

# Submission

to

Senate Employment, Workplace Relations and Education  
Legislation Committee

## **Inquiry into the provisions of the Higher Education Support Amendment (Abolition of Compulsory Up-front Union Fees) Bill 2005**

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**Submission to the:  
Committee Secretary  
Senate Employment, Workplace Relations and Education Committee  
Department of the Senate  
Parliament House  
Canberra ACT 2600  
Australia**

The impact of voluntary student unionism at the Queensland University of  
Technology

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## 1. Introduction

The model of voluntary student unionism (VSU) proposed by the Federal Government will destroy the ability for the QUT Student Guild to provide essential services to the students at QUT.

The QUT Student Guild currently also contributes almost **\$9 million** to the Queensland economy and this contribution will be severely diminished under the proposed model.

Concerns have been raised over the role student organisations play in providing a politically active voice on student issues. While **some** (less than 3%) Student Guild fees are used to pay for political campaigns, the rest (97%) are used to fund **essential services** that go into making university more than simply getting a degree. Services such as joining a club or society, participating in sport, having an unfair grade challenged by an independent organisation, having access to welfare services and a raft of other services, will all be severely curtailed without the universal funds which support their provision.

## 2. The current situation:

On the 16<sup>th</sup> of March 2005, Dr Brendan Nelson, the Federal Government's Minister for Education, introduced legislation into Federal Parliament to abolish universal funding of student organisations throughout Australia. This legislation, known as voluntary student unionism (VSU), will end a tradition of over 100 years of student organisations providing a number of essential services to its student population through the levying of a mandatory amenity fee. The initial implementation of such a fee was something that students themselves asked for in order to have a pool of money they could use to improve university life as they saw fit, by creating campus culture, support services and representative structures.

This proposed legislation has angered all major sectors of the higher education community in Australia, including the Australian Vice Chancellors Committee, who categorically supports student organisations as being the best organisations to provide essential services and representation to students.

The Australian Vice Chancellors Committee (AVCC), recognise the integral role Student Organisations play in contributing to the student experience at university. The following is a list compiled by the AVCC specifying what they see to be the "essential services" which Student Organisations provide.

- Student Accommodation
- Binding Services
- Catering and Food Services
- Student Theatre
- Sporting Facilities eg tennis courts
- Student Lounges
- Shower, Change and Locker Facilities
- Leisure Activities
- Student Development Courses
- Concerts
- International Student Services and Advice
- Student Employment Service
- International Clubs

Campus radio and television  
Child Care  
Travel Service  
Trips and Tours  
Discount ticketing  
Function Spaces  
Dental Services  
Welfare Services  
Representation on University Bodies  
On-campus Shops  
Social Activities  
Photocopy Service  
Campus Sports  
Gymnasiums  
Cinemas and Theatres  
Facility upkeep and maintenance  
Recreational Libraries  
Computer Facilities  
Interest Clubs and Societies  
Art Galleries  
Information and Equity Service  
Bookshops and Retail outlets  
University Diary  
Campus Media/ Student Newspapers  
Legal Services  
Sporting clubs and societies  
Bars and Bistros  
Conference and meeting Rooms  
Academic Dress  
University Games  
Academic Advice and Advocacy

If enacted, the Australia will be unique in not recognising the valuable role student organisations provide. Universities in almost all other OECD countries including the United States, the United Kingdom, Canada and New Zealand all charge students a mandatory fee for services. At Harvard University in the United State, one of the most prestigious universities students pay approximately US\$2994 each year for student services because these services are seen as part of what makes a good university.

The detrimental effects of VSU on the membership of Student Organisations can be seen in Western Australia where VSU legislation was enacted by the Liberal State Government in 1994. See **Appendix 1**. The current Federal legislation proposes to introduce this Western Australian model of VSU that will effectively strangle all sources of revenue raising for student organisations.

### **3. The QUT Student Guild**

The QUT Student Guild operates to provide services to the community of students at QUT. Membership to the QUT Student Guild is mandatory upon enrollment, however students have the option to be a 'conscientious objector' and pay their amenities fee directly to QUT.

In recognition of the fact that full-time, internal students are best able to take advantage of the services provided by the QUT Student Guild, a tiered fee-charge is applied for different types of students.

<b>Attendance Mode</b>	<b>2004 (Full year)</b>	<b>2005 (Full year)</b>
Full-time	\$242.00	\$242.00
Part-time	\$121.00	\$121.00
External	\$48.40	\$48.40

The fee amount is set by QUT and then collected and distributed to the Student Guild after taking an administration (3.6%) and building fund fee (13.6%) from this amount. The remaining funds are used for services which are fully described in **Appendix 2**. There is a grave concern that **all** of these services will be lost under the proposed VSU legislation.

#### **4. Financial Contribution to the State of Queensland**

The QUT Student Guild provides an extensive contribution to the Queensland economy as follows. Under the proposed legislation of voluntary student unionism, a large proportion of this contribution will be withdrawn. In addition, many jobs at the QUT Student Guild will become redundant, increasing unemployment.

