



Media Release:

For Immediate Release: 25 March 2009

## Get the facts on *Getting Smart* through post-secondary education

A new free guide aims to help students and their parents make more informed decisions about whether to pursue further education or take their chances in Australia's weakening job market. The Australian Scholarships Group (ASG) commissioned tertiary student services expert, Vince Callaghan, to write ASG's *Get Smart Guide* to provide a comprehensive, plain-language information source aimed at giving students and their parents ready access to the facts about post-secondary study and its various costs.

ASG's General Manager Development, Ms Michelle Hunder said pursuing post-secondary education was a "smart decision" with lifetime benefits to individual students and the community.

"Education provides a major foundation in life. ASG's *Get Smart Guide* provides a valuable resource to assist students and parents plan for post-secondary education.

"As a not-for-profit member-based organisation, ASG is committed to supporting children's education, and where possible, encouraging students to gain a complete education with the assistance and backing of their parents," she said.

Student services expert, Mr Vince Callaghan said ASG's *Get Smart Guide* provided a much-needed resource to assist both students and parents.

Mr Callaghan said that there was a lot of "misinformation" going around and he hoped to set the record straight with the guide, as well as answer the most frequently asked questions he received from both students and their parents when undertaking seminars about the transition from secondary to post-secondary study.

"My experience indicates most parents want to understand the post-secondary education sector as much as their student children," Mr Callaghan said. "ASG's *Get Smart Guide* fills this need and aims to provide a resource that encourages planning, investigates options, and provides a host of tips, checks, and resources for prospective post-secondary students to explore with their parents."

Increasingly governments are focused on boosting Australians' current levels of post-secondary qualifications. The Council of Australian Governments (COAG) set a target to halve the proportion of Australians without a certificate level III qualification by 2020. The target proposed for the proportion of young adults with undergraduate degrees is recommended to increase from the current 29 per cent to 40 per cent by 2020 or the Australian Government's preferred date of 2025.

Ms Hunder said ASG hoped that its new guide would assist students to embark on post-secondary studies with their eyes open to both the costs and benefits.

"While there are substantial costs associated with gaining post-secondary qualifications, the benefits over the course of a lifetime can really add up," she said.

Research shows that students who gain a university qualification are more likely to experience higher wages (up to \$1.5 million more over the course of their lifetime), better working conditions, and have less chance of being unemployed. If they do become unemployed, they are more likely to find a new job faster than their less qualified colleagues.

The community also benefits from more people getting higher qualifications through greater productivity, higher participation and skilling of young people when they enter the workforce, resulting in more prosperity within the community.

ASG's *Get Smart Guide* includes estimates outlining post-secondary study costs for students who live in various arrangements, including living in the family home (estimated at \$9,962 excluding course tuition fees), living in halls of residence (estimated at \$17,038-\$27,038 excluding course tuition fees), shared independent living arrangements (estimated at \$22,395 excluding course tuition fees) or boarding through a program such as Homestay (estimated at \$24,432 excluding course tuition fees).

Ms Hunder said the estimates revealed that it's no coincidence that children today are living with their parents for longer periods than ever before, especially if they're students.

ASG's research among its member parents indicates that 35 per cent of students are required to relocate in order to pursue post-secondary study. The estimates also place regional and country students at a distinct disadvantage compared to their metropolitan colleagues who are less likely to have to relocate.

ASG's *Get Smart Guide* provides detailed information to help students and their parents access their full entitlements while studying, and is supported by ASG's *Get Smart Scholarships Guide* that details the huge range of sources for scholarships and how students can increase their chances of receiving them.

"We know that relatively small amounts, as little as \$500 - \$1,000, can make the difference for some students in accessing post-secondary education and enables them to improve their experience of and the benefits gained from studying," Ms Hunder explained.

"While ASG encourages families to plan for their children's future education costs so that they can provide member-funded scholarships, it recognises that not every child is so fortunate to have this kind of assistance.

"However, with the release of ASG's *Get Smart Guide*, ASG hopes to promote the benefits of planning to a wider audience of students and parents," Ms Hunder said.

ASG's *Get Smart Guide* and the supporting ASG's *Get Smart Scholarships Guide* are available as free downloadable resources from ASG's website: [www.asg.com.au](http://www.asg.com.au) - Resources tab.

ASG's Education Program™ offers a unique, convenient, and proven way for people to plan for their children or grandchildren's future education. The program can be tailored to suit the needs and budgets of most families.

Currently ASG is helping more than 208,000 member parents plan for the costs of their children's education. Last year almost 45,000 students had their secondary or post-secondary education costs supported by ASG benefits. In addition, ASG has paid out more than \$867 million in benefits to its members since its inception.

\*\*\*\*\* ends \*\*\*\*\*

Images relating to ASG's *Get Smart Guide* and ASG's *Get Smart Scholarships Guide* can be downloaded at: [www.asg.com.au/images\\_asgsg](http://www.asg.com.au/images_asgsg). Images include covers of the guides, images of Ms Michelle Hunder, ASG's General Manager Development and Mr Vince Callaghan, tertiary student services expert, who wrote the guides.

**For more information, please contact:**

Janet Thomas, Public Relations, Australian Scholarships Group

Ph: 03-9276 7758 Mobile: 0402 837 758 Email: [publicrelations@asg.com.au](mailto:publicrelations@asg.com.au) Web: [www.asg.com.au](http://www.asg.com.au)

Australian Scholarships Group Friendly Society Limited ABN 21 087 648 879  
Registered Office: 23-35 Hanover Street, Oakleigh, Victoria 3166  
Phone: (03) 9276 7777 Fax: (03) 9563 2780 Website: [www.asg.com.au](http://www.asg.com.au)