

AUSTRALIAN COUNCIL of DEANS of SCIENCE



PRESS RELEASE

NOW IS THE TIME TO CHOOSE A SCIENCE DEGREE

Australian Council of Deans of Science (ACDS) President, Professor Rob Norris, said that the recent decision by the Rudd Government to reduce HECS for Science and Mathematics programs from the middle to the lowest HECS Band (a reduction from as high as \$7,260 p.a. in 2008 to \$4,162 in 2009) was an extremely positive message being sent by the Government to the youth of Australia. This move clearly indicated recognition of the importance of science degrees in particular and the general need for Australia to encourage students to undertake Science degrees.

Although enrolments in Science programs had increased in some Universities, many young people are still not taking the opportunity to study Science. This is despite there being good prospects for finding jobs in a wide range of industries, government bodies and business generally, entering satisfying, successful career paths and gaining very good salaries.

Norris noted that it was clear that a strong message needed to be sent to the youth of Australia, particularly those leaving school this year and, at this very moment, considering possible careers and making choices about future tertiary study. The HECS reduction does that! The wide range of career opportunities available to Science graduates needs to be driven home to school leavers, and school science teachers and careers advisors alike.

The Government's decision to reduce the Science HECS was a result of intense lobbying by a number of bodies including ACDS, FASTS and the Australian Academy of Science. This move should assist Australia in meeting its clear need to produce future science graduates and meet the scientific, environmental and technological challenges of the 21st Century.

In what he hoped would be a successful experiment in the tertiary science sector, Norris said University Science faculties were looking forward to higher numbers of preferences for Science programs among the tertiary entrance choices currently being made by school-leavers.

Finally Norris congratulated the Australian Government for undertaking this change in HECS and also agreeing to modify the support given to universities ensuring that the funding per student was not reduced.

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