##### **Employment - (\$3,910,000)**

- The QUT Student Guild employs an average of 160 persons
- Our Payroll is \$3.9 million which is injected into the Queensland economy
- The QUT Student Guild paid \$192,000 in Payroll Tax to the Queensland Government in 2004
- The QUT Student Guild paid \$330,000 in Superannuation contributions on behalf of its employees.

##### **Local Businesses - ( \$3,735,000)**

- The QUT Student Guild purchased \$3.7 million worth of goods and services.
- Almost 100% of this was from Queensland suppliers, which is our preferred policy

##### **QUT - (\$1,250,000)**

- Every year The QUT Student Guild makes a large capital contribution to QUT for improvements to facilities. In the 2004 year this contribution amounted to \$894,000
- The Guild also paid \$356,000 to QUT during the 2004 year for a range of services that employed QUT staff

##### **Banking (UNICREDIT)**

**UNICREDIT** is a University Based Credit Union that is based at all major Queensland Universities. The introduction of the proposed VSU legislation will adversely affect this Queensland company.

- UniCredit operates 8 branches and 4 agencies at these Queensland Universities
- All the QUT Student Guild's banking is transacted through this Queensland based Credit Union ( Head Office at Toowong)
- The QUT Student Guild ranks as a major customer of Unicredit

## **5. Student representation**

Elected student representatives at QUT play an essential quality control role at the University. Student representatives sit on all university committees that make the decisions that impact on the lives of the student body.

Students are the greatest stakeholders in any university and student representatives are just that – representative of the student population. University administrators, academics and other interested groups all represent their own interests. Despite their best intentions, they cannot possibly know what it is to be a student in the current environment.

The university administration greatly values the role student representatives play in the decision making process. They appreciate that QUT Student Guild representatives are well versed in QUT rules (because they have access to research officers) and have a genuine desire to facilitate change that will benefit the student population as a whole. Student representatives are active in working with QUT to look at the student rules, university policies and procedures, course plans and other aspects of the university to ensure that QUT is working in the best interests of all students.

The introduction of VSU would diminish the quality of education received by all students at QUT. If all students are no longer universally members of the QUT Student Guild then even if students are still invited to sit on bodies like QUT Council the student will no longer represent **all** students. Important decisions that will have direct impact on students will be made without the contribution of committed well-informed student representatives elected on behalf of the student body.

## **6. What Coalition Politicians Think**

The following are extracts from Hansard (Queensland State Parliament June 8<sup>th</sup>) and the The Age (Melbourne June 10<sup>th</sup>) quoting several Liberal politicians who have gone on record in their opposition to the proposed form of VSU.

Leader of the Opposition in Queensland, the member for Southern Downs, is on the record as saying--

***"I think there is a strong case for a compulsory levy otherwise genuine student services will suffer, particularly in regional areas."***

The member for Toowoomba South, Mr Horan, said--

***"I think the Commonwealth government should put in place a way in which universities like the USQ can provide within their structure a service fee which they can then use to assist the student guild to continue providing sporting facilities, recreational facilities, and counselling and support services."***

And who could forget Senator-elect Barnaby Joyce, who said--

***"It is implicit in going to university that you have both buildings and fields and you must support both. It's like ordering a salad sandwich and saying you only want to pay for the salad."***

Deputy leader of the state Liberal Party, Phil Honeywood, has urged every MP with a university or TAFE campus in their electorate to fight the plan, ***"to ensure that common sense prevails"***.

***"Those of us who were the beneficiaries of the full campus life experience owe it to future generations of students to provide them with the same opportunities for a well-rounded education,"*** he writes in *The Age* today (Friday 10<sup>th</sup> June 05).

The above extracts show that even within the Coalition government itself, there are many people with genuine concerns about what the introduction of the proposed legislation will do to the "university experience".



## **7. Conclusion**

Most student organisations spend only **3% or less** of universally acquired funds on political campaigns. To eliminate this expenditure by destroying the entire funding base of student organisation is an extreme reaction and a classic case of “throwing the baby out with the bath water”.

At the end of the day, legislation should be about what is in the best interests of the community (in this case students). Thousands of students at QUT have voiced their concerns over the VSU legislation by signing anti-VSU petitions and through other means because they can see how it is going to affect their life at university. Students who have been helped by the QUT Student Guild in the past have even written letters of thanks and support, expressing that they would have been lost without the services provided by their student organisation – see **Appendix 3**.

The QUT Student Guild is strongly opposed the proposed motion to introduce Voluntary Student Unionism.

