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Office of the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Corporate Strategy and Services)
Rhonda Hawkins

SUBMISSION
TO THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES STANDING COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION AND
EMPLOYMENT
INQUIRY INTO HIGHER EDUCATION AMENDMENT (STUDENT SERVICES AND AMENITIES) BILL
2010

1. The University of Western Sydney (UWS) strongly supports the urgent introduction of the Higher Education Legislation Amendment (Student Services and Amenities) Bill 2010.
2. We recognise the Bill as a tangible solution to the negative impact of voluntary student unionism on the level of amenities for students on university campuses across Australia. We strongly support efforts to address the significant negative effects of voluntary student unionism, through enabling institutions to charge a \$250 p.a. student amenities fee.
3. The introduction of voluntary student unionism had a devastating effect on this University. It meant that \$10M in funding was cut which was used primarily to support key services for UWS students - childcare, welfare services, advocacy about academic matters, health services, activities to help students transition from school in to university, mentoring programs, sports facilities and multi-faith centres.
4. UWS plays a vital role in improving educational opportunities and outcomes for the region of Greater Western Sydney. This is a significant region that despite its importance in economic and population terms, is disadvantaged in education outcomes. Only 3.2% of the population have participated in higher education compared with 5.3% for the rest of Sydney.
5. This Bill will enable UWS to levy students a small amount in order to ensure that vital student services are provided. This is a necessity rather than a nicety for a university such as UWS, which has six campuses to service a spread of 8900 kilometres and with a student population that has fewer support structures to fall back on. Around 70% of our students come from the region and over 50% are first in their family to attend university. The levy is essential in enabling us to meet the high level needs of these students and to facilitate their academic success. Research shows the importance of the full range of support services and university life to enable success of students in their academic outcomes.
6. The funds made available under this bill will be particularly important for regional universities which are struggling to provide the number and quality of amenities on their rural and regional campuses which the larger and older universities in city centres can provide. Support for this Bill will therefore be an important aspect of supporting educational facilities in the rural and regional areas of Australia, including the outer urban regions of its largest cities.
7. The relevant UWS contact person regarding this submission is Ms Rhonda Hawkins, DVC Corporate Strategy and Services,