

WA students face hardship with cuts to penalty rates 23 February 2017

Tens of thousands of WA students will be worse off under changes to penalty rates announced today by the Fair Work Commission.

Liam O'Neill, President of the Curtin Student Guild which represents almost 60,000 university students, said the decision will adversely impact those who work in the affected industries.

The Curtin Student Guild believes the decision by the Fair Work Commission should be reversed.

"Financial stress is a leading contributor to students withdrawing from courses," said Mr O'Neill.

"We understand that students who experience stress as a result of their personal finances are three times more likely to drop out than their peers who do not."

Mr O'Neill said that students working evenings and weekends in relatively low paid jobs barely earned enough to cover their living expenses.

"Two-thirds of students live below the poverty line and many go without food or other necessities.

"Any reduction in their take-home pay will jeopardise their ability to support themselves while studying."

Mr O'Neill said that Indigenous students and those from lower socio-economic backgrounds were less likely to receive financial support from their families which meant that they were at greater risk of dropping out as a result of the changes to penalty rates.

"Students are already over-represented in the retail and hospitality industries which will be affected by the changes to penalty rates," he said.

"Curtin Student Guild is committed to advancing the interests of disadvantaged students and we are concerned that these changes will bring greater hardship to those who can least afford it."

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