MEDIA RELEASE

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**Greens step up national campaign to boost higher education funding**

This week the Australian Greens stepped up their national campaign to reverse the $2.3 billion university funding cuts, with Australian Greens Leader Senator Christine Milne visiting Adelaide University to kick off a national series of Greens’ campus meetings.

Greens higher education spokesperson Senator Lee Rhiannon presented a petition to Higher Education Minister Craig Emerson earlier this month with over 3,500 signatures, collected in just two weeks, calling on the Labor government to stop the budget cuts.

"Our message for university staff and students is that increased public funding for universities will be at the top of the Greens election agenda,” Senator Milne said.

"The Greens are offering a firm commitment to reverse the $2.3 billion budget cuts and work for a 10 per cent increase per student base funding, so that our universities can operate in a way that serves the public good.

Labor and Tony Abbott have ignored the recommendations of both the Bradley Review of higher education and the Lomax-Smith review to increase base funding, which is needed to ensure universities remain first class and young people can gain a quality higher education.

"Labor’s cuts are an attack on the capacity of universities to maintain high standards of quality teaching and research, which directly hurt staff and students. The Greens will never support them,” said Senator Milne.

Greens Senator and Higher Education spokesperson Lee Rhiannon said:

"The Greens are working to restore the start-up scholarships for students, and a $50 per week increase in the Youth Allowance so that students can concentrate on their studies instead of working longer hours to meet rising cost of living expenses.

"Converting student start-up scholarships to loans will hit disadvantaged students hardest, and will increase future student debts.

"It is wrong to force students to pay more, work longer hours and accumulate more HECS in order to get a university education.

"The Greens are working for HECS reform. We want to end the debt burden that turns many young people off furthering their education.

"Our higher education election platform will also work to protect the rights of university workers, including measures to reduce casualisation, increase job security and secure the rights of unions to enter workplaces, organise members and engage in strike action.

"Senator Milne and I are looking forward to working with Greens members across the country to make this work a major part of our election campaign.

Media Contacts: