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Secretary of the House Standing
Committee on Education and Employment
Parliament House, ACT
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**BOND
UNIVERSITY**
STUDENT ASSOCIATION

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Bond University
Gold Coast, Queensland 4229
Australia

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Secretary,

RE: Inquiry into Higher Education Support Amendment (Asian Century) Bill 2013

The Bond University Student Association welcomes the opportunity to make this submission to the House Standing Committee on Education and Employment.

Our generation of students recognise the importance of Australia in the Asian Century and the benefits of education driving our connection with Asia.

OS-HELP is an outstanding government initiative and since its inception has fostered the ongoing internationalisation of the Australian tertiary student body. The amendments of this bill, particularly those extending OS-HELP eligibility to postgraduate students, are an important extension of this valuable support.

In its current form however, OS-HELP is only available to students in Commonwealth supported places. As a result, not a single student of Bond University is eligible for supports. This is in spite of the fact that a significant percentage of our domestic student cohort rely on FEE-HELP to finance their studies.

Many domestic students studying at Bond do benefit from its international cohort and global curriculum. However, this international focus is fundamentally limited without mechanisms to support overseas study.

Our students are struggling to afford a truly international educational experience. Despite the University's sixty-five exchange partners in over twenty countries, less than 5% of our students utilise the opportunity to study abroad, countless citing insufficient financial support as a reason for not embracing such an exciting opportunity.

The eligibility of students on HECS-HELP matched with the ineligibility of students on FEE-HELP is a legislative anomaly. It serves as a handbrake on students enrolled in private tertiary institutions from undertaking studies overseas. As we look to encourage study abroad in this Asian century, this is bad policy.

In comparison with domestic students at other Australian universities, domestic Bond students do not have the same opportunity to forge overseas relationships, experience other cultures, or develop language skills. This Parliament should act immediately to remedy this and place on an equal playing-field all university who set their sights on study abroad.

Therefore, on behalf of the students of Bond University, I ask this Committee to recommend to the Parliament that the eligibility of OS-HELP be extended to all undergraduates and postgraduates registered for FEE-HELP.

In the event that the Committee is not willing to recommend such a wholesale amendment, I would urge a more minimalistic alteration. That is, a clause within the Act that renders all domestic undergraduate and postgraduate students enrolled at Bond University and financing their study through FEE-HELP eligible for OS-HELP. Or, in the alternate, a provision making eligible for OS-HELP all domestic undergraduate and postgraduate students enrolled at a Table B Higher Education Provider and financing their study through FEE-HELP.

I thank the Committee for taking the time to review this submission and look forward to its final report later this year.

Yours Sincerely,

Matthew McLean
President
Bond University Student Association