

# **AUSTRALIAN COUNCIL FOR THE DEFENCE OF GOVERNMENT SCHOOLS**

**PRESS RELEASE 566#**

## **Christopher Pyne Got His Start In Politics Campaigning Against The Introduction Of Student Fees**

**14 September 2014**

The Federal Minister for Education is determined to place the next generation of students in hoc for life if they dare to aspire to university education. Mr Pyne has embarked on a mission to deregulate fees and lift the percentage of course costs paid by students to about 50 per cent, from 30 per cent.

Students around the country have protested the planned changes, arguing the cost of some degrees could increase to more than \$100,000 and the socio-economically disadvantaged would be disenfranchised from tertiary education.

When he introduced his Bill to deregulate university course fees, Pyne claimed that deregulating uni fees would “*enable Australia to achieve the best higher education system in the world*”. Nothing surprises with the twisting and turning of words by our ideologically driven government, but the bald faced hypocrisy of this federal Minister boggles.

But don't worry. He firmly believes that Australia NEEDS him so greatly that a bit of hypocrisy along the way of his political career- he has had no other – is sufficient justification.

For further information see:

[Alex McKinnon 9/9/14 at http://junkee.com/so-christopher-pyne-got-his-start-in-politics-campaigning-against-the-introduction-of-student-fees/41294#SFqCfYbQ5MP658Xb.99](http://junkee.com/so-christopher-pyne-got-his-start-in-politics-campaigning-against-the-introduction-of-student-fees/41294#SFqCfYbQ5MP658Xb.99)

McKinnon discovered that Christopher Pyne started his lifelong political career by running on a platform of opposing any university fees at all. In an April 1985 edition of University of Adelaide student newspaper *On Dit*, [which you can view online here](#), Pyne outlined his reasons for running for a position on the Students' Association of the University of Adelaide's (SAUA) Education Standing Committee, first and foremost of which was keeping higher education free of any fees whatsoever, government and private both.

*"I feel it my duty to stand for election and do everything possible to forestall the introduction of fees and indeed to end any movement by the Federal Government to introduce fees"*, Pyne, who was in his first year of a law degree at the time, wrote in the paper. He added that he felt the need to run due to his interest in student politics and *"the need to promote discussion and activity in education matters, particularly concerning [the] introduction of fees to attend university education"*.


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Put the students' voice on this  
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Labor.



**Christopher M. Pyne**

Due to my interest in student politics and the need to promote discussion and activity in education matters, particularly concerning introduction of fees to attend tertiary education I feel it my duty to stand for election and do everything possible to forestall the introduction of fees and indeed to end any movements by the Federal Government to introduce fees. I also feel that as a first year I should become as involved as possible in the administration of the student association.

**Activities**

He was contesting a spot on the Education Standing Committee of the university's students' association. Throughout the 1980s, students were resisting gradual moves by the federal government to reintroduce university fees, after Labor's Gough Whitlam removed them in 1974. Bob Hawke's Labor government brought fees back for most students in 1989.

Pyne graduated from UA with a law degree in 1988, one year before the Hawke Labor government abolished free higher education and introduced HECS fees in 1989. As Crikey worked out, if Pyne had completed his degree under the current system he'd be rocking a student debt of over \$40,300 instead of getting it for free. If fee deregulation sees the cost of

some degrees double, as modelling by Universities Australia suggests (and also pointed out by Crikey), Pyne's debt would sit at over \$80,000.

Pyne did very well out of his free education and the student politics it enabled him to engage in so enthusiastically; he served as the President of the Adelaide University Liberal Club from 1987 to 1988, and was elected to federal Parliament just five years later at the tender age of 25. He's been there ever since. It'd be interesting to see, if he had had an \$80,000 student debt to juggle, if he would've made it quite so far.

"I was a student politician and a protester, but, of course, then you leave university and you realise that you can't just keep borrowing money, you can't just keep taxing people when they're already taxed to the hilt, and you can't just keep spending money you haven't got," he said in a radio interview with John Laws in May.

"Now, when you're at uni, it's days of wine and roses, but when you get out into the real world, of course, you actually have to understand that governments have to live within their means just like households do."

But it is unclear whether Mr Pyne was a true believer in free education even in 1985. In June this year he told the ABC's Fran Kelly: "You don't get elected as student politician by saying the opposite to what the voters in your university are thinking."

In May, it was shown that Treasurer Joe Hockey also protested fee deregulation while he was a student at Sydney University. In 1987, he was filmed opposing the introduction of a \$250 administration fee because it would threaten universal free education.

Mr Hockey has since said that people aged in their 20s "complain", while those in their 40s "explain".

"When I was 21 I thought things would be free and now in my 40s I know they are not," he said

Michael Koziol from the *Sydney Morning Herald* has also dug into Pyne's past.

<http://www.smh.com.au/federal-politics/political-news/christopher-pyne-opposed-uni-fees-while-a-student-20140909-10eitx.html#ixzz3Co55ftOo>

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