

Media Release

Date: Tuesday, 28 April 2009

Support Growing for April 29 'Fair Fares' Rally

The decision of the GSA and thirteen other organisations to protest at the Victorian State Parliament tomorrow has prompted significant broader support for the aims of the campaign. At a meeting of the Melbourne University Council held last night (27/04), the University Chancellor, the Hon Alex Chernov AO QC, moved the following resolution which was endorsed unanimously:

The Council supports the claim of the Graduate Student Association that the State Government provide to Victorian postgraduate and international students the same public transport concessions that are now made available to domestic undergraduate students.

Today, the University of Melbourne Provost Professor Peter McPhee offered the following words of encouragement and support to student organisations that have been campaigning for transport concession equality:

I offer my strong support to the GSA campaign for transport concessions to be extended to all graduate students as well as to overseas students. In an economic situation that is accentuating the pressures on students, it is all the more important that Government find ways to alleviate that pressure and to encourage students to continue their studies. Students will more than pay this back from their taxes once they graduate.

The Committee for Melbourne has already pledged its support for full transport concessions in its budget submission to the State Government.

President of the Graduate Student Association Paul Coats reported having received phone calls from "all and sundry" about the rally planned for tomorrow. "Many staff and students at other universities, including many of the private colleges throughout the Melbourne CBD, are showing real interest in the rally," he said. "We expect large numbers of postgraduate students, international students and undergraduate student supporters to attend. We trust that the government will take us seriously."

In a further late development, Greens MLC Greg Barber has agreed to table the GSA petition in Parliament if the Premier fails to do so. GSA President Paul Coats said: "We have written to the Premier asking him or his representative to attend the rally at 2 pm on the steps of the Victorian Parliament tomorrow, Wednesday 29 April. We hope the government takes democracy seriously enough to welcome the voices of more than 5000 students who have signed the petition. But, failing that," Coats continued, "we are pleased that the petition will still find its way into Parliament before the State budget is set next Tuesday."

Rally Details for Tomorrow (Wed) 29 April:

1pm Rally starts (and speeches) in front of Graduate Centre, Grattan St, University of Melbourne

1:30pm, March to Victorian Parliament (via route shown on poster attached)

2:00pm Rally at Victorian Parliament, speeches, petition handover

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