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Federal Member For Fowler



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Prime Minister Albanese's Neglect of Fowler's HECS Payers.

The impact of the cost of living on our best and brightest young people in Western Sydney is being dismissed by the Prime Minister.

During question time today, I asked the Prime Minister when will his Government act to freeze the compounding HECS indexation as this is having profound impact on young people from low socio-economic backgrounds, especially those from Fowler in Western Sydney.

The Prime Minister began his answer referring to the Stage 3 tax cuts – which I welcomed – and proceeded to identify how the tax cuts will support every Australians and that they will have more money in their pockets. But his decision to conclude his answer to my question prematurely was disappointing, showing his lack of considerations of Fowler youth's real concerns.

As a voice in Western Sydney, who represents a very diverse community in Fowler, I firmly believe our youth deserve a sufficient answer from the PM as to how his Government will address the compounding debts through the Higher Education Contribution scheme.

Students who are currently in the workforce are still battling their HECs debt. The indexation currently sits at 7.1% which is crippling for students who are from low-socio economic backgrounds and are unable to repay their HECs debt in a timely manner. This will have impact on their ability to get a loan and eventually buy their dream home.

Even the Australian Universities Accord final report, which has now been released, made a note that this issue is vital to address as excessive debt can deter prospective students from pursuing higher education, whereby they can earn immediate income working in other sectors.

If the Australian Government is really encouraging students to obtain higher education for the good of Australia's future and the support of their aspirations, they must take a step back and consider the financial inequities which millions of Australians encounter. The reality in my electorate is that students are disadvantaged and often concurrently study and work to make ends meet.

We must do something regarding the HECs-HELP indexation as we are essentially charging students interest rates to be able to study – money which they don't have.

And that is why I think studying in a university is becoming only a dream to many of my Fowler residents.

Whilst we cannot revert to the Whitlam Government days of abolishing university fees in 1974, we should still contemplate measures to make higher education more accessible for working- and middle-class Australians.

Young people are thus the future of Australia, and they will be driving our workforce and economy and this HECs loan will continue to haunt many of my young people in Fowler. Making them question if the Government of the day can give them a breather by freezing the indexation.

It was therefore disappointing that the PM did not address the pressure of HECS adequately.

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