Defend our Jobs and Living Standards Against Attacks

15. EDUCATION

EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION AND CARE (ECEC)

Giving Children the Best Start in Life

1. The child should be at the centre of all policy initiatives. Access to affordable and high quality maternal and child health and early childhood education is the starting point of equal opportunity for all Australians. Policy initiatives should prioritise early childhood education and care (ECEC) programs to maximise participation by vulnerable and disadvantaged children, for example those living in rural or remote communities, children from low socio-economic backgrounds and children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.

2. Congress notes that valuing children means valuing educators. For too long, early childhood educators’ work has been economically and socially undervalued due to its historical origins in unpaid domestic labour done by women. Modern, high quality ECEC is a complex field that requires educators to have significant professional skill and knowledge to assist children to develop emotionally, cognitively and socially. Valuing educators means according them the professional pay they deserve for the challenging work they perform. A qualified, supported and professionally paid workforce is key to a world-class ECEC system and Australian children deserve nothing less.

3. Congress reiterates its support for universal access to high quality early childhood education and care. All children should be given the best possible start in life through equitable access to quality early education delivered by educators earning more than poverty-level wages.

Supporting Workforce Participation of Parents

4. Access to high quality, play-based and developmentally age appropriate, affordable ECEC delivered by qualified and skilled early childhood educators is central to enabling the workforce participation of parents whilst ensuring the best outcomes for children.

5. Congress notes that Australia’s employment rate for mothers is the lowest of all countries in the OECD at 62%. Congress calls on the Government to set a target that is in line with the OECD average of 66%. Affordable and high quality ECEC with an adequate number of hours per week contribute to an increase in the participation of women in the labour force. The OECD notes the relationship between a mother’s labour market participation and enrolment rates in formal ECEC is strong.

6. Congress calls on Government to:

   a) ensure increased, permanent funding for every child in Australia to access at
least 15 hours per week, of high quality play-based and developmentally age appropriate early childhood education in the two years before school; and

b) provide additional baseline funding to the sector to ensure families with children aged 0-3 also have access to 24 hours per week of high quality education and care.

Ensuring Quality Early Childhood Education and Care

7. Unions have a role in being vigilant about the promotion of quality standards and parental awareness of changes to the system, given access to quality care and education for children is critical to many workers’ continued employment and the health and wellbeing of their families and community.

8. Congress notes general support for the National Quality Framework (NQF) including the Early Years Learning Framework, National Quality Standards, Quality Rating System and Quality Improvement Plan, However Congress acknowledges that workload pressures exist and need to be monitored. We also acknowledge that the increasing requirements of educators under the NQF have not been recognised in the award.

9. Congress calls on the Federal Government to commit to long term funding for ACECQA and the National Partnership on the National Quality Agenda in order to maintain the consistent application of the Education and Care Services National Law and Regulations. All governments, children and families benefit from the jointly governed National Quality Framework.

A Legacy of Under-Investment

10. Congress recognises that public investment still continues to fall short of levels needed to ensure affordable and high quality education and care for Australia’s next generation.

11. Government policies must ensure that increases in ECEC fees do not negatively impact on workforce participation, and that funding arrangements are appropriate for supporting affordable high quality ECEC for all families, especially for those children who stand to benefit the most, for example, low income, disadvantaged and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children.

12. Further, government policies must ensure that increased cost of early childhood education and care does not result in children not accessing ECEC.

13. Any policies that seek to reduce costs by compromising quality standards are unacceptable. Best practice quality education and care must be actively encouraged and rewarded, and Government should continue its commitment to improving quality standards in the sector not only through greater monitoring and assessment of services but also by ensuring that funding arrangements are appropriate to support these objectives.

14. The current funding arrangements are both insufficient and inefficient and are not adequately targeted at delivering resources to ECEC professionals or children in early education and care. Government is currently paying a large share of ECEC costs in subsidies to parents, however, the actual price of fees is determined by ECEC providers. Congress continues to advocate for direct service based funding which is tied to
appropriate wages for staff and support for training and development and quality outcomes for children and families.

15. Congress reasserts the need for government regulation requiring ECEC providers to provide greater transparency of financial practices to ensure resources are used appropriately to benefit children, employees and parents. Ongoing financial regulations are required to monitor the status of operators, ensuring that sound accounting practices are in place, including transparency around internal allocation of resources, ownership of fixed assets and disclosure of private equity interests.

