

29 October 2010

Mr. Kim Thomas-Francis,

Senate Inquiry into New Student Fees

Submission to the Senate Select Committee on new Taxes

I must first begin but stating my objection to the way in which the Student Services and Amenities Fee (SSAF) has been put into this committee. The SSAF isn't a tax and therefore should be in this committee. The terms of reference for this committee aren't suited for an inquiry for the SSAF.

I'm the incoming President of the Flinders One Student Council. The Flinders One Student Council is the peak representative body for students at Flinders University, in that capacity I represent over 15,000 students.

Before VSU Flinders University had six different organisations providing students with advocacy, representation and support, After VSU all the organisations has merged into a single organisation. The current organisation call Flinders One relies on the University to provide limited funding for the organisation, the University also pays for the entire advocacy performed by the organisation. The organisation also relies on the income from commercial outlets for extra income, the problem with this is that the commercial outlets are that they aren't run to make a profit, but to provide affordable food for students. So it is difficult for these outlets for extra income for the organisation with charging high prices for the food in the commercial outlets, if we do raise the price too high that students will longer buy food on campus

Student representation at Flinders has also suffered; we are unable to affiliate with the National Union of Students (NUS), this denies the students at Flinders a voice within NUS. On a broader scale campus wide representation has suffered, The Student Representative Council has been relegated to a sub-committee of the Flinders One Board. The board itself is the only Student Association in South Australia without student control of the board. The Student Council is continually to that they are part of an "a-political" organisation they are limited on the campaigns they can run. Also because of the financial situation of the organisation when cut are made the Student Council is always on of the first targets. Working within these parameters this makes it is harder to provide effective representation to students.

It is important for student to have a voice on the board of their own student organisation. During the start of this year the refectory was upgraded without any conciliation of Students, the result was an eating space which none of the Students like and the University had to fix it.

Implementing a \$250 a year fee which is payable on HECS will give Flinders University extra funds to spend on student advocacy, representation and support. With this money the two functions of Flinders One can be split into two different organisations.

In South Australia out of the three Universities, currently Adelaide University provides the best services to students. Adelaide University provides free legal advice for students, free tax advice for students, provides good support for clubs and societies on campus and has a vibrant and active Student Representative Council. The Adelaide University Union (AUU) is able to achieve this by have a stable stream of income each year which doesn't rely on the proceeds of non-for profit commercial outlets to top up the AUU funding The SSAF which is payable on HECS will no disadvantage student because like the cost of their studies student can defer the payment. Like the cost of their education I believe

that students should all contribute to make their campuses a better environment to study. However I also believe that students know what services student want, the AUU has only student membership on their union board and it's no coincidence that this is why they provide such important service to students. To ensure that student are consulted the legislation needs to stipulate that students have an important say in where the money goes.