

25 November 2009

STUDENTS ARE THE LOSERS - ATN

The Chair of the **Australian Technology Network (ATN) of Universities**, Professor Ross Milbourne has condemned the outcome of Senate deliberations on amendments to the Social Security and Other Legislation Amendment (Income Support for Students) Bill 2009 as an opportunity lost to for more than 150,000 Australian students.

“Failure by the Coalition and Family First Senator, Steve Fielding to support this amended legislation is not only bad for the education system in Australia, but it’s bad social policy and is very bad long term economic policy,” Professor Milbourne said.

“There are no winners with this outcome. Indeed those who stood to benefit the most - our future university students - are the losers in a game which appears to have been blindsided by politics rather than good policy.”

The amended Bill would have delivered a level of financial security for those students most in need. Instead we now have a situation whereby more than 150,000 students across Australia will now not receive the Start-up scholarship in 2010.

“These scholarships help very poor students give more time and attention to their studies by reducing stress and worry, reducing their paid work hours, and increasing their sense of belonging. As a result, these students have attrition rates about 40% lower than other students – the benefit of this scholarship is tangible.”

Together with Universities Australia, the ATN implores the Coalition and Family First to put politics to one side and consider the desperate needs of our current and future university students – our workforce of the future.

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