16. Congress urges Government to work to maintain a diversity of services available to parents, in particular the ongoing supply of ECEC delivered through Government agencies or the not-for-profit sector. The continued shifting of Local Government provided ECEC into the private sector reduces the sector’s diversity and capacity.

17. Congress notes that Australia has one of the lowest expenditures on early childhood education and care of all OECD countries spending 0.49% of GDP compared to the OECD average of 0.8%. Congress will campaign for an increase in public spending in line with international best practice of 1% per cent of GDP.

**Workforce Crisis**

18. Congress recognises the highly feminised nature of the ECEC workforce and consequently the systemic undervaluation of skilled and valuable ECEC work as evident by a gender wage gap within the industry approximately twice the national average. Congress recognises the role of the overlapping and interlocking markers of feminisation in the sector in forming barriers to genuine enterprise bargaining. This includes a mostly female workforce; a decentralised industry; a lack of targeted government funding or industry strategy; the vocational nature of the work of caring for and educating small children; high turnover and limited workforce attachment; and an historical lack of community understanding of the content and value of early childhood education work.

19. Low wages in the ECEC sector have contributed to a workforce crisis. Congress notes that over the past decade, staff turnover has been extremely high as passionate and dedicated early childhood education and care professionals have been forced to leave to look for better paid and properly recognised roles elsewhere.

20. Valuing children means allowing them to grow and learn with qualified and experienced educators with whom they can form ongoing, secure attachments in a nurturing environment. Congress recognises that the most important indicator and guarantee of quality are engaged and stimulating interactions between educators and children. Research shows that educators are leaving the sector because of low pay, poor conditions and the lack of professional recognition. We know that every time an educator leaves the sector, there is an impact on children, their families and the quality of care and education. There are also hidden costs in recruiting and training new staff.

21. In order to ensure early childhood educators are properly valued for the important work they do, and to ensure they are attracted to and stay in this essential education sector, wages in the sector must reflect the value of their work. Congress calls on Government to recognise the endemic low pay that characterises the gender-segregated industry of ECEC
and assume responsibility for addressing this inequity.

22. Congress notes that affordable ECEC is a critical issue for many families and that it serves a vital function for ensuring equity and broader objectives, including increasing workforce participation. Congress notes that it is not possible for parents and providers to provide resources sufficient to achieve equal pay without government funded support. Additionally, Congress notes that most ECEC providers already operate on tight budgets in a strict regulatory environment. Given that the majority of funding to the sector originates with the Federal Government, Congress believes that Government must acknowledge its responsibility for ensuring that the sector is funded adequately to allow early childhood educators be paid wages commensurate with their skills and qualifications.

23. Congress calls on government to work together with unions and employers to ensure that early childhood education and care professionals receive equal pay. Congress calls on the Federal Government to commit to the provision of funding equal pay for early childhood educators in recognition of the important and skilled work they do.

24. Congress calls on Government to fund a new national ECEC workforce strategy to support the ongoing professionalisation of the ECEC workforce, improve service quality and get the best outcomes for children. Improving qualifications, training and working conditions is an essential quality ECEC policy lever. Quality ECEC is absolutely dependent on quality educators. A national ECEC workforce strategy needs to support – not replace – professional pay. A national ECEC workforce strategy should at a minimum include policy levers around:

a) ensuring a high quality vocational education and training (VET) sector with greater oversight of registered training organisations’ ECEC programs to ensure that they are producing educators with the requisite skills;

b) establishing paid professional development and meaningful career pathways, for example by incorporating registration systems and aligning the industrial award with the professionalisation the NQF has offered;

c) investigating the impact of remuneration and conditions on workforce recruitment, stability, retention and quality;

d) programming to increase the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workforce to ensure culturally appropriate ECEC services are available for Aboriginal and Torres Strait children; and lastly

e) appropriate ECEC workforce data collection to drive the world’s best practice in early education.

Implementing the National Quality Framework

25. The National Quality Framework (NQF) contains a number of specific requirements regarding the level of skills and qualifications of the ECEC workforce. Congress supports these requirements, as they reflect the professional standing and role of early childhood education and care professionals.

26. Congress believes it is the responsibility of governments to ensure there are sufficient
funds and appropriate working conditions to facilitate the realistic implementation of the NQF, including:

a) access to genuinely fee-free courses;

b) recognised prior learning programs;

c) access to paid study leave;

d) funding for centres to ensure they are able to meet minimum staff ratio requirements; and

e) ensuring workload issues and access to breaks are addressed through appropriate regulatory arrangements and/or industrial agreements negotiated with unions.

