

# Submission

to

Senate Employment, Workplace Relations and Education  
References Committee

## **Inquiry into student income support**

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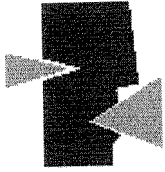
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## Speech Pathology Australia



*Giving people a say in life*



### Speech Pathology Australia: Submission to Senate Employment, Workplace Relations and Education References Committee: Student Income Support

The standard of speech pathology education, and the competency of its graduates, is critical to the provision of quality care to the community. Speech pathology students are required to complete many hours of clinical placements during their entry-level degree, in order to meet defined competencies. Speech Pathology Australia believes that it is of considerable benefit to the student and to the profession. Rural placements offer students a range of experience across a broad case mix, which may not be provided in specialised placements in urban centres; rural placements help to accommodate the large demand for placements which cannot be met through metropolitan sites alone; and experience in a rural clinical placement is a significant factor in influencing graduates to practice in rural areas, assisting in alleviating recruitment and retention difficulties.

However, many students are financially disadvantaged by their participation in rural placements, with their accompanying travel and accommodation costs. Unfortunately, cheap accommodation in nurses' quarters is no longer frequently available; the student also generally continues to pay rent in their usual metropolitan placement, causing further financial hardship. Students also incur additional food costs when the accommodation they secure does not have cooking facilities; other expenses include STD telephone calls.

Many students are forced to work part-time because they have no other means to support themselves through their study. This work places a particular burden on speech pathology students, who must attend long hours of lectures and placements in order to learn their clinical discipline, and Speech Pathology Australia believes it is detrimental for students to focus on the need to make a living rather than the studies that are crucial to their future employment prospects. The financial hardship of a rural placement may also be compounded by an inability to continue part-time work whilst on clinical placement, further limiting the students' income.

The federal government provides funding for medical students to meet the increased costs of rural placements; no such support is available to speech pathology students. Speech Pathology Australia offers small scholarships to offset the costs associated with rural placements, however these are limited, and the Association is unable to provide financial support for all students undertaking such placements.

Speech Pathology Australia believes that the federal government must provide income support to speech pathology students on clinical placements.

Various options may be considered, one being the provision of an allowance to all speech pathology students while on clinical placements. The Association contends that a figure of \$150 per week would be appropriate. The allowance could be implemented through student applications to the Department of Education, Science and Training, or funds could be provided directly to the universities for administration of the process.

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