



# USQ STUDENT GUILD

*Proudly supporting the university's  
academic curriculum.*



# **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**

---

**Submitted & authorised by: Kevin Stapleton  
General Manager  
USQ Student Guild**

**Organisation: University of Southern Queensland Student Guild**

**Address: USQ Student Guild  
PO Box 28  
DARLING HEIGHTS Qld 4350**

**Phone: 07 46 312570**

**Fax: 07 46 361725**

**Email: [stapleto@usq.edu.au](mailto:stapleto@usq.edu.au)**

---

## **TABLE OF CONTENTS**

|  |           |
|--|-----------|
| <b>Introduction.....</b>                       | <b>4</b>  |
| <b>Summary.....</b>                            | <b>6</b>  |
| <b>Background to USQ Student Guild.....</b>    | <b>8</b>  |
| <b>Facility Development .....</b>              | <b>10</b> |
| <b>Lack of Consultation.....</b>               | <b>13</b> |
| <b>Consequences.....</b>                       | <b>14</b> |
| <b>Policy Failure.....</b>                     | <b>18</b> |
| <b>Conclusion.....</b>                         | <b>18</b> |
| <b>Recommendation .....</b>                    | <b>19</b> |
| <b>Student Guild On-Campus Facilities.....</b> | <b>20</b> |

## **INTRODUCTION**

This submission to the Senate Employment, Workplace Relations and Education Committee is made in relation to its inquiry into the *Provision of the Higher Education Support Amendment (Abolition of Compulsory Up-front Union Fees) Bill 2005*. The submission is made by the USQ Student Guild on behalf of past, current and future USQ students, especially those at the Wide Bay and proposed Springfield campuses.

As Senators will be aware, the Bill contains two provisions of which only one is reflected in the title. If enacted the legislation will:

- (i) Compulsorily introduce voluntary membership of University campus student organisations (and)
- (ii) Prevent university governing Councils from imposing an amenities and non-academic services fee on students who choose to enrol at the particular university.

The Bill also provides for penalties for universities for imposing such a fee on enrolling students. This is despite the fact that, in Queensland, University Councils have a specific power under their establishment Act to do so [see *USQ Act 6 (1)(e)*] and all Council members have a fiduciary duty to follow corporate governance principals and ensure the financial viability of their institution.

The Student Guild suggests that, if the Government and Minister were honest about their intentions, the Bill would be split. The two separate and independent provisions could then be discussed and debated on their individual merits.

This submission addresses the committee's first term of reference – *Assessment of the likely effect of the legislation on the provision of student services and related consequences*. It focuses particularly on one aspect of the Guild's provision of student services – sport and recreation services and facility development. This is done to illustrate the point. The Guild's many other student services will also cease to be provided by Guild staff who will, as a direct consequence of the legislation, be retrenched. These services include;

- Free phone and free fax for distance education students
- Academic advice, representation, assistance and counselling
- Free legal advice and tax return preparation
- Campus security bus
- Student ID card
- Personal accident and 24 hour/7 day a week death cover insurance
- Club and society establishment and operational grants
- Orientation Program
- Lunch time and night time sport and social activities

This is not a complete list of services. It is included here for illustrative purposes only.

The Guild believes that the legislation is fundamentally unfair and will not make USQ a better place. It is unfair to USQ when compared to larger and longer established metropolitan universities as they have had longer to develop facilities. It is unfair on past and current students. Their fees have been used to fund capital infrastructure on campus which future students will use without making a contribution to the construction and fit out costs.

The USQ Student Guild recommends:

1. That University Councils, which already have the responsibility for corporate governance of universities, be left to decide if an amenities and facilities fee should be payable by enrolled students and
2. That the University Councils introduce corporate governance guidelines for campus service organisations.

In Queensland, University Councils have these powers under their Act of establishment.

The USQ Student Guild thanks the Committee for its consideration of this submission.

Yours sincerely

**Kevin J Stapleton**

General Manager  
16 June 2005

## **SUMMARY**

The Student Guild believes that, if the Minister and members of the government are concerned at the practices and behaviour of some individual campus student organisations, the Department, the Government and universities would be better served by the introduction of codes of practice, industry regulation and performance standards rather than the proposed legislation.

