

AV-CC

Paying their way

**A SURVEY OF AUSTRALIAN
UNDERGRADUATE UNIVERSITY
STUDENT FINANCES, 2000**

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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Table of Contents

Overview	1
1. Background	1
<i>Paying their way: A survey of undergraduate students at Australian universities</i> presents results from a survey of undergraduate non-overseas students enrolled at 19 Australian universities in second semester 2000. The survey focused on the income, expenditure and debt profiles of students and the impact of their financial circumstances on their studies. Comparison with results from previous surveys provides a basis for documenting changes over time.	
2. A Description of the Survey	3
The universities that participated in the survey constitute 51.4% of Australian public universities with 51.5% of non-overseas undergraduate enrolments. Questionnaires were sent to 84,591 students and 34,752 replies were received – a response rate of 41.1%.	
3. Income Support	3
Nearly four in every ten students (38.7%) receive some form of government income support. The most common forms of support are the Youth Allowance (23.3%) and Austudy (10.3%). The majority of recipients are categorised as ‘independent’ (19.0%) and receive their benefits at the full-rate (24.8%). For many students, the Youth Allowance and Austudy allows them to continue studying, but there are concerns that the level of support is too low and that access to the schemes is too restrictive. Austudy recipients are disadvantaged compared with Youth Allowance and Newstart recipients because they are not eligible for rent assistance. Because of the way in which the programs are structured, Youth Allowance and Austudy recipients have a strong financial disincentive to work more than about a day a week on average throughout the year.	
4. Debt	7
10.7% of students obtained a loan in order to be able to continue their studies. The average amount borrowed was nearly \$4,000 -- a fairly substantial amount in the context of the average incomes of students. Students from those categories that correspond to disadvantage were more likely to have needed to borrow money.	
5. Payment of HECS	8
HECS receives considerable support among students as an alternative to the payment of up-front fees -- even though it can result in levels of debt that many consider worrying. The students who are most likely to make use of the deferred HECS option are those with relatively disadvantaged financial circumstances.	
6. Choice of Course, University and Mode of Study	11
Financial circumstances had influenced the choice of:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>course</i> for 11.1% of students;• <i>university</i> for 17.4% of students; and• <i>mode of study</i> for 23.3% of students.	

7. Part-time Study	12
<p>Nearly a quarter of the students in the sample are enrolled part-time. Just over a half (54.0%) of part-time students indicated that, financial circumstances permitting, they would prefer to be studying full-time.</p>	
8. Work and Study	13
<p>The proportion of full-time students who are in paid employment during semester has increased in the last two decades. In 1984 about 5 in 10 undergraduates were employed during the semester. In 2000, more than 7 in every 10 students were employed during the semester.</p> <p>Not only are more students in paid employment during the semester, those who are employed are working longer hours. In 1984 full-time undergraduate university students worked an average of five hours every week during semester. By 2000, full-time students worked an average of 14.4 hours a week, or about two days every week -- and nearly three times the hours worked by students in 1984.</p> <p>The increase in paid work takes its toll on studies. Nearly 1 in every 10 students who are employed 'frequently' miss classes because of that work -- or about 33,900 students. Nearly 2 in every 10 students in paid employment say that the work adversely effects their study 'a great deal' -- or about 70,600 students Australia-wide.</p>	
9. Study, Childcare and Finances	17
<p>The apparently low percentages are in part due to the fact that the majority of students do not have dependent children. Of students who have financially dependent children, 4.1% miss classes 'frequently' and a further 15.4% miss classes 'sometimes' because they cannot afford childcare. In terms of the student population, 2,400 students miss classes 'frequently' and 8,700 students miss classes 'sometimes' because they cannot afford childcare.</p>	
10. Travel Costs	19
<p>Just over 1% of students miss classes 'frequently' because they cannot afford to travel to university. A further 9.0% miss classes 'sometimes' because they cannot afford to travel to university. These values are equivalent to 5,331 and 43,617 students respectively.</p>	
Appendix: The Steering Committee, Questionnaire design	22
References	23

TABLES

Table 1.1	Undergraduate enrolments in Australian universities, number of students selected, number of respondents, and response rate	2
Table 3.1	Receipt and non-receipt of government support by sex, enrolment status and background characteristics: All students	6
Table 5.1	Course fees, HECS payment and source by sex, enrolment status and student characteristics: All students	10
Table 6.1	Influence of financial circumstances on aspects of study by sex and enrolment status: All students	12
Table 8.1	Percentage of students who work during semester: 1984, 2000	14
Table 8.2	Percentage of students who work, hours of work, and effect on studies: by student background characteristics and enrolment status: All students	16
Table 9.1	Percentage of students with dependent children, and frequency of missed classes: All students and students with dependent children	18
Table 10.1	Missing classes due to travel costs: All students	20

Overview

***Paying their way: A survey of Australian Undergraduate University Student Finances, 2000* provides strong evidence to support concerns that students' financial circumstances are having substantial impact on students' studies such that they, and the public that funds them, are not gaining optimum value from their enrolment.**

It highlights the extent to which many students are in paid work to ensure sufficient income with the consequent negative impact that has on their study; and conversely the financial difficulties faced by students attempting to live within Government income support arrangements.

1. Background

The report presents results from the responses of 34,752 undergraduate non-overseas students enrolled at 19 Australian universities in second semester 2000. The survey focused on:

- the income, expenditure and debt profiles of students; and
- the impact of their financial circumstances on their studies.

The survey provides universities with up-to-date national survey data about the financial circumstances of their domestic undergraduate students. This information is essential as a basis for evaluating anecdotal evidence of a marked deterioration in the financial circumstances of many students over recent years. The information is also important for the development of policies and initiatives intended to alleviate the negative impact of financial pressures on participation in higher education and on academic progress.

The 2000 survey was designed to build upon four previous national surveys of the financial circumstances of higher education students. The first was in 1974, when the Department of Education surveyed all undergraduate students, whether full-time or part-time, to establish a profile of their income and expenditure situations (Australian Department of Education, 1975). The second was in 1979, when the Department repeated the survey, though among full-time undergraduates only, for the purposes of enabling a comparative analysis with results obtained in 1974 (Commonwealth Department of Education, 1981). The third was in 1984, when the Department of Education surveyed full-time undergraduate students in higher education and TAFE (Department of Employment, Education and Training, 1987). The fourth was in 1991, when the Australian Bureau of Statistics conducted a survey on behalf of the Department of Employment, Education and Training of the income and expenditure patterns of all students aged 15 to 64 years (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 1992; see also Peut *et al.*, 1994). Unlike all earlier surveys, the 2000 survey excluded overseas students. Though it relates most closely to the surveys in 1974, 1979 and 1984, unlike the surveys in 1979 and 1984, it included part-time students.

