

28 October 2010

The Secretary
Senate Select Committee on the Scrutiny of New Taxes
PO Box 6100
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

**The Australian National University
Students' Association (ANUSA)**

T +61 02 6125 2444
F +61 02 6125 3967
E sa.president@anu.edu.au

Building 17a, Student Services Building
Canberra ACT 0200 Australia
sa.anu.edu.au

To Whom It May Concern,

Re: Inquiry into the proposed Student Services and Amenities Fee (SSAF)

The ANU Students' Association (ANUSA) is grateful for the opportunity to comment on the Higher Education Legislation Amendment (Student Services and Amenities) Bill.

ANUSA is the peak representative body for undergraduate students at the Australian National University (ANU). ANU is Australia's top-ranked university and one of the leading institutions of higher learning and research in the global community. ANUSA strongly supports the passage of this legislation.

ANUSA provides, free of charge:

- Democratic student representation for the student community;
- Independent advocacy and support in academic matters;
- Professional legal and welfare services in a wide range of areas specific to students and young people;
- Campus social services and events;
- Administrative and financial support to student clubs and societies; and
- A range of facilities and venues for student work and activities.

These student-run student services are essential to a strong and supportive campus community open to students of all backgrounds and means, but have only survived with the generous but limited financial aid of the University. The introduction of Voluntary Student Unionism (VSU) in 2005 has had a dramatic negative impact on the student community at ANU.

ANUSA regrets that the SSAF has been characterised as a 'tax' and questions whether it should be scrutinised as such. The SSAF does not constitute a general levy to fund government revenue and therefore does not lend itself to definition as a tax. It is a fee for services which, if implemented, would currently raise over \$3 million per annum for essential student services at ANU.

The majority of ANU students support the SSAF. In the 2009 annual ANUSA elections a record number of ANU students voted for the return of a reasonable student services fee (payable by income-contingent loan) and indicated that they believe that the proposed fee is a reasonable price to pay for a strong university community, free and accessible essential services and quality student representation.

ANUSA notes approvingly that the legislation ensures that students are not required to join a union or association, and that fees raised cannot be used for inappropriate political purposes.

Without the introduction of the new Student Services and Amenities Fee – or an equivalent investment by the Commonwealth in universities for the same purpose – essential student services at ANU will continue to decline and may eventually collapse. ANUSA hopes you will ensure the prompt passage of this legislation.

Yours sincerely,

Tully Fletcher
ANUSA President