

Diary of Social Legislation and Policy 1987 and 1988

Author:

King, Anthony

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**1987
and
1988**

**Diary of
Social
Legislation
and
Policy**

**Supplement:
Education**

National Institute of
Economic and Industry Research
Australian Institute of
Family Studies
Social Policy Research Centre

Education — 1987

Compiled by Anthony King
National Institute of Economic and Industry
Research

Higher Education Administration Charge

20 January 1987: Further categories of students to be exempted from the Higher Education Administration Charge (HEAC) were announced by the Minister for Education. These include part-time students who have been receiving Unemployment Benefit for three months or more prior to enrolment. These latest exemptions would bring the total number of students who are either exempted from the Charge or compensated for it to around 130 000.

30 April 1987: The 'Report of the Higher Education Administration Charge Monitoring Committee' was tabled in Parliament. The Report noted, since introduction of HEAC, an increase in the number of full-time students but a decrease in the numbers of part-time and external students, and went on to recommend a number of further exemptions to HEAC, mainly for part-time and external students on low incomes. The Report also discussed possible arrangements for a ceiling on the total amount of the Charge paid by part-time and external students.

Funding and Policy for Schools

5 February 1987: When announcing the approval of funding for 68 new or significantly changing non-government schools in 1988, the Minister for Education also announced that responsibility for new schools would be transferred from the Commonwealth Schools Commission to the Education Department in order to streamline procedures.

10 February 1987: The Minister for Education announced that membership of the Non-Government Schools Funding Review Committee would be increased from 3 to 5 in order to facilitate the hearing of appeals.

14 April 1987: Completion of all Resource Agreements for schools funding in 1987 between the Commonwealth and each State and non-Government system was announced by the Minister for Education. The Commonwealth funds provided under Resource Agreements in 1987 would amount to \$74 million over a base untied grant for schools of \$1180 million.

23 April 1987: The Minister for Education released a Commonwealth Schools Commission report on secondary education. Recommendations in the report 'In the National Interest', covered retention rates, curricula and links with businesses and TAFE. The report recommended establishment of a new Commonwealth Specific Purpose Program to help pursue the recommendations made. The Minister said possible replacements for the Participation and Equity Program (PEP) were being considered in the Budget context.

5 June 1987: The Minister for Education reaffirmed the Government's commitment to a full eight-year funding plan for Australian schools. No major changes were to be made to the current 1984-92 funding plan, though a limited review of the plan would be undertaken in 1988 with a focus on technical matters.

School Retention Rates

15 February 1987: The Minister for Education announced a target for the early 1990s of 65 per cent of students completing 12 years of schooling. The 1986 retention rate was 48.7 per cent compared to 36.3 per cent in 1982. The target has been supported by the Industry Reference Group which includes several major business groups as members.

Rural Education

8 March 1987: Formation of a rural education working party was announced by the Acting Minister for Education and the Minister for Primary Industry. The working party would assist in the introduction of new strategies in post-secondary rural education.

ACT Education System

19 March 1987: The report of the working party inquiring into the low numbers of ACT tertiary students taking science and technology courses was presented.

General Student Assistance

9 April 1987: The Minister for Education announced that \$1m, in addition to the \$4.5m announced in November 1986, would be allocated to tertiary institutions in 1987 to provide low-interest loans and grants to students with financial difficulties. The funds are provided under the Special Assistance to Students Scheme.

13 May 1987: Changes to the rates of benefit under Austudy and related schemes were announced in the May Economic Statement. By bringing forward to 1988 the alignment of rates for education, training and unemployment benefits which had previ-

ously been foreshadowed to be achieved in 1989, expenditure on student assistance would be reduced by \$14.6 m in 1987–88 and \$29.2 m in 1988–89. It was announced in the Statement that the criteria for independent status under Austudy would be tightened. From 1988, independent status would require a student to have worked full-time for three out of the last four years compared to the current requirement of two out of the last three years.

15 September 1987: Changes to the Austudy family income test were announced in the 1987–88 Commonwealth Budget. The deduction from assessed family income for children (other than the Austudy applicant) would be increased from \$450 per child to \$1200 for the first child and \$2500 for each subsequent child. The scope of the sibling concession would also be extended. The cost of these measures would be offset by less than full indexation of the basic income test threshold. The changes would take effect from 1 January 1988.

