote the reclamation of student control of services and amenities through lobbying and direct action on campus where appropriate.
4. Promote awareness in the student community regarding the advantages of student control of student services
5. Promote increased funding of student services.
6. Work to develop new and innovative student services to deal with changing demands on students.

*M: Jesse Marshall (LaTrobe)*

*S: Emma Lancaster (NUS National Executive)*

## **STUD 2: Appropriate Public Transport Infrastructure and Services**

Platform:

It is currently expensive, inefficient and uncomfortable for many university students to get from home to their campus by public transport. With over-specific conditions for access to concessions, inability to access the same concessions as primary and secondary students and steep up-front costs, many students opt to ignore the public transport option.

Policy:

NUS supports free public transport for all students.

NUS urges investment in frequent services to and from university campuses.

NUS urges continuing improvements to public transport infrastructure which link universities to wider public transport networks.

Action:

The National Welfare Officer, in cooperation with State Welfare Officers and Campus Office Bearers, shall:

Identify student issues with public transport accessibility, infrastructure and service in each state.

Lobby state governments to adopt specific programs and policies targeted at alleviating any such problems faced by students.

Increase awareness of issues and establish support for reform in these areas.

*M: Jesse Marshall (La Trobe)*

*S: Rhiannon Newman (NUS SA President)*

### **STUD 3: Services 8**

#### Preamble:

Since the introduction of VSU food prices have increased dramatically on many campuses. The legalisation of a compulsory, deferrable amenities fee by the Rudd Government greatly reduces the financial rationale for such price hikes.

#### Platform:

1: The NUS recognizes that service providers, including food suppliers on many campuses, were put under a great deal of financial pressure by the Howard Governments VSU legislation.

2: The NUS also recognizes that the Rudd Governments legalisation of deferrable amenities fees has helped reduce this measure.

#### Action:

1: The NUS will urge all campus food providers negatively effected by VSU to refrain from introducing further major price increases.

*M: Chris Monnox (Wollongong University)*

*S: Amber Stechell (UNSW)*

### **STUD 4: Services 9**

#### Preamble:

One of the single most debilitating consequences of the Howard Governments VSU legislation has been the decline, and in some cases outright cessation, of subsidised child care on campuses. The Rudd Governments legalisation of a deferrable \$250 amenities fee offers service providers and opportunity to restore these vital facilities.

#### Platform:

1: The NUS believes that the provision of subsidised child care on all campuses is a vital component of an equitable and accessible tertiary education system.

2: The NUS notes the damage done to subsidised child care across Australia by the introduction of VUS.

3: The NUS notes the opportunities for service restoration provided by the Rudd Government's legalisation of a deferrable \$250 amenities fee and believes that the restoration of subsidised child care must be a priority.

#### Action

1: The NUS will support all student organisations engaged in campaigning for access to a portion of university levied amenities fees for the provision of subsidised childcare to the fullest extent possible.

2: The NUS will support all student organisations engaged in pressuring their university administrations to provide subsidised childcare to the fullest extent possible where childcare provision has historically been the role of the university.

*M: Felicity Evans (UTS)*

*S: Ausseela Thanaphonsakron (UNSW)*

### **STUD 5: Services**

#### Preamble:

In 2007 the Rudd Government announced the creation of an \$11 billion Education Investment Fund for capital works programs at universities and other tertiary institutions. This presents an opportunity for student associations, an opportunity which the National Union of Students should be at the forefront of exploring.

#### Platform:

1: The NUS notes the Rudd Government's establishment of an \$11 billion Education Investment Fund.

2: The NUS notes that universities will be drawing on this funding to refurbish existing facilities and construct new facilities in the coming years.

3: The NUS encourages student organisations to pressure universities for improvements in their facilities as part of these refurbishments.

#### Action

1: The National Union of Students will offer its fullest support to all student organisations engaged in lobbying their university administrations for improvements in student organisation facilities as part of university capital works programs.

2: The National and State Executives of the NUS will encourage affiliated organisations to take advantage of the potential opportunities presented to them by university construction and refurbishment projects.

*M: Chris Monnox (Wollongong University)*

*S: Felicity Evans (UTS)*

## **STUD 6: Public Transport**

### Preamble:

As of August 2008, Cityrail revoked student concessions for full time students who are in any paid employment or receiving any remuneration.

### Platform:

1. NUS believes that increasing student numbers on public transport is crucial to reducing carbon emissions from motor vehicles.
2. NUS does not support the increase in public transport fares by the NSW state government.

### Action:

NUS will Campaign for all full time students to regain their eligibility for transport concessions regardless of their current income or employment status.

*M: Deahna Richardson (Newcastle)*

*S: Kris Gesling (Newcastle)*

## **STUD 7: Food on Campus**

### Preamble:

Currently, it is difficult to purchase a complete meal on campus for less than nine dollars.

### Platform:

1. NUS believes that the availability of affordable food is a fundamental human right and should not be exclusive based on income.
2. NUS supports subsidised food sources by student organisations.

### Action:

The NUS Welfare Officer will assist student organizations in conducting student surveys to discover what it is exactly that students require, and to lobby their university to assist in providing a minimum of one affordable, student-owned food outlet on campus.

*M: Deahna Richardson (Newcastle)*

*S: Kris Gesling (Newcastle)*

## STUDENT UNIONISM POLICY

### UNION 1: PROTECTION INDEPENDENT AND DEMOCRATIC STUDENT ORGANISATIONS

#### Preamble:

1. NUS recognizes the devastating impact Voluntary Student Unionism legislation has had on essential student services and the student voice since it was introduced in late 2005.
2. NUS recognizes that VSU has disproportionately affected regional areas where universities have been less able to cover the funding shortfall following the removal of compulsory fees.
3. NUS notes that at many universities across Australia university students no longer have access to an independent democratic student organisation to be their voice to the university, government and wider community. NUS also notes that even if VSU reform is passed, many campuses still not have a student organisation or sufficient funding for their student organisation to provide representation and basic services.

#### Platform:

1. NUS welcomes the announcement by Kate Ellis, Federal Minister for Youth, that the Government is going to establish national benchmarks and protocols for minimum standards of student services, advocacy and representation at Australian universities.
2. NUS supports the Government's proposal to allow universities to charge a new student levy to assist in meeting the benchmarks. NUS also supports the decision to allow the new levy, capped at \$250, to be deferred onto HECS so that no financially needy student will have to face any additional up-front charge.
3. NUS is very concerned that in the current Government plan there is no clear place for protecting the role and work of student organisations, specifically in delivering the student services and representation required in the benchmarks.
4. NUS is committed to starting a '**Re-establishing Representation**' campaign should VSU reform be passed through the senate in 2009. The campaign will focus on those universities without viable independent representative student organisations. The aim of the campaign will be to establish student organisations and ensure they are adequately funded to provide representation.

#### Action:

1. NUS calls on the Federal Government to allow and require universities to pass on the new student fees to their student organisations to deliver key support services and the student voice. These are services that can only be delivered effectively when independent from universities.
2. NUS calls on the Federal Government to allow universities to incorporate opt-out membership of student organisations as part of their enrolment procedures, to guarantee that every student has the capacity to join their student union.
3. NUS will encourage all of its members, particularly those from regional campuses, to contact their local members expressing NUS's position on the Government's current plan. NUS also encourages all of its members to contact National Party senators, Greens senators, Senators Nick Xenophon and Steve Fielding urging them to vote with the Government in reforming VSU.
4. NUS conference directs the National President and National Education Office to incorporate the longstanding NUS policy on VSU into the major campaign for 2009 should VSU reform fail to pass through the senate in 2009.
5. NUS conference directs the National President and National Education Office to prepare a '**Re-establishing Representation**' campaign should VSU reform succeed in passing through the senate in 2009. Preparations for this campaign will include;
  - a. A draft Re-establishing Representation University Ranking System (RERUS) that ranks universities by their support of their campus student organisations. This will be developed in conjunction with state and campus presidents.
  - b. Compilation of a comprehensive list of email and mail contacts to which RERUS material can be distributed. Including but not limited to; Year 12 advisors, school career advisor, international student recruitment agencies, English language colleges, Trade Unions, tertiary sector groups, MPs and media contacts.
  - c. A draft RERUS website with links to NUS and DABF websites, facebook groups. With potential for translation of website into other languages deemed strategic to the completion of RERUS objectives.
  - d. Preliminary calendar of second-semester campus-specific events when focused awareness-raising RERUS actions would cause most effect.

- e. Communication with LHMU organisers responsible for the LHMU's highly visible, effective name-and-shame campaign Clean Start Campaign.

*M: David Barrow (NUS NSW President)*

*S: Rhiannon Newman (NUS SA President)*

## **UNION 2: Federal Labor and Repealing VSU**

### Preamble:

Voluntary Student Unionism (VSU) was introduced Federally in 2005 by the Howard Coalition Government, coming into effect from July 2006. VSU was introduced as an attempt by the Howard Government to strip away the independent political voice of students, through the decimation of Student Unions and Guilds.

VSU was introduced in a period of rampant neo-liberalisation of the Higher Education sector, with an increased attempt by the Government, and the University Administrations, to shift the burden of the cost of education upon students.

The student population responded to this political attack through a series of mobilisations throughout 2005, thousands of students marched and demonstrated all across the country to defend their student organisations, and their political voice.

After contributing to the successful campaign to see an end to the Howard era in the 2007 Federal elections, the student movement has been left out in the cold by the Rudd Labor Government, who has refused to ensure the survival of independent, fully funded student unions. As a result, since VSU was introduced a third of student organisations have collapsed, while the remainder have been forced to depend upon various forms of subsidies from University Administrations to survive. The recent announcement of a new student fee to cover a range of services is not an end to VSU, as this money will be going to administrations rather than student organisations. The new fee will not restore the independent political voice that has been stripped away from the student movement.

### Platform:

NUS understands that the recent trajectory from both the Federal Governments and the University Administrations has been of forcing students to shoulder the costs of the Higher Education sector. Student need independent, fully funded, political student unions that can represent student interests, and oppose the neo-liberalisation of Higher Education.

NUS recognizes that the introduction of VSU was a political attack on the ability of students to collectively organise. Despite rhetorical opposition to aspects of VSU before the 2007 Federal Election, the Labor Government has

taken no concrete steps to ensure a funding model that will ensure the long term survival of student organisations, as political independent representative bodies.

NUS believes that the Labor Government should repeal Howard's anti-student union provisions (VSU) within the *Higher Education Act*. The Government should also fund our student unions to an amount no less than the levels in existence pre-VSU, to ensure the short term viability of our unions as independent bodies.

### Action

1. NUS condemn the Labor Government for their refusal to repeal Howard's anti-union VSU laws. Such a refusal is a rejection of the right of students to a collective voice, and damaging to the ability of students to advance our interests, both in the Higher Education sector and in society more broadly. NUS will communicate this to the major media outlets, through student media etc.
2. NUS commits to the demand to fully repeal VSU as a major component of any campaign that NUS runs in 2009. NUS will engage closely with campuses in such a campaign (through organising petitions, coordinating the production and distribution of campaign materials, and through national office bearer visits to build the campaigns on campuses), to highlight the relevance of this issue on both a national and campus specific level.
3. NUS commits to the highest level of information sharing between the national office and campuses, in regards to the state of the campaign, and the progress of lobbying efforts between NUS and the government, and university bodies.
4. NUS will commit to endorsing and supporting on-campus and campus specific actions that aim to highlight the devastating effect that VSU has had on student representation and culture, as part of the framework of a national campaign to repeal VSU.

NUS will produce a petition to repeal VSU to be submitted to the Federal Government. The petition should demand the new student fee needs to go directly to student organisations, not administrations. This petition will be provided to campuses all across the country with the aim of collecting 30,000 signatures against VSU. To both highlight the ongoing support amongst the student population for our student unions, and to allow campuses (particularly regional and smaller campuses) to engage with the campaign.

M: Colleen Bolger (Monash Clayton)

S: Liam Byrne (NUS National Executive)

## **UNION 3: Protecting democratic student union elections: banning student bribes**

### Preamble:

A number of student unions across the country have moved to offer free gifts or services to encourage students to vote in student elections. Most recently this was introduced by the University of Queensland Student Union in 2008. Although these bribes have increased the number of students voting in almost all cases, it does not increase the number of students who become involved in the union's activities outside of elections.

At the University of Queensland Student Union it is expected that the incentives scheme will cost the Union almost \$30 000 in 2008/9 - funds which could have been spent on campaigns to fight for adequate student income support or decreased university fees for students.

### Platform:

1/ NUS believes that student unions should not introduce bribes for students voting in student elections such as gifts or services.

2/ NUS believes that bribes are an attempt to offer a quick fix solution to the problem of decreasing numbers of students being involved in the student movement but actually do nothing to address this problem outside the election period. In fact, bribes detract from discussion about the real issues facing students today which could be used to convince more students to be involved in their unions during the election campaign and in the long term.

3/ NUS believes that bribes are expensive and waste valuable funds which are needed to run and organise campaigns, especially under VSU.

### Action

1/ NUS will publicly condemn the use of bribes in student elections.

2/ NUS State and National Office Bearers will campaign against the use of bribes in student elections on campuses where they occur.

3/ To address the problems of decreasing numbers of students involved in student unions around the country, NUS National and State Office Bearers will spend time on campus each month promoting the political events organised by NUS and student unions.

4/ To further address the problems of decreasing numbers of students involved in student unions around the country, NUS will endeavour to hold actions that are on campus when possible and which can include the largest numbers of students.

*M: Rebecca Leeks (QUT)*  
*S: James Vigus (NUS National Queer Officer)*

#### **UNION 4: Funding Student Organisations**

##### Platform:

Student Organisations have been and are at the mercy of governments and their political persuasions in their willingness to support vital student advocacy, representation and services on University Campuses. This means that much of the time and energy of organisations is spent in trying to ensure adequate funding for the next year. This policy seeks to end this constant fight for resources.

##### Policy

NUS will seek the Federal Government to set and fund a Student Services and Representation fund, with the fund being of an amount that will fund student Organisations into perpetuity.

NUS will seek that a board of student representatives, with appropriate financial training and assistance be developed to administer the fund to student organisations across Australia.

NUS seek to develop a set of guidelines of appropriate spending and appropriate controls of the funds that are administered.

##### Action

The NUS President and General Secretary to actively promote the establishment of a fund to fund Student Organisations.

The NUS Executive establish a working party to find an appropriate model of trust/fund, board membership and governance.

Other Office Bearers, NUS state and campus officers shall :

- \* promote student controlled funding of student organisations
- \* build support for this model of funding

*M: Sarah Cousins (Monash University)*  
*S: Ephiny Gale, (Monash University)*

#### **UNION 5: Congratulating the Rudd Government's Move to Ending VSU**

##### Preamble:

Since the introduction of VSU following the Howard Government's *Higher Education Support Act* student organisations have been decimated. As a consequence of VSU vital student services have been lost or reduced. VSU has sucked the life out of campus culture turning what were once vibrant cultural centres into ghost towns. Voluntary Unionism has curtailed the ability of student representative bodies to effectively advocate for the enhancement of students' education and for the improvement their

financial and social welfare. The recent moves by the Rudd government to end VSU have thrown a lifeline to student organisations and students more broadly.

#### Platform:

- NUS congratulates and thanks the Rudd Labor Government and Minister for Youth Kate Ellis for their moves to end VSU and their proposed alternative model.
- NUS must learn from the VSU experience and recognise that financial uncertainty distracts from the core aims and objectives of student representative bodies and service providers. To ensure effective advocacy and essential services are maintained a premium must be placed upon sound and responsible financial management of student organisations.
- NUS urges future NUS General Secretaries to investigate alternative sources of income to safe guard the financial health of the national union.

#### Action

- The President of NUS will send correspondence to Prime Minister Kevin Rudd and Minister Kate Ellis thanking them for support of the student movement and the national union.

NUS will encourage all affiliate campuses to take appropriate steps to thank the Prime Minister and Minister Ellis.

*M: Patrick Sheehan (LaTrobe)*

*S: Matthew Incerti (Melbourne University)*

### **UNION 6: Universal Student Unionism**

#### Preamble:

The student organisation funding model released by the Rudd Government threatens to further diminish the activist capacity of student organizations, and is no solution to the problems faced by students organisations as a result of Voluntary Student Unionism.

A compulsory student levy, while having the potential of reintroducing a universal and independent funding source for student organisations, also reduces the capacity of organisations collect their own, voluntary fees from students. If political representation and activism are not explicitly identified as areas to be funded by the new levy, student organisations face an even graver future with virtually no way of funding such activities on campus.

Considering the sweeping changes occurring throughout much of the higher education sector, including the introduction of Melbourne Model style restructures, and the corporatisation of academic activity, student organisations have an important role to play in the fight for equitable, accessible and quality education. At this time, it is critical that it not be left up to Universities to determine the allocation and application of funding designed to reinvigorate student organisations. Universities must not have the power to effectively silence student union activity, and students' voices, by denying funding to representative organisations, or certain activities conducted by them.

