

Submission

to

Senate Employment, Workplace Relations and Education
Legislation Committee

Higher Education Support Amendment (Abolition of Compulsory Up-front Union Fees) Bill 2005

Submission no: 1

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Student

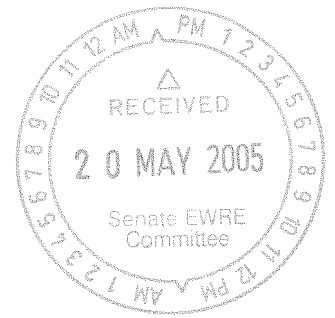
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Dear Sirs/Madams,

As a current Student with a Disability (SWD) at University of Tasmania (Launceston) I am deeply concerned with the potential adverse results that VSU could have on me, current SWD's and especially future SWD's.

We will lose our student representation for any disputes about 'reasonable adjustment' if the Universities cannot or will not fund equipment, hardware or software that is necessary for a SWD to be able to study. There are places around our campus that are impossible to access for the mobility challenged yet the university can very easily prove they do not have the funds to redress those matters so certain sections of students will be prevented from being able to gain access to those areas. Under the proposed legislation it will be difficult for any student to mount a challenge to get those areas redressed as they will not have the weight of the student body behind them.

The proposed legislation also expressly forbids the Universities from raising monies separately to make up for the shortfalls in providing Student Services that are presently funded through our Student Fees. The Universities will have to decide which necessary services to maintain and which ones will be abolished or cut back. As such we could be in the position where counselling services are impossible or very hard to obtain and the Student Services area of the Universities have a cut back in staff numbers especially in the more expensive qualified staffing areas. There is nothing in the proposed legislation that will prevent this possibility from occurring.

I fully agree with the de-politicisation of the various student bodies and the NUS but see that the service side of the student organisations must be maintained. The legislation as such must be changed so that the Universities get separate fundings to replace the the Student Fees to ensure there are no cut backs or abolition of necessary services. Those funds could then be specially earmarked to ensure that certain approved and required student activities are adequately funded without the Universities being forced to take those monies away from the academic side of their current funding. This could easily be done through legislation regarding the existing Student Fees or through legislation guaranteeing a fully indexed special grant to cover those costs.

It is all very well for those who have already used those services and have no further use for them to adversely legislate against the continuation of services but they must be made aware of the political consequences of those decisions as well as the way they are affecting the lives of those they are legislating against.

Geoff McDonough

University of Tasmania (Launceston)