The survey's results inform various issues of policy-related concern. These include the extent of financial hardship among students, the extent to which full-time students are engaging in longer hours of part-time work to support themselves financially, and the extent to which financial worries among students are impacting adversely upon study habits, academic progress and retention in higher education. Several recent empirical studies have drawn attention to a deterioration in the financial circumstances of higher education students (see, for example, Abbot-Chapman, 1998;

Table 1.1 Undergraduate enrolments in Australian universities, number of students selected, number of respondents, and response rate

<i>State/Institution</i>	<i>Total Students</i>	<i>Number Selected</i>	<i>Number of Respondents</i>	<i>Response Rate</i>
Australian Catholic University	7,112	3,899	1,839	47.2
Central Queensland University	9,438	4,800	2,038	42.5
Charles Sturt University	17,998			
Curtin University of Technology	14,308	4,800	2,047	42.6
Deakin University	18,914	4,800	1,902	39.6
Edith Cowan University	14,723			
Griffith University	17,800	4,800	2,101	43.8
James Cook University	8,515			
La Trobe University	15,057			
Macquarie University	12,755			
Monash University	25,110	4,800	1,806	37.6
Murdoch University	7,562			
Northern Territory University	3,121			
Queensland University of Technology	21,904	4,800	2,117	44.1
RMIT University	16,587	4,800	1,709	35.8
Southern Cross University	7,234			
Swinburne University of Technology	7,802	4,800	1,910	39.8
The Australian National University	6,495	4,800	1,999	41.6
Flinders University	10,490	4,800	2,338	48.7
The University of Adelaide	11,472			
The University of Melbourne	20,608			
The University of New England	11,025			
The University of New South Wales	17,058	4,800	1,813	37.8
The University of Newcastle	14,813			
The University of Queensland	22,061			
The University of Sydney	25,141			
The University of Western Australia	9,815	4,800	2,330	48.5
University of Ballarat	3,543	2,000	848	42.4
University of Canberra	6,336	4,800	1,954	40.7
University of South Australia	20,622	4,800	1,987	41.4
University of Southern Queensland	9,890			
University of Tasmania	9,514			
University of Technology, Sydney	14,866			
University of the Sunshine Coast	2,392	1,892	876	46.3
University of Western Sydney	21,880	4,800	1,616	33.7
University of Wollongong	8,475			
Victoria University	12,196	4,800	1,512	31.5
TOTAL	484,632	84,591	34,752	41.1

McInnis *et al.*, 2000; Thies *et al.*, 2000; Wilson, 2000), and concern about this matter is strongly voiced in a number of submissions to the 2001 Australian Senate inquiry into higher education (see, for example, submission from the Equal Opportunity Practitioners in Higher Education - Victoria, 2001; and from McInnis, 2001). The issues are not confined to Australia, as is indicated by a recent and parallel investigation of student finances in the United Kingdom (Callender and Kemp, 2000).

The results also provide a basis for identifying categories of students most affected by financial hardship. The 'at risk' categories are widely regarded as including younger students forced to live away from home to study and younger students from families with modest incomes who do not qualify for a Youth Allowance (see, for example, Birrell *et al.*, 2000; Thies, 2000; Wilson, 2000).

2. A Description of the Survey

In June 2000, AVCC member universities were invited to participate in the survey. Nineteen universities agreed -- 51.4% of Australian public universities accounting for 51.5% of non-overseas undergraduate enrolments.

Table 1.1 shows the number of domestic students enrolled in undergraduate and enabling courses at Australia's 37 public universities in the year 2000. It also shows, for each of the 19 universities that participated in the survey, the number of students selected into the survey, the number of students who responded to the survey questionnaire, and the response rate.

Questionnaires were sent to 84,591 students and 34,752 responses were received – a response rate of 41.1%.

The tables presented in the Summary have a similar format with results presented separately for *full-time and part-time students* and for *male and female students*.

3. Income Support

Students who receive government income-support find it invaluable. There is concern, however, about the level of support provided to students and the restricted access to that support. Income support for Australian university students has been available in various guises for many decades in Australia. The most recent major change to the programs of student-income support was the introduction of the Youth Allowance scheme in July 1998.

Youth Allowance is principally for persons aged under 25. Austudy continues as a separate income-support program for students who commence their studies when they are 25 years or older. Austudy recipients are considered independent of their parents. Only their own income and assets (and the income and assets of their partner, if any) are considered in determining eligibility. Youth Allowance recipients, however, may be assessed as independent of, or dependent on, their parents. If a student is assessed as dependent, then his or her parents' income and assets are considered in determining eligibility for Youth Allowance.

Full Youth Allowance benefits are received if the parents' taxable income is less than about \$25,000 (more if there are other dependent children). Benefits are reduced progressively as

the parents' income exceeds this limit. The full Youth Allowance and Austudy benefit for an unmarried person with no dependents is about \$140 per week (and about \$90 per week for living-at-home Youth Allowance). To receive the full Youth Allowance or Austudy benefit, a student needs to earn less than about \$110 per week (perhaps about eight hours of paid employment per week). Above that limit, student income-support is progressively reduced, initially by 50 cents in the dollar, and then with higher income, by 70 cents in the dollar.

These are strong financial disincentives that discourage students from working more than about a day a week. Effective 'tax' rates climb quite quickly to more than 50%. The total income from the limited part-time work that a student can undertake before encountering these disincentives, together with the money from the income-support programs, leaves participants in these programs financially vulnerable -- especially in the context of the costs of undertaking university education.

A fully Youth Allowance or Austudy eligible unmarried university student with no dependents who has a part-time job for about 8 hours a week will have an income of about \$250 a week. Additionally, a Youth Allowance recipient receiving the living away from home allowance (the full allowance) may receive rent assistance.

For many students Youth Allowance and Austudy make the difference between whether or not they are able to enrol at university:

If I were to lose my Youth Allowance I wouldn't be able to continue my studies.

I would not have been able to go to university if I couldn't have deferred HECS payments or if I wasn't getting Youth Allowance and rent assistance.

But for most, the level of Youth Allowance and Austudy payments is too low.

I cannot live and study effectively on Austudy. However I have little choice.

It is very difficult to make ends meet as a student. I am only able to do so because I have a casual job - I could not afford to study on Youth Allowance alone.

Youth Allowance and Austudy have limits on the maximum amount a student can earn before payments are reduced. So not only do many recipients find the payments too low, they are restricted in the amount they are able to earn to supplement those payments:

Youth Allowance is not enough money and we are penalised in the extra hours we work through higher tax. Surely, you shouldn't be penalised for earning extra money, when Youth Allowance is not very much at all.

Comparisons with unemployment benefits were common -- particularly by recipients of Austudy. The creation of the Youth Allowance addressed this problem for young people -- and in some ways gave full-time students advantages compared with job seekers. The problem seems to persist, however, for older students. The lack of rent assistance (available to recipients of unemployment benefits and to some Youth Allowance beneficiaries) for Austudy recipients was a recurring theme:

I know people that have discontinued studies as they can get more money on the dole (than Austudy etc). This seems ludicrous, as people should be encouraged to get an education.

Difficult to live on Austudy alone without working. It would be good if the government subsidised rent assistance like Newstart. There's no encouragement to study.

The income and asset tests used for eligibility for Youth Allowance and Austudy and the criteria used for assessing independence were frequently criticised.

I couldn't get Youth Allowance because my parents earned too much, so I was forced to work 20 hours a week in order to claim independence. This had an adverse effect on my full time studies. Our expenditure exceeds our income and thus we have slowly been selling off our assets (car etc) to cope. My wife's income is just over the threshold for us to receive Austudy assistance & life is quite difficult. People in our position should be eligible for Austudy.