Multicultural Education

4 May 1987: A major government report recommending a national language policy for Australia was tabled in Parliament by the Minister for Education. The report, 'National Policy on Languages' proposed that the Commonwealth co-ordinate language use and learning according to four principles: competence in English; maintenance and development of languages other than English; provision of services in languages other than English; and opportunities for learning second languages.

26 May 1987: A report, 'Education In and For a Multicultural Society: Issues and Strategies for Policy Making', was launched by the Minister for Education. The report had been prepared by the National Advisory and Co-ordinating Committee on Multicultural Education.

18 June 1987: The Prime Minister and the Minister for Education announced a commitment to implement a national languages policy and foreshadowed an allocation of \$15m in the 1987–88 Commonwealth Budget for the first stages of the policy.

Funding for Tertiary Institutions

10 May 1987: The Minister for Education announced a number of grants to higher education institutions under the Higher Education Equity Program. The grants were for projects aimed at assisting students from disadvantaged backgrounds to participate successfully in higher education.

13 May 1987: Reductions in general recurrent grants for higher education institutions and TAFE colleges were announced in the May Economic Statement. Funding for higher education institutions would be reduced by \$12 m in 1987–88 and

\$24 m in 1988–89 with the reduction to be achieved through increased efficiency. The fees reimbursement grant for TAFE would be reduced by \$30 m in 1987–88 and \$45 m in 1988–89 with the effect of the reduction expected to be offset by increased efficiency and cost recovery. The Minister for Education announced that a working party had been established to report on means for restructuring Commonwealth TAFE funding to better reflect industry training needs.

15 September 1987: The allocations for tertiary institutions in the 1987–88 Commonwealth Budget incorporated the reductions announced in the May Economic Statement with offsets through increased TAFE funds for labour market training programs and an additional \$20.3 m for 3500–4000 new student places in higher education. Details of a restructuring of Commonwealth funding programs for TAFE, designed to better meet national training needs, were provided in Budget paper No.9 'Skills Formation in Australia'.

5 November 1987: Details of 1988 funding for higher education institutions were announced by the Minister for Employment, Education and Training.

Overseas Students

13 May 1987: Details of the Overseas Student Charge (OSC) to apply over the 1988–90 triennium were announced in the May Economic Statement. The OSC for new tertiary students from 1988 would be increased to 55 per cent of full average cost. The OSC for continuing tertiary students would remain at the current cost-recovery rates of 45 per cent or 32 per cent of full average cost, depending on the year in which tertiary studies were commenced. The OSC for secondary students would continue at the current level of \$300 adjusted for movements in the CPI. It was also announced in the Statement that the 1988 entry quota for new subsidised overseas student places would be maintained at the 1987 level of 3500.

15 September 1987: The levels of the OSC to apply in 1988 were announced in the 1987–88 Commonwealth Budget.

Women in Education

22 May 1987: The Minister for Education reported on work being undertaken to develop a comprehensive strategy for implementing a national policy for the education of girls in Australian schools.

Aboriginal Education

12 June 1987: The Minister for Education announced that the Government would aim to double the retention rate of Aboriginal students in Year 12 by 1992. The current rate is around 17 per cent.

15 September 1987: The 1987-88 Commonwealth Budget included announcement of details of the changes to allowances for Aboriginal students which were foreshadowed in the previous Budget. The changes, to take effect from 1 January 1988, would move allowances for Aboriginal students nearer to alignment with allowances under Austudy. Further changes were foreshadowed to take effect from 1989.

Departmental Responsibilities

14 July 1987: The Prime Minister announced major changes in Commonwealth Government administration including a reduction in the number of departments and establishment of a two-tier ministerial structure. The reorganisation, which took effect from 24 July 1987, included the creation of a new Department of Employment, Education and Training (DEET) through amalgamation of the former Department of Education and elements of the former Department of Employment and Industrial Relations. DEET would also incorporate parts of the Department of Science and also the Office of Youth Affairs from the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet. The Hon. J. S. Dawkins was appointed Minister for Employment, Education and Training.

Advisory Bodies

15 October 1987: A new advisory structure for the Employment, Education and Training portfolio was announced by the Minister. The principal element in the new structure would be a statutory body to be known as the National Board of Employment, Education and Training (NBEET). The new structure would absorb the functions of a number of existing advisory bodies including the Commonwealth Tertiary Education Commission (CTEC) and the Commonwealth Schools Commission (CSC).

