



## PARSA Recommendations: A Parent-Friendly ANU

These recommendations from the ANU Postgraduate and Research Students Association (PARSA) are informed by our 2017 Student Survey, 2017 Parents Survey and the work of the Student Assistance team. The uptake of the 2017 Parents Survey was small, with only 46 respondents, and we are seeking statistics from the ANU around the percentage of students who are also parents, but the data is also anecdotally supported by the access of our Student Assistance services and through the experiences of both staff and student representatives. PARSA is currently building stronger relationships with student-parents and boasts two such students on the Postgraduate Representative Council. Currently student-parents are feeling underserved, betrayed and unsupported by the university and it is obvious - after an analysis of university policy - that the ANU is designed for students who are unattached and who do not have other commitments, and this issue is particularly exacerbated for international students who do not have the same local support structures and safety nets.

### 1. An improvement in the immediate services offered to parents.

#### a. Accommodation

The ANU currently does not have any family-friendly on-campus accommodation. University information suggests that students arrive in Canberra alone and secure accommodation before bringing the rest of their family. This information both presumes that students are able to find accommodation in the competitive Canberra market, and shows that the university is ill-equipped to meet the needs of a substantial group of students. We appreciate the university has committed to providing family-friendly accommodation in the new construction that is happening on campus, but this must be done in thorough consultation with PARSA and student-parents.

**KPI: Commitment from the ANU to a build time and schedule for family-friendly accommodation**

**KPI: Thorough consultation with PARSA and student-parents about the roll-out and design of family-friendly accommodation**

#### b. Parent Rooms

There are currently 9 Parenting Rooms at the ANU that are fit for service and reportedly they are underserved, very hard to find and access, and are used by students who are not parents.

**KPI: Obtaining Baby Care Room Awards for all Parenting Rooms on the ANU campus**

**KPI: Creating a Parenting Room in every building on campus**

**KPI: Adequate signage for all the rooms, and accessibility for all parents who may be on campus**

#### c. Parking

Current parking permits are limited to full-time students unless they have a valid Centrelink Health Care Card. A significant number of parents are part-time students and therefore cannot have access to parking permits. There is another group of student-parents who do have access to parking permits, but due to their childcare or school drop-off commitments, may not be able to get to campus on time to find one of the incredibly limited number of parking spaces on campus. This particularly applies for student-parents who have to leave and return to campus due to parental commitments who are invariably unable to find parking upon their return.

**KPI: Parental exceptions to the parking permit regulations around enrolment requirements**

**KPI: Dedicated parking spaces on campus for parents in current and future parking structures**



**d. Childcare**

On-campus childcare options are very limited, expensive, and waiting lists can be more than twelve months, potentially leaving student-parents with an entire academic year without secure childcare arrangements. Additionally, offers are not necessarily released in time for students to apply for childcare, childcare systems do not cover classes after 6:00pm, timetables are not released in time to organise childcare requirements, and exam periods leave students with arrangements that suit them during the semester, but aren't sufficient for their exam commitments.

**KPI: More childcare places on campus**

**KPI: More affordable childcare places on campus**

**KPI: On-campus short-stay childcare options, especially during exam periods and out of regular operating hours**

**2. University policy and information changes.**

**a. Information distribution and collection**

A number of students indicated that they would have thought twice about attending the ANU if they were aware of the realities of the student-parent experience. Having a better student experience would provide a competitive edge for the university, and coherent, compelling and rigorous information will allow parents to plan and prepare for life in Canberra and at the ANU. Currently the ANU also doesn't collect statistical information as to whether students are parents, having this information will allow PARSA and ANUSA to better support our membership.

**KPI: A specific page on the ANU website providing information for parents covering childcare, parking, college and school policies around children in the classroom, public school fees, accommodation (on-campus and off-campus), parents rooms, health cover, parental leave and crucial dates**

**KPI: Statistical information to be collected from students as to whether they have children that they have brought or plan to bring with them to Canberra, information that will be shared with PARSA so that we are able to serve them personally and appropriately**

**b. Children in the classroom**

There are inconsistencies in policies across the university around children in the classroom. Currently [university policy](#) dictates that parents can request to bring their children into the classroom "when there are sudden and/or unexpected difficulties in childcare arrangements". Where students who have only one class in a day where it is unfeasible to organise a whole day of childcare, and children who are not disruptive, they should be able to be able to regularly bring their child into the classroom. In addition to this, breastfed babies should be welcome in the classroom at all times.

**KPI: An updated university-wide policy that allows for student-parents to regularly bring their children into the classroom if the child does not create unreasonable disruption to the learning environment**

**c. Release dates for assignments, exams, timetable, offers**

One of the critical issues raised by students in the PARSA Parents Survey was that they are struggling with the notice that they are given about assignments, exams, timetables, and even about whether they have been accepted into the ANU. This means that it is considerably more difficult to arrange childcare, especially if they are not given adequate notice for moving states or even countries.



**KPI: A central ANU policy with clear guidelines for schools about the notice required for assignments, exams, timetables and offers with provisions for recourse for students whose notice does not comply**

**d. Parental leave for PhD students**

Parental leave from PhD programs is not centrally controlled and is left almost completely up to the discretion of supervisors, a relationship that we know from the recent Sexual and Sexual Harassment Survey can be fraught and problematic. In our recent Postgraduate Student Survey, 118 students indicated that poor relationships with their teachers was one of their biggest issues. Supervisor relationship issues were also highlighted in the qualitative responses.

Additionally, current information available is unclear, difficult to find and doesn't acknowledge or include transgender or gender diverse people who are able to give birth, or even that parents who are not female may and can take leave to spend time with their young child or children.

**KPI: Remove transgender exclusive language from the [Program Leave of Absence webpage](#)**

**KPI: Create an overarching PhD program leave policy based on the ANU Students' Association Enterprise Agreement. This must enforce a minimum entitlement for both parents, include foster and adoption leave, include gender-neutral language, and be easily accessible online for staff and students**

**KPI: Conduct a comprehensive audit of the current scholarships available to ANU PhD students to ensure that their conditions are in line with the new guidelines**

**3. University advocacy for students.**

**a. OB/GYN care under Overseas Student Health Cover**

Overseas Student Health Cover (OSHC) provided in Australia does not cover pregnancy related services in the first twelve months of their contract. This is an area where students or partners of students who are assigned female at birth (AFAB) are clearly and obviously discriminated against. It is not always possible to plan out conception, particularly under the circumstances of reproductive coercion and it has even occurred that a student has arrived in Canberra to commence her studies, only to find that she fell pregnant very soon before she came to Canberra. It is completely unjust to deny these students adequate and affordable prenatal care.

**KPI: For the ANU to lobby the federal government to change the legislation around OSHC to ensure that there is no waiting list for pregnancy-related cover**

**b. Affordable school fees for all**

International fee-paying research students and other students under specific visas are required to pay between \$11,100 and \$16,200 a year per dependent in school fees. It is unfair to exclude international students as they do in fact contribute to the ACT economy through the considerable revenue they bring to the ACT and the jobs they generate here and the ACT Human Rights Act states that there is a right to free education for all children.

**KPI: For the ANU to lobby the ACT government on the grounds of a human rights violation, to change the legislation about public school fees for student-parent dependents**