27. Congress urges the Government to ensure that, commensurate with the National Quality Framework, funding is allocated to ensure that classification structures, wages and conditions properly value these higher qualifications.

28. Congress advocates for skills and training policies explicitly directed towards enabling early childhood educators to develop a career path in this important educator sector.

29. It is essential that any current or future ‘fee-free’ programs are genuinely free of fees. In low paid industries such as ECEC, hidden fees in the form of amenity or course fees can provide a major disincentive to further study. Congress calls on the Federal Government to monitor TAFE and other training organisations fee structures to ensure the provision of genuinely fee-free places.

Programs to Support Children with Additional Needs

30. Congress asserts that the lack of adequate funding, resources and supports for early childhood education and care for children with additional needs, such as geographic location, socio-economic circumstances, cultural diversity or disability, are a significant barrier to equity and access.

31. Congress urges government to provide an immediate and significant increase in funding to ensure children with additional needs are provided with equitable access to high quality, properly resourced early childhood education which meets the needs of every child.

32. Federal, State and Territory governments must work in partnership to ensure that programs, resources and funding address the needs of children with additional needs.

Programs to Support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children

33. Congress believes that early childhood education and care must recognise and affirm the cultural knowledge, language and values of young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and children from culturally diverse backgrounds.

34. Congress calls on government to give priority to providing access for two years of high quality, culturally appropriate, free early learning education to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children.
35. Congress believes that all providers of ECEC have an ongoing obligation to provide for the intellectual, cultural, social and emotional development of young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and must recognise that central to learning for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children is a focus on identity and self-determination and belonging and that the delivery of care and education must be culturally inclusive of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander pedagogies.

36. Congress urges government to ensure that providers of ECEC services to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children:

   a) Provide professional development opportunities in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural awareness and training to counter racism for all staff;

   b) Adopt teaching practices which recognise, value and utilise the student’s first languages and Aboriginal English/Kriol and Torres Strait Islander Kriol;

   c) Provide environments in which Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander parents feel welcome and encouraged to be involved in the education program; and

   d) Adopt practices which maximise the co-ordination of early childhood education and care programs with health services and nutrition education programs.

37. Congress also urges government to ensure that appropriate and sensitive cultural orientation to work with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children is a prerequisite for all workers in all children's services.

Access to ECEC

38. Congress advocates the following principles to ensure accessible and affordable early childhood education and care is provided to all families, including those who work non-standard hours:

   a) Access to ECEC has the best interests of the development of children and quality of learning and care as the primary objective;

   b) Parents working non-standard hours and those in irregular employment have equal access to ECEC options which are in the best interest of their children;

   c) Financial assistance is appropriately targeted to those parents who need it and supports parents to participate in the paid labour market;

   d) Government funded assistance to parents who work non-standard hours or are in irregular employment should not be a substitute for access to quality ECEC for all children;

   e) Congress recommends that ECEC services should be co-ordinated in a manner which improves access for parents who work non-standard hours or are in irregular employment; and

   f) Congress calls on the government to pilot co-location of different ECEC services such as long day care and occasional care with maternal and child health services, preschools, playgroups and other related services in regional ‘hubs’
that enable families to utilise a range of ECEC services in a complementary manner.

**Out of School Hours Care**

39. Congress is aware that many parents do not have access to quality out of school hours care (OSHC). In particular, many OSHC programmes are not extended to young children attending secondary schools. Congress believes that as a minimum, all school children up until fourteen years of age should have access to quality, affordable and age appropriate OSHC programs.

**Workplace Based Services and Support**

40. Congress supports the provision of ECEC services by employers and encourages the government to develop financial incentives for employers to either provide work-based ECEC or access to ECEC services for employees.

41. Congress further encourages unions and employers to work together to develop work-based programs such as school holiday programs and access to leave arrangements which assist parents to accommodate extensive school holiday breaks.