### **Consequences for USQ, Toowoomba and South West Queensland**

The legislation, if introduced in its current form, it will likely have, amongst others, the following consequences:

1. All 45 full time or part time and 100 casual staff of the USQ Student Guild being retrenched on or before 31 December 2005. Total payroll costs in 2004 were over \$2.2 million. Staff have been informed of this consequence and arrangements have been put in place to implement it upon the legislation receiving assent.
2. A cessation or dramatic reduction of capital investment in non-teaching campus infrastructure at all USQ campuses.
3. A run down of existing sporting, recreation and leisure capital items over the short to medium term.
4. The immediate removal of all existing sporting, recreation and leisure capital items funded by the Student Guild. Their replacement would be the University's responsibility and at the University's expense.
5. USQ will be forced to either:
  - a. Not replace or expand campus non-teaching capital infrastructure
  - b. Divert DEST funding from staffing, teaching or research program funds to replace or expand existing and planned infrastructure currently funded and maintained by the USQ Student GuildOr
  - c. Request additional funding from DEST to provide such infrastructure, capital replacement and maintenance. If such a request was granted it would mean that tax payers were funding facilities and activities currently funded by students.
6. USQ's community commitment and obligations will be compromised.
7. The cessation of Student Guild funded health, fitness, volunteer and leisure programs. This would be contrary to policies of the Australian and State Government Departments of Health and Sport. It may also result in additional demands on the resources and funding of those departments to maintain or replace existing programs for the University community.
8. Although some of the current commercial activities may be undertaken by outside private enterprise as suggested by the Minister, there is no reason to expect that profits generated from these activities will be directed to funding on-campus sporting and recreation infrastructure and programs including the USQ Performance Centre as is currently the case

with the Student Guild. Guild facilities become part of the University's assets at no cost to the taxpayer.

9. On-campus student numbers may fall as students, prospective students (both domestic and international) and parents come to realise that expected campus services and facilities are no longer available at regional campuses.
10. Student Guild salary and wages costs are considerably less than USQ costs. Therefore, any staff employed by USQ to provide some or all of the services currently provided by the Guild will cost the University more than it would to have the Student Guild staff provide the same service.
11. USQ may find it increasingly difficult to attract well qualified academic and general staff and their families to Toowoomba and its other campuses. If there is a rundown in the amenity or hours of operation of existing campus food & beverage outlets, or recreational and leisure facilities and no prospect of future developments such as a heated, indoor Aquatic Centre, staff and especially their families may be reluctant to move to Toowoomba. Staff as well as students expect a university in regional centres to provide a range of recreation and leisure opportunities, as well as excellent teaching and research opportunities.

### **Recommendation**

1. That University Councils be left to decide if students should pay an amenities and facilities fee.
2. If the government has concerns about the manner in which some organisations are run or how their funds are spent or allocated they could introduce, as is done with other industries, a form of regulation by mandating standards, codes, policies or procedures and allow universities to determine what services should be available on their campus and who should pay for them.

## **BACKGROUND TO USQ STUDENT GUILD**

### **Establishment**

1. The USQ Student Guild is the only student organisation at the University of Southern Queensland.
2. The USQ Student Guild is established and incorporated under the University of Southern Queensland Act (1998) – an Act of the Queensland Parliament.

### **Core Responsibilities**

3. The Student Guild's core activities are:
  - Provision of sporting, leisure, recreational and cultural activities;
  - Funding and management of non-academic sporting and recreation infrastructure;
  - Representation and advocacy on behalf of students and
  - Management of commercial operations

Effectively, it is responsible for the services provided by the Union, Sports Union and Student Associations at some interstate universities.

### **Infrastructure Funding**

4. Since 1996 the Student Guild has funded over \$7,500,000 in campus infrastructure and other capital expenditure.
5. The Clive Berghofer Recreation Centre opened in 1996 with a construction and fit out cost in excess of \$6,000,000 almost entirely funded by the USQ Student Guild. The estimated replacement cost of this building and its equipment is in excess of \$15,000,000.

### **Staffing**

6. The Student Guild employs 45 permanent salary and wages staff together with over 100 casual staff who are mostly USQ students. Total payroll costs for 2004 were **\$2,292,990**. Tax remittances to the ATO for PAYE, GST and FBT exceeded \$735,000.
7. The Student Guild employs a professional management team, all of whom are graduates and which includes two CPAs. Currently two staff are enrolled in MBA programs.