Platform:

NUS opposes any post VSU model that seeks to put the allocation of student union funding into the hands of university administration at a time when changes within universities demand the attention of active, political and independent student unions.

The funding of student political representation and activism must form part of any model. NUS proposes that the Federal Government introduce a compulsory levy of all students that directly funds student organizations, and that the distribution and application of such funding should be at the discretion of student run organizations without political interference by University administrations.

Action:

1. That NUS publicly calls on the Federal Government to identify fully funded and independent political representation and activism as necessary component of any policy aimed at addressing the impact of VSU and work towards a model that ensures student control of the any new student levy.

2. That the National President facilitate a process in which student organisations and student activist groups contribute to the development of an NUS model for the reintroduction of a student-controlled, compulsory levy that addresses the need for the re-establishment of independent, student funded political representation on campuses.

*M: Talia Barret (Newcastle)*

*S: Danny Boulos (Newcastle)*

## **WELFARE POLICY**

### **WELF 1: Cost of Living Crisis and students**

Preamble:

The cost of basic living has risen steady across Australia during 2008. The cost of food, petrol and rent are at record levels, meanwhile rates for water, electricity and gas continue to climb, with government predictions they will double over the next 5 to 10 years. Students as a group will and

are feeling the effects of this cost of living crisis. As highlighted by the number of homeless students, including at elite G8 institutions like Melbourne University, where 440 students were deemed to have no home. The rate of homeless students is even worse at non-G8 universities.

The desperate situation of students will only get worse if predictions by the Reserve Bank of Australia are true of a steady rise of unemployment over the next year. One of the main ways students has survived the lack of government assistance is through paid work, a recent study showed that since 1984 on average students have doubled the amount of hours of paid work. The financial crisis and slowed economic growth is likely in the near future to cut off job opportunities for students.

The financial situation of students is shameful and will only get worse if government inaction continues. The government should immediately increase the amount of youth, Austudy and rent assistance to being well above the poverty line and be increased yearly indexed to inflation. The current strict eligibility needs to be lifted immediately to ensure as many students as possible can gain access to welfare whilst studying.

Action:

1/ NUS (through the welfare officer) will publicly lobby the Commonwealth government around cost of living issues and students. This should include demands on government to increase student welfare and provision of more public housing for students.

2/ To ensure maximum pressure on government, NUS (through the welfare officer) will work closely with campuses to launch a campaign that involves as many students as possible. The main demands being:

- i. To lift strict eligibility criteria for student welfare and to increase youth, rent and Austudy assistance to levels well above the poverty line and indexed inflation levels.
- ii. For government to provide more public housing stock for student use.
- iii. For student concessions on food, water, electricity, gas and transport

*M: Alexis Vassiley (UWA)*

*S: Paul Coats (University of Melbourne)*

## **WELF 2: Reform of HECS: Making Student Payments Fair**

Platform:

The current Government is committed to a co-payment scheme for Tertiary Studies by individuals. While we strongly disagree that this should be the case and believe in a free education system, NUS should advocate for an alternative to the current arrangements that will be fair, will be based on our current generally accepted taxation principles, and ensure continuation

of funding for a system in which education will be widely available to all and not provide disincentives to a few.

### What is wrong with HECS?

The current HECS regime provides disincentives to undertake low paid although valuable employment. This includes areas such as Nursing, Education and Humanities. The contribution that is received currently from the individual co-payment systems like HECS charges students despite their potential or actual earnings in the future.

HECS, or individual co-payment schemes, also fail to recognise that people in the same industry may also earn different levels of income. This results in a further disparity in the real value that Higher Education has provided to the individual. The following systems provide alternatives to the current system that should redress these inadequacies.

System 1 - Progressive Taxation This system would not increase or decrease the actual overall cost or contribution of Higher Education by students, but redistribute where that taxation falls to those most able to pay. This would ensure that fees fall fairly on all individuals, including who have not benefited as much as others from the Higher Education that they have received.

The new system of individual payments would be a broad addition to the existing taxation arrangements. This can be implemented in two different ways. The first is to have a progressive tax system based on the current tax system, including an increased level of taxation on the basis of increased income.

For example:

Taxable income	Tax on this income	Education co-payment
\$0 - \$6,000	Nil	Nil
\$6,001 - \$34,000	15c for each \$1 over \$6,000	0.10c <sup>1</sup> for each \$1
\$34,001 - \$80,000	\$4,200 plus 30c for each \$1 over \$34,000	+0.12c for each \$1
\$80,001 - \$180,000	\$18,000 plus 40c for each \$1 over \$80,000	+0.15c for each \$1
Over \$180,000	\$58,000 plus 45c for each \$1 over	+0.20c for each \$1

<sup>1</sup> These figures are suggested for the purpose of example only; the actual amounts would need to be worked out by Treasury.

	\$180,000	
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This would see payments by former students increasing on a scale proportionate to their income. This would mean that it is possible to pay an unlimited amount on your education over your taxable lifetime, achieved by adding the proposed small tax amount to your regular income tax. Conversely, people who earn comparatively little over their lifetime, and have thus received little financial benefit from the Higher Education they have participated in, will pay little (or less than their current contribution) in their taxable lifetime.

### System 2 - Medicare Style Higher Education Levy

An alternative option is to introduce something similar to a Medicare Levy. This would see a percentage of tax added to individuals' tax based on their participation in Higher Education.

Either of these systems would mean that there is a progressive basis for co-payments. An individual system could have a number of features, including a specific time period for which the tax or levy applies to an individual, or a cap on co-contributions (either yearly or over a lifetime) to ensure that individuals do not pay an excessive amount for Higher Education fees.

Both of these systems provide a means for students to undertake degrees that they may not have considered previously, based on lower expected returns from future employment achieved through these degrees. They also align strongly with current incentives put in place by the previous Federal Government in regards to a decrease in HECS, including the National Priority areas of Nursing and Education.

Such systems may also see a decrease in costs of administration as applied to the general taxation system and no separate HECS system would need to be implemented. Further within this regime, HECS or similar statements would not need to be prepared, as the lifetime of payments would be undefined unless an upper limit of years was set.

In the absence of a free education system, an alternative model to the current HECS is necessary to equalise HECS-related taxation, and create a fair system in which all recipients of Higher Education pay a tax that is reflective of their resulting income. Either of the two methods described would not only make individual payments more just, but would highlight Higher Education as an institution for learning, rather than the focus remaining on a gain of high financial rewards as a result of tertiary study.

### Policy

NUS will support the implementation of a progressive and fair HECS system, based on actual earnings after achieving a degree rather than a flat rate per subject. The fair HECS system should not increase overall HECS burdens, but rather redistribute this burden to those who can pay.

### Action

The NUS President and General Secretary to actively promote the establishment of a progressive and fair HECS regime.  
The NUS research officer is directed to research appropriate levels and the appropriate model.  
NUS members will discuss Reforming HECS with their peers seek change through whatever means they find appropriate.

*M: Ephiny Gale (Monash University)*  
*S: Sarah Cousins (Monash University)*

### **WELF 3: Youth Allowance: Employment Disincentives, Independence Requirements, Indexation**

#### Platform:

The current Youth Allowance system needs significant reform. It is inefficient and illogical, providing inadequate support to students as they undertake university study. The independence requirements do not take into account the autonomy of young adults and their inability to rely on parental support, nor do they place sufficient value on study as a contribution to society.

The rates of payment have not been indexed since the early 1990s, leading to the creation of a damaging poverty trap. Not only does this system create the need for students to supplement their income by taking up work, it then penalises them for doing so with reductions in their payment. The counterproductive nature of this support system for students extends beyond creating financial troubles and associated issues; it also damages students' ability to allocate time to study.

The current arrangements make the task of balancing work, study and social life almost impossible for students who live alone, who come from disadvantaged backgrounds or whose parents do not support them financially.

#### Policy:

NUS supports the lowering of the age of independence for Centrelink payments to 18 years.

NUS urges the Federal Government to adopt the proposals it outlined to the Bradley Review for improving the Youth Allowance payment.

#### Action:

The National Welfare officer, in partnership with campus Presidents and Welfare officers shall:

Continue to raise awareness of student poverty issues in local and national media, in the community and on campus.

Campaign through lobbying - and through such direct action as is coordinated on a national, state or campus level - to encourage change as outlined in the NUS submission to the Bradley Review.

