

MGA Welcomes Labor's Election Promises on University Governance and Fare Caps, Calls for Dedicated Graduate Representation



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The Monash Graduate Association (MGA) welcomes recent election commitments made by the Victorian Labor Party regarding university governance reform and public transport fare reductions. While MGA commends these steps toward addressing student representation and living costs, we continue to advocate for dedicated graduate student representation and full public transport concession parity.

University Governance

On Friday, 16 October, Labor announced that, if re-elected in November, it will legislate to increase minimum elected staff and student representation on university councils to at least two members each. Increasing student and staff representation reflects key recommendations from the *Inquiry into Enhancing Victorian University Governance*, to which MGA contributed.

MGA's submission to the Inquiry called for three distinct student representatives across undergraduate, graduate coursework, and graduate research levels to ensure the diverse needs of each cohort are adequately represented. While Labor's promise does not meet MGA's target, it is a step in the right direction, although we call on the government to ensure the additional student position created under this change is specifically designated for a graduate student.

Deputy Premier and Minister for Skills and Training Gabrielle Williams has encouraged universities to strengthen student representation without waiting for legislation. La Trobe, Deakin and Swinburne have already committed to do so, and the University of Melbourne has doubled its student representatives. MGA renews its call for Monash University to do the same.

Public Transport Costs

On Monday, 19 October, Labor announced that, if re-elected, it will cap public transport fares at \$30 a week, or \$15 for concession holders, for two years from January. Half-price fares end on 31 December. Without the cap, a graduate student commuting five days a week for classes, placements or work would go back to paying \$57 a week. The cap would save them \$27 a week, nearly half. It applies to every graduate student: domestic and international, full-time and part-time.

MGA has pushed for lower fares through our Legislative Council petition, signed by more than 5,000 people, and through direct advocacy with policymakers. We welcome this commitment, but it also demonstrates the problem. Under Labor's plan, a full-time undergraduate would pay at most \$15 a week, while a full-time Master's or PhD student on the same tram, train or bus would pay \$30. Victoria remains the only Australian state that denies concession fares to full-time graduate students, and MGA will keep advocating until that changes.

The \$30 cap offers meaningful, if temporary, cost-of-living relief. MGA urges the Coalition to match or exceed this commitment so that graduate students do not return to \$57 weekly fares in the new year.

Monash Graduate Association