### **Governance**

8. The Guild's Board of Governance consists of 10 elected students and 4 non-students including one person appointed by the USQ Council and one person appointed by the Vice-Chancellor. The Vice-Chancellor's nominee is the Chairperson.

### **Debt**

9. At 1 January 2005, the Guild had an outstanding debt of over \$1,500,000. Since 1996 the Guild has repaid over \$5,500,000 in debt financing used to fund campus sporting infrastructure and other capital items.

### **Fees**

10. Total fees paid by students to the University in recent years have been:

|        |                         |
|--------|-------------------------|
| ⌚ 2001 | \$1,684,372             |
| ⌚ 2002 | \$1,628,663             |
| ⌚ 2003 | \$1,627,784             |
| ⌚ 2004 | \$1,685,779             |
| ⌚ 2005 | \$1,700,000 (estimated) |



In a statement issued on 16 March 2005 the Minister stated USQ fees for 2005 were \$2,630,000. This is an overestimation of \$930,000.

**National Union of Students (NUS)**

11. The USQ Student Guild is **not** a member of the National Union of Students (NUS). It is a member of Australian University Sport (AUS) and ACUMA – the peak body of campus service organisations.

## **FACILITY DEVELOPMENT**

**Since 1996 the USQ Student Guild has funded Sport and Recreation infrastructure on the Toowoomba campus with a total replacement value in excess of \$15 million.**

Since the mid 1970's universities have not been specifically funded for the construction, maintenance and operation of non-academic facilities such as sport and recreation infrastructure for students. Consequently, they have been almost exclusively funded by campus student organisations.

Sport and recreation facilities, together with other non-academic facilities such as refectories and student common rooms, are considered an essential part of any educational institution, especially universities. This is even truer now with the increasingly competitive nature internationally of attracting on-campus overseas students. These students represent a multi-billion dollar export industry for Australia. Research findings show that they expect adequate and modern leisure and recreation facilities on campus together with excellent teaching and research facilities and services.

The Federal Government's proposal to prevent universities from collecting a buildings and amenities fee will, over the next 10 years, threaten the on-going maintenance, upgrading, redevelopment and construction of sport, leisure and recreation facilities at all universities but especially regional campuses such as USQ. Regional campuses, particularly post Dawkins universities, will be especially hard hit as they are generally newer campuses with smaller student numbers. They have not had the years of existence or the large on-campus student numbers to build and fund on campus sport and recreation facilities.

At the Toowoomba campus of USQ, the USQ Student Guild has, since 1996, funded the construction and fit out of the Clive Berghofer Recreation Centre, the construction of 3 international standard tennis courts and the purchase of Toara Park, a football oval adjacent to the campus. The projects have been funded largely by loan funds. Since 1996 the USQ Student Guild has repaid over \$5,500,000 and has \$1,500,000 in outstanding loans on these facilities.

The single most frequently asked question by students (both domestic and international) prospective students, parents and staff at USQ is "Is there a swimming pool on campus?"

If the legislation is passed in its current form it is unlikely that an aquatic centre will ever be built at USQ. This, together with the expected rundown of other recreation facilities will, it is suggested, lead to a decline in both domestic and international students.

## **COMMUNITY USE**

**The community expects access to University facilities. Student Guild funded facilities allow events to be held that would otherwise not be hosted in the region.**

The regional community is encouraged to use the international standard, 3 court Clive Berghofer Recreation Centre and Tennis Centre. This not only makes good business sense, as they pay higher user charges than students, it also compliments the University's community obligations and meets the community's expectations.

The community's access to Guild organised sporting activities provides increased opportunities for students to participate in sport and recreation at all levels. Although they have not made a direct contribution to the campus facilities the regional community expects to have reasonable access to campus facilities. The capacity of the Clive Berghofer Recreation Centre also provides an opportunity to hold events in the region that would otherwise not be held. These include conferences, concerts and championships. Guild operated and maintained facilities are also regularly used for school and regional sporting events and championships.

If the legislation is passed in its current form these facilities will still exist. However, taxpayers' funds will be used if they are maintained by the University. Also they are unlikely to be expanded, developed or replaced when necessary. The regional community will suffer as much as the University if this happens.