*M: Sarah Cole (NUS VIC President)*

*S: Evan Wallace (La Trobe Bundoora)*

#### **WELF 4: Co-operative Student Housing Initiatives**

##### Preamble:

Affordable student housing has been increasingly difficult to find as vacancy rates dwell well below 1% for the inner city areas and rents are increasing on average at 17%. As a result more and more students are finding it difficult to access an education or not getting one at all. This is especially difficult for those where it is not practical to live at home due to the time needed to travel to and from their educational institution.

##### Platform:

1. NUS believes in the right of students to access affordable accommodation in an secure environment and calls on the state and federal government to take action.
2. NUS supports the establishment of student run housing co-operatives to address the need for affordable accommodation as one of many mechanisms to solve the problem.

##### Action

1. Welfare Officer to put together a "Housing pack" on how to set up a housing co-operative and what resources are available in every state, along with funding or subsidies that are available from state and federal governments. These are to be distributed to campus welfare office bearers so that they can enact practical affordable housing arrangements for the students they are elected to represent.

*M: Kaitlin Ferris (Melbourne University)*

*S: Evan Wallace (Melbourne University)*

#### **WELF 5: Student Housing**

##### Preamble:

The issue of adequate and affordable student accommodation has reached crisis point, with the rising costs of living, the expenses of inner city rents

and the lack of adequate student income support all contributing to the problem.

This is an issue the government needs to address as evidence shows more instances of students being homeless or couch surfing at friend's places. Many students are choosing to stay at home because of the high costs of rent, and overall on campus accommodation is significantly more costly than other arrangements.

Student income support needs to be reformed to reflect the costs of rent. It cannot be seen as supporting a 'lifestyle' when students are paying upwards of \$200 a week on rent with not even half that coming from income support. It has become impossible for a full time student to not work whilst studying just to meet living requirements, unless they live at home or have a family supporting them. This creates inequities within the student population as students who can afford to have the ability to focus on study whilst those that can't have to sacrifice marks to work and support themselves.

This issue is not just linked to the housing affordability crisis overall, but should also be the responsibility of the universities. Considering the amount of time and money universities spend recruiting international students to come to Australia, it is appalling that there is no access to accommodation that they can offer which leads to international student being exploited in the rental and tenancy market as well.

#### Platform:

1. The NUS recognizes that students are one of the most vulnerable groups in the housing market because they are more likely to be exploited by landlords.
2. The NUS acknowledges the role that university administrations should play in this crisis, taking the responsibility to ensure every student has access to affordable accommodation if they need.
3. The NUS calls on both state and federal governments to look into reforms to rent assistance support and youth allowance reform, and for the government to take seriously this issue and instruct that universities invest more into this area.

#### Action:

1. That the national welfare officer in coordination with state and campus welfare officers run a campaign about affordable student housing directed at the state and federal governments as well as university administrations.
2. That the national welfare officer create a national comparative study to see which universities provide affordable on campus accommodation that is not necessarily a college like environment.
3. That the national welfare officer contacts the NLC and other international student support services to run a campaign about international student housing availability.

4. That the national welfare officer continues the campaign about fairer student income support and rent assistance, so that rates of payment reflect the real costs of rent.

*M: Kate Laing (University of Sydney)*

*S: Sarah Cole (NUS VIC President)*

## **WELF 6: Student Income Support**

### Preamble:

Australian tertiary students are faced with significant challenges in providing an adequate quality of life while studying. Many are unable to access any support due to draconian and unrealistic restrictions on accessing Youth Allowance. Those who do receive the maximum away from home rate must still work in order to supplement their meagre \$355.40 a fortnight. With rent assistance this can be increased up to \$428.87 a fortnight. Both these rates of assistance are well below the Henderson Poverty Line. For a single person with no dependents this is calculated to be \$510.88 a fortnight not inclusive of housing, and \$756.16 a fortnight including the costs of housing.

### Action

In order to increase access to Youth Allowance, the National Union of Students calls upon the Federal Government to immediately lower the Age of Independence for young people living away from home to 17.

The National Union of Students also calls upon the Federal Government to raise the maximum level of Youth Allowance without Rent Assistance to \$510.88 a fortnight, and with Rent Assistance to \$756.16 a fortnight.

*M: Rebecca Amery (Newcastle)*

*S: Beth Maloney (Newcastle)*

## **WELF 7: Industrial Relations and Workchoices**

### Preamble:

1. The former Howard Coalition Government's *Workplace Relations Amendment (WorkChoices) Act 2005* represents the greatest legislative attack on the rights of workers ever seen in Australia. The laws threaten living standards and democratic rights. The laws aim to destroy collective bargaining and union organisation. The laws are fundamentally biased in favour of business.

2. The WorkChoices changes:

- Deliver workplace power to employers by promoting individual contracts (Australian Workplace Agreements) and discriminating against collective bargaining;
- Drastically weaken the comprehensive protection of wages and employment conditions through awards, replacing them with an inadequate set of basic minimum standards;
- Destroy the ability of the Australian Industrial Relations Commission to maintain the safety net of pay and conditions, carry out the functions of an independent umpire, and ensure fair treatment of all parties to industrial disputes;
- Criminalise the normal functioning of unions by unreasonably limiting the representation rights of union members;
- Allow employers to dismiss workers without regard to fair treatment or natural justice;
- Aim to eliminate the state industrial relations systems which have provided effective protection for workers for well over one hundred years;
- Breach fundamental international labour standards and ILO Conventions to which Australia is a party; and
- Fail to ensure free and fair collective bargaining by further restricting the subject matter and level at which agreements can be made, imposing barriers to protected industrial action that have the effect of restricting the right to strike and delivering employers legal means to avoid or walk away from the commitments that they have made in agreements.

3. The election of the Rudd Labor Government provided a new stimulus for the campaign to repeal WorkChoices. However, the Australian Labor Party's current *Forward with Fairness* Industrial Relations Policy falls far short of repealing the WorkChoices legislation in its entirety and restoring fundamental rights to workers and trade unions.

4. In particular the current ALP Industrial Relations policy:

- Fails to fully restore basic rights to trade unions, such as right of entry and right to strike;
- Fails to comprehensively restore unfair dismissal rights for all workers;
- Fails to restore all previously protected statutory minimum conditions and entitlements for workers; and
- Fails to completely and immediately repeal the *Building and Construction Industry Improvement Act 2005*, which fundamentally and unashamedly attacks the rights of building and construction workers to organise collectively.

5. The Rudd Labor Government has introduced the *Workplace Relations Amendment (Transition to Forward With Fairness) Bill 2008*, which only partly abolishes individual agreements and has committed to ‘modernising’ (rationalising) industrial awards. None of the substantive deficiencies of the WorkChoices legislation have been fully addressed.

Platform:

1. NUS is fundamentally committed to the principles of trade unionism and is committed to an industrial relations system which protects and safeguards the rights of workers and trade unions;
2. NUS is committed to centralised minimum wage fixing, legislated statutory minimum conditions and the right for workers to collectively bargain, through their union, for industrial conditions;
3. NUS is opposed to Australian Workplace Agreements and further moves towards a deregulated labour market; and
4. NUS acknowledges that the WorkChoices changes have had a particularly detrimental effect on student and young workers, who are often engaged in casual or precarious employment with little ability to negotiate individually with their employer and assert their industrial rights.

Action:

1. NUS will call on the Rudd Labor Government to *fully* repeal the WorkChoices legislation, including:
  - i. Fully abolishing Australian Workplace Agreements and other forms of individualised industrial instruments;
  - ii. Fully restoring unfair dismissal rights for *all* workers;
  - iii. Reinstating a fair and independent system of centralised minimum wage fixation with a fair system of comprehensive industrial awards;
  - iv. Reinstating *all* previously protected statutory minimum conditions and entitlements;
  - v. Respecting the rights of workers to collectively bargain through their union and; and
  - vi. Restoring full rights to trade unions with respect to right of entry, induction participation, workplace organising, recruitment and right to strike.
2. NUS will openly call on the Rudd Labor Government to abolish discriminatory youth wage rates in industrial instruments, in line with current NUS policy, and instead introduce a system of competency-based

minimum wage classifications based on the principle of 'equal pay for equal work.'

3. NUS will openly advocate for a new statutory government-funded parental leave scheme providing an entitlement to six months paid leave.
4. NUS will openly and consistently advocate the above positions and in all relevant media releases and public commentary.
5. NUS commits to supporting the ongoing Australian Council of Trade Unions (ACTU) campaign for a fair and just industrial relations system for Australian workers.

