

# 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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16 June 2005

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

Dear Mr Carter,

**HIGHER EDUCATION SUPPORT AMENDMENT  
(ABOLITION OF COMPULSORY UP-FRONT UNION FEES) BILL**

The following submission outlines, from the perspective of the Sports Association at the University of New South Wales, an assessment of the likely effect of the Higher Education Support Amendment (Abolition of Compulsory Up-front Union Fees) Bill (also known as VSU) on the provision of student services at UNSW.

Whilst we believe the impact the legislation will have on the broader University sporting community across Australia, and the local community surrounding UNSW, will be significant and damaging, this submission is structured to provide a case study of one university. As a Go8 university with a strong reputation and presence in Australia and internationally, UNSW provides an excellent model of a diverse, thriving community of which sport and other student services are core elements. VSU, then, threatens not the periphery of the University but its foundations.

The paper comments on both the services that will continue and the services that will perish under the VSU legislation, in some detail. Unfortunately, however, the paper cannot adequately personalise the effect sport and recreation clubs, and other student services and volunteering hubs, have in shaping the university experience and life habits of 40,000 future community leaders each year.

The UNSW Sports Association would like to see the Bill withdrawn. Failing that, an amendment to allow continued compulsory collection of an amenities and services fee is necessary to maintain the heart and soul of Australian universities.

Yours sincerely.

Gary Jones  
Manager  
UNSW Sports Association

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**AN ASSESSMENT OF THE LIKELY EFFECT OF THE HIGHER EDUCATION  
SUPPORT AMENDMENT (ABOLITION OF COMPULSORY UP-FRONT UNION  
FEES) BILL ON THE PROVISION OF STUDENT SERVICES AT UNSW**

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The Sports Association is the student body on campus responsible for encouraging, establishing, fostering, promoting, developing, extending and controlling sport and recreation within the University. To fulfil this charter the Sports Association aims to:

- Provide a wide range of affordable sporting opportunities to UNSW students, whereby student participation is maximised
- Provide equally for high performance, competitive and recreational sports
- Be recognised as an outstanding sporting university within Australia and enhance the UNSW brand through High Performance/Elite Sport
- Pursue innovation in sport and sports management using quality principles, education and training as foundations for the delivery of sporting excellence
- Seek, recognise and implement opportunities to promote the UNSW Sports Association & UNSW Sport and to establish and maintain positive relationships with the University community

This translates into a number of agreed objectives. Principal amongst these are aims:

- To increase student participation to 15,000 in UNSW Sports Association clubs, programs and events by 2005
- To be ranked as one of the top 5 universities in Australia in sports results and delivery within both Australian University Sport and the wider community by 2005

The role of sport in the university community is acknowledged in a number of ways. The University of New South Wales Act 1989 encourages the University to “develop and provide cultural, sporting, professional, technical and vocational services to the community”, and University Council has acknowledged the contribution sport makes to the University community, resolving in 2002 that “Council recognises the important role of sport and sporting activities in the life of the University and the student experience on Campus, and therefore endorses sport as a core activity of the University”.

There is a direct correlation between the affordability of sport and recreation activities and levels of participation in these activities. Further, there is a direct correlation between the resources allocated to sport and recreation and the resulting quality of performance of participants. Most critically, there are direct, if less easy to quantify, correlations between higher levels of participation, skill development and performance and the quality of the student experience, the richness and vibrancy of the University community, and the perception of the University brand in the greater community. This extends to the University’s engagement with its alumni with links to the sporting clubs, both directly in terms of playing and spectating, and indirectly through attending functions and keeping

in touch with results, one of the most powerful and most utilised connections graduates have with UNSW.

The major activities and programs of the UNSW Sports Association, and the effect VSU would have on these activities and programs, include the following:

## Club sport and recreation

The Sports Association supports forty sporting and recreational clubs that range very broadly in size, purpose, nature and cost. Clubs may be as small as twenty members for specialist pursuits such as taiko, athletics and windsurfing, through to over four hundred members for the waterski and outdoors clubs. Clubs may be competitive, competing at the highest level in sports such as water polo, cricket, judo and badminton, or may be established purely for participatory purposes, such as with underwater and boardriders. Clubs may be team based or individual, and may have few costs or require significant capital and operational funding. The common thread is that the Sports Association believes strongly in maximising opportunities for students to participate in sport and recreational activities, and supports clubs equally regardless of the cache of their sport or the cost to participate.

For the purposes of completeness, the sports supported by the Sports Association via a club structure include aikido, archery, athletics, australian rules, badminton, baseball/softball, basketball, boardriders, cricket, cycling, fencing, golf, hockey, jitsu, judo, karate, kendo, netball, outdoors, rowing, rugby league and oztag, rugby union, sailing, ski and board, soccer, squash, swimming, table tennis, taiko, tennis, taekwondo, touch, triathlon, ultimate frisbee, underwater, volleyball, water polo, waterski and windsurfing. There are almost 5,000 members of these clubs.

The Sports Association supports clubs and the club structure because these clubs provide inestimable value to students, the student experience, the University community and the University itself. Benefits include:

- the development of rounded, community aware graduates. The skills and expertise that students gain from their involvement in university sport and other extra-curricular activities include teamwork, co-operation, communication skills, leadership and initiative.
- the development of community leaders. University sport in its present form is a training ground for community leaders and sporting administrators whose expertise benefits the whole community. UNSW Medallists Lisa Israel (Archery) and Kristy Owen (Water Polo), and Rhodes Scholars Elizabeth Stone (Judo) and Selena Griffiths (Cross Country Ski), were all UNSW Sports Association Club Presidents and athletes.
- the opportunity for students to participate and/or compete in their chosen sporting or recreational pursuit, or to try something new in a non-threatening and accessible environment.
- the opportunity for students to mix with other students across different faculties, schools and areas of study, developing a University-wide community and culture.
- the development life-long friends and networks.
- capturing young people at the time they are most likely to drop out of sport and physical activity, in this way developing healthy habits for life.
- a support network for students whilst at University, especially those from outside Sydney or Australia, allowing them to more easily transition into University life and continue the interests they have developed throughout their school years.

- an exposure to networks of professionals within a student's field of study which provides role models and mentors whilst studying and assists the transition to work.
- the opportunity to compete in clubs with a unique spirit and attitude to their sport, where the sport is important but not the defining part of players' lives.
- the multiplier effect of sporting clubs – a relatively small funding base produces considerable further funding and an incredible number of volunteer administration and coaching hours that the University could not afford to pay for.
- the opportunity for students to participate in club and financial administration, including running and participating in meetings, creating and working to budgets and dealing with governance procedures and the like.
- a unique and unrivalled connection with the University that extends well beyond graduation and personal participation.
- links with the local community through participating in the same teams or clubs, coaching junior and school teams, and attracting school students to UNSW
- the unique marketing angle of sport and fitness facilities to the international education market, especially in competing with the US and UK university systems

VSU in its purest form would likely be devastating to sporting clubs at UNSW. The experience in Western Australia was that whilst the sporting and fitness facilities on campus often survived VSU until its rollback, the sporting clubs emerged, if still in existence, