

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

Submitter: David Browne

Organisation: Economics and Commerce Student Society (UWA)

Address: ECEL Student Centre, Lawlink Building
35 Stirling Highway, CRAWLEY WA 6009

Phone: Phone: (61 8) 6488 2285

Fax: Facsimile: (61 8) 6488 1086

Email: president@ecoms.org.au



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

17th June, 2005

Dear Sir / Madam,

Ecoms Position on Voluntary Student Unionism

Ecoms, the Economics and Commerce Students' Society, represents some 3000 students currently enrolled at the University of Western Australia's Business School. Ecoms is an entirely student run organisation that creates and runs events which are relevant to all students within the university not just those completing a commerce or economics degree. Ecoms holds education, business and social based events to further educate, challenge and reward students UWA.

In order for Ecoms to run these events free of charge to students we rely on partial funding from the UWA Student Guild. With the introduction of *Voluntary Student Unionism* (VSU) the Guild's operating expenditure will drop by a projected \$1,000,000 based on previous Guild membership figures¹, leaving the UWA Guild with a \$700,000 income shortfall². As a result, the generous funding provided by the Guild to faculty societies such as Ecoms, will be severely reduced. Accordingly, the scale and variety of activities offered by Ecoms will be cut back as they simply cannot be funded. Ecoms and the Guild provide a service to students the University itself simply does not have the resources to offer. These services include unit revision seminars, professional skills seminars, emergency funding and most importantly student representation at the various faculty levels. Furthermore, the Guild provides many services which improve the university experience for all students, while the Guild's fight against illegal fees and improper scaling and other assessment practices have made courses at UWA fairer for students across the board.

Without alternative sources of funding student run organisations Australia wide, whether politically oriented or not will be unable to operate. The various Guild supported clubs and societies operating in universities Australia wide not only allow students to become involved in activities previous to which they were unfamiliar but also many of the clubs operating perform many philanthropic initiatives which benefit the wider community³. Without Guild funding, as stated above many of these organisations, which add so much to campus life, will disappear.

Therefore, The Economics and Commerce Student Society acknowledging the important contribution which the UWA Student Guild makes to student life at university stands firm in its opposition to the VSU legislation which has been introduced into Federal Parliament.

Yours Sincerely,

David Browne
2005 Ecoms President

¹ Under VSU

² Based on forecasted VSU membership of 35% of total student population.