When students are means-tested based on their parents' income and assets, it is assumed that resources will be distributed to the student within the family. There are instances where this does not happen:

Students who study full or part time should be able to obtain Youth Allowance no matter how much their parents earn. Not all parents who earn a decent income necessarily hand out money to their children.

I find the Youth Allowance definitions of dependent & independent very inaccurate. I'm considered dependent because I live 'at home' with my mother. However, I still pay board, buy groceries, pay part of the electricity and telephone bills etc.

Table 3.1 shows the incidence of receipt of various forms of government income-support for undergraduate students in Australia. It also shows the extent to which students have applied for government support and not received it, and the reasons why their applications were refused. The table also shows the reasons why students did not apply for benefits.

- Nearly four in every ten students (38.7%) receive some form of government income support. The most common form of support is the Youth Allowance (23.3%) and Austudy (10.3%). The majority of recipients are categorised as 'independent' (19.0%) and receive their benefits at the full-rate (24.8%).
- Some 8.0% of students had applied for government benefits in 2000, but had been refused. The most important basis for rejection (5.0%) was the level of their parents' assets or income.
- More than half of all students (53.3%) received no government benefits and had not applied for any government income support. The major reasons for not applying were the level of their own or their parents' income or assets.
- Full-time students (45.4%) were substantially more likely to receive government income support than part-time students (17.0%) since Youth Allowance and Austudy are mostly restricted to persons undertaking full-time study. Part-time students, however, are more likely to report receipt of a pension, family allowances, or some other type of government support.
- Part-time students (5.9%) were also less likely to have applied for, and been refused, some form of government income support than full-time students (8.7%). The most common reason for part-time students' applications being refused is because they are studying part-time (1.8%), but collectively, the various forms of income and asset tests constitute a larger basis for refusal (3.1%). For full-time students, however, too high a level of parental income or assets (6.1%) is by far the largest single reason for refusal of applications for income support.

Table 3.1 Receipt and non-receipt of government support by sex, enrolment status and background characteristics: All students

Enrolment	Full-time			Part-time			All			
	Sex	Male %	Female %	Persons %	Male %	Female %	Persons %	Male %	Female %	Persons %
Received government support		45.1	45.7	45.4	12.3	20.3	17.0	37.8	39.4	38.7
Youth Allowance		28.7	30.6	29.7	2.8	2.4	2.5	22.8	23.6	23.3
Austudy		14.9	10.9	12.7	2.2	2.8	2.5	12.1	9.0	10.3
Abstudy		0.6	0.6	0.6	0.1	0.5	0.3	0.4	0.5	0.5
Pension (or equivalent)		0.7	2.3	1.6	2.4	6.6	4.8	1.1	3.4	2.4
Family/Parenting Allowance		1.6	3.8	2.8	1.9	11.4	7.4	1.7	5.7	3.9
Other government support		1.4	1.8	1.6	3.3	3.1	3.2	1.8	2.1	2.0
Level of support										
Dependent		15.6	15.9	15.8	2.5	4.2	3.5	12.6	13.1	12.9
Independent		23.0	22.5	22.7	5.8	7.9	7.0	19.2	18.9	19.0
Not sure/not applicable/no answer		6.5	7.3	6.9	4.0	8.2	6.5	6.0	7.4	6.8
Received at full-rate		30.2	28.9	29.5	7.4	10.8	9.4	25.1	24.4	24.8
Not received at full rate because:										
Parents' income/assets too high		5.4	5.0	5.2	0.3	0.4	0.4	4.2	3.9	4.0
Partner's income/assets too high		0.6	0.8	0.7	0.4	2.4	1.6	0.5	1.2	0.9
Own income/assets too high		4.4	5.8	5.1	1.7	2.9	2.4	3.8	5.0	4.5
Completed too much study		0.1	0.1	0.1	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.1	0.0	0.1
Not full-time study		0.0	0.1	0.1	0.4	0.8	0.6	0.1	0.2	0.2
Other		1.4	1.8	1.6	0.6	1.1	0.9	1.2	1.6	1.4
Don't know reason		2.0	2.1	2.1	0.4	0.4	0.4	1.7	1.7	1.7
Not stated		1.0	1.1	1.0	1.1	1.5	1.3	1.1	1.4	1.1
Applied but did not receive support		8.1	9.1	8.7	4.9	6.6	5.9	7.4	8.5	8.0
Own income too high		0.7	1.1	0.9	0.9	1.3	1.1	0.8	1.1	1.0
Own assets too high		0.1	0.1	0.1	0.0	0.1	0.0	0.1	0.1	0.1
Parents' income/assets too high		5.7	6.3	6.1	1.6	1.4	1.5	4.8	5.1	5.0
Partner's income/assets too high		0.3	0.6	0.5	0.3	0.6	0.5	0.3	0.6	0.5
Studied too long		0.5	0.2	0.3	0.2	0.3	0.3	0.4	0.2	0.3
Not full-time study		0.0	0.0	0.0	1.3	2.3	1.8	0.3	0.6	0.5
Course excluded		0.0	0.0	0.0	0.1	0.0	0.1	0.1	0.0	0.1
Other reason		0.6	0.5	0.6	0.2	0.5	0.3	0.5	0.5	0.5

Table 3.1 *Continued*

Did not apply	46.7	45.2	45.9	82.9	73.1	77.2	54.8	52.0	53.3
Own income/assets too high	5.5	4.1	4.7	43.1	32.2	36.8	13.9	11.0	12.3
Parents' income/assets too high	24.3	25.7	25.1	7.1	6.2	6.6	20.4	20.9	20.7
Partner's inc/assets too high	1.9	3.0	2.5	1.7	6.8	4.7	1.9	4.0	3.0
No need	4.0	2.8	3.3	9.9	6.7	8.0	5.3	3.7	4.4
Did not expect approval	7.0	6.0	6.5	8.9	10.3	9.8	7.4	7.1	7.2
Not eligible to apply	2.4	1.9	2.1	9.0	8.2	8.5	3.9	3.5	3.6
Other reason	1.7	1.6	1.6	3.1	2.7	2.9	2.0	1.9	1.9
Student finance supplement loan	6.5	5.8	6.1	1.9	2.7	2.3	5.5	5.0	5.2
Supplementary benefits									
Pensioner education supplement	0.5	2.8	1.8	2.0	7.0	4.9	0.8	3.8	2.5
Health care card	27.1	31.2	29.4	8.2	12.3	10.6	22.8	26.5	24.9
Commonwealth rent assistance	9.4	10.3	9.9	2.4	5.3	4.1	7.8	9.1	8.5
State rent assistance	1.4	1.7	1.5	0.3	1.1	0.8	1.2	1.5	1.4
n =	10116	16514	26673	2534	4842	7385	12774	21547	34374

- Correspondingly, part-time students (77.2%) were far more likely to have not applied for, and not received, any form of income support than full-time students (45.9%). In keeping with their higher levels of full-time work, and older age profile, part-time students didn't apply principally because their own income or assets were too high.
- Part-time students were generally more likely to receive the supplementary benefits than full-time students, a result that is consistent with the higher incidence of receipt of pensions by part-time students. The apparently high frequency of possession of a health care card by students overall, and by full-time students in particular, may reflect confusion between a Medicare card and a Health Card.

