



# Australian Universities Accord

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UNPACKING THE FINAL REPORT

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# Unpacking the Accord's recommendation of reshaping outreach

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## Building aspiration including through increasing readiness for tertiary education and providing career advice

11. That to encourage greater aspiration, participation and success in tertiary education among under-represented groups, the Australian Government support effective outreach programs designed to develop familiarity with tertiary education. These outreach programs should be resourced separately from the Review's recommended needs-based funding model and include:
  - a. work with state and territory governments to drive a consistent national framework for careers advice across all life stages
  - b. work with state and territory governments to ensure post-school pathways are visible and integrated into secondary schooling, including current reforms to senior secondary pathways and assessment, and that the schooling system increasingly produces Year 12 completers who are ready and informed about tertiary education opportunities
  - c. a national communications campaign that shares positive examples that build aspiration and that speak to prospective students about their pathway into tertiary education, particularly young people, through media and channels they engage with, trust and respect.

Where are universities in this recommendation?

Are we – unwittingly – disabling the sector-wide commitment and capability to contribute to widening participation?

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# Unpacking the recommendations on addressing student poverty

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## Student income support

15. That to reduce the cost-of-living pressures on current students and remove the financial barriers to commencing study, the Australian Government improve access to income support for those who need it most and consider how to ensure the level of support is adequate to meet basic living standards while studying by:

- a. increasing the Parental Income Free Area for Youth Allowance from \$58,108 to \$68,857 per family and index it to the higher of the Consumer Price Index and Male Total Average Weekly Earnings, recognising that the current income free area has not kept pace with growth in wages
- b. expanding income support eligibility and providing pro rata student payments to students who study part-time (between 50% and 74% of a full study load)

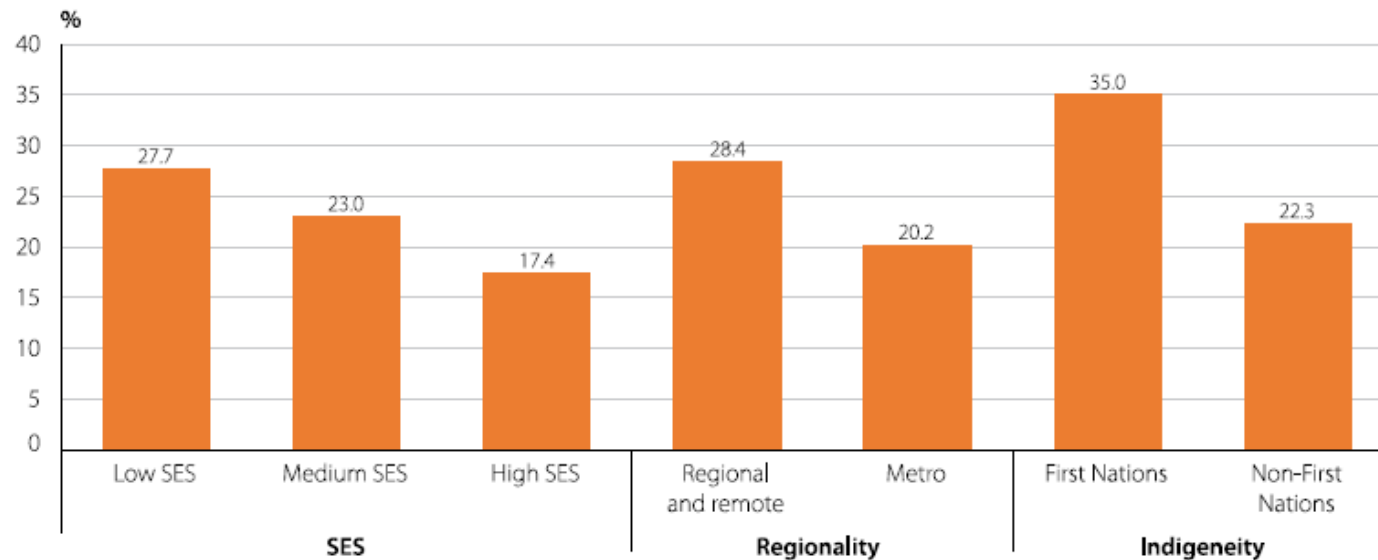
and that, due to the complexity of social security payments, the Minister for Social Services works with the Minister for Education to address the problems the Review has identified by commissioning further technical analysis, with a report back to the Ministers by early 2025. Such work should follow the principles below:

YES! YES! YES! BUT: How do we address the stigma and fear associated with using Centrelink?