## Appendix 1

Under the **Victorian model** of VSU, students must pay a fee for a pre-determined list of services stipulated by the Government. These are determined as services that are designed solely to foster the welfare of students. For example, the QUT Student Guild provides a free accommodation and employment service, free legal advice, subsidised childcare, free academic advice and free accident and death insurance cover, as well as sport and recreational services on campus. These services would still be funded under a Victorian model of VSU. What **is** prohibited is the collection of a compulsory fee to be used for political purposes and the making of membership compulsory.

Under the **WA model**, not only is compulsory membership prohibited, but also it would be *illegal* (punishable by fines) for a university to impose any non-academic levy on a student and then pass money collected on to their relevant student organisations.

The W.A. model (which is the model proposed by the current Federal legislation) would have a disastrous impact on student organisations in Queensland.

### Impact of VSU on student services at WA universities

The Western Australian model for VSU introduced by the Liberal State Government in 1994 prohibited the Universities from levying a “student amenities fee”.

The initial voluntary membership rates of the student population in W.A. after the introduction of VSU were:

- Curtin 10%
- Edith Cowan 13%
- Uni of WA 28%
- Murdoch 38%

It is important to emphasise that in order to attract members, the amount charged for membership in Western Australia was also considerably reduced. Guild fees halved and there was an emphasis on members’ discounts and price incentives to join the Guild. Membership rates were highest amongst first years and dropped in later years.

This fall in membership does not mean that students do not value the services offered by their Student Organisations. Rather, it reflects basic human nature not to pay a fee when one does not have. There is no doubt that if **taxation** were voluntary the number people who would willingly hand over their money would be quite small indeed!

There is a misrepresentation that the introduction of VSU in Western Australia did not result in a reduction in services. This is untrue because for the first couple of years VSU operated in this State the Federal Government provided emergency funding to ensure that services did not die. According to the National Union of Students’ paper “Student Originations in Australia” (Graham Hastings, March 2005) it was not until this funding was withdrawn that the full impact of VSU in Western Australia was seen with the closure or reduction of the following services.

#### **Curtin University**

- Academic Rights Support - reduced
- Welfare Officers - reduced

- Full Programme of Cultural Events - discontinued
- Women's Rooms - discontinued
- Weekly Campus Newsletter - discontinued
- Policy support for student reps - discontinued
- Women's Portfolio - discontinued
- Environment Portfolio - discontinued
- Orientation Camp for First Years - discontinued
- Funding for Clubs and Societies - reduced
- Student Emergency Loans - discontinued
- Disabled Students Portfolio - discontinued
- Sexuality Portfolio - discontinued
- Sport Library - discontinued
- Subsidised Catering on Campus - discontinued
- Student Conference Funding - discontinued
- Student Publications - reduced
- International Student Campaigns and Projects - reduced
- Activities -reduced
- Postgraduate Support - reduced
- Regional Campus Funding -reduced
- Affiliation Fees to NUS - unable to pay
- Affiliation Fees to Sports Peak Body - unable to pay

#### **Edith Cowan University**

- Academic Rights Support - lost at undergraduate level
- Welfare Officers - retained only through university funding position directly
- Guild Service Centres - discontinued
- Full Programme of Cultural Events - discontinued
- Women's Rooms - discontinued
- Weekly Campus Newsletter - discontinued
- Policy support for student reps - discontinued
- Women's Portfolio - discontinued
- Environment Portfolio - discontinued
- Orientation Camp for First Years - discontinued
- Funding for Clubs and Societies - discontinued
- Student Emergency Loans - discontinued
- Sexuality Portfolio - discontinued
- Subsidised Catering on Campus - discontinued
- Personal Accident Insurance - discontinued
- Off Campus Housing Advice - discontinued
- Student Conference Funding - discontinued
- Student Publications - reduced
- International Student Campaigns and Projects - reduced
- Activities -reduced
- Postgraduate Support - reduced
- Regional Campus Funding -reduced
- Affiliation Fees to NUS - unable to pay
- Affiliation Fees to Sports Peak Body - unable to pay

#### **Murdoch University**

- Academic Rights Support - discontinued
- Welfare Officers - reduced
- Guild Service Centres -discontinued

- Full Programme of Cultural Events - discontinued
- Policy support for student reps - discontinued
- Women's Portfolio - discontinued
- Environment Portfolio - discontinued
- Orientation Camp for First Years - discontinued
- Funding for Clubs and Societies - reduced
- Student Emergency Loans - discontinued
- Sport Library - discontinued
- Subsidised Catering on Campus - discontinued
- Sexual Assault Referral Service - discontinued
- Off Campus Housing Advice - discontinued
- Student Conference Funding - discontinued
- Student Publications - reduced
- International Student Campaigns and Projects - reduced
- Activities -reduced
- Postgraduate Support - reduced
- Regional Campus Funding -reduced
- Affiliation Fees to NUS - unable to pay
- Affiliation Fees to Sports Peak Body - unable to pay