30 November 1987: The program and administrative responsibilities of CTEC and CSC were transferred to DEET.

23 December 1987: The Minister for Employment, Education and Training announced further details of NBEET including acting appointments to an interim Board and supporting Councils pending legislation to create the statutory authority. Four Councils will support the Board: the Schools Council; the Higher Education Council; the Employment and Skills Formation Council; and the Australian Research Council.

Policy for Higher Education

9 December 1987: A green paper on higher Education, 'Higher Education: A Policy Discussion Paper', was released by the Minister for Employment, Education and Training. The Paper discussed proposals for a unified national system of higher education to replace the existing binary system with its distinction between universities and CAE's. Key features of the proposed system would include: fewer and larger institutions offering students wider choices; competitive tendering between institutions for new places; changes to the management structures in institutions; better targeting of research funds and greater industry involvement in research and development; more flexible academic staffing arrangements; and better credit transfer arrangements to assist students' mobility between institutions. The paper also considered the issue of broader funding for higher education, and the Minister announced the decision to establish a committee to examine possible sources of funding and their implications for student assistance. Responses to the Green Paper received by the end of April 1988 would contribute to a Policy Statement on Higher Education which would be finalised later in 1988.

Participation and Equity Program

31 December 1987: The Participation and Equity Program terminated.

Education — 1988

Compiled by Anthony King
National Institute of Economic and Industry
Research

Ministerial Responsibilities

January 1988: The second-tier ministerial responsibility under the Department of Employment and Training was changed. The position of Minister for Employment and Youth Affairs was replaced with that of Minister for Employment and Education Services. The Hon. P. Duncan M.P. was appointed to the new position.

Funding and Policy for Schools

29 January 1988: Details of capital grants totalling \$36 m to non-government schools were announced by the Minister for Employment, Education and Training. The grants, which would be paid over a three-year period, were the first to be approved under a new block grant arrangement which came into effect this month.

4 February 1988: A statement by the Commonwealth Schools Commission (CSC) on an agenda for schooling in Australia was released. The statement had been prepared for the final meeting of the Commission in December 1987. Key matters in the statement included: the need to recognise and support schooling as the foundation for the government's social and economic development plans; the need to continue direct Commonwealth support for schooling; and the need to give the highest priority to curriculum and teaching reform and development in schools.

23 May 1988: The Minister for Employment, Education and Training released a statement titled 'Strengthening Australia's Schools: A Consideration of the Focus and Content of Schooling'. The statement sought the co-operation of the States in a concerted effort to improve the school system through measures such as the development of common curricula and approaches to assessment. The initial focus would be on public schools.

25 May 1988: A number of changes to the non-government schools general recurrent grants program were announced in the May Economic Statement. Non-government schools would remain in their present funding categories for the next four years with the only ground for a review of funding category being significantly increased financial need. Establishment grants will be abolished, the

minimum enrolment requirements under the new schools policy will be increased, and new non-systemic schools will be funded at categories 1 to 6. Cost savings from these measures would amount to \$5 m in a full year.

23 June 1988: The Australian Education Council agreed to convene a special meeting of education ministers to discuss issues arising from the statement on schooling released in May.

23 August 1988: The 1988-89 Commonwealth Budget included provision for a 4.3 per cent real increase in Commonwealth funding for schools in 1989.

Policy for Higher Education

19 February 1988: Support 'in principle' for the objectives of the Green Paper on higher education was agreed at a special meeting of the Australian Education Council. The Council consists of Federal, State and Tertiary education ministers. The ministers also agreed to establish interim Federal-State joint planning committees for higher education.

4 March 1988: The Minister for Employment, Education and Training reported that Professor Peter Karmel had been requested to provide advice on the development of 'educational profiles' as proposed in the Green Paper on higher education. The profiles would provide the basis for funding agreements between government and institutions.

30 June 1988: The Minister for Employment, Education and Training reported on the terms of an agreement between academic unions and employers on academic staffing practices. The final agreement followed intervention by the Minister to ensure accord with the proposals set out in the Green Paper on higher education.

26 July 1988: A major 'Policy Statement on Higher Education' (the White Paper) was released by the Minister for Employment, Education and Training. The Statement included new planning and funding arrangements, definitions of equity goals to improve access to tertiary education for disadvantaged groups, a new national structure for higher education, new research arrangements, and measures which will result in fewer and larger institutions. The centrepiece of the reforms is a new unified national system which all existing institutions will be entitled to join subject to their meeting certain criteria. Institutions in the unified national system will negotiate agreed 'educational profiles' with the Federal Government as a basis for their funding.