*M: Enrico Burgio (NUS National Executive)*

*S: Luke Villiers (NUS National Executive)*

## **WELF 8: Abolish Youth Wages**

### Preamble:

The National Union of Students notes that youth wages significantly affect students who receive only a fraction of the full rate of pay, based on their age rather than their skill set. Wage rates significantly below the minimum wage make it difficult for Australian students to maintain a quality of life while studying.

### Action

The National Union of Students calls for the abolition of youth wages and junior rates of pay. Such wages are discriminatory, denying young workers equal pay for doing equal work.

*M: Talia Barret (Newcastle)*

*S: Danny Boulous (Newcastle)*

## **WELF 9: Student Employment**

### Preamble:

The best weapon against student poverty is employment. NUS should play a central role in helping students gain and maintain steady jobs. An increased emphasis on employment can offer students greater financial autonomy, and a reduction in welfare dependency.

### Platform:

NUS must reaffirm that financial stability in students' undergraduate years is the foundation of a secure future

NUS must acknowledge that prioritising a steady income stream over

extensive study is often a necessary reality.

NUS should seek to increase vocational opportunities for students by encouraging occupational training and offering advice on job application and interview processes.

#### Action

That the NUS Welfare Department increase its focus on issues of employment and job seeking initiatives, in particular, by actively promoting career-oriented websites and assessing the feasibility of holding relevant seminars.

That NUS continue to support traditional student poverty measures, such as those addressing Youth Allowance, in conjunction with this increased focus.

*M: Xavier Williams (NUS National Executive)*

*S: Matthew Incerti (Melbourne University)*

### **WELF 10: Tax Returns And You**

#### Preamble:

Many students are not aware of their tax responsibilities. During the transition to working life and tertiary study, integral information relating to these obligations are often poorly communicated. Lacking the provision of a rigid financial management curriculum in most secondary schools and universities, NUS has a duty to further inform students on tax matters when needed.

#### Platform:

NUS must reaffirm the fulfilment of tax responsibilities as an important step in maintaining a student's financial welfare and legitimacy.

Working university students in Australia should be regularly informed of their responsibilities via an information campaign conducted by NUS

#### Action

That the NUS Welfare Department publish and distribute posters outlining the basic obligations a working Australian citizen has to the Australian Tax Office. These posters would be distributed in the lead up to October 31, on an annual basis.

That NUS investigate the viability of developing this project with support from the Australian Tax Office.

*M: Xavier Williams (NUS National Executive)*

*S: Patrick Sheehan (LaTrobe)*

## **WELF 11: Financial Management**

### Preamble:

While efforts to address existing cases of student poverty are necessary, sufficient preventative measures are also needed. Young people in Australia are too often debt-ridden and lacking fiscal know-how. This affects the ability to earn and save, and instils a habit of systematic financial mismanagement. Student poverty will decrease if NUS promotes a cultural shift towards responsible spending and borrowing.

### Platform:

NUS should enact an extensive welfare campaign, seeking to develop the important life-skill of responsible financial management in university students. Featured in this campaign should be a focus on the prevention of cyclical debt and overspending.

This focus involves:

- warning students to seriously consider the risks of credit cards and high-interest loans
- warning students of the reduced standard of living that accompanies a poor credit rating
- ensuring all student loans are sourced through reputable financial institutions
- promoting sensible spending habits such as budgeting, savings accounts and eliminating impulse buys
- promoting steady expenditure over the course of students' pay periods, instead of hasty pay-day spending
- preventing excessive mobile phone and internet usage through consideration of pre-paid arrangements and smaller download limits
- promoting inexpensive alternatives to fast-food dining, such as home-cooked meals and bulk purchases
- promoting inexpensive alternatives to popular alcohol products, including casked wine.

### Action:

That NUS publish and widely distribute information packs to welfare departments, containing pamphlets and posters, engaging these issues of financial proficiency.

That NUS undertakes a marketing campaign - through social networking, collectives and the media - to alert students of said efforts to further extend their financial literacy.

That NUS continue to support traditional student poverty measures, such as those addressing long-term unemployment and Youth Allowance, in conjunction with this proposed campaign.

*M: Xavier Williams (NUS National Executive)*  
*S: Hugh Mortensen (Swinburne University)*

## **WELF 12: Working Wages and Youth Allowance**

### Preamble:

The individual income that students can earn without penalty when receiving Youth Allowance payments has not changed for over 6 years. Once an individual student earns over \$236 a fortnight (\$118 per week) their Centrelink payments are reduced proportionately to the additional individual income that student earns. While wage growth is generally in line with the CPI the amount a student can earn without penalty to their payments does not. This provides a significant disadvantage for students to enter the workforce in a casual or part time capacity while studying full time. Casual or part time work while studying is vital in providing essential graduate skills to students upon completion of their relevant course. In addition, income from casual or part time employment is essential for students to meet the rising costs of living including rental accommodation, food, transport, text books and course fees.

### Platform:

Individual earnings for recipients should be significantly increased and indexed to the CPI to provide for a greater incentive for students to gain vital graduate and employment skills while maintaining study.

### Action:

1. That the Federal Rudd Labor Government immediately increase the \$236 a fortnight individual allowable earnings of students before affecting their Youth Allowance payments to a level appropriate to sustain 10-15 hours per week paid employment while studying without penalty.
2. That the Federal Rudd Labor Government index the allowable individual earnings of students annually to the CPI to allow for wage growth and increased costs of living.

*M: Sarah Shepley (QUT)*  
*S: Myles O'Sullivan (QUT)*

## **WELF 13: Student Income Support Package**

### Platform:

1. NUS notes with concern that students in casual and part-time employment are open to exploitation by employers and believe that this situation is largely due to student reliance on part-time and casual employment to support their education.

2. NUS recognizes that Employment Law is constantly changing and believes that information programs can help students become aware of their rights and responsibilities in casual and part-time employment.

### Action

1. Accordingly, the NUS Welfare Department will:
  - a) Produce an updated information booklet that looks at the rights and responsibilities of students in part-time and casual employment. In particular, the information booklet should canvass issues such as:
    - i) The new rights and obligations of both employees and employers, as under Labor's Forward with Fairness Policy and the proposed *Fair Work Bill*.
    - ii) The rights and obligations of parties that enter into award flexibility arrangements.
    - iii) The limited rights of employees working for cash, including their inability to access statutory compensation schemes in the event of a workplace accident.
  - b) Produce and circulate articles to the mainstream and student media highlighting the issues pertaining to students in part-time and casual employment.
  - c) Enter into cooperative arrangements with employee organisations in order to facilitate an increased awareness of employment rights, a growth in unionism, and a reduction in the exploitation of students in casual and part-time employment. Such organizations should include, but are not be limited to, the LHMU (Hospitality) and the SDA (Retail) - who both have coverage over industries in which a high percentage of students work.
  - d) Liase with State Trades Halls; State Governments; the Australian Council of Trade Unions; the Workplace Ombudsman; and the Commonwealth Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations in order to:
    - i) Raise awareness of the exploitation of students in employment - particularly with regards to: cases of underpayment, inferior and unsafe working conditions, and the financial pressures on students that make them more willing to sacrifice basic pay and conditions.
    - ii) Lobby for increased enforcement mechanisms in industries that have a high rate of both exploitation and with employment regulations, to ensure that students receive appropriate remuneration.
    - iii) Ensure that further measures are taken to improve the protections for younger workers, including the development and

implementation of a program to increase union membership and representation.

*M: Matthew Incerti (Melbourne University)*

*S: Ella George (Monash University)*

## **WELF 14: Welfare 30**

### Preamble:

1. For many students in Australia, balancing an education with full-time or part-time work is part of the every day struggle to meet the increasing cost of living.
2. Full time and part-time employees are entitled to a minimum of 4 weeks annual leave and a minimum of 5 days sick leave in their first year of employment with 8-10 days in the years following. Part-time employees are entitled to a pro-rata of this amount.
3. Many organisations in Australia offer the concept of study leave, whereby an employee is entitled to a set amount of days or hours off from their employment duties for educational purposes. However, this concept is only offered by some organisations and not mandatory.

### Platform:

1. NUS calls on the Federal and State Governments to amend their industrial relations laws allowing for all full-time students employed on a full-time basis to be entitled to 2.5 paid study days and a further 2.5 non-paid days study leave a semester. Part-time employees would receive a pro-rata amount.

### Action

That NUS lobby state and Federal Governments to amend current legislation to allow for students to receive study leave.

That NUS lobby employer organisations to voluntarily give study leave to full-time students currently employed on a full-time or part-time basis.