#### **University of Western Australia**

- Academic Rights Support - reduced
- Welfare Officers - reduced
- Guild Service Centres - discontinued
- Policy support for student reps -
- Women's Portfolio - partly integrated into university equity office
- Funding for Clubs and Societies - reduced
- Student Emergency Loans - discontinued
- Disabled Students Portfolio - discontinued
- Subsidised Catering on Campus - discontinued
- Sexual Assault Referral Service - reduced
- Student Conference Funding - discontinued
- Student Publications - reduced
- International Student Campaigns and Projects - reduced
- Activities -reduced
- Regional Campus Funding -reduced
- Affiliation Fees to NUS - unable to pay
- Affiliation Fees to Sports Peak Body - unable to pay

## **Appendix 2**

### **Services provided by the QUT Student Guild that will be lost under VSU**

#### **Academic advocacy**

The work done by the QUT Student Guild's Education Portfolio is often the difference between a student dropping out of university and completing their degree. Some of the problems the portfolio assists students with include

Appeals against exclusion from the university

- Grievances with lecturers/tutors
- Reviews of grades
- Appeals against exclusion from the University
- Enrolment concerns
- Exam conditions
- Plagiarism accusations
- Special consideration and deferred examinations
- Reviews of academic rulings
- Intellectual property disputes
- Course complaints

An example of the invaluable work performed by the Guild's Education Portfolio is that in 2005 the Portfolio successfully assisted over 65 students' appeal against their exclusion. In fact almost 95% of students who sought assistance from the QUT Student Guild had their exclusion overturned. If it were not for the Student Guild these students would not have been able to continue with their university studies. The Student Guild's Education Portfolio therefore acted as insurance for students who, for reasons often beyond their control were facing the very real prospect of not being allowed to finish their studies.

It is important to note that the reason the Education Portfolio of the QUT Student Guild is so popular with students is that it is seen as being **independent** from the University. If the University was made responsible for investigating grievances against itself, then there is a possible serious conflict of interest.

The enormous importance of the QUT Student Guild's Education Portfolio is demonstrated by the following quote from the University's Student Ombudsman.

- *"The QUT Student Guild is well versed in rules and policies concerning academic and related affairs of QUT students. The specialist help it provides in respect of such affairs is of great value in terms of*
- *cost channelling matters to the correct University officer or forum for speedy resolution, thereby relieving many other University officers of time-consuming committee work and investigation of matters afresh;*
- *efficiency - developing an experience of regular and recurring student concerns and focusing that experience on appropriate means of handling matters;*
- *expertise - assisting students in becoming versed with requirements of University rules and policies and their subsequent demands on students' roles in the University;*

- (iv) service - offering a pastorally strong support system in terms of clearly visible mutual sharing of the student experience; and
- (v) contract - assisting the University in meeting its implicit contractual requirements for quality treatment of its students as clients. Whilst the Student Guild's operations in these respects do not make those of the University redundant, they greatly assist the University in managing such affairs in a cost-effective and timely fashion”.

*Dr Neville Bolfinger  
QUT Student Ombudsman  
BSc (UNE) PhD (Qld) GDCCompSci (QUT)*

In 2004 the Education Portfolio's budget was \$77 763

### **Welfare Portfolio**

The Welfare Portfolio of the QUT Student Guild recognises that university life can be challenging, not only on an academic level, but also on a social, personal and a financial level.

The aim of the Portfolio is to offer support, advice and services to all QUT students in areas affecting students' welfare, including accommodation and employment, youth allowance, austudy and student accident insurance. The Portfolio also advocates for QUT students on welfare issues at Guild Council, and on various QUT Boards and Committees, to ensure that the voice of students is heard at the highest levels.

The Portfolio also provides food, textbook and Telstra vouchers for the most disadvantaged students.

The vital service that the Student Guild plays in ensuring the welfare of QUT students is demonstrated by the following statement made on behalf of QUT Counselling Services:

*“Some of the prime functions currently undertaken by the Student Guild and which impact upon students well-being include:*

- *Advocacy*
- *Employment*
- *Insurance*
- *Accommodation*
- *Referral to the Counselling Service of students requiring assistance.*

*We have appreciated the close working relationship we have had with the Student Guild over many years and believe that the staff have shown sensitivity in advocating on behalf of students which has benefited them over the past years.*

*I believe the Student Guild has also made a contribution to the retention of students at risk of leaving the University for a host of reason, which again has been important to the institution and the long term outcome and welfare for the students concerned”.*

*Brian Bishop  
QUT Counselling Services*

Further testimony of the valuable work the Student Guild's Welfare Portfolio does in assisting disadvantaged students is contained in the following statement from the QUT Q-Step Committee:

*The Q-Step program assists people from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds to gain entry into QUT undergraduate courses. We also provide tertiary awareness activities for prospective students and an Orientation program for commencing Q-Step students. The Q-Step has been in existence at QUT since 1992 and since this time the QUT Student Guild has provided valuable support to Q-Step each year offering informative presentations about Student Guild services at our Orientation as well as financial assistance in providing lunch for commencing Q-Step students.*

