

Edith Taylor

CAPA Women's Officer

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The Review of Higher Education Financing and Policy

Location Code 728

GFO Box 9880

Canberra ACT 2601.

Dear Mr. West,

Subject: Comments on The Review of Higher Education Financing and Policy.

Please find enclosed comments regarding the Review, these were formed from the 1997 CAPA Women's Conference, University of Western Sydney, Hawkesbury, where you spoke to Meredith Murray, the 1997 Women's Officer. It was understood that you would fax her a response to the Women's Committee Submission, I would be most appreciative if you could send me a copy as well.

Council of Australian Postgraduate Associations

Women's Committee Comments on Review of Higher Education Financing and Policy

The CAPA Women's Conference wishes to express disappointment at the West Review's failure to engage with the recommendations of the CAPA Women's Committee in the submission to the Review. The Review refers to the 'small' number of submissions from women's student organisations on page 75, grossly understating the fact that the CAPA Women's organisation alone represents over 65,000 women postgraduate students. Although the Review acknowledges issues of equity, the policies and proposals it elaborates contribute nothing towards a more equitable system of tertiary education, and in fact exacerbate current inequities.

Many issues raised for comment have already been dealt with in our submission, and I urge you to reconsider it, however, there are two issues that need to be further clarified: -

Duration of student's entitlement to public support

The duration of a student's entitlement should take into account the reasons for discontinuing studies or for changing study patterns. In the scenarios provided there is no consideration given to an interrupted pattern of study caused by family commitments or pressures, which is often the case for women. The determination of the duration of public support should take this into account if it is to be equitable.

Tuition fee flexibility

Low cost study options will rely heavily on advanced technological requirements. Reports have already shown that women are disadvantaged in this area, as they do not have the access to the technology or the training. A commitment must be made to ensure a basic infrastructure is created to provide training and access to this technology. The cost of the course should not influence the quality of the course.

The impact of the increase in HECS in 1997 has already shown a dramatic decrease in the number of mature age students applying for University places. The impact on changing fee structures on women, particularly in coursework degrees, needs to be monitored.

Thank you for considering our remarks and I wish you well in the preparation of your final report.

Edith Taylor
CAPA Women's Officer 1998