## **SPORT AND RECREATION PROGRAMS**

**Student Guild programs enhance the University experience and assist transition and retention.**

University is more than going to lectures and tutorials. The programs and activities offered by the USQ Student Guild enrich the University experience for all students enrolled at the University.

The Student Guild sport and student development officers are responsible for the provision of all sporting and recreation opportunities for USQ students. These opportunities include access to sporting events at all levels – from social and club competitions through to representation at regional and Australian University Games and support for students selected for national and international competitions. The Student Guild provides support for on campus and external or distance education students by coordinating sporting teams and events and assisting with the cost of participating. It organises lunch time sport for students, night sporting competitions which are open to the local community and provides funding grants and administrative assistance to 15 sporting clubs. University clubs are integral to the success of many local competitions.

Participation in Student Guild organised activities enhances a student's university experience. Programs are designed to compliment a student's academic experience and, most importantly, to assist a student to make the academic and social transition from school to university.

Without a secure source of funding the Student Guild will be unable to offer secure, long term employment to staff to arrange and manage sport and recreation activities.

## **REPRESENTATION, ADVOCACY AND OTHER SERVICES**

**The Student Guild helps “level the playing field” for students. Its assistance can mean the difference between retention and failure.**

Another core responsibility of the USQ Student Guild is representation, advocacy and advice. Universities are based on collegiality. It is essential therefore that students are effectively represented on university committees to provide input,

feedback and evaluation of university processes and procedures. Government supported programs such as Quality Audits require universities to incorporate student feedback and evaluation in their processes.

The Student Guild assists students and the University in this role by providing training, administrative support, advice and assistance to students serving on university committees. Because of the high turnover of students serving on committees, there is an ongoing need for these services.

Student Guild staff also assist students facing academic or personal difficulties or who need to utilise the University grievance or appeal procedures. Students in these situations are often overwhelmed by the experience. The assistance provided by the Student Guild may be the difference between student retention and "failure to complete". Student Guild staff independently assist students with problems arising from

- ⌚ Assessment results or grades
- ⌚ Harassment or other grievances
- ⌚ Allegations of cheating or plagiarism
- ⌚ Show cause or exclusion
- ⌚ Administrative or academic decisions.

In other words, the Student Guild helps "level the playing field" for students caught up in the University bureaucracy. Under the current legislation these services will cease and the staff retrenched. The services may be continued by university or community based organisations. The inclusion of community based organisations in university processes will add to the University's cost and may result in delays. If the University employs staff for this purpose it will add to the University's costs.

## **COMMERCIAL OPERATIONS**

### **Profits from commercial operations are used to fund campus sport and recreation infrastructure.**

The USQ Guild owns and operates a number of commercial business units, both on campus and in the city of Toowoomba. These operations provide both essential on-campus services for students and staff and the surpluses required to maintain lower than national average student fees. These commercial operations operate on normal business practices and generate profits for the Guild which are used to fund and maintain campus infrastructure without cost to the University or the taxpayer. However, from time to time they require capital re-investment and redevelopment which is funded from either reserves, loans or leasing finance. Without the security of an amenities fee income, reserves will be exhausted and loans or other financing will not be available. Consequently some operations will cease due to a lack of capital replacement and finance.

Some operations may be undertaken by other private operators. However, they have not expressed interest in the past possibly due to the low on campus numbers, declining on campus attendance rates and the fact that students are only on campus for 26 weeks of the year. Also, it is highly unlikely that they will use the profits generated to fund on-campus, and therefore, university, infrastructure as the Guild does.

## **LACK OF CONSULTATION**

There has been an almost complete absence by the Government, the Minister or the Department of any consultation or the seeking of input from the industry and its peak bodies in relation to the proposed legislation, except for the Senate Inquiry.

The industry, which employs over 5000 Australians in permanent and casual employment, is represented by several peak bodies including ACUMA, AUS (Australian University Sport), NUS (National Union of Students) and CAPA (Council of Australian Postgraduate Students Association).

It should be noted that neither NUS nor the Australian Liberal Students Federation speak for or exclusively represent the industry.

Overwhelmingly campus service organisations are not unions or student unions within the context of the meaning used by the Government and the Minister. Campus service organisations that are members of ACUMA or AUS, with one or two exceptions, are managed by professional staff and have a corporate governance structure that includes a combination of elected students and appointed University or community members.

Without adequate industry consultation and input, the USQ Student Guild finds it difficult to understand how the Department can adequately advise the Minister or the Government on the impacts and consequences of the legislation or in fact be informed itself. Thus, it is unable to adequately draft policy proposals and responses or to advise other Government Departments and agencies of the likely impact and consequences of the legislation and in particular possible future demands by universities for additional funding to pay for projects currently funded by campus organisations. It is therefore not entirely correct to suggest as is done in the Explanatory Memorandum to the Bill that the financial impact of the legislation is "Nil". Staff retrenched by student organisations will no longer contribute PAYE tax instalments and may be entitled to Federal Government welfare payments.

## **CONSEQUENCES**

### **Possible Consequences – intended or otherwise – of the legislation**

**1. All full time, part time and casual staff of the USQ Student Guild will be retrenched on or around 31 December 2005.**

The USQ Student Guild employs 45 full time and approximately 100 casual staff. Total payroll costs in 2004 were over \$2.2 million. Tax remittances to the ATO for PAYE, GST and FBT exceeded \$735,000.

Since 1996 the Guild has repaid approximately \$650,000 per year in loan repayments to fund sport and recreation infrastructure on the Toowoomba campus. Consequently, it does not have extensive reserves.

The Board and management have a fiduciary duty to ensure that the Guild can meet its obligations, particularly staff entitlements and outstanding loans.

The current advice to the Board is that to meet their fiduciary duty and responsibilities and to ensure the Guild does not trade if it is unable to meet its financial obligations, the Guild should cease all operations on or about 31 December 2005.

If private operators and owners take over some of the commercial operations, some staff may be offered employment. There is no guarantee of this and it is unlikely to occur before March 2006 when students return to campus. It will also depend on what arrangements, if any; private operators come to with the Guild as current operators of the business. Private operators should not expect that current fit outs remain in place (see Consequence #4).

**2. Cessation by the Student Guild of capital investment in non-teaching campus infrastructure.**

The Guild has invested over \$6,000,000 in campus infrastructure and another \$1,500,000 in capital items in the last ten years. In addition the Guild has purchased a sporting oval adjacent to the University to add to the University's stock of outdoor sports facilities. This investment was largely funded through Guild reserves and debt financing with the fee income being used as security.

Without the security of an income from an amenities and services fee it is highly unlikely that the Student Guild will in the future be able to borrow to fund major infrastructure or capital projects.

**In effect this means NO SWIMMING OR AQUATIC CENTRE AT USQ TOOWOMBA CAMPUS OR GUILD FUNDED DEVELOPMENTS AT USQ'S SPRINGFIELD OR WIDE BAY CAMPUSES.**

**3. The run down of existing sporting, recreation and leisure capital items over the short to medium term.**

Currently on-campus facilities such as the Clive Berghofer Recreation Centre (CBRC), the tennis centre and the Club are maintained by the Student Guild. The cost to operate the CBRC in 2004 was \$190,000.

Already in 2005 the Guild has paid over \$20,000 to resurface the CBRC stadium floor and it is intended to replace 4 external doors damaged by weather at a quoted cost of almost \$10,000.

The stadium timber floor will need to be replaced in approximately 25 years at an estimated cost in excess of \$1,000,000. The floor cost \$500,000 when installed in 1996. Without regular recoating (approximately every 12 – 18 months), the timber surface will be damaged and therefore require replacing sooner than the expected 25 years.

The tennis courts which were constructed in 2003 at a cost of almost \$300,000 were funded by the Student Guild. The international standard rebound-ace surface requires regular maintenance or will be damaged. If the legislation is enacted this cost must be borne by the University, presumably using taxpayer funds.

**4. The immediate removal and/or non-replacement of existing sporting, recreation and leisure capital items in the short to medium term.**

Equipment such as staging, chairs, scoreboards, basketball backboards, weights and cardio fitness equipment which belongs to the Student Guild may need to be sold to ensure funds are available to meet Guild commitments in the event of winding up. Regardless, this equipment not be made available to any private provider of the service. The replacement cost of the fitness centre equipment is in excess of \$600,000 and the replacement cost of the loose chairs, staging and carpet tiles in the Stadium is in excess of \$500,000.