*In providing this assistance, the Student Guild has recognised that students from this group have no excess disposable income and are normally unable to participate in many of the events that enhance the student experience and add value to their studies. For instance, Q-Step students have been funded by the Student Guild to attend and deliver papers at national conferences and Student Guild subsidies have enabled many to attend purpose-developed study retreats. The Student Guild also assists students on low income with Book Bursaries. We have also had positive feedback from students accessing the Emergency Food Voucher system that the Welfare Portfolio provides.*

*Q-Step students have benefited individually from the services provided to all QUT students, in particular, Centrelink advice and advocacy, legal advice, Women's and Queer Rooms, as well as assistance from the Education portfolio regarding Academic Appeal. It is only possible for socio-economically disadvantaged students to access these services because the cost is shared through the imposition of a common fee. A 'fee-for-service' basis of provision would put such essential support beyond their reach and it is inevitable that attrition rates of the cohort would increase.*

*The QUT Student Guild has been a factor in the success of the Q-Step Program in attracting over 1000 students since 1992, many of whom have graduated, and ensuring that retention rates are high and academic achievement levels are in line with the QUT average.*

Brenda Kelly  
Q Step Coordinator  
QUT

QUT Health Services are also strong supporters of the Student Guild's Welfare Portfolio as demonstrated by the following statement

*QUT Health Services strongly supports the Student Guild as a strong component of the University's ability to provide a range of welfare, legal, disability and educational services to all students, international and domestic. The services provided by the Student Guild are a vital complement to the Medical Centre here on campus. Health and Medical Services is a Student Support Service that seeks to assist students with their health needs so that they may achieve an optimal academic performance in the shortest possible time. Without the Student Guild many students will be disadvantaged who also use the Health Services facilities, as the impact on our service delivery will be restricted.*

*Leonie O'Keefe  
Manager, Health Services  
Student Support Services  
Queensland University of Technology*

In 2004 the Welfare Portfolio's budget was \$ 186 296

### **Student Information Centres**

Another service that the QUT Student Guild provides to the University community are the "Student Information Centres". Information Centres are located on each of QUT's three campuses and they are areas where students can go to find vital initial information in respect to:

- Youth allowance
- Taxation
- Accident insurance
- Accommodation
- Employment
- Education
- Women's library
- International students services
- Recreation events
- Second hand books
- Queer Library
- Safe sex products

The Information Centres also provides cheap photocopying and worldwide fax service. As the Information Centres charges only 5 cents per photocopy many students on a limited income rely on this service rather than the more expensive library (10 cents) photocopying facilities.

If further specialist information is required then the Information Centres will refer the student to the particular specialist Guild service. However in most instances the Information Centres are able to provide enough information to help the student deal with their problem.

The Information Centres are an extremely important tool for assisting students with their problems and providing them with information necessary for their welfare. In 2004 it is estimated that the Information Centres dealt with over 20,000 student enquires.

In 2004 QUT Student Guild Information Centres incurred a loss of \$88 313

### **International Students Portfolio**

The International Students Portfolio addresses the needs and interests of international students at QUT. Education is a major export industry for Australia. At QUT there are approximately 4000 international students and they are responsible for a great deal of export income per year. International students however have special needs that need to be fulfilled if they are to adapt to life in a new country and successfully complete their studies.

The International Students Portfolio of the QUT Student Guild exists to:



- Ensure an enriched educational and social experience for International students
- Represent the views and issues of the international student population in QUT
- Safeguard the welfare of international students in QUT
- Provide international students with opportunities to access their own cultural/religious settings and to interact with others with whom they can identify.
- Promote cross-cultural interaction between the local community and international students.
- Promote multiculturalism and diversity

The QUT Student Guild also enhances the life of QUT's international students by providing the following services free of charge:

- Part time and casual employment
- Housing assistance
- Discrimination/Harassment counselling and assistance
- Advice in appealing academic grievances with the University
- Health care advice
- Child care advice and assistance
- Insurance advice and assistance
- Immigration advice
- Planning and organisation of cultural events and activities
- Co-ordinate activities between various clubs and associations
- Provide an avenue to address current cultural, religious and international student issues

There are also a number of international student clubs that operate under the auspices of the QUT Student Guild. All of these clubs receive funding from the Student Guild to run social events like sports, dance nights, movie nights, excursions, camping trips, leadership workshops and many more.