*M: Chris Monnox (Wollongong University)*

*S: Amber Stechell (UNSW)*

## **WELF 15: Welfare 31**

### Preamble:

Disabled students are able to access many forms of Commonwealth assistance besides the well known Disability Support Pension. These include, but are not limited to, the Pensioner Education Supplement and Pharmaceutical Allowance. Regrettably, the existence of these measures is

not well publicised by Centrelink. Student Organisations, particularly those in control of disability services, can play a significant part in redressing this lack of awareness.

Platform:

1: The NUS notes that a wide range of Commonwealth assistance measures exist for disabled students. It is also noted, however, that many disabled students are unaware of these measures.

2: The NUS commends the work done by campus disability services, advocacy services and disabilities collectives in raising awareness in this area.

3: The NUS encourages expansion of these awareness building activities.

Action

1: The NUS National and State Executives will work to assist campuses to establish effective and visible disability services where these services are now lacking as a result of VSU.

*M: Felicity Evans (UTS)*

*S: Ausseela Thanaphonsakron (UNSW)*

**WELF 16: Welfare 32**

Preamble:

The Commonwealth Education Costs Scholarship provides scholarship holders with \$2,162 a year. Such a payment can be of great assistance to students struggling with the costs of study. 22456 such scholarships were made available by the Federal Government in 2008. This represents a commendable commitment to student welfare, but more can be done and this program is worthy of expansion.

Platform:

1: The NUS acknowledges the importance of Commonwealth Education Costs Scholarships in supporting indigenous and economically disadvantaged students.

2: The NUS believes that the number of these scholarships should be increased to facilitate better access to tertiary education for economically disadvantaged students.

Action

1: The NUS will strongly urge the Federal Government to increase the number of Commonwealth Education Costs Scholarships available to students in 2010 and subsequently.

*M: Chris Monnox (Wollongong University)*

*S: Felicity Evans (UTS)*

### **WELF 17: Welfare 33**

#### Preamble:

Commonwealth scholarships can play a vital role in supporting students from lower socio-economic status backgrounds and indigenous students with the financial burdens imposed on them while studying. Unfortunately many students who could benefit from the Commonwealth Scholarships Program are not aware of its existence.

#### Platform:

- 1: The NUS acknowledges the importance of Commonwealth Scholarships in supporting indigenous and economically disadvantaged students.
- 2: It is also noted that many students who could potentially benefit from Commonwealth Scholarships are not aware of their existence.
- 3: The NUS believes that the Federal Government, NUS and student organisations should all be involved in promoting the existence of these scholarships.

#### Action

- 1: The National Union of Students will lobby the Federal Government to invest more in promoting its Commonwealth Scholarships Program.
- 2: The National Union of Students will provide a link to the Commonwealth Scholarships Program on its website.
- 3: The National Union of Students will encourage all affiliated student organisations to carry information on this program to be made available to students on their campuses.

*M: Chris Monnox (Wollongong University)*

*S: Ausseela Thanaphonsakron (UNSW)*

### **WELF 18: Financial Responsibility**

#### Preamble:

The youth and students primarily use E-Tax as they are comfortable with the technology. The ATO has introduced the concept of 'pre-filling' which collates data from banks, investment companies and superannuation companies that can add data to a person's tax form. This and other areas of the financial sector are confusing for many young people. NUS can play a significant role in supporting students through this area of their life.

#### Platform:

NUS recognizes that the pre-filling system may lead to people being lax in not keeping checking the data themselves or taking a proactive responsibility in their tax.

NUS recognizes that the system is complicated as it is and therefore students and young people should have basic skills taught to them to be able to take proactive responsibility with their financial affairs.

NUS further recognizes that many young people are unsure about superannuation and lack the knowledge to be able to take proactive responsibility and therefore lose the opportunity to take full advantage to increase their superannuation and further understand the importance of it.

Further, NUS recognizes that E-Tax should be compatible for Macs to ensure as many people as possible can access the online system.

Action:

1. NUS Welfare Department continues to lobby the ATO through Personal Tax Advisory Group (PTAG) to ensure that 'pre-fill' will not lead to a reliance on the system.

2. NUS Welfare Department continues to work with the Student Financial Services Network (which depleted significantly due to VSU) in lobbying for:

1. lobby the Federal Government for financial literacy to be included in the national curriculum for high school students
2. increase the transparency of superannuation companies and allowing for easier options such as net-super to allow for easier self-transfers.

*M: Chris Monnox (Wollongong University)*

*S: Amber Setchell (UNSW)*

## **WOMEN'S POLICY**

### **WOMN 1: Full Abortion rights: Defending a Women's right to choose.**

Preamble:

The right for women have free, safe, legal abortions on demand is a fundamental human right. Women have a right to have full control over their bodies, no matter what stage of pregnancy, without the interference of governments.

The campaign for abortion rights in Australia has had a recent victory in the passing of new legislation in Victoria. Abortion has finally been removed from the criminal code, and women are now able to have an abortion at any time during the first 24 weeks of pregnancy. However, there is still much to be won. The Victorian law requires for abortions after 24 weeks to be approved by two doctors, restricting women's ability to obtain an abortion at this stage. Abortion is the subject of criminal law in all other Australian

states and territories, except the Australian Capital Territory. Each state and territory has legislation prohibiting 'unlawful' abortion. There are legislative measures in place in the states and territories, which in practice make lawful abortion available to a large number of women. However, we are still far away from seeing full abortion rights for women in any state.

There is overwhelming public support for abortion rights in Australia. 81% of Australians are pro-choice, according to a 2003 survey, and a recent poll has shown that 84% of Victorians support the removal of all restrictions on abortions, regardless of the stage of pregnancy. In accordance with these views, each state and territory government should immediately remove all restrictions on abortions. Governments should also move to provide free, safe abortions on demand, so that all women are able to exercise their right to choose.

#### Platform:

1. NUS recognizes that the demand for full abortion rights is a basic human rights issue. Support for women's right to choose is in accordance with the NUS position of opposing sexism.
2. NUS believe that all state and territory governments should immediately move to provide full abortion rights.
3. NUS believe that socioeconomic status should not impede a woman's ability to obtain an abortion, and therefore demand that governments move to provide facilities that perform free, safe abortions on demand.

#### Action

1. NUS formally support the campaign for full abortion rights and will undertake the following:
  - i. NUS endorse any protests taking place in the states and territories in support of full abortion rights.
  - ii. NUS (through the national Women's Officer) work with key women's community and lobby groups involved in pro-choice campaigns around the country.
2. NUS (through the national Women's Officer) will lobby the state and territory governments to immediately provide full abortion rights, and to provide free, safe abortions accessible to all women.
3. NUS (through the national Women's Officer) will work closely with women's departments and student unions to keep campuses informed of the campaign and distribute information. The national office should help to connect the campuses with relevant national or state campaign/community groups.

*M: Jo Mettam RMIT*  
*S: Emma Dock Sydney Uni*

## **WOMN 2: Sexism in Everyday Life, both on and off the Campus.**

### Preamble:

Sexism affects women in all aspects of our lives. In the 21<sup>st</sup> century sexism may look different to how it did in the 1950's but it still persists and impacts how women are perceived and treated in society. Women suffer from sexism in the workplace where they earn 15.6% less than their male counterparts for standard full time work. This figure increases to a shocking 34.4% gap when total earnings are considered. Women have limited control over our bodies and our sexuality. Women are perceived in the media as little more than objects and our sexuality appears to exist purely to satisfy men's sexual needs. Control over our bodies is restricted by most state's laws where abortion is still illegal and we are charged excessive amounts to use the contraceptive pill.

These external pressures provide the material basis for women's oppression. The ideas and expectations they convey permeate into people's conscious interactions and personal relationships. Women are expected to be attractive to men, submissive and apolitical and when they deviate from these norms, are subject to a barrage of criticism.

The gains that have been made during the 1960's and 1970's have been extremely important for the fight against sexism. However there is still significant inequality and therefore the fight needs to continue. Student organizations played a leading role in the gains of the past and should continue in that proud tradition.

### Platform:

1. NUS recognizes the material and social inequality facing women and rejects all forms of sexism including sexist language and behavior. Sexism will not be tolerated by NUS in any of its events or the work it does.
2. NUS believes the fight against women's oppression is an ongoing struggle in which it can and must play a leading role.
3. NUS demands the government legalise abortion, provide all forms of contraception for free, and address the income gap between men and women immediately. We demand equality for women in all aspects of our lives.

### Action:

1. NUS will (through the national Women's Officer) lobby the state and federal governments to address the pay gap between men and women, and all other issues that discriminate against women because of their sex.

2. NUS will (through the national Women's Officer) work closely with all campuses participate in all campaigns that relate to the discrimination of women because of their sex and will encourage campuses to have an annual meeting about sexism today.