4. Debt

The need to borrow is an indicator of financial distress. That debt itself can then exacerbate financial difficulties through the need to pay interest and in turn reduce the likelihood of course completion. Additionally, if study produces debt, it may deter potential students from those categories with a higher likelihood of having to borrow to continue their study.

In 2000, 10.7% of undergraduate students obtained a loan (excluding HECS) to continue their studies. The average amount borrowed was \$3,943 -- a fairly substantial amount in the context of the average incomes of students. Such amounts are probably cumulative across the three or more years required to obtain a qualification. Students from those categories that correspond to disadvantage were more likely to have needed to borrow money.

Students commented on their sense of despair about their increasing indebtedness.

Basically, I live in debt while attending university; ends never meet; Austudy only allows you to work a certain number of hours regardless of your expenditure; I'm always borrowing money and stressing over how to make my budget stretch.

A large financial burden is the interest on loan repayments. Current Centrelink payments do not meet this cost of living so extra expenditure goes on credit cards, until the end of semester 2 when I can get an adequate amount of work to repay loans.

Financial Supplement Loans are available to tertiary students who are eligible for Youth Allowance, Austudy, Abstudy or the Pensioner Education Supplement. Each year, eligible independent students can trade in up to \$3,500 of their government payment for a Supplement Loan of twice that amount (that is, \$7,000 or an extra \$70 per week). The amount is paid to students in installments spread across the year. Students not eligible for income-support because of the means test can receive a supplement loan of \$2,000 (about \$40 per week) under a more liberal means test.

Students were very positive about the Financial Supplement Loan Scheme:

University loan scheme is great.

If I was not able to receive the supplementary loan I would not be able to attend university.

Could not have done this course without the assistance of an \$8,000 government loan.

Financial situation hard at first -- hard to live out of home on Youth Allowance. Took out a student supplement loan which is easier. Still hard. I am now working two casual bar jobs to get savings, so I can buy textbooks, pay car loan & fees.

Nevertheless, such loans simply add to the long-term debt burden of students.

The financial supplement is designed to meet everyday living expenses -- payments are spread across the year. It does not address the situation that frequently prompts a student to obtain a loan -- a large single bill or set of bills.

5. Payment of HECS

Payment of fees for undergraduate courses at Australian universities is principally through the HECS. At the heart of HECS is an income-contingent loan. The Commonwealth Government provides the loan and students are required to repay it over a number of years at progressively higher rates as their taxable income passes certain thresholds.

There is considerable variation in the final HECS debt of graduates. At the lower-end is a HECS charge of about \$10,500 for a three-year Arts degree. At the upper-end, students can be charged nearly \$30,000 for a five-year course in medicine.

Students can pay their HECS at the beginning of the year or semester in which the payment is due with a 25% discount -- an approach termed 'up-front payment'. Alternatively, students can defer their charge and repay it over time when their annual taxable income meets specified levels. Students can also pay some of their HECS charge up-front (a minimum of \$500) and receive the discount and then pay the remainder as a deferred loan.

Partial or full up-front payment of fees may indicate that a student has some discretionary expenditure -- they can pay their fees now even though such payment could be deferred. On the other hand, it may indicate that someone is willing to pay those fees for the student. While HECS may be paid for the student, support may not extend to daily living expenses.

The comments of some students indicate that they have a low tolerance of debt -- that they would rather undertake more paid work during their course, even to the detriment of their studies, in order to avoid the comparatively benign debt represented by HECS.

Table 5.1 shows the pattern of responses to the questions about payment of fees. Students were initially asked whether they were in a HECS course (88.0%), a HECS exempt course (2.1%), or a full fee paying course (9.8%). Full fee paying undergraduate enrolments have only been introduced in the last few years and enrolments have been small. It is unlikely that 9.8% of the sample are enrolled as full fee paying students. The response pattern indicates that students may have misunderstood the question and possibly equated HECS with deferred payment and up-front payment as full-fee payment.

Any such misunderstanding makes little difference to the subsequent responses. Students understand whether they pay course fees, even if they may not always be able to discriminate between HECS up-front payments and full-fee payments. The results are summarised in Table 5.1 in the row headed 'Payment of any fee'. Just over one in four (26.5%) students paid a course fee up-front.

Part-time students were more likely to pay their fee than full-time students -- for males, 44.6% of part-time students compared with 22.8% of full-time students and for females, 36.0% of part-time students compared with 22.2% of full-time students. While for full-time students there is little difference between males and females, for part-time students males were more likely to pay their course fees than female students -- doubtless a reflection of their better financial position.

The percentages deferring fees, fee exempt and paying a fee do not always sum to 100 in Table 5.1 because of a small number of missing cases. Nevertheless, the inverse of paying fees is deferral of fees and these values show a pattern that mirrors those for fee-paying -- higher deferral by full-time students, and by females within part-time students.

Table 5.1 also shows the mean amount of fees paid by students for those who paid some fees. Females tended to pay a little less than males for both full- and part-time students in-part because they were more likely to only pay part of their HECS fee. The differences, however, are slight. The major difference is between full- and part-time students. As might be expected, full-time students pay about twice as much as part-time students, reflecting their different course loads.

Students do not necessarily pay their fees themselves. Table 5.1 shows that there is substantial variation in the sources of payment between full-time and part-time students. Part-time students are far more likely than full-time students to pay course fees themselves or to have their course fees paid by their employer.

Full-time students, however, are more likely to have their fees paid by their parents than are part-time students. There was relatively little difference between male and female full-time students, but for part-time students, males were more likely both to pay their course fees themselves or to have them paid (or part-paid) by their employer.

Table 5.1 Course fees, HECS payment and source by sex, enrolment status and student characteristics: All students

	Enrolment			Full-time			Part-time			All		
	Sex	Male %	Female %	All %	Male %	Female %	All %	Male %	Female %	All %		
Type of fees												
HECS		90.2	90.2	90.2	78.3	82.9	81.0	87.4	88.4	88.0		
HECS exempt		1.6	2.3	2.0	2.8	1.8	2.2	1.9	2.1	2.1		
Full fee		8.1	7.5	7.8	18.6	14.7	16.3	10.5	9.3	9.8		
Payment of HECS fees												
Deferred all		74.4	74.4	74.4	51.5	60.8	56.9	69.1	71.0	70.1		
Paid part		5.2	5.7	5.5	3.6	4.0	3.8	4.9	5.3	5.1		
Paid all		9.5	9.0	9.2	22.4	17.3	19.4	12.4	11.0	11.6		
Payment of any fee		22.8	22.2	22.5	44.6	36.0	39.5	27.8	25.6	26.5		
Mean amount paid for fees												
Paid part (\$)		1397	1363	1376	1065	1132	1106	1343	1318	1327		
Paid all (\$)		3494	3227	3354	1421	1426	1423	2618	2498	2557		
Paid any (\$)		3088	2806	2935	1541	1528	1535	2507	2346	2421		
Fees paid by . . .												
Self		5.7	5.2	5.4	28.6	24.0	25.9	10.9	9.9	10.3		
Self partly		2.8	2.6	2.7	3.9	4.2	4.0	3.1	2.9	3.0		
Other		13.9	14.2	14.1	11.5	7.2	9.0	13.4	12.5	12.9		
Parents		15.5	15.6	15.6	3.9	3.6	3.7	12.9	12.6	12.7		
Partner/spouse		0.2	0.4	0.3	0.4	1.9	1.2	0.3	0.7	0.5		
Relatives/friends		0.3	0.4	0.4	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.3	0.3	0.3		
Employer		0.5	0.1	0.3	10.7	5.4	7.6	2.8	1.4	2.0		
Other		0.2	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.3		

The attitude to HECS depends on what students saw as the alternative. The view that higher education should be free was consistent with the abolition of HECS.