- Chinese Scholars Student Assoc
- Hong Kong Student Ass.
- Indonesian Student Ass.
- International Students Association
- Japanese Australian Friendship Society
- Korean Society
- Malaysia Student Assoc
- Norwegian Student Club
- Papua New Guinea Students
- Scandinavian Network Association
- Singapore Student Ass.
- Sri Lankan Student Assoc
- Taiwan Student Assoc.
- Thai Students Association
- Vietnamese Australian Students Assoc

The vital role the QUT Student Guild's International Student Portfolio plays in the welfare of International Students at the University is evidenced by the following statement made by the Head of QUT International Student Services:

*“The International Students Portfolio of the QUT Student Guild plays a vital role in the support of international students at the University. This has been*

*most clearly evident in the advocacy of students concerns to faculty and the administration. Although the University provides excellent support services, it can be a student's perception that we are part of the establishment. They may prefer to approach the International Students Portfolio of the Guild because they feel they will get full support.*

*The Director of the Portfolio is an international student as are his/her assistants. This provides a comforting atmosphere for the students and communication barriers are immediately removed.*

*The International Students' Portfolio has also been very active in the past in providing feedback to the University administration about student's concerns and the University respects the position of the Director.*

*Over the past few years the Portfolio has also been actively involved in anti-racism campaigns and organising orientation and social activities for their students.*

*I fully support the maintenance of the present system giving students an alternative voice in the University”.*

*Graeme Baguley (Johan)  
Head, International Student Services  
Student Administration Portfolio  
Queensland University of Technology*

If Queensland wants to continue to attract international students to its shores then there needs to be an adequate level of service provision. The QUT Student Guild has received a number of deputations from international students expressing their concern that they will no longer receive value for money if they are denied the services student organisations provided. Having a viable student organisation will no doubt give Queensland universities an advantage over their inter-state and international competitors.

In 2004 the International Students' Portfolio budget was: \$126 894

### **Women's Portfolio**

Women at QUT make up 54% of the University student population, but as graduates earn less than men working in comparable positions. Women only make up a third of positions above senior lecturer, and are often concentrated in non-academic positions such as faculty administration. Women students are more likely to be homeless and/or live under the poverty line. They are also more likely to be victims of domestic, sexual and family violence and are one hundred percent more likely to become pregnant. All of these factors contribute to their academic achievements and potential success. It is for these reasons that the QUT Student Guild Women's Portfolio is inclusive of all women's issues and addresses them through service, support and representation such as:

- Information and Referral services
- Personal Support
- Lobbying and advocacy of Women's issues

- Women's Rooms on all three campuses – to ensure women have a place to go when dealing with women's issues, when resting, child minding, breastfeeding or collectively organising campaigns and events
- Resource libraries available for all women to access.
- Women's only Surf Day and Car Maintenance Workshops. Free Self Defence workshops
- Subsidised attendance for women students of QUT at NOWSA (Network of Women Students Australia).
- The annual Student Guild women's publication - *Philosophia* – giving women a chance to contribute articles stories and artwork and to be part of a feminist publication that also acts as an informative resource for many new students, locally and Nationally.

The Women's Portfolio also runs and contributes to the following campaigns:

- International Women's Day
- Domestic Violence Prevention Week
- Blue Stocking Week (Celebrating Women in Education)
- Eating Disorders Awareness Week
- Reclaim the Night (Women against Sexual Violence)
- Breastfeeding Awareness Month
- Breast Cancer Awareness Month

In 2004 the Women's Portfolio budget was \$129 525

### **Activities Portfolio**

The QUT Student Guild's Activities Portfolio is responsible for the coordination of major events such as O' Week, Beerfest, Oktoberfest, the May Ball, Guild Idol, concerts and themed weeks throughout the year run in conjunction with other portfolios like Stress-Less Week and Survivor Week. The Activities Portfolio also provides logistical support for all other campaigns and events and books all entertainment across the three campuses.

The Activities Portfolio is also responsible for the many recreation courses the Student Guild runs each Semester.

In 2004 'Activities' coordinated more than 50 events at QUT all of which were well attended. The Activities Portfolio also offers a number of recreational and skill development courses during the year, such as Learn to Surf, the popular Winery Tour, Pilates courses and more. University is more than going to lectures and tutorials. The activities the QUT Student Guild provides enriches the university experience for all students enrolled at the University.

In 2004 the Activities Portfolio budget was \$199 153

### **Sport Facilities**

The Student Guild in conjunction with the University provides a Joint Sports Centre at Gardens Point Campus. The centre features a 25m indoor heated pool. The centre also features two glass backed squash courts that enable squash as well as rebound volleyball, badminton and table tennis.

The Student Guild also operates Fitness Centres on all three campuses. Fitness Centres employ fully qualified staff to ensure that all ages, abilities and fitness levels

are catered for. The Centres have approximately 920 members who between them used the facilities 53 000 times during 2004.

## **Sports Portfolio**

The Student Guild's Sports Portfolio is responsible for the provision of all sporting opportunities for QUT students. These opportunities include access to sporting events at all levels, from social competitions through to representation at Australian University, international (including Olympic) events.

The Student Guild Sports Portfolio provides support in the form of coordination of sporting events and funding subsidies. The large number of students who participate in these events, which included over 250 QUT representatives at the Northern University Games, clearly indicates the importance of this service.