42. Congress affirms that tax policy in Australia should be developed in accordance with the following principles:

(a) Policy settings must secure sufficient revenues to enable all levels of government to fund the type of society that Australians want, need and deserve, including universal access to public goods such as health, education and welfare, and a decent social wage;

(b) Policy must act to fairly distribute public resources and provide a decent social support safety net to achieve equal opportunity and alleviate poverty and disadvantage;

(c) Policy should promote levels of investment, savings and consumption across the economy that will support employment, job security, wage growth, environmental sustainability and Australia’s social goals;

(d) Policy may need to compensate for instances of market failure including, where necessary, the use of an appropriate mix of tax and price signals to properly cost negative externalities particularly those affecting the environment and public health;

(e) Individuals and companies must make a fair and progressive contribution to our tax base based on their different levels of income, regardless of the source of that income;

(f) The efficient and equitable collection of public revenues requires a system of public tax administration with sufficient resources, capacity and skills; and
(g) Tax rates are one, among many factors, that determine levels of investment and growth. Reduction of the overall tax base will not secure the prosperity, jobs and fairness our community needs.

43. Congress agrees these Principles should guide all tax and revenue policies and agrees that unions will campaign for reform to tax policies in line with these Principles.

SCHOOLS

Refer to [insert resolution name here] for details

VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING

43. Congress reaffirms its support for the operation of a high quality, well resourced, nationally consistent, equitable and affordable vocational education and training system with public TAFE institutions at its centre. The skills and capabilities, national qualifications and broad education that TAFEs and the vocational education and training system deliver are vital for workers, including many of our members, for the future skill needs of industry and the nation and for a fair and equitable society that provides opportunities to all.

44. The TAFE and vocational education and training system allows students and workers to get the critical skills and capabilities they need to enter the workforce, move into higher-skilled, higher-paying jobs, return to the workforce, or transition to a new field of work.

45. At the same time as it provides a strong vocational focus on ‘skills for jobs’ and occupational outcomes based on standards determined by industry (including unions), it is critical that the TAFE and vocational education and training system retains a focus on providing a broad general and further education, including foundation skills and ‘second chance’ learning that empowers people to participate fully in Australian society, particularly the vulnerable, marginalised, and disadvantaged and those individuals with different abilities and communities generally.

46. The TAFE and vocational education and training system should also offer the opportunity for students to articulate to the higher education sector, without losing its focus on the development of vocational skills and capabilities and labour market outcomes.

47. The key, enduring characteristics and strengths of the TAFE and vocational education and training system that unions will continue to promote and defend include:

   a) A dynamic and well-resourced TAFE system as the public provider of quality vocational education and training across the country, especially in regional areas;

   b) A system focused on delivering quality vocational education and training, which meets industry and community needs, rather than profits to private providers;

   c) A national system based on nationally recognised, portable qualifications that give workers the transferable skills to work across an industry or occupation, rather than simply narrow enterprise-specific skill sets;

   d) The industry leadership of the vocational education and training system by unions (including teacher unions) and employers, including through genuinely bipartite...
bodies established by industry such as the network of Industry Skills Councils or an equivalent structure that allow for genuine industry leadership, engagement and collaboration on skills matters;

e) The primacy of national training products developed and endorsed by industry as the vocational standards required for effective performance in the workplace, supported by such foundation, second chance and technical and further education necessary to empower people to participate fully in Australian society;

f) Vocational education and training and skills development as an integral part of workplace bargaining, with qualifications linked to job roles and award classification structures; and

g) An apprenticeship and traineeship system that combines work with vocational education on and off-the job under nationally consistent Training Contract arrangements that support the rights of apprentices and trainees.

**Investment in TAFE and vocational education**

48. Congress believes investment in vocational education and training and skills development is critical to improving Australia’s productivity performance, meeting the skill needs of Australian businesses, and providing Australians with access to higher-paid, higher-skilled jobs, the creation of an equitable and sustainable society and expanded future career opportunities, as well as more fulfilling work. This investment is a shared responsibility.

49. The TAFE and vocational education and training sector is the worst funded of all education sectors, lagging behind schools and universities. The National Centre for Vocational Education Research’s 2016 Financial Information confirms that vocational education is in dire straits. The sector lost one-sixth of its financing in 2016, with operating revenues falling 16.8 per cent to $8.14 billion. Commonwealth revenue fell 27.3 per cent or $1.25 billion, while the states and territories withdrew an additional $425 million. Overall government funding for the sector has plunged 23 per cent since 2012 once funding for VET FEE-HELP is eliminated from the statistics.

50. The 2016 figures are consistent with the trajectory that the sector has been on for more than ten years. Since 2005, government real recurrent VET expenditure has increased 4.1 per cent, while the number of government funded annual hours has increased 51.8 per cent. As a result, government real recurrent expenditure per annual hour has declined 31.5 per cent over the past 10 years — from $16.64 in 2005 to $11.40 in 2014 — at an average annual rate of decline of 4.1 per cent.