3. NUS will (through the national Women's Officer) encourage the participation of women in NUS and all student representative bodies. It will where possible encourage women to chair meetings, express their opinions and run for positions within NUS.

*M: Jo Mettam RMIT*

*S: Katie Wood RMIT*

### **WOMN 3: Women's Right To Choose**

#### Preamble:

It remains that 70% of Australians are pro choice and believe in a women's right to choose, yet in 2008 with the change over in the federal Senate the political breakdown has become more conservative, and conscience voting means that bills such as the one proposed by Guy Barnnet could compromise Australia's stance on this issue. The bill proposed is to remove the Medicare item no. 16525 - "Management of second trimester labour, with or without induction, for intrauterine foetal death, gross foetal abnormality or life threatening maternal disease."

Removal of the item number will mean women may be forced to continue a pregnancy where the foetus has been diagnosed with a gross abnormality and the baby is likely to die before or during birth, or may die shortly after birth due to a fatal condition that causes great pain and suffering. Women with a life threatening illness may forced to continue the pregnancy even if it places their lives in further danger or treatment will cause damage to the foetus.

Removing funding for medical procedures will affect financially disadvantaged women the most. These women will be delayed in accessing services or forced to continue to carry a dead or dying baby, even if it is against medical advice and will cause them greater psychological distress.

The motion to remove item no. 16525 is a cruel proposal that will cause increased distress to women and their partners at a terrible time in their lives. It is also a direct attack on the right of women to make their own reproductive choices.

#### Platform:

1. That the NUS oppose this bill and any other attacks on a woman's right to choose.

2. That the NUS condemns this bill and the intent that it stands for in disadvantaging low socio economic status women and recognizes it as an attempt to further entrench a tiered system of access to public health care.

### Action

1. That the national women's officer in collaboration with state and campus women's officers co-ordinate a campaign about a women's right to choose.
2. That the national women's officer coordinate with other pro choice lobby and campaign groups to create a unified campaign.
3. That the women's officers of NUS mobilize students on campuses in letter writing, email and petition campaigns targeted at politicians should a pro life bill be placed on the agenda again, to match and out do the organised pro life right who are very effective at this type of campaigning.
4. That the NUS coordinate policy submissions to any inquiry or committee outlining these positions.

*M: Kate Laing (University of Sydney)*

*S: Sarah Cole (NUS VIC President)*

## **WOMN 4: Women's Rights At Work**

### Preamble:

Australia is one of the only countries to not have a national maternity leave scheme. While it may seem like a campaign that does not directly affect the student community, if conceptualised in broader terms we can see this inequity in the workplace affects us more than we realize.

The student community is the workforce of the future, and we should be looking at the current policies that surround women's rights at work asking what kind of workplace do we wish to move into. What kind of workforce should Australia encourage? Is it one that equally respects the involvement and contribution of women, one that recognizes and doesn't penalise the responsibilities of having children and family commitments, that doesn't perpetuate the breadwinner stereotype and pressure of a household?

Until we have a national commitment to address this issues the culture and expectations of the workforce will not improve. Women are unfairly affected by superannuation policy after absences from the workplace, not to mention the boy's club mentality of a lot of industries that leads to harassment and discrimination. Linking this to education, if workplace entitlements are not reformed for women the statistics of women being unable to repay their HECS debts will be exacerbated.

We want a workforce that acknowledges and encourages female participation. Reform in this area would be a symbol that Australia is serious

about equality and a workforce that encapsulates both genders to maximise the potential of Australia, to maximise equity and to acknowledge and recognise family.

Platform:

1. That the NUS encourage all women to find out more about their rights at work and to join their relevant trade union.
2. That the NUS push for a national paid maternity leave scheme, recognising that Australian students are the future work force of Australia and we have a stake in what kind of workplace we would like to move into.
3. That the NUS recognise and condemn the inequity entrenched in the workplace by the systems of superannuation (disproportionately benefiting men as women are more likely to have their working lives interrupted by family commitments) and HECS repayments (studies show that women take twice as long to repay the debt because of absences from the workplace).

Action

1. That the national women's officer in consultation with state and campus officers run a campaign about women's rights at work, focusing on the disproportionate effect that HECS repayments have on women and the lack of accessible paid maternity leave options for working women.
2. That the national women's officer contact the ACTU and other trade unions running the national campaign about women's rights at work to share resources and campaign ideas.

*M: Kate Laing (University of Sydney)*

*S: Sarah Cole (NUS Vic President)*

**WOMN 5: NOWSA Training Camp**

Preamble:

1. The effects of VSU have been devastating on many women's departments of student organisations. Women's departments are among the first to have their budgets cut or their departments merged. Women's ability to organize on campus has been hindered by the lack of support and financial resources, which has resulted in a cycle of disempowerment and lack of sustainability of women's activism.

Platform:

1. The NUS Women's department and the Network of Women Students in Australia (NOWSA) recognises that feminist debate, new

developments in feminist theory and practice, and the involvement of new feminist activists requires that there be opportunities for women to discuss the campaign priorities of the department and gain skills in feminist organising and campaigning. It is therefore crucial that at the beginning of the year there be a forum to bring together all newly elected women's officers from NUS State Branches, member campuses and feminist activists.

**Action:**

1. There shall be an annual NOWSA training camp for feminist activists organised by the National Women's officer. The purpose of this conference will be;
  - 1.1 to create an opportunity for feminist activists to meet and share skills, experiences and strategies
  - 1.2 provide training and support to incoming women's officers and feminist activists; benefit from the experiences of continuing activists and discuss strategies to involve women in campus and community activism
  - 1.3 strategise around the problems of sexism on campus, sexism within student organisations and sexism towards women's officers, women's departments and female office bearers.
2. The incoming National Women's Officer, working with the outgoing National Women's Officer and campus women's officers, will organize the training camp to be held within the first three months of the year.
3. NUS will provide funding where possible and necessary, to ensure the continued existence of the NOWSA training camp.

*M: Claire Tatyzo (National Women's Officer)*

*S: Sarah Hunt (University of Sydney)*

**WOMN 6: Women's Studies and Gender Studies Departments in Tertiary Education**

**Preamble:**

1. There are continually fewer Australian universities that offer Women's Studies or Gender Studies as a major. Women's and Gender Studies departments are continually being de-funded or assimilated into other courses, and are deemed as less important than most other faculties.

**Platform:**

1. NUS believes that as traditional courses have not legitimated or inquired into women's experiences or history, Women's and Gender Studies courses are a means of achieving this, and are essential in enabling women's values, contributions and experiences to be re-discovered, explored and built upon. A genuine

integration of women's perspectives into the mainstream curriculum will only be possible if this process continues.

2. NUS believes that this process needs to be expanded so that Women's and Gender Studies courses become available at more institutions and include greater coverage of disciplines.

3. NUS believes that students from disciplines other than the humanities should be provided with the opportunity to undertake appropriate units in Women's and Gender Studies and related endeavors to make various curricula more gender inclusive.

4. Further, students from disciplines other than the humanities should have the opportunity to undertake appropriate units in Women's and Gender Studies as a discipline as well as related endeavors to make various curricula more gender inclusive.

5. NUS believes that Women's and Gender Studies courses should hold departmental status as is fitting to their extreme importance to university curricula.

#### Action

1. To this end, the NUS National Women's Officer in conjunction with the National Education Officer, state and national based women's convenors, women's collectives and other interested parties will fight to ensure that Women's and Gender Studies departments across Australian universities receive adequate funding and hold departmental status

2. Further, the NUS National Women's Officer in conjunction with the Welfare Officer will strongly oppose any moves to lessen the importance of funding or status of Women's and Gender Studies Departments.

*M: Claire Tatyzo (National Women's Officer)*

*S: Sarah Hunt (University of Sydney)*

### **WOMN 7: Violence Against Women and Gendered Crimes on Campus**

#### Preamble:

NOWSA and NUS believes in the ending of all forms of violence against women and affirms that violence is always the responsibility of the perpetrator. This occurs in the context of a society that oppresses women as women and also by virtue of other characteristics including but not limited to sexuality, gender identity, race, class, age, ability and education. NOWSA and NUS recognizes that ending violence against women is unfortunately a long-term goal and while campaigning to this end will incorporate more short term goals including more support for victims/survivors of violence and myth-busting stereotypes of violence against women.