The QUT Student Guild Sports Portfolio is also responsible for:

- Sport scholarships (not offered by the University) - providing financial support to 10 -14 elite student athletes per year
- An annual sport excellence awards dinner - providing recognition to outstanding sporting achievements and volunteer contributions by students.
- Affiliation with the Australian University Sport (AUS) and Australian University Sport North (AUS north) governing bodies for university sport in Australia (Student Guild pay's this annual fee)
- Providing an opportunity for students to attend & participate in over 40 professionally run sport event sanctioned by Australian University Sport run within Australia and Overseas.
- Professional development opportunities for students to assist in the coordination of sport events
- The publication of the annual sport & recreation guide

Participation in the Student Guild's sport program provides students with an avenue to pursue their sporting excellence and friendships with other competing universities in Australia and overseas whilst pursuing their studies.

The sporting services and facilities offered at QUT by the Guild has been responsible for the development of a number of champion athletes who have gone on to prove themselves in the international sphere. Some of the well-known athletes that the QUT Student Guild has developed over the years through the granting of scholarships include:

- **Nathan Rickard** (Olympic gold medal winner – swimming)
- **Shane Watson** (International cricketer)
- **Nicholas Sprenger** (Olympic silver medallist swimming)
- **Gail Miller** (Olympic gold medallist – waterpolo)
- **Liam De Young** (Olympic gold medallist – hockey)

It is important to highlight that in addition to helping elite athletes, the Student Guild Sports Portfolio also plays an active role in helping combat the growing rate of obesity amongst the general Australian population.

In 2004 the Sports Portfolio budget was \$221 712

## **Clubs and Societies**

The QUT Student Guild 'manages' all the different Clubs and Societies that students form to cater to their interests while they are at QUT. These range from faculty-based clubs and societies (like SECS - the Society for Economics and Commerce Students) through to religious clubs (like the Muslim Students Association) and special interest clubs (like the Photography Club).

There are approximately 68 clubs affiliated with the QUT Student Guild.

Clubs that affiliate with the QUT Student Guild are entitled to the following benefits:

- Funding assistance for registration and affiliation or external bodies
- Funding assistance for club operating costs
- Funding assistance for venue hire
- Funding assistance for speakers or workshops
- Assistance and advice on club management and finance
- Assistance with booking of university and Guild facilities
- Assistance with ordering of club equipment and/or uniforms
- Assistance with special events, sponsorship and fundraising
- Assistance with club promotion including Club and Society advertising
- Assistance with the purchasing of beverages
- Access to Fulltime staff member (Clubs and Societies Officer)
- Access to Guild equipment (BBQ, eskies, chairs, tables, tents, etc) for on-campus fundraising
- Access to office equipment (fax, computer, printer, photocopier)

In 2004 the Clubs and Societies budget was \$104 292

## **Childcare Services**

The QUT Student Guild is the sole provider of childcare at QUT.

The QUT Student Guild provides nationally accredited childcare on all QUT campuses (2 centres at Gardens Point) so that students have access to affordable childcare. The Centres offer long daycare programs, with a relaxed, friendly atmosphere. Programs are innovative and flexible, and aim to provide a rich, authentic life experience for the children and families attending. The Centres are also open to non-student families.

The QUT Student Guild childcare facilities are priced at a rate to ensure that as many QUT students as possible can access the service. As such they are not profit making entities. QUT uses the Student Guild Child Care Centres as an inducement to recruit quality staff.

In 2004 the QUT Childcare facilities operating budget was \$249 047

## **Queer Portfolio**

Queer Portfolio provides essential support and information with regards to Queer issues for all students, particularly Queer Students, on campus. They play a crucial role in helping to break down all forms of homophobia, biphobia and transphobia on campuses. This helps to create a supportive environment for queer students on campus, which is essential in enabling them to complete their time at university with the least amount of trouble possible.

Queer Spaces are provided and maintained at Gardens Point, Kelvin Grove and Carseldine campuses. The Queer Portfolio provides education materials on coming out, safe sex, drug information and other resources that assist queer people to come to term with their sexuality. In addition they provide cheap and safe events for students to not only provide a well-rounded university experience but, as an alternative to the social problems that exist in bars, pubs and nightclubs, such as substance abuse, violence and rejection for those who might not seem 'normal'.

Queer people live in a world that still does not entirely accept them. The QUT Student Guild's Queer Portfolio goes a long way in equalling some of the inequalities that exist in the wider community.

In 2004 the Queer Portfolio's budget was \$82 240

## **Indigenous Portfolio**

The QUT Student Guild's Indigenous Portfolio exists to promote the welfare of indigenous students on campus and to foster an inclusive university community.

In 2004 the Indigenous Portfolio was \$24 994

## **Environment**

The QUT Student Guild's Environment Portfolio exists to promote environmental friendly practices at the University. It actively runs events and provides material designed to foster environmental awareness at QUT.

