Dr Michael Ayling
BMedSc MBBS(Tas) FANZCA
PO Box 5351
Wagga Wagga BC NSW 2650

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Australian Parliament House

Senate Inquiry into New Taxes (proposed student fees)

Dear Sirs/Mesdames,

I write with some concern about the proposal to reintroduce compulsory student union fees under the guise of "student amenities" fees.

While I am aware of the cynical nature in which such fees, howsoever named, and compulsorily extorted, have historically been abused to pursue the aims of the collectivist side of politics, I shall leave it to others more personally affected by such abuse of their money to pursue those issues.

My concern relates to the possible relevance of such taxes to distance education students. I am enrolled at the University of New England (UNE) for a Graduate Diploma of Economics in 2011. I am also in full-time practice as a specialist anaesthetist in South West NSW and a father of two young children. It is not my intention to ever visit the UNE campus in Armidale . I will have no role in student politics at UNE. I will never visit the university gym, join any clubs, make use of their childcare facilities, buy a subsidised cup of coffee at their refectory, nor seek the advocacy of their student union. Yet it is still envisaged that I should pay the new tax.

Since I will derive no benefit whatsoever from the tax in terms of amenities, and since I object to abuse of my money for the nefarious political purposes of those who would take even more from the productive sectors in society if given real power, I must regard this tax as nothing more than a callous grab for cash from an organisation who, in fearing that nobody would join them unless compelled, is unable to come to terms with its irrelevance in the modern university environment.

Surely a market-led solution is best for delivery of amenities on campus. This not only supports local business, but also allows for more locally tailored service delivery. Let the invisible hand of the market determine what is best for each environment.

For those who would wish to cut their teeth in politics on campus, they should be compelled to learn the lesson of the democratising value of fundraising: people will not pay membership fees or or otherwise donate funds to political organisations unless they represent their interests. We have seen the result of grabbing cash from students, on pain of exclusion from exams, and wasting it on various political causes, many of which a majority of students would object to if given the choice. I wonder how many students would have voluntarily donated to Arafat's PLO or to communist North Vietnam; their unions decided that issue for them - with their money.

Some say that if students believe that their money is being wasted then they should run for office in the union/guild/association and ensure that the money is spent wisely. This begs the question of why their funds should be compulsorily acquired in

the first place. It should not be incumbent on students, many of whom desire to study hard to advance their careers, to compete against students in certain courses with very light study loads, to gain control of an organisation that steals and then wastes their money. Perhaps they have no interest in running for office. Perhaps they are just too busy doing what the university expects them to do: studying. It doesn't matter; they should not be expected to play the game when the whole field is rank with corruption.

Students are under no illusion that this fee represents nothing more than a proxy donation to left-wing parties such as the Labor Party and/or to radical Left parties such as the Greens. It must not be reintroduced.

Sincerely yours,

Michael Ayling