**5. USQ will be forced to either:**

- a. Not replace or expand campus non-teaching capital infrastructure**
- b. Divert DEST funding from staffing, teaching or research program funds to replace or expand existing and planned infrastructure currently funded and maintained by the USQ Student Guild**  
or
- c. Request additional funding from DEST to provide such infrastructure, capital replacement and maintenance.**

If USQ is to assume responsibility for the operation and maintenance of facilities currently operated and maintained by the Student Guild it will be an additional strain on its financial resources. Consequently, it will either need to divert funds from existing programs or request additional DEST funding. A private provider may operate the Recreation Centre under license. However, that will not guarantee the building's expansion, maintenance and replacement or that its use will continue to support the University's mission.

**6. USQ's community commitment and obligations will be compromised.**

The USQ Student Guild supports the University's community obligations through the extensive community use of its facilities and programs. Without Guild or University funding community access to the Clive Berghofer Recreation Centre will be severely curtailed.

**7. The cessation of Student Guild funded health, fitness, volunteer and leisure programs will be contrary to policies of the Australian and State Government**

**Departments of Health and Sport. This may result in additional demands on the resources and funding of those departments to maintain or replace existing programs for the University community.**

The USQ Student Guild offers a range of health and fitness, as well as volunteer, sport leisure and personal development programs. Not only do these programs contribute to a vibrant campus life and a healthy balance between academic, sport and cultural activities, they encourage all students to be more physically active. This compliments current government programs. At a time when the Government, through the Australian Sports Commission, is spending \$90,000,000 encouraging increased sporting participation at primary and secondary school levels it seems ironic and somewhat contradictory, to be introducing a policy that will lead to less participation at tertiary level. It may also lead to a need to increase government expenditure in education and health in the medium to long term.

- 8. Although some of the current commercial activities may be undertaken by outside private enterprise as suggested by the Minister, there is no reason to expect that profits generated from these activities will be directed to funding on-campus sporting and recreation infrastructure and programs including the USQ Performance Centre as is currently the case with the Student Guild.**

The Student Guild owns and operates a number of commercial enterprises. These enterprises operate on normal business practices. Profits are used to fund its activities including capital and infrastructure funding and acquisition, service provision and support for other University activities. In the last 10 years approximately \$100,000 has been provided by the Student Guild to the USQ Performance Centre. This funding, as well as financial and in-kind support for other projects will cease without regular fee income. Consequently, these projects, will face a funding shortfall or will require additional funding from the University.

Some of the Guild's current commercial activities may be undertaken by private enterprise. However, it should be remembered that students are only on campus for approximately 24 of 52 weeks and that, on small and regional campuses, these commercial activities are not the "gold mine" that some may think they are.

Also, it should not be assumed that private organisations will have access to Student Guild owned equipment and capital.

- 9. On-campus student numbers may fall as students, prospective students (both domestic and international) and parents come to realise that expected campus services and facilities are not or no longer available at regional campuses.**

Students, whether they be domestic or international on-campus or distance education students visiting campus, expect a range of non-academic services and facilities to be available on campus. Parents of on-campus students also have this expectation.

The Student Guild has done much to provide facilities and services on the Toowoomba campus and has plans to develop and extend services and



facilities at Wide Bay and the proposed Springfield campus. These plans have been put on hold. They may be deferred indefinitely.

For example almost every student – on-campus or distance education – and newly appointed staff member expects that the Toowoomba campus to have an aquatic centre. Many on-campus students and their parents are disappointed to find that university has fewer sporting and recreational facilities than their former high school. In a highly competitive environment international students are particularly surprised at the lack of campus facilities compared to the metropolitan campuses and their expectations.

Should there be a deterioration in the condition of existing recreational and sporting facilities or no improvements or expansion of these facilities the Student Guild believes student numbers will, in the medium term, be adversely affected.

The Student Guild also believes that, in the interests of informed decision making, it has an obligation to inform prospective students, their parents and student counsellors that a range of currently provided Guild services will not be available at USQ in 2006. We will advise them that if they expect to have these services available at their preferred university, they may need to reconsider their preferences.