Get rid of HECS, make university free for everyone.

Other students just wanted the HECS levy reduced.

Less HECS fees. I feel they are too high. It works out to be about \$20-\$50 a lecture.

Should not charge HECS for first undergraduate degree.

It would be nice to see if HECS could be reduced, if not removed from students who end up failing semesters.

Less HECS -- it seems to be a lot to get out of university and get hit with a \$25,000 loan to repay.

On the other hand, if the alternative was up-front course fees, the attitude to HECS was more positive.

It would be almost impossible for me to go to university if it weren't for the HECS system as it is now.

No matter what government changes take place in the future, no university fees should ever have to be paid up-front. HECS must always be an option.

I am glad the 'deferred HECS' option is available or else I would have never gone to university. HECS must stay.

Many students want HECS expanded to include compulsory non-academic fees such as union fees or to textbooks.

I would like to see the addition of methods of putting other uni-related fees (books, parking permits) on HECS, or being able to pay in installments.

Should be able to defer student union fees via HECS.

Make HECS payments possible to be deferred for summer school units. At the moment these fees are to be paid up-front.

HECS was designed to have a minimum impact on access to university or the choice of course. At the outset, doubts were raised about possible indirect effects through debt-aversion. The introduction of different rates of HECS for different courses could certainly have a direct effect on choice of course.

I think it is getting harder for (partially) dependent spouses to study since I started in 1995, because of increases in HECS and repayment rates.

Times are tough - the burden of HECS weighs heavy. Working full-time and studying is hard - with no support.

I am crippled by HECS debt I can't repay.

Low income thresholds at which repayment of HECS begins mean that some students begin to repay their HECS debt before they have completed their course -- compounding what may be an already difficult financial position.

Increase the amount earned before taking out compulsory HECS.

Low HECS threshold makes it difficult for me to supplement income and not end up having to pay a percentage of wages back in HECS.

HECS receives considerable support among students as an alternative to the payment of up-front fees -- even though it can result in levels of debt that many students consider worrying. The students who are most likely to make use of the deferred HECS option are those with relatively disadvantaged financial circumstances. For full-time students, who are more likely to be dependent on their family, payment of up-front course fees is more closely related with family resources. For part-time students, who are more likely to be independent, it is associated with personal resources. For both full- and part-time students, recipients of government payments were substantially less likely to pay up-front fees than other students.

6. Choice of Course, University and Mode of Study

A student's choice of course, of university, and of mode of study may be influenced by their financial circumstances. Different courses require different levels of financial commitment. Not only are HECS rates higher for some courses than others, but some courses are typically longer than others. Additionally courses may differ in their requirements for materials and equipment.

Attendance at a university of choice may also have financial implications for a student. Even if a student does not change their place of residence, he or she may face prohibitively high transport costs to attend a university further from home. Alternatively, moving home in order to attend a university may increase accommodation costs and living expenses.

Table 6.1 Influence of financial circumstances on aspects of study by sex and enrolment status: All students

Enrolment	Full-time			Part-time			All			
	Sex	Male	Female	All	Male	Female	All	Male	Female	All
		%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
<i>Choice of course</i>		11.0	10.6	10.8	11.3	12.8	12.2	11.1	11.1	11.1
<i>Choice of university</i>		17.1	19.3	18.3	12.2	15.8	14.2	16.1	18.5	17.4
<i>Mode of study</i>		16.4	15.5	15.9	44.5	48.8	47.0	22.8	23.8	23.3

Most obviously, mode of study is influenced by financial circumstances. Students with families to support may simply not be able to afford to study full-time -- they need the income from their full-time job to support their families.

The survey addressed these questions by asking students whether their financial circumstance had influenced their choice of course, of university, and of mode of study. The results are shown in Table 6.1.

- Financial circumstances had influenced the *choice of course* of 11.1% of all students. The percentage was similar for full- and part-time students and for males and females.
- The *choice of university* was influenced by financial circumstances for 17.4% of students. The percentages were slightly higher for full-time rather than part-time students and for females rather than males.
- Financial circumstances influenced the *choice of mode of study* of 23.3% of students. The intent of the question was to ask about full- or part-time study, and this is reflected in the substantially higher response for part-time (47.0%) students compared with full-time students (15.9%). The intent of full-time students who believe their mode of study was influenced by their financial circumstances is not immediately obvious. Some full-time students may mean that they would prefer to be part-time, but it is likely that they understood 'mode of study' to refer to something other than full- or part-time study.

7. Part-time Study

A quarter of students (24.0%) described themselves as part-time. They study part-time for a variety of reasons -- to fit in with their work, to fit in with their family commitments, access to the university, and so on. Among part-time students, however, nearly a third gave 'lack of income support' as either their first or second most important reason for studying part-time. In all, financial circumstance permitting, more than half (54.0%) would prefer to be studying full-time.

There is consistent evidence of financial barriers to full-time study. Students who would prefer to study full-time, finances permitting were from low socioeconomic family backgrounds; had applied for, but been refused, government income support; were either financially independent or financially dependent on a relatively low income earner; had taken a loan to continue study; had a deficit budget; and had not paid course fees up-front. Taken

together, these form a picture of substantial demand for full-time study that cannot be met because students simply cannot afford to study full-time.

The single most important reason for studying part-time was to fit in with employment (56.5%). Male students (65.6%) were more likely than female students (49.9%) to give this reason. Family commitments were a more important reason for female students (18.9%) than male students (5.0%).

Immediate financial reasons were less important -- 12.6% of students gave a lack of income support as a reason for studying part-time and 1.5% gave the cost of study as their main reason. These were more important among the second most important reasons (18.1% and 6.5% respectively). The combined percentages for the main and second most important reasons for studying part-time are 30.7% for a lack of income support and 8.1% for costs. In each case, female students were slightly more likely than males to cite financial reasons for studying part-time.

Just over a half (54.0%) of part-time students indicated that, financial circumstances permitting, they would prefer to be studying full-time. There was little difference between male (53.9%) and female (54.1%) students.

Students who gave financial reasons for studying part-time were more likely to want to study full-time -- 92.4% of those who cited lack of income support as their main reason for studying part-time said that they would prefer to study full-time, and 83.0% of those who cited costs. Those who cited other barriers -- a few units to complete, a disability or family commitments -- were less likely to want to study full-time.

8. Work and Study

At Australian universities more than seven in every ten undergraduate full-time students are employed *during the semester*. Female full-time students are more likely to be in paid work during the semester (75.7%) than are male full-time undergraduate students (68.6%). Part-time students, of course, are even more likely to be in paid employment (89.9% of males, 85.4% of females).

The hours of work are substantial for full-time students -- an average of 14.6 hours per week for males and 14.4 hours for females, or about two days a week. Part-time students are more likely to be in full-time employment and their hours of work are correspondingly higher: 35.5 for males and 30.1 for females.

Table 8.1 compares results from the 1984 survey with the current survey. For full-time students, the incidence of paid work during the semester has increased by just under 50% during the 16 years between 1984 and 2000. Not only are more students in paid employment during the semester, those who are employed are working longer hours. In 1984 full-time undergraduate university students worked an average of about five hours per week during semester. By the year 2000, full-time students worked an average of 14.5 hours a week -- nearly three times the hours worked by students in 1984.

Between 1984 and 2000 the combination of the increase in the incidence of paid employment and the increase in the average hours of work for those in paid employment has resulted in a more than four-fold increase for full-time students in the 'burden' of paid employment.

The studies of 3 out of every 20 undergraduate students in Australian universities are affected ‘a great deal’ by their employment during semester -- or some 71,000 students. The studies of a further 43.5% or 220,000 students are adversely affected ‘somewhat’ because of their hours of work.

Classes are missed ‘frequently’ by 7% of students because of their paid employment and a further 21.3% miss classes ‘sometimes’ because of their paid employment -- jointly more than a third of the undergraduate student population. In terms of Australia’s undergraduate population, these percentages represent about 33,900 and 103,000 students respectively.

The interpretation of results on the impact of work on study is complex. The hours a student works during the semester are a major influence on the extent to which that work interferes with a student’s study -- the more hours of work, the greater the adverse effect on study.

The number of hours a student works, however, influences their income -- the more hours worked, the greater the income. This relationship underlies several relationships. Firstly, students with higher incomes often report greater negative impacts of their work on their study. Second, students who are financially independent are also likely to work more hours, and are therefore more likely to experience adverse outcomes for their studies. Third, students who receive no government income support may work longer or fewer hours (because they need to work more hours to compensate for not receiving any income support, or because they were ineligible because they were in less need of money, or because of the substantial disincentives for additional employment in the Youth Allowance and Austudy arrangements). Such students may therefore either report more or less adverse effects of their work on their study simply because of the eligibility criteria for income support.

Table 8.1 Percentage of students who work during semester: 1984, 2000

Sex <i>Year of survey</i>	Male		Female		Persons	
	1984 %	2000 %	1984 %	2000 %	1984 %	2000 %
Age						
<i>17-19 years</i>	46.3	67.5	50.9	76.1	48.7	72.4
<i>20-24 years</i>	48.6	71.6	56.2	80.1	52.1	76.2
<i>25-29 years</i>	46.9	66.8	38.9	70.0	43.5	68.3
<i>30-39 years</i>	49.3	58.4	36.4	57.5	42.2	57.9
<i>40 years or older</i>	35.5	50.9	17.9	53.0	24.5	52.2
<i>Total</i>	47.6	68.6	51.4	75.7	49.5	72.5

There are potentially more subtle problems. Some categories of students may choose to work fewer hours of paid employment because they anticipate greater adverse effects of that paid employment on their study. This kind of self-selection can mean that the observed relationships reported in the tables do not accurately reflect the causal relationships that underlie those tables. On the other hand, some categories of students may be less able to find the paid employment they need in order to meet their financial obligations.

These considerations make it a little surprising when some results still suggest that it is those students who are financially less well off who experience more adverse effects on their study from paid employment.

Many students identified the financial imperative to undertake employment as a problem for their studies. Their comments included:

I am working so I can afford to study, but working drastically effects my attendance and revision. It feels like my job is full time and university is casual.

The only problem I find is a diminishing study ethic due to work-related tiredness. You feel like you have no other choice but to work so you can pay for the things you need. It really does have an impact on your study/university commitments.

It is hard for me to be as committed to my university work as would like to be. Mainly because I find work commitments a burden, but it is essential for me to work in order to attend school.

Others acknowledged the problem, but believed it didn't affect them.

I manage my part-time work around my studies as they are more important. I still make enough to get by . . .

Trying to work and study is hard to do, but you have to be flexible.

The comments contain three solutions. First, they suggest that one of the most important advantages of government income-support programs such as the Youth Allowance and Austudy was that it meant that there was a reduced need to work.

Students who were not eligible for Youth Allowance or Austudy wanted broader eligibility for the programs:

I wish I could get Austudy so that I could work a little less and thus sacrifice less schoolwork.

It's too difficult to receive a government payment that I need! I'm working the hours of a full time employee and studying full time.

Austudy and Centrelink payments shouldn't be based on parents' income or assets if a student is working no matter what their age. Because I cannot receive assistance, I have to skip classes to work and support study.

I think financial assistance should be more wide spread for students. Many students need to work to get through uni, and any sort of assistance be that financial, flexible class times or flexible work times would be a great help.

Some beneficiaries recognised this advantage:

I am fortunate to receive Youth Allowance, being classed as 'independent' because of taking a year out of education to work. Without this I would be forced to work during semester, and consequently reduce my potential to succeed in my degree.

Others believed that payments from the schemes should be higher so that they needed to work fewer hours:

Receiving Austudy is a blessing. It is difficult to scrape by each week. I am reliant on my casual work to pay big bills and to do this, sometimes I miss university to work.

My university marks suffered because I had to work late nights and hours to supplement my Youth Allowance. I get the full benefit - I don't know how other students cope!!

The Austudy / Youth Allowance criteria for independent students need to be reviewed . . . to encourage more students to be independent as it is difficult to study and work at the same time (especially when studying a long and difficult course like Medicine).

Table 8.2 Percentage of students who work, hours of work, and affect on studies: by student background characteristics and enrolment status: All students

Enrolment Sex	Full-time			Part-time			All		
	Male %	Female %	Persons %	Male %	Female %	Persons %	Male %	Female %	Persons %
<i>In paid employment</i>									
<i>Any employment</i>	75.8	80.0	78.1	91.8	86.6	88.7	79.4	81.6	80.6
<i>During semester</i>	68.6	75.7	72.5	89.9	85.4	87.2	73.4	78.1	76.0
<i>Full-time</i>	3.7	2.7	3.1	64.2	44.3	52.6	17.3	13.0	14.9
<i>Part-time</i>	18.1	21.5	20.0	13.7	23.7	19.5	17.1	22.1	19.9
<i>Casual</i>	46.3	51.0	48.9	11.5	17.1	14.8	38.4	42.6	40.7
<i>Between semesters</i>	71.9	75.9	74.1	87.5	79.3	82.7	75.4	76.7	76.1
<i>Full-time</i>	12.9	10.2	11.4	65.7	45.1	53.7	24.8	18.8	21.5
<i>Part-time</i>	16.3	19.3	17.9	9.9	18.1	14.6	14.9	19.0	17.2
<i>Casual</i>	42.2	45.6	44.1	10.6	15.0	13.1	35.0	38.1	36.7
<i>Mean hours of paid employment per week</i>									
<i>Students employed during the semester</i>									
<i>During semester</i>	14.6	14.4	14.5	35.5	30.1	32.4	20.4	18.6	19.4
<i>Between semesters</i>	24.6	23.2	23.8	38.2	33.1	35.4	28.1	25.7	26.7
<i>Missed classes because of paid employment</i>									
<i>All students</i>									
<i>Frequently</i>	5.1	4.0	4.4	18.3	13.2	15.3	8.0	6.2	7.0
<i>Sometimes</i>	18.0	21.0	19.7	28.2	25.4	26.6	20.3	22.1	21.3
<i>Rarely</i>	17.8	20.0	19.0	15.9	13.8	14.7	17.5	18.4	18.0
<i>No</i>	34.2	34.4	34.3	26.9	29.6	28.5	32.4	33.2	32.9
<i>Students employed during the semester</i>									
<i>Frequently</i>	7.4	5.2	6.1	20.7	16.1	18.1	11.0	8.1	9.3
<i>Sometimes</i>	25.9	27.6	26.9	31.7	31.2	31.4	27.5	28.5	28.1
<i>Rarely</i>	25.5	26.0	25.8	17.9	16.9	17.3	23.5	23.6	23.6
<i>No</i>	41.2	41.2	41.2	29.7	35.8	33.2	38.0	39.8	39.0
<i>Adverse effect of paid employment on university studies</i>									
<i>All students</i>									
<i>A great deal</i>	11.4	10.9	11.1	28.8	42.4	26.2	15.4	14.2	14.7
<i>Somewhat</i>	38.9	44.7	42.0	48.4	48.3	48.3	41.1	45.5	43.5
<i>Not at all</i>	24.7	23.6	24.1	13.2	12.7	12.9	22.0	20.9	21.4
<i>Students employed during the semester</i>									
<i>A great deal</i>	16.4	14.2	15.2	32.1	28.7	30.1	20.8	18.2	19.3
<i>Somewhat</i>	55.4	58.3	57.1	53.8	56.7	55.5	55.0	57.9	56.6
<i>Not at all</i>	28.2	27.4	27.8	14.1	14.6	14.4	24.2	24.0	24.1
All students (No.)	10199	16646	26888	2545	4886	7441	12871	21720	34645

Second, students believed that universities needed to be more flexible in their delivery of courses. Most suggestions focused on timetabling, but other included an appeal for greater understanding by lecturers, greater emphasis on distance education techniques or even taping lectures and modifying assessment so that it did not reward attendance per se. Many comments also reveal a change in priorities between work and study:

In my experience, the 'full-time student' is a myth. Everyone I know works a significant number of hours in order to afford to live. This is why campus life is dying. University staff need to either realise this; or measures need to be taken to ensure that people can work and study.

Students need more allowance and regular timetables to study and work eg contact hours days 1,2,3 and then work and study 4,5,6,7

Cramming as many classes into one day is best for working opportunities.

I work as many hours as possible, and try and fit in as much university as possible. It would make life easier if university ran more evening courses. Saturday /weekend classes in mainstream units would be fantastic.

University timetables should be scheduled to allow students more flexible (paid) work hours.

I live at home with my parents, but I still have to work to be able to attend university and generally live. I know I'm a full-time student, but I wouldn't be at university if I didn't have a job. I wish lecturers would understand this when they believe that the world revolves around their course.

Universities need to be more flexible in the delivery of courses to enable students to work full time if needed. Eg more distance education, classes outside of business hours, intensive courses, delivery on the Internet.

No marks given for attendance of classes. If you do the work and pass the exams then you shouldn't be discriminated against for not being able to make the classes.

Third, and less frequently, students identified the benefits of study leave:

If I was not able to get assistance for study leave I would not be able to undertake study.

Employers should recognise the commitment of their staff and provide support in term of paid study leave.

Government should encourage employees of part time university students to allow study / exam leave at the very least!!

9. Study, Childcare and Finances

The availability of childcare and its affordability are important issues for many students with children. The lack of affordable childcare no doubt prevents some students from even enrolling -- they are not represented in this survey. Others enrol, and continue with their studies handicapped by the need to miss some classes and despite financial hardship. Still others find alternatives. They have parents who provide free childcare, they study externally, or make use of flexible delivery.

Table 9.1 shows that relatively few full-time students have dependent children -- 5.6% overall consisting of 4.2% of male students and 6.8% of female students. The proportion of full-time students with dependent children has increased since 1984 when the corresponding values were 3.3% overall with 3.1% of male students and 3.6% of female students.

Part-time students, if only because they are older, are more likely to have financially dependent children than full-time students -- 31.5% of part-time students have dependent children (26.9% of male students and 34.8% of female students). The sex difference, in terms

of its implications for childcare, is larger than these values suggest because some male students do not live full-time with their children.

Table 9.1 shows that of students who do have financially dependent children, 4.1% miss classes ‘frequently’ and a further 15.4% miss classes ‘sometimes’ because they cannot afford childcare. Extrapolating to the student population as a whole 2,400 students would miss classes ‘frequently’ and 8,700 students miss classes ‘sometimes’. Female students are more likely to miss classes than male students (especially among part-time students) and full-time students are more likely to miss classes because of not being able to afford childcare.

Only some university campuses have child care centres. Students on university campuses without childcare facilities simply want access to childcare:

Child care facilities on campus please!!

Even when facilities are available, the service they provide does not always meet the needs of students:

Child care facilities at the university that are accessible during university teaching hours not 9-5. It would be enabling if university childcare was available for primary school age child for after school time university attendance.

My child is severely disabled meaning I can't put him into normal childcare. This has prevented me attending classes causing me to try to defer my studies -- some sort of assistance in this regard would help.

I would like university holidays that fit in with school holidays. Childcare is not available on public holidays, but university still has lectures which makes it very difficult.

Table 9.1 Percentage of students with dependent children, and frequency of missed classes: All students and students with dependent children

	Enrolment			Full-time			Part-time			All			
	Sex	Male	Female	Person s	Male	Female	Person s	Male	Female	Person s	Male	Female	Person s
		%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
All students													
<i>With children</i>		4.2	6.8	5.6	26.9	34.8	31.5	9.4	13.8	11.9			
<i>No children</i>		95.8	93.2	94.4	73.1	65.2	68.5	90.6	86.2	88.1			
<i>Total</i>		100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0			
<i>With children, 1984</i>		3.1	3.6	3.3	----	----	----	----	----	----			
Students with financially dependent children													
<i>Miss classes . . .</i>													
<i>Frequently</i>		4.9	5.4	5.3	1.7	4.2	3.3	3.0	4.6	4.1			
<i>Sometimes</i>		16.3	22.9	20.7	8.1	15.0	12.5	10.9	17.9	15.4			
<i>Rarely</i>		18.2	18.4	18.3	12.9	13.8	13.5	14.7	15.5	15.2			
<i>Never</i>		54.4	47.7	49.9	71.8	59.3	63.8	65.8	55.0	58.8			
<i>Unstated</i>		6.2	5.6	5.8	5.4	7.7	6.9	5.7	7.0	6.5			
<i>Total</i>		100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0			
All students (No.)		9881	16093	25984	2495	4748	7246	12492	21017	33522			
With dep. children (No.)		484	1120	1606	715	1721	2438	1206	2866	4076			

Even where child care facilities are available and meet the needs of students, their cost can be prohibitive, a problem which is sometimes accentuated by the way in which they charge for their services:

My largest expense is after school care for my two primary school children with no assistance for study. Childcare is out of the question for holiday periods as it is expensive at these times.

Flexible, on-campus non-school-aged and vacation care for children. Eg one two-hour class means paying for one whole day at childcare centre.

Child care needs to be made more affordable maybe even some type of 'payback' system upon graduation.

The childcare fees at university are higher than other places so I couldn't afford them for my baby. Had to drop subjects due do lectures running later than daycare hours.

The university childcare centre requires me to pay half fees when my children aren't there eg. In semester breaks, if I give 2 weeks notice. Otherwise I still pay full fare. This equates to paying for 5 weeks childcare without the benefit of it.

My teaching rounds are difficult as I find it extremely hard to pay for child cares for a full two or three weeks at a time. The lack of childcare makes it very hard to gain employment as you continually have to ask for time off.

As might be expected, single parents have a greater need for available and affordable childcare:

It is difficult to study full-time with three children as the cost of childcare is expensive, especially if you are a sole parent.

Single mothers are by far the most financially disadvantaged group in our unis. They need more support such as reasonably priced on campus childcare facilities.

Recent tax changes and changes in child care subsidies were welcomed by some students because they were associated with lower child care costs:

My childcare costs have halved since the GST which has enabled me to save a great deal of money. Childcare costs were my main concern when commencing my course and considering future studies.

The GST I think has made my life easier. Child care costs dropped by \$17 a week.

Some students find childcare too expensive and would not be able to study without the child care provided by their parents:

As a mother of young children, I have been lucky in the fact that my mother lives near, and looks after two children while I was attending lectures, tutes, or exams. If I had to pay child care costs, I would have been unable to study.

If I didn't have the support of my parents there's no way I could afford to study. My mum looks after the children much of the time.

I would not be able to study and fulfill my parental responsibilities without occasional financial, emotional and child care support from my parents.

One of the advantages of external study and flexible delivery is the saving on childcare costs:

The lectures online thing has been great for me as I wouldn't have been able to go to most lectures this year, because I have a kinder child and a school child with schedules that didn't fit with university schedules. Lectures online solved that.

I commenced study as an external student due to family commitments. We moved to a country town so I stayed external. Once we returned I still chose external due to the cost involved in paying for childcare, if I attended the campus.

10. Travel Costs

Students frequently cited transport-related issues as a major cause of financial and study hardship. The comments of students reveal the financial decisions they face. Moving closer to the university saves on travel time and cost, but has costs of its own:

The distance to the closest university increases my traveling costs considerably. However, I can't afford to move closer.

I travel for 4 hours to and from university everyday because I can't afford to live closer - yet I'm not eligible for financial help should I move out and at the same time it's not deemed that I live far enough away for assistance with travel expenses.

Distance from university has a larger effect if there is limited access to public transport and students need to buy a car:

My largest cost for university is transport. I live 50km from university and no buses travel within 15km of my house so I need a car for transport. This cost eats up most of my money.

State governments provide full-time student concessional rates for travel on public transport. The comments of students emphasise the importance of these concessions. In Victoria at least, students are required to first purchase a concession card in order to receive the concession. A recent increase in the price of the card provoked a considerable number of adverse comments from students. Similarly, restructuring of fares -- abolition of cheaper weekly and monthly tickets -- was critical for many students. The impact of the recently introduced Goods and Services Tax on the cost of transport also received extensive comment.

Table 10.1 Missing classes due to travel costs: All students

Enrolment	Full-time			Part-time			All			
	Sex	Male	Female	Person	Male	Female	Person	Male	Female	Person
		%	%	s	%	%	%	%	%	s
<i>Missed classes</i>										
<i>Frequently</i>		1.0	1.1	1.0	1.0	1.6	1.4	1.0	1.2	1.1
<i>Sometimes</i>		9.4	9.5	9.5	6.1	7.8	7.1	8.8	9.2	9.0
<i>Rarely</i>		18.5	19.8	19.2	11.9	14.2	13.2	17.2	18.6	17.9
<i>Never</i>		69.1	67.9	68.4	73.8	67.1	69.9	69.9	67.6	68.7
<i>Not applicable</i>		2.0	1.7	1.8	7.3	9.3	8.5	3.1	3.5	3.3
<i>Total</i>		100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
<i>n =</i>		10059	16308	26377	2277	4279	6559	12457	20773	33243

And of course, students were concerned about the availability and reliability of public transport:

Better and more frequent public transport.

Cheaper fares for public transport.

Public transport is poor, very expensive, 3 hours from home to uni, for 4 hours of university lecture/tutorials, 3 hours home. Long day!

The removal of weekly and monthly student tickets creates financial difficulty for students relying on public transport.

It would be much better if the cost of a public transport concession card was at the same level as high schools ie \$7 instead of \$110.

I was unable to afford to buy a concession card so I had to pay full fare on public transport. Therefore I had to miss university when I was unable to pay.

A lot of my friends can't afford the concession card and so come in and pay full price on public transport and therefore don't come in all the time.

The comments reveal the sensitivity of students to travel costs. Travel costs are only marginally discretionary -- a student can only choose to miss so many classes before he or she has to give up their course and a change of mode of transport is not always possible. Many institutions are involved.

The Commonwealth Government has a role because the issue of travel costs is often set in the context of eligibility for Youth Allowance or Austudy -- travel is expensive because the student cannot afford to move because they are not eligible for income support. State governments have a role through their policies on concessions and ticket pricing. Universities set parking charges and may be in a position to negotiate with public transport providers for better access to public transport for their students.

Table 10.1 shows the extent to which students miss classes because of being unable to afford to travel to campus. About 1.1% of students report that they miss classes 'frequently' because they cannot afford to travel to university (equivalent to 5,331 students), and another 9% miss classes 'sometimes' (equivalent to 43,617 students).

There is relatively little difference in the extent to which full- and part-time students miss classes because of travel costs, especially given that 8.5% of part-time students responded 'not applicable' to this question -- principally because they study externally and do not have to attend classes regularly.

Appendix

The Steering Committee

Ms Yvette Devlin, formerly Director of Quality and Equity in the Higher Education Division of DETYA, initiated the survey and was the project officer for the Survey. The Australian Vice-Chancellors' Committee endorsed her proposal for the survey, and a group of nineteen universities agreed to participate. These universities also provided the financial support necessary for the survey to take place. A Steering Committee chaired by a member of the Australian Vice-Chancellors' Committee, Professor Anne Edwards, Vice Chancellor of Flinders University, managed the project. Members of the Steering Committee were: Dr Jane den Hollander, General Manager, Student and Staff Services, Curtin University of Technology; Mary Kelly, Equity Coordinator, Queensland University of Technology; Ian Dobson, Associate to the Deputy Vice-Chancellor and Director of Institutional Research, Monash University; Professor Nigel Bond, Pro Vice-Chancellor (Academic Programs), University of Western Sydney; Conor King, Director, Policy and Coordination, Australian Vice-Chancellors' Committee; and David Henderson, President, National Union of Students (replacing Ms Lisa Johnstone, past President).

Questionnaire Development

The questionnaire was modelled substantially upon the instrument employed in the 1984 survey of student finances (DEET, 1987). Pilot testing took place at Flinders University, the University of Western Australia, the University of Southern Queensland and the University of the Sunshine Coast. The design team for the questionnaire was chaired by Wendy Marchment, from Flinders University. The members were Yvette Devlin, Professor Don Anderson (ANU), Josie Palermo (Victoria University) and John Chan (AVCC).

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