

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: 13

Received: 9/06/2005

Submitter: Mr David Coulton
On behalf of Staff and the Executive Committee

Organisation: Clubs and Societies Division
Monash Student Association

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From: David Coulton [David.Coulton@adm.monash.edu.au]
Sent: Thursday, 9 June 2005 9:37 AM
To: EET, Committee (SEN)
Cc: enquiries@monashclubs.org
Subject: submission to inquiry into HESA (Abolition of Compulsory Up-Front Fees) Bill 2005



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The Secretary,

Please find attached a word document copy of a submission to the Senate inquiry into HESA (Abolition of Compulsory Up-Front Fees) Bill 2005, on behalf of the Clubs & Societies division of the Monash Student Association.

A Hard copy has also been forwarded to your office, with a petition of 1,495 names attached.

The attachment here contains only the supporting information, and not the petition.

Should you require any further information, please don't hesitate to contact the Clubs & Societies office on (03) 9905 4159, or myself at the address below.

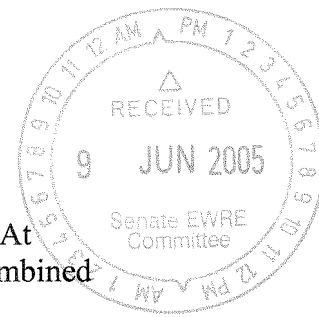
Yours faithfully,

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David Coulton
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Monash Student Association

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Background

There have been student-run clubs at Monash University Clayton since 1962. At present there are 95 affiliated non-sporting clubs at Clayton campus, with a combined membership of 15,509* students from a total student population of 22,998.

Through their affiliation with the Clubs & Societies division of Monash Student Association, these clubs receive: administrative support (in the form of staff guidance, assistance with financial matters including taxation, use of resources such as lockers, computers, subsidised photocopying, assistance with sponsorship and much more); financial regulation (through twice-yearly audits); student development (through compulsory workshops in club administration); insurance coverage; and funding to assist their aims and objectives.

The implementation of the Higher Education Support Amendment Bill in its current form will put at risk all the above assistance the Monash Student Association, through its Club & Societies division, currently provides for the clubs. It will in turn threaten the very existence of the clubs themselves.

*as at 31/12/04. The figure at 1/6/05 is 13,614. Total current student population unknown.

Benefits of Club Membership to Students

There are currently clubs which provide support, information, and social interaction in the following areas: faculty-based clubs; cultural clubs, performance-based clubs, political, spiritual, community/charity clubs and general interest clubs.

There are obvious benefits to being a member of a club at Monash Clayton. With a student population of over 20,000, transition to university can be a daunting issue for many students. The ability to make contacts and friends with similar interests through club activity is a vital element to assisting students to make the transition to university life, and consequently to retaining students in the tertiary environment.

There are other benefits students achieve through club involvement. Skills can be attained in areas such as: leadership; teamwork; communication; public speaking; financial skills in budgeting, and marketing skills. Experience in event management, meeting procedure and networking, all make club involvement a valuable augmentation to a student's degree, and also assist in a student's later quest for employment.

How will the implementation of VSU affect clubs?

Staffing

The implementation of the HESA Bill as it stands will affect the Monash Student Association's ability to provide staff to coordinate the many resources C&S provides for clubs.

Some of the ways staff assist clubs are as follows:

- ❖ Providing information and coordinating workshops in the areas of club administration (finance, minute-taking, event management etc); responsible serving of alcohol; food handling procedures, first aid, sponsorship etc.
- ❖ Coordinating and maintaining shared resources, such as first aid kit, computers, stationery, photocopying,
- ❖ Auditing clubs' finances; ensuring clubs are fiscally responsible;
- ❖ Assisting with constitutional matters, and assisting in writing constitutions for new clubs, assisting clubs with matters relating to incorporation etc.;
- ❖ Liaising with other bodies, eg University, Australian Tax Office, etc. on club's behalf if required.
- ❖ Facilitating the processing of club grants.

Without the above assistance, many clubs would suffer. There would be a lack of current consistent information passing on to clubs with regard to their rights and responsibilities, and there would be little or no fiscal accountability. Clubs are currently overseen by a Council and Executive Committee of representatives, but without staff to coordinate this and put in the hours required to administer the clubs' needs, many clubs would simply disappear.

Resources

- ❖ Computers and printing facilities;
- ❖ First aid kit;
- ❖ Photocopying facilities;
- ❖ Meeting room;
- ❖ Tables, extension cords, other miscellaneous items for events;
- ❖ Up-to-date sponsorship information;
- ❖ Lockers (and in limited cases office-space).

The provision of the above resources, and their maintenance, requires a consistent source of income.

Funding

Clubs are currently provided funding in the following grant categories:

Club Equipment;
 Special Projects (including tutoring, workshops, productions);
 Social Functions;
 Camps and Conferences;
 Administration.

The grants are provided following very strict guidelines, requiring club committee approval of all expenditure, proper receipts and timely reporting of expenditure. Grants are only provided to clubs who employ responsible financial mechanisms. Some clubs rely very heavily on these grants for their existence.

Petition

Attached is a petition coordinated by the clubs at Monash University, Clayton campus, with 1,495 signatories.

Conclusion:

Clubs and Societies provide a valuable extra-curricular resource for tertiary students. It is a requirement for clubs at Monash Clayton that they not merely exist for social purposes – though social interaction with fellow students with shared interests/backgrounds etc. is a vital way of easing the transition to university life. Clubs also provide valuable support academically and culturally, and also assist students to develop skills sought after by potential employers.

The abolition of the guaranteed source of funding provided by Amenities Fees will greatly inhibit the potential for clubs to exist. Those clubs which are able to survive will have to do so without the current checks and balances which ensure they operate responsibly and effectively.

We respectfully urge your enquiry to acknowledge:

- ❖ the importance of student clubs in contributing to university life;
- ❖ the drastic impact of Abolition of Compulsory Union Fees on the ability of clubs to continue;
- ❖ the wishes of the signatories to the attached petition.

Yours faithfully,
Clubs & Societies Executive Committee and Staff,

Alicia Cameron
President

Johannes Schmidt
Vice-President

Jeffrey Leong
Treasurer

Wei-Aun Ngo
Secretary

Melinda McLay
General Representative

Li Weng
General Representative

David Coulton
Manager

Kristin Bates
Divisional Support
Officer

Catherine Jones
Club Development Officer

8 June 2005

...Encl.