**10. Student Guild salary and wages costs are considerably less than USQ costs. Therefore, any additional staff employed by USQ to provide some or all of the services currently provided by the Guild will cost the University more than it would to have the Student Guild staff provide the same service.**

It has been suggested by some government members and media commentators that if universities want Guild services to continue then they could provide the service themselves. These commentators may not be aware, however, that the Guild's salaries and wages and associated on-costs are considerably less than the equivalent university costs. The Guild operates with its own EBA and does not follow the University's. In addition the Guild pays the minimum SGL. Consequently, there is a considerable saving in payroll on-costs without considering any differences in base salary. Of course, costs for additional university staff to replace Guild staff will divert funds from existing teaching and research projects.

## **POLICY FAILURE**

The Higher Education Support Amendment (Abolition of Compulsory Up-front Student Union Fees) Bill 2005 is bad policy is based on a false premise; and will not achieve a user pays system of service provision in higher education. It will lead to greater demand for additional government expenditure on education, health and sport an increase in drop out rates, as well as an increase in the payment of Newstart allowances.

It is bad policy because it is based on ideology and not what is in the best interest of the nation or its system of higher education. It is also contrary to existing Government policy whereby students are required to make a contribution to the academic services available at University although they may not use them all.

It is based on the false premise of preventing compulsory membership of student unions when in Victoria and at the Universities of Wollongong and Newcastle, amongst others, students are not required to belong to all campus student organisations. Students at these universities pay a fee for the provision of services such as a General Services Fee. USQ also has a provision for opting out of membership of the Student Guild.

The Government's stated intention is to introduce a user pays system. However, if, by the introduction of the policy, the government is eventually forced to increase funding to universities, it will be the taxpayer rather than the user who will eventually pay.

There is a considerable body of evidence to suggest that failure to socially adjust and connect will lead to transition problems especially for 1<sup>st</sup> year rural or isolated students. It is expected that this will also apply to international students. This in turn will lead to a higher failure and drop out rate.

If there is a reduction in the opportunities for social adjustment and interaction through social, sporting and recreational programs it can be expected that there will be an increase in failure and drop out rates and/or an increase in disenchantment amongst students and parents. This may lead, through word of mouth advertising, to declining future enrolments particularly regional universities such as USQ.

## **CONCLUSION**

The USQ Student Guild is opposed to the legislation because it believes:

- ⌚ The legislation is bad policy and is based on flawed and inadequate information and advice;
- ⌚ There is a failure to recognise and deal with the resulting consequences;
- ⌚ All students should make a contribution to the non-academic services and facilities at a University just as they are required to make a contribution to the academic services;
- ⌚ Universities should have the right to determine if a range of additional student support services should be available at the University and what contribution, if any, students should make to those services;
- ⌚ Rather than achieving a user pays system the policy is likely to result in a diversion of funds from teaching and research and, the tax payer, rather than students, paying for campus support services and infrastructure;
- ⌚ Most importantly, the policy will not make universities a Better Place for either domestic or international students and
- ⌚ The campus service organisation industry employs over 5,000 Australians. In keeping with other industries that have been dislocated because of government policy or legislation – examples are the sugar and dairy industries – this industry should also be eligible for structural adjustment assistance.

## **RECOMMENDATION**

The vast majority of campus based service organisations are efficient, well managed and well governed organisations.

If the government has concerns about the manner in which some organisations are run or how their funds are spent or allocated they could introduce, as is done with other industries, a form of regulation by mandating standards, codes, policies or procedures and allow universities to determine what services should be available on their campus and who should pay for them.

Some metropolitan campus organisations would be as large financially as some rural and western local governments. Yet, while Queensland Local Government Act is 960 pages long, there is no legislation specifically related to campus organisations.

## STUDENT GUILD ON-CAMPUS FACILITIES



**Centre Reception**



### **Tennis Courts**

- Constructed in 2002
- Cost \$260,000
- Funded by Student Guild
- International standard



### **Clive Berghofer Recreation Centre**

- Constructed in 1996
- Construction cost and fit out \$6,000,000
- Funding provided by Student Guild
- \* Funded from reserves and loan funds



### **Rugby League**

At Student Guild-owned  
Toara Park, Baker St, Toowoomba



### **Indoor Volleyball**

Interior shot of Clive Berghofer  
Recreation Centre



**Coffee Club**



**Fast 'N' Fresh Refectory**



**USQ Club**



**Inside the USQ Club**



**Central Bean**



**Safer Venues Award**