



Macquarie University Debating Society
Submission Opposing Voluntary Student Unionism
16 June 2005

Macquarie University Debating Society (MUDS) has over 150 members and is extremely active, hosting weekly debates and regular training sessions. It is a dynamic community promoting discussion and awareness of world issues and current affairs. Members benefit from learning skills in public speaking, analysis and argumentation.

Macquarie University has an established tradition in debating, having successfully competed both nationally and internationally in debating tournaments. Macquarie had the proud honour of winning the World Universities Debating Competition in 1996, and each year competes at a high standard in a number of intervarsity competitions.

In addition to these functions, MUDS hosts the Macquarie Schools' Cup three times a year. The Macquarie Schools' Cup is a secondary school debating tournament. The tournament invites government and non-government schools within the Sydney region to take part in a day of fierce yet friendly debating competition. The tournament provides excellent experience for schoolchildren within the region to practice their skills and gain confidence. Every year, approximately 900 students in total attend the tournament in each of the three divisions.

The MUDS executive believes that debating has an important place at university and also in secondary schools. Fostering inquiry is an essential part of any educational institution. We believe that the role of MUDS is to give students this chance to develop their views and engage in stimulating debates. In wider society these skills prove to be invaluable tools for personal development.

The view of MUDS is that the introduction of Voluntary Student Unionism would severely limit its capacity. The society relies on student fees to obtain grants from the union in order to fund their activities. Members of MUDS are subsidised for their attendance at intervarsity tournaments, as well as the Macquarie Schools' Cup relying on such funding. The Schools' Cup has considerable costs to register and provide catering, adjudication and awards for the hundreds of attendants. The excellent benefits accruing to university students and to the wider educational community would be all but lost if compulsory fees were abolished.

Regards,
Madeleine Penman
President
Macquarie University Debating Society, on behalf of the Executive.