SRC Statement:
Paid Placement Expansion

UNSA STUDENT REPRESENTATIVE COUNCIL

The University of Newcastle Students' Representative Council welcomes the Federal Government's expansion of the Commonwealth Practical Payment (CPP) to additional allied health disciplines of Clinical Psychology, Physiotherapy, Occupational Therapy, Speech Pathology, Paramedicine, Radiography, Pharmacy, Rehabilitation Therapies, Audiology and Podiatry. These disciplines now join Teaching, Nursing, Midwifery and Social Work as eligible professions able to receive financial support of $338.60 per week during mandatory placement periods.

This announcement reflects the significant advocacy of student representatives, organisations and professional bodies. The SRC acknowledges and congratulates organisations such as CAPA, the National Association of Pharmacy Students Australia (NAPSA), and the many individual student advocates who have worked tirelessly to highlight the impacts of placement poverty and secure this important reform.

While this expansion is a positive and welcome step forward, the SRC believes paid placements are fundamentally a student welfare issue. We recognise that workforce demand and workforce shortage considerations have contributed to this policy expansion, and these are valid factors. However, it is critical that the welfare impacts of mandatory placements remain at the centre of this discussion.

No student should face financial hardship, be forced to accrue debt, experience food insecurity, or consider withdrawing from their studies because they are undertaking a compulsory placement required for graduation. Placements are not optional. They are an essential component of professional training and should not create financial barriers to participation and success. For many students, placements involve hundreds of hours away from paid employment, alongside significant travel, accommodation, and living expenses. These challenges are not unique to any one profession. The same arguments supporting paid placements for allied health, teaching, nursing, midwifery and social work students apply equally to students in Medicine, Veterinary Science and other disciplines that require substantial periods of compulsory practical training which have yet to be included.

Therefore, the SRC urges the government to continue working towards a system where all students undertaking mandatory placements receive meaningful support, regardless of their field of study.

CPP eligibility must continue to be expanded to cover disciplines such as Medicine and Veterinary Science so that no students are left without placement support.

SRC President Imogen Reid spoke on ABC Newcastle Radio on 23 July, welcoming the expansion as an important step in the right direction while highlighting the need for the conversation to continue. While the announcement is exciting, it should also be recognised as part of a broader commitment to ensuring no student is financially disadvantaged for meeting the requirements of their degree based on a simple principle that if a placement is compulsory, students should be supported to undertake it without financial hardship.

Students who wish to discuss their placement experience or provide feedback are encouraged to contact the SRC at UNSA-SRC@newcastle.edu.au