#### Platform:

1. NUS recognizes that a major basis of women's oppression is violence. While violence affects women differently according to race, class, sexuality, disability and age, it is a form of oppression that all women share.
2. Violence against women is not limited to specific or isolated instances. It is systemic under patriarchy, and is experienced by all women at some stage in our lives. Women live in a culture of violence distinct from the individual acts. Women are socialised in a climate where violence is ever present. This is not only common to all women, but it is unique to women, and it is a crucial part of women's socialisation and gender roles.
3. Violence against women includes rape, domestic violence, intra-familial rape, sexual harassment, pornography, sexist media, physical assault, emotional abuse, stalking, prostitution, intimidation, trafficking in women, forced sterilisation and all forms of state and medical control over women's bodies.
4. Further NUS recognizes that violence against women plays an important role in maintaining male dominance, and as such has a distinct character and is different to violence against men and property. Violence against women cannot be justified.

#### Action

1. That the National Women's Officer prioritise a campaign for consciousness raising around all forms of violence against women.
2. That the National Women's Officer will encourage State and campus Women's Officers and activists to liaise with sexual assault centres, domestic violence crisis centres and women's community centres for information and referral services.
3. The National Women's Officer will endeavour to campaign around Violence Against Women, encouraging "Reclaim the Campus" events, and other alternative forms of protest and non-violent direct action on and off campus

*M: Claire Tatyzo (National Women's Officer)*  
*S: Sarah Hunt (University of Sydney)*

#### **WOMN 8: Women and VSU**

##### Preamble:

1. In July 2006, under the Liberal Howard Government, the Higher Education Support Amendment (Abolition of Compulsory Up-front Student Union Fees) Bill came into effect. This meant that universities could no longer charge a compulsory student services and amenities fee for their student organization. This legislation has resulted in a loss of around \$170

million dollars to student unions, decimating student services, representation, amenities, and resources in almost every university campus in Australia. Some student organisations collapsed altogether or were handed over to the university, resulting in a loss of student control.

2. Women in particular have been heavily affected by VSU legislation. Women's department budgets in student unions have been cut dramatically, seriously affecting the level of campaigning, representation, and advocacy on behalf of women students. Childcare services, legal aid and advocacy services, employment services, welfare and counseling services, have been cut or removed altogether due to lack of funds and support. Women's collectives struggle to find funding and legitimacy within their own student unions and their own universities, which further disadvantages them as students and as women.

3. In 2008 the Labor Rudd Government announced new changes to the VSU legislation to take place in 2009, which addresses some of the devastating affects of VSU. From 1 July 2009, universities will be allowed to set a compulsory fee, capped at \$250 with indexation each year, to help rebuild student amenities and student services, and to ensure adequate student representation and advocacy. The government will also provide access to a HECS style loan system to help students defer payment of the fee if they choose.

4. While the new changes represent a significant step forward in restoring student services and representation, NUS recognizes that there are problematic aspects to the changes. The first is that it is unclear who will have control over the funds: student organisations or the universities, as the government has not committed to handing over control to student organisations. The second concerning factor is that there are limitations on where funds can be spent, particularly highlighting 'political purposes' as not allowed. This rule is also very ambiguous and has the potential to diminish students' activist capacity on campus and silence their voices.

#### Platform:

1. NUS recognizes that the effect of VSU on women's departments is profound, and that these departments must be supported both financially and structurally in order to continue to provide essential services to women students, raise awareness of vital women's issues and facilitate women's involvement and activism in student unions

2. NUS asserts that support for autonomous women's organizing must remain a priority for VSU affected campuses to reflect the gender inequality that still exists today on our university campuses and in our society more broadly.

2. NUS recognizes the importance of women's access to and control over resources and funding which supports women through services, representation and advocacy.

#### Action

1. The National Women's Officer will work with the National Education and National Welfare Officers, as well as state and campus women's officers, to campaign around student control of funding for student services and representation. They will also campaign to ensure that students' voices are not regulated or silenced, and that their needs and rights are met, particularly women students and other disadvantaged groups.

*M: Claire Tatyzo (National Women's Officer)*

*S: Sarah Hunt (University of Sydney)*

### **WOMN 9: Women's Response to the Northern Territory Intervention**

#### Preamble:

1. In July 2006, under the Liberal Howard Government, the Higher Education Support Amendment (Abolition of Compulsory Up-front Student Union Fees) Bill came into effect. This meant that universities could no longer charge a compulsory student services and amenities fee for their student organization. This legislation has resulted in a loss of around \$170 million dollars to student unions, decimating student services, representation, amenities, and resources in almost every university campus in Australia. Some student organisations collapsed altogether or were handed over to the university, resulting in a loss of student control.

2. Women in particular have been heavily affected by VSU legislation. Women's department budgets in student unions have been cut dramatically, seriously affecting the level of campaigning, representation, and advocacy on behalf of women students. Childcare services, legal aid and advocacy services, employment services, welfare and counseling services, have been cut or removed altogether due to lack of funds and support. Women's collectives struggle to find funding and legitimacy within their own student unions and their own universities, which further disadvantages them as students and as women.

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4. While the new changes represent a significant step forward in restoring student services and representation, NUS recognizes that there are problematic aspects to the changes. The first is that it is unclear who will

have control over the funds: student organisations or the universities, as the government has not committed to handing over control to student organisations. The second concerning factor is that there are limitations on where funds can be spent, particularly highlighting 'political purposes' as not allowed. This rule is also very ambiguous and has the potential to diminish students' activist capacity on campus and silence their voices.

#### Platform:

1. NUS recognizes that the effect of VSU on women's departments is profound, and that these departments must be supported both financially and structurally in order to continue to provide essential services to women students, raise awareness of vital women's issues and facilitate women's involvement and activism in student unions
2. NUS asserts that support for autonomous women's organizing must remain a priority for VSU affected campuses to reflect the gender inequality that still exists today on our university campuses and in our society more broadly.
3. NUS recognizes the importance of women's access to and control over resources and funding which supports women through services, representation and advocacy.

#### Action

1. The National Women's Officer will work with the National Education and National Welfare Officers, as well as state and campus women's officers, to campaign around student control of funding for student services and representation. They will also campaign to ensure that students' voices are not regulated or silenced, and that their needs and rights are met, particularly women students and other disadvantaged groups.

*M: Claire Tatyzo (National Women's Officer)*

*S: Sarah Hunt (University of Sydney)*

### **WOMN 10: Supporting Women in the Textile Industry**

#### Preamble:

1. Female advocacy positions are often regarded as not relevant as the fabric of female support mechanisms are made of textiles that are inflammable.
2. In the hey-day of the feminist movement, the ability to burn one's item of clothing represented the ultimate destruction of the misogynistic social construction of sexuality.

#### Platform:

1. NUS views the change in textiles used as a blatant attempt by manufacturing corporations to restrict the continuation of the feminist movement.
2. NUS calls upon manufacturing corporations to repeal current textiles used in manufacturing female support mechanisms and investigate alternative textiles, which allow the continuation of the feminist movement.

#### Action

1. That the NUS National Women's Officer will write to all manufacturing corporations requesting that they heed NUS's call.
2. That the NUS National Women's Officer investigate potential business opportunities to create their own line of female support mechanisms with the profits returning to the National Women's Department.

That the NUS National Women's Officer will develop and implement a fire safety and hazard-training program for all female advocates who utilise these mechanisms.

*M: Simone McDonnell (Adelaide University)*

*S: Patsy Niklas (RMIT)*

#### **WOMN 11: Trend to Oppose**

##### Preamble:

2008 was a disappointment for women as the number of female board directors in the AX 2000 companies decreased from 8.7 to 8.3 per cent. While this is not a large decrease it is not a trend that we would want to continue.

##### Platform:

NUS recognizes that courses at university for women in leadership, corporate management and bargaining can help to support women in their initial move from university to the full-time employment sector.

NUS recognizes further that peer mentoring groups and women's network groups can also help to support women in their careers.

##### Action:

1. NUS supports the Women's Officer and Women's Departments of student organisations in pursuing network and peer mentoring groups.

*M: Felicity Evans (UTS)*

*S: Ausseela Thanaphonsakron (UNSW)*

## WOMN 12: Don't Forget Senior Networks

### Preamble:

The Sydney International Women' Day was a great success with the return of the older and senior women's networks supporting the student women's groups. IWD in 2007 was very small but with the wisdom and skills of the older women in 2008 IWD was a greater success.

### Platform:

NU recognizes that communication and consultation with past and present activists must continue to ensure that current activities remain strong.

NU recognizes that this will also allow NUS campaigns to be more successful when communication is open to more groups in the community.

### Action:

NUS should for campaign strategies not forget to seek the advice of senior groups and networks for the support and skill of experience.

*M: Amber Setchell (UNSW)*

*S: Felicity Evans (UTS)*