2 September 1988: The Minister for Employment, Education and Training reported on a meeting with the Australian Vice-Chancellors Committee to address concerns raised by the Committee with regard to the White Paper on higher education. A number of issues of concern have been referred to NBEET.

30 September 1988: The formation of a committee

to review higher education research policy was announced by the Minister for Employment, Education and Training. A central task of the review will be to provide a statement of national research priorities to guide the Australian Research Council.

Multicultural Education

27 March 1988: Membership of the Australian Advisory Council on Languages and Multicultural Education (AACLAME) was announced by the Minister for Employment, Education and Training. AACLAME has been established to assist in implementation of the National Policy on Languages announced in 1987.

Social Justice Strategies

2 May 1988: 'Towards a Fairer Australia', a report detailing the Government's actions in the area of social justice and the agenda for further reform, was released by the Prime Minister. The report included sections on employment and on education and training.

29 October 1988: The Minister for Employment and Education Services announced that a Youth Social Justice Strategy was being developed in conjunction with the Minister for Social Security. The key areas identified as relevant to the position of disadvantaged young people included access to mainstream education and training opportunities, and income support arrangements and related labour market assistance for the unemployed.

Advisory Structures

4 May 1988: Interim membership of the Australian Research Council was announced by the Minister for Employment, Education and Training.

26 May 1988: The formation of a Women's Employment, Education and Training Advisory Group was announced by the Minister for Employment, Education and Training. The Group will be drawn from women appointed to the National Board of Employment, Education and Training and its Councils.

1 July 1988: The legislation establishing NBEET and its four Councils came into effect with proclamation of the *Employment, Education and Training Act 1988*.

13 July 1988: Membership of NBEET and the four associated Councils was announced by the Minister for Employment, Education and Training. Existing advisory mechanisms concerning Aboriginal education would be retained pending establishment of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission which was announced in the May Economic Statement.

Funding for Tertiary Institutions

5 May 1988: The report of the Committee on Higher Education Funding (the Wran Committee) was released. The report made four major recom-

mendations: introduction of a scheme whereby students would contribute to the cost of their higher education; a series of measures, particularly through the extension of Austudy, to increase access to higher education by disadvantaged groups; establishment of a tripartite body to consider appropriate education and training levies; and abolition of the Higher Education Administration Charge (HEAC). The Minister for Employment, Education and Training called for public discussion and comment on all aspects of the Report.

2 June 1988: Grants totalling \$1.1 million to 29 tertiary institutions to develop plans to increase the opportunities for disadvantaged people to gain tertiary qualifications were announced by the Minister for Employment, Education and Training.

23 August 1988: The 1988-89 Commonwealth Budget saw a return to triennium funding, on a rolling basis, for higher education. The Budget provided for an expansion of higher education with funding for an additional 6500 higher education places in 1989, and an additional 40 000 over the next three years. The higher education provision in the Budget also included elements associated with the abolition of HEAC and the introduction of the Higher Education Contribution Scheme in 1989.

22 November 1988: The Minister for Employment, Education and Training announced a commitment of \$55m over the next three years for the establishment of a new university in the western suburbs of Sydney.

23 November 1988: The Minister for Employment Education and Training announced details of higher education funding and additional intakes over the next three years, 1989 to 1991. The plans included the creation of an additional 49 000 student places. The announcement followed the tabling of a Parliamentary Statement outlining the Government's approach to higher education.

Higher Education Charges

5 May 1988: The report of the Committee on Higher Education Funding (the Wran Committee) recommended the introduction of a scheme whereby higher education students would be required to contribute to the cost of their higher education with the amount of the contribution dependent on a student's income. Given the above recommendation, the committee also recommended abolition of the Higher Education Administration Charge (HEAC).

27 May 1988: The Minister for Employment, Education and Training released the results of an opinion survey commissioned by the Department to measure the degree of support for the Wran Report proposals for a student contribution scheme. Results indicated a majority of support for the proposals.