51. The importance of vocational education and training to individuals, employers, communities and the wider economy should be matched by a level of public investment that reflects the true cost of delivering quality training and support services to students, including support for disadvantaged learners and training delivery in rural and remote areas.

52. Congress calls for government investment in vocational education and training to be focused on full, nationally recognised qualifications, aligned to realistic job prospects that
give workers the best opportunity to use and transfer their skills across an industry or occupation.

53. Congress affirms that employers must also assume responsibility, including financial responsibility, for developing the skills that their business then benefits from. Co-contribution mechanisms and industry training levies are among the options that should be utilised, as well as measures to improve business capability in identifying their skill needs.

54. Congress calls for a national inquiry into funding for the TAFE and vocational education and training sector to establish an adequate funding rate to ensure high quality delivery. Public funding for vocational education and training should be commensurate with funding directed to other sectors of education, and be informed by rigorous analysis and forecasting of current and future skill needs and priorities endorsed by industry.

55. Government policies to divert public funding to private for-profit providers of VET have funnelled scarce public funds and resources from the sector into the pockets of individuals, and reduced the quality of education and trust in the vocational education and training system. In response, Congress demands that governments guarantee funding and resources to TAFE institutions, strengthen regulation of private providers, and guarantee a minimum seventy per cent public funding for the TAFE system. Our position is that public funding should not be available to for-profit training providers at all - as is the case with respect to school funding.

56. Congress notes the terrible consequences for individual students and workers of the failed VET FEE HELP scheme, which wasted more than $8b, 80 per cent of which went to the private for-profit sector, and much of which will never be repaid. The VET FEE HELP and VET Student Loans schemes have resulted in huge increases in student fees and charges, and a collapse in trust in the whole vocational education system. Congress calls on governments to acknowledge the massive failure of the attempt to shift the cost burden of vocational education onto individuals, through increased fees, income contingent loans, or other such measures. The cost of vocational education and skills development to individuals, many of whom come from lower socio-economic backgrounds, must be free, and equity of access a primary consideration.

57. The interests of students and workers who undertake vocational education and training are paramount. It is students and workers who have too often been penalised by the operation of a competitive training market and instances of poor quality training that do little or nothing to help them in the job market, as well as other questionable, often fraudulent, recruitment practices used in the promotion and marketing of VET courses by for-profit providers and third-party brokers.

58. Congress will continue to lobby for strong regulatory and compliance measures to ensure that students receive the vocational education and training they sign up to, that the vocational education and training being offered matches students’ interests, skills and aptitude, and aligns with identified job opportunities, and that on completion, students can in fact do what the qualification says they can do. These regulatory and compliance measures should mandate a minimum duration of learning, consistent with requirements in the Australian Qualification Framework (AQF) to ensure that Registered Training Organisations deliver the amount of training they have been paid for, either through
government subsidy, or directly by students, and prohibit providers from sub-contracting training delivery to unregistered providers.

59. Registered Training Organisations must have, as a condition of their regulation, the provision of high quality vocational education as their primary purpose, and the best interests of students as their key focus, not profit.

60. Congress is firmly of the view that a market-driven approach to the delivery of VET has had adverse effect on individuals, communities and industry sectors and must be subject to a fundamental rethink and overhaul. There is no evidence it is working in the interests of students, employers or the wider economy.

61. Unions must continue to be heard on all decisions that affect the vocational education and training and skills development options available to their members and workers generally, whether at a national level, industry level or in the workplace. These are matters that affect the cost, accessibility and quality of vocational education and training and ultimately impact on workers’ livelihoods, quality of work and quality of life.

62. The TAFE and vocational education and training system needs to work closely with industry and government around workforce development strategies across a broad range of industry areas. This would re-establish its role as an innovative and forward-looking sector which can work in partnership with employers and unions to develop and support the existing workforce and the workforce of the future.

63. Congress calls on governments to resource the TAFE and vocational education and training sector to establish a workforce development plan for itself, which includes examining the skills, capabilities and expertise of the teaching and administrative workforce, and supporting the development of industry and pedagogical qualifications to ensure that the workforce has the skills, capabilities, knowledge and expertise to support the broader workforce. This strategy must be underpinned with decent employment practices and standards, including a commitment to secure and dignified work for all those who work in the TAFE and vocational education and training sector.

**HIGHER EDUCATION**

64. Congress affirms that Australia must maintain and continue to improve our high quality and equitable public university system, where opportunities to complete higher education qualifications are available throughout the country.

65. Congress affirms that access to higher education must be equitable and merit based for Australia to become a strong, smart economy and society of the future.

66. Congress recognises and affirms that publicly funded universities must act in the public interest and for the public good.

67. Congress recognises that universities not only contribute economically to Australia’s prosperity, but are a core social and cultural institution in providing education and research. Along with the CSIRO, universities are the site of basic research which is depended upon for the breakthroughs and innovations that address the big issues of our times.
68. Congress affirms resolute opposition to the Federal Coalition Government’s higher education agenda of fee deregulation, funding cuts and public subsidisation of private higher education providers.

69. Congress condemns the Federal Coalition Government for persisting with unprincipled, unfair and unsustainable policies that shift the cost burden for university education onto the shoulders of students and their families.

70. Congress notes that Australia’s public investment in higher education is still well below that of other industrialised economies and Australian students currently pay amongst the highest fees in the world to attend public universities.

71. Congress notes that, although universities are public institutions and are highly regulated by government, public grants only account for about one third of their income, with the remainder derived from international student fees (about one dollar in five), as well as domestic student income and research grants.

72. Congress supports an immediate increase in public investment in higher education to cover the costs of educating students from diverse backgrounds and regions across Australia. Public investment in Australia’s public universities should be increased to the equivalent of 1 per cent of GDP, from the current 0.7 per cent. Such an increase will put Australia on a more even footing with other industrialised economies.

73. The federal Coalition government’s repeated failed attempts to deregulate higher education have created a great deal of uncertainty for universities, their staff and students. Our public universities require a stable and sustainable funding model that gives both government and universities some certainty in planning, and that takes into account student, community, professional and industry demand and needs.

74. Congress notes that higher education is one of the most highly casualised industries in Australia. While the full time equivalent proportion of Casual employees account for one in five full time equivalent (FTE) employees, but in real headcount terms there are about 150,000 casual and contract employees working in our universities. Eight out of ten FTE teaching-only employees are employed on a casual basis. More than half of all teaching is carried out by academics employed by the hour for a few hours a week over a teaching period. Casuallisation of university teaching adversely impacts upon the students, academics and the quality of education.

75. Congress also notes that whilst universities are relied upon to undertake basic and applied research, the funding remains inadequate to cover the costs of research. Of the significant increase in research-only staff over the past decade, eight out of ten are employed on fixed term contracts, which adversely impacts upon research careers and capacity.

76. Congress acknowledges that, as the third largest export industry in Australia, the tertiary education sector is integral to the economic wellbeing of the nation. Universities constitute the largest component of the sector generating in excess of $20 billion annually in export income.

77. Congress acknowledges that reliance by universities and others in the tertiary sector on international student fee income exposes the sector to volatility in the market and
fluctuations in currency rates. Any downturns in the market will result in significant job losses, which, given the scope of the sector, will impact negatively on the Australian economy more broadly.

78. Congress recognises that expanding higher education opportunities across the population requires more than just enabling enrolment. To facilitate the successful completion of qualifications by students from lower socio-economic backgrounds, Congress supports:

1. The abolition of tuition fees;
2. An increase and expansion of student income support;
3. A requirement that all institutions in receipt of government subsidies for teaching and learning to develop programs aimed at improving the participation rates of students from disadvantaged backgrounds, including specifically targeting the increased participation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders; and
4. A requirement that institutions levying the Student Services Amenities Fee (SSAF) ensure independent and democratic student representation and provide adequate funding to support student support, welfare and advocacy services.

79. Congress affirms support for staff and student representation on university governing bodies noting the UNESCO 1977 Recommendation concerning the Status of Higher Education Teaching Personnel. Higher education personnel should have the right and opportunity, without discrimination of any kind to participate in governing bodies. They should be free to criticise the functioning of higher education institutions, including their own, while respecting the right of other sections of the academic community. They should also have the right to elect the majority of representatives to academic bodies within the higher education institution.

80. Congress notes that intellectual freedom and institutional autonomy are intrinsic to maintaining the quality and reputation of our world class universities, and recognises that these principles are enshrined in legislation. Congress, however is concerned that constraints on academic research either through a lack of funding, precarious employment or direction of management may operate as an impediment to the exercise of intellectual freedom.