In 2004 the Environment Portfolio's budget was \$ 17 419

### Appendix 3

(Ms.) Deborah Ferrier  
6 Taupo Street  
Kippa Ring Qld 4021

25<sup>th</sup> January 2004

QUT Student Guild  
GPO Box 1545  
Brisbane Qld 4001

#### To Whom It May Concern

This letter is written to endorse the invaluable services that the QUT Student Guild provides to university students enrolled with Queensland University of Queensland. It has been my personal experience that the guild has provided assistance to me within a variety of problems experienced whilst enrolled at QUT Carseeldine. In all of these cases I had no one else to turn to and without the Guild, I seriously doubt that I could have completed my degree.

These services ranged from the Education Officer Mr. Shane Snow representing me twice when the University displayed blatant unequitable practices within a second year unit and unfounded prejudicial bias within a third year unit. In both cases we were successful, but without Mr. Snow I doubt that my applications for fair treatment would have been taken seriously.

The Welfare Office of the Guild has assisted myself with food vouchers and bill payment advice when I have had no other avenue to obtain basic living essentials. Without this small contribution I would have been hungry and destitute which does not equate to happy and stable conditions within which to obtain successful academic results.

The Guild Office of Carseeldine and especially the staff Jeremy and Tonia have always been helpful whether with a smile, a cup of coffee when I have been on campus with no money, food or drink, assistance with Centrelink, and invaluable advice on who to talk to when different situations have arisen.

These few examples cannot sum up all of the support, encouragement, friendship or a shoulder to cry on that has been given to me freely from the staff mentioned of the Guild. It is these people and the Guild services which aided myself to successfully complete a Bachelor of Social Science – Human Services within the three years of the degree.

The university itself does not offer these services and in my experience it is imperative that a service, which is impartial from the university, is there to represent students when errors are made or staff show bias. The guild has kept the university honest when it

comes to matters of high significance to myself, as a student, and without them who else will take up this banner?

This is not a time or an action that should be taken lightly with the current Federal Government's agenda of the dollar rather than fair, equitable and honest education for all. Who will oversee the University when it comes to an individual's battle against a bureaucracy that is now more concerned with profit rather than the individual student's education and the process in which to successfully obtain this education?

It is my heartfelt endorsement and faith that I pledge my support to keep the invaluable skills of the Guild within the current education system so that individual students like myself can turn to when the corporate machines get it wrong.

Yours sincerely

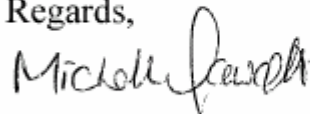


(Ms.) Deborah A. Ferrier

234 Horizon Drive  
Westlake 4074.  
Mobile 0403 302 559

Dear Shane,

I would like to thank you for the invaluable support that was given to me by the student guild. The support provided me with the confidence and knowledge to successfully state my case and prove my innocence. All of the staff at the guild were helpful and friendly and made me feel at ease during this stressful time. I wish you all a prosperous year ahead. Thank you once again,  
Regards,



Michele Fawcett



David Hopley  
2/30 Bradshaw St  
LUTWYCHE Q 4030

Student Guild  
Queensland University of Technology  
Victoria Park Road  
KELVIN GROVE Q 4059

24 January 2004

**Re: Thanks for Assistance**

Dear QUT Student Guild,

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the student guild for assistance provided to me during a recent period of academic difficulty.

The student education officer, Brittany McKee, was very informative and understanding in helping me to appeal against an academic exclusion notice. The student counselling service, likewise, were remarkably understanding when I approached them with related personal issues.

The student guild provides an invaluable and necessary range of services to students who do not have the resources to seek alternative assistance and support, often in times of personal crisis. If Australia is to continue to improve its education standards and its international reputation for quality universities, it must continue to support student unions and the services they provide. Although I am not generally a trade union supporter, I believe that voluntary student unionism will destroy the excellent range of resources available to students through the student guild.

Please accept my thanks and the hope that voluntary student unionism does not end up destroying a great system of existing student services and support.

Yours Faithfully,



David Hopley

## Views on VSU


I am currently an honours student at the faculty of IT, QUT and I am rather disturbed by the news of the impending changes to the student guild setup due to VSU. I am an international student from Singapore and I have just been granted approval on my PR application.

I served as the Sports coordinator and thereafter president of the Singapore students association here in QUT student guild and I must say that the structure of the student guild has helped my club and fellow international clubs and students tremendously. As fees increases for international students by a large margin every year, it is common for students to face many problems financially, and this is on top of issues like visa extension, health cover , being in a foreign land and study results.

The QUT student guild offers a voice for the students, and also help many clubs organise fun-filled activities and social events that would enrich a student's education here in QUT. And I believe ultimately, that what Australia wants for its image and economy- An education hub that provides an all-rounded education.

And as such, I believe that current student services offered should be retained and subsequently improved, so that students would not be disadvantaged by various welfare issues.

Best Regards



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Felix Tan Ter Chian