23 August 1988: The introduction in 1989 of a Higher Education Contribution Scheme (HECS)

was announced in the 1988-89 Commonwealth Budget. HECS will entail: a uniform annual course charge of \$1800 for each year of equivalent full-time study undertaken from 1 January 1989; maintenance of outstanding liability in real terms; no requirement for payment until personal taxable income reaches \$22 000; repayment of accumulated liability at a rate of 1 per cent of personal taxable income where taxable income reaches \$22 000, 2 per cent where it reaches \$25 000 and 3 per cent where it reaches \$35 000; and a discount of 15 per cent if students choose to pay their annual course charge within a specified period. The annual course charge and the income thresholds will be indexed annually. HECS will apply to all students in Commonwealth-funded higher education with the exception of a number of classes of students, such as overseas students who are already subject to the Overseas Student Charge. HEAC would be abolished upon the introduction of HECS.

Aboriginal Education

25 May 1988: The combination of the Aboriginal Secondary Assistance Scheme (ABSEC) and the Aboriginal Study Assistance Scheme (Abstudy) from 1989 was announced in the May Economic Statement. The new single scheme, to be known as Abstudy, would provide living allowance entitlements subject to a modified income test which will be based on the Family Allowance Supplement for students under 16 years and on Austudy for students 16 years and over.

23 August 1988: The 1988-89 Commonwealth Budget included allocation of an additional \$11 million for Abstudy in 1988-89 and a commitment of \$10 million over the next three years for the construction of facilities to enhance the participation of Aborigines in TAFE.

20 October 1988: The report of the Aboriginal Education Policy Taskforce (the Hughes Report) was released by the Minister for Employment, Education and Training. The report will provide the basis for development of a national Aboriginal education policy. A working group has been established to develop the policy in consultation with Aboriginal people.

Rural Education

25 May 1988: A number of initiatives aimed at improving access to education and training at the local level in rural areas were announced in the May Economic Statement. Expenditure on the initiatives would amount to \$1m over three years.

23 August 1988: the 1988-89 Commonwealth Budget provided \$2 million for two new programs to improve rural education and training. The Rural Education Access Program would be available to local community groups to run education and train-

ing activities. Under the Innovative Rural Education and Training Program, educational institutions and industry groups would develop innovative courses. The two initiatives stem partly from recommendations made earlier in the year by the Working Party on Post-secondary Rural Education.

Curriculum Development

29 June 1988: A national review of teacher education in mathematics and science was announced by the Minister for Employment, Education and Training. The review follows the assessments of the discipline of law, which was completed in 1987, and of engineering, which is nearing completion.

8 July 1988: 'Science for Everybody', a discussion paper prepared by the Curriculum Development Centre, was released by the Minister for Employment, Education and Training. Responses to the paper would contribute to the development of science curricula for all levels of schooling.

13 July 1988: The report of the review of engineering education, which had been initiated in 1986, was released by the Minister for Employment, Education and Training. Recommendations included the need to increase graduation rates and the number of qualified engineers in the workforce.

General Student Assistance

23 August 1988: A number of changes to the provisions of Austudy and the Assistance for Isolated Children (AIC) Scheme were announced in the 1988-89 Commonwealth Budget. From 1989, receipt of assistance under Austudy and AIC will be subject to an assets test on recipients and their families. The asset thresholds will be related to those applying in the social security system, the test will be a 'sudden death' rather than tapered assets test, and special provisions will apply to the self-employed. The family income test concession for dependent children under Austudy will no longer be available where those children also generate the sibling concession. The Budget also included announcement of increased generosity with certain components of Austudy, including an increase in the personal income test free area from \$2000 to \$3000 per year.

Overseas Students

23 August 1988: Rates of the Overseas Student Charge (OSC) to apply in 1989 were announced in the 1988-89 Commonwealth Budget. The rates for higher education students would increase beyond indexation to reflect the abolition of HEAC for which overseas students were previously compensated.

28 November 1988: An ANU seminar on 'Australian Education Offshore' was opened and addressed by the Minister for Employment, Education and Training.

The *Diary of Social Legislation and Policy* summarises the legislative and administrative changes made by the Commonwealth government in social security and community services, employment, education, family law, immigration, housing and health.

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NIEIR



**National Institute of Economic and Industry
Research
582 St Kilda Road
Melbourne Vic 3054**



**Australian Institute of Family Studies
300 Queen Street
Melbourne Vic 3000**



**Social Policy Research Centre
University of New South Wales
Kensington NSW 2033**