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University of Technology, Sydney

17 June 2005

The Hon. Judith Troeth
Chair, Senate Employment, Workplace Relations
and Education Legislation Committee
C/- Committee Secretary
Department of the Senate
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

Dear Senator

Please find enclosed the statement of the University of Technology, Sydney in response to the provisions of the Higher Education Support Amendment (Abolition of Compulsory Up-front Union Fees) Bill 2005.

The statement may be of interest to the Senate Employment, Workplace Relations and Education Legislation Committee in its consideration of the Bill.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Ross Milbourne".

Professor Ross Milbourne
Vice-Chancellor and President

20 April 2005

UTS and students united on VSU concerns

The University of Technology, Sydney, the UTS Students' Association and the UTS Union are aligned in their concerns about the impact that proposed voluntary student unionism legislation might have on campus services currently benefiting students.

UTS Vice-Chancellor Professor Ross Milbourne said the University, the UTS Students' Association and the UTS Union agreed on the important role student clubs and services provide in creating a rich, rounded and memorable experience for students at University.

He said the UTS Council had passed a resolution in its most recent meeting declaring that *"University Council reaffirms its opposition to Voluntary Student Unionism on the grounds of its inconsistency with the educational and community ethos of the University, and its negative impact on the services, amenities and activities that are important to the University community"*.

"Important ongoing initiatives at UTS will almost certainly be affected due to the introduction of VSU," Professor Milbourne said. "Orientation programs, social and recreation programs for international students; extension and improvement of sporting amenities; events promoting awareness of indigenous and international issues; childcare and equity programs are just some areas that would be put under pressure."

"The University and UTS student organisations are together identifying new areas where we can provide a vibrant student experience including the extension of services for part-time and out-of-hours students; extended programs and support for international students."

Professor Milbourne said the University would take action to minimise impacts on the UTS student body resulting from the proposed VSU legislation.

"UTS is proud of its reputation as one of Sydney's most flexible and progressive institutions and is reviewing its operations and core services for students to help mitigate the potential impacts of VSU and maintain the University's reputation," he said. "Maintaining and expanding provisions for part-time students who work and live near the CBD and must juggle many commitments is also a priority for UTS."

The UTS Union and UTS Students' Association, largely funded by student contributions, provide a wide range of services threatened by VSU, including subsidised sporting facilities, food outlets and tutoring, a used textbook service, childcare, employment and welfare/advocacy services.

UTS Students' Association President Michelle Sparks said the Association is a major advocacy body for UTS students and that it provides a range of activities from free, independent assistance for students, to research on the impact of government policies such as fee increases and Australians' access to higher education.

"Student rights are not voluntary," Ms Sparks said. "This legislation is aimed at destroying advocacy and the collective voice of students." "VSU is not about choice, it's about silence."

UTS Union President Felicity McMahon said it was vital that the activities that make UTS vibrant and exciting are sustained in order to support the unique Australian University experience.

"Students must not be stripped of opportunities to acquire important life skills through involvement in clubs, sports and group leadership," Ms McMahon said.

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Further Information:

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