

29 October 2010

Committee Secretary
Select Committee on the Scrutiny of New Taxes

By email: newtaxes@aph.gov.au

Dear Secretary,

Thank you for the opportunity to make a submission to the Senate's inquiry into proposed student fees. My name is Peter Gangemi and I am a 2nd year PhD student from the University of New South Wales in Sydney. I have studied at the Kensington campus at UNSW for seven years and am very familiar with the facilities our university offers to students.

I write today as I am most concerned with the proposal that a \$250 levy be charged to all tertiary students to fund campus facilities, sporting clubs and various other campus services. Firstly, I believe an across the board levy is quite inequitable as it takes no consideration of a student's personal or financial circumstances. A student who is studying by correspondence or part time on the evenings will still be charged the same fee as a student who is on campus five days a week. A student's financial situation is also not taken into account, and invariably it will be the poorer students who will suffer the most. Many students work part time jobs to pay for their tuition fees, up to 30 hours a week as I did at an undergraduate level, and often hours even longer than that. Students who work hard alongside their studies should not be financially burdened any more than is absolutely necessary to complete their studies.

It is also my belief that the core function of universities should be for people to grow in their academic lives and to gain a qualification that will set them up for the rest of their life. The vast majority of students are not attracted to tertiary study to play sport or to enjoy a large amount of extracurricular activities. Despite this, clubs have continued to exist since 2005, and they will continue to do so in the future. I personally don't see the compelling case to allocate additional funds now.

Furthermore, many students including myself have had great concerns about the way certain campus organisations have spent their funding in past years. The National Union of Students ran an anti Tony Abbott campaign in the 2010 federal election with student money. I can personally recall the UNSW Guild president in 2005 Manoj Dias-Abey offering monetary incentives to students to attend an anti VSU Rally, with the prize pool paid for using student fees. Bringing back a compulsory levy on students opens the possibilities for these organisations to resume wasteful spending and allocate funds to causes that the majority of students would not approve of. Students have worked too hard for their money to be used this way, we are educated adults and should have the right to spend it as we see fit.

Once again, I thank you for the opportunity to present this brief submission for the inquiry

Regards,

Peter Gangemi