- i. student income support payments should continue to be focused on those most in need of support, and eligibility criteria should be regularly monitored to ensure the level of support is adequate to meet basic living standards while studying
- ii. student income support payments should continue to allow students to undertake reasonable amounts of work while studying, including through arrangements such as the income bank
- iii. student income support payments should follow an education-first principle where the policy intent is to reduce roadblocks to tertiary education participation and enable retention, success and completion
- iv. student income support payments should reduce the barriers facing students deciding whether to commence their study, focusing on the largest barriers of financial security and other responsibilities (such as working, caring and family)
- v. eligibility criteria for youth payments should take into account the specific needs of regional students, including the extra costs of relocation and that, once they leave home to study, many are effectively independent.

# Student poverty and considerations of leaving early

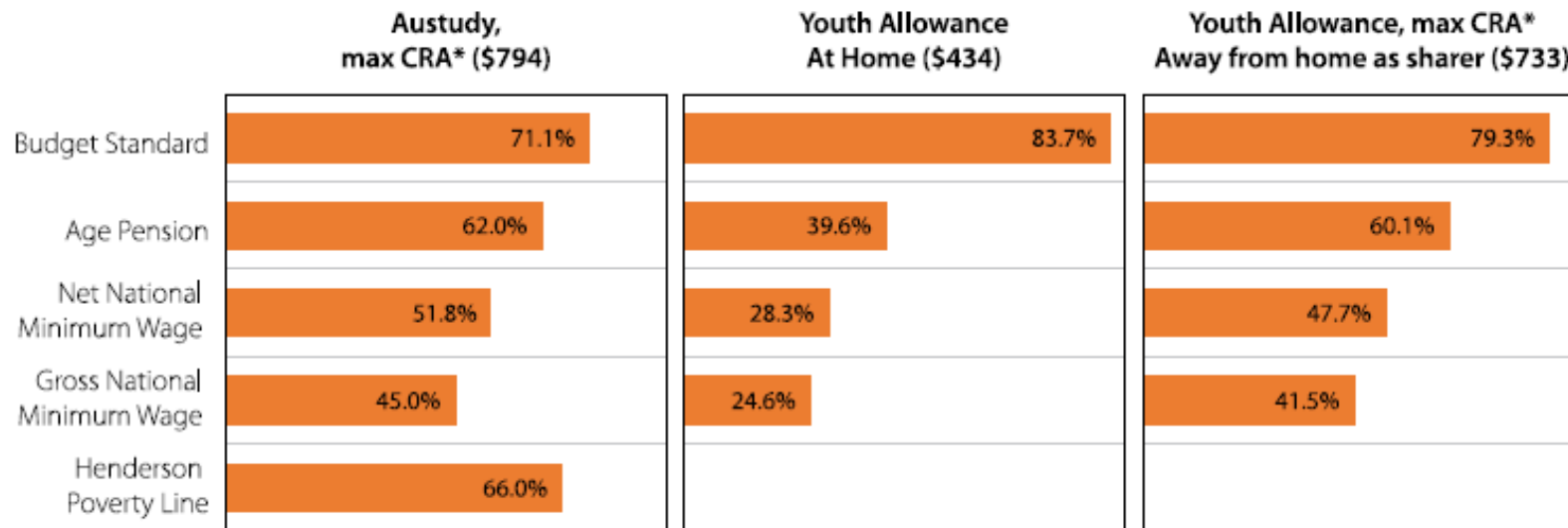
**Figure 17: Among undergraduate students who have seriously considered leaving their university studies early, proportion that cited financial difficulties as a reason (%), by demographic, 2022.**



Source: Quality Indicators for Learning and Teaching (QILT), 2022 Student Experience Survey [unpublished data set], (Canberra: 2022).

# Student poverty in figures

Figure 19: Student income support payments as a proportion of common benchmarks (%), as at December 2023.



\*Commonwealth Rent Assistance

Comparison uses relevant comparisons based on payment (rent, sharing etc.)

# Unpacking the recommendations on addressing student poverty, including placement poverty

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Paid placements: is it a living stipend or compensation for labour?

What is the problem we're trying to solve? And why do we think that a national Jobs Broker would solve the problem?

## Financial support for placements

14. That to reduce the financial hardship and placement poverty caused by mandatory unpaid placements, the Australian Government work with tertiary education providers, state and territory governments, industry, business and unions to introduce financial support for unpaid work placements. This should include funding by governments for the nursing, care and teaching professions, and funding by employers generally (public and private) for other fields.

7. That to ensure students develop work relevant skills for employment after their study, the Australian Government increase opportunities for students to both earn and learn while studying by:
- a. establishing a national brokerage system ('Jobs Broker') to support tertiary education students find part-time work and placements relevant to their fields of study. Delivery should be through a provider that charges paid subscriptions by employers. The service should be free for students, and allow them to earn income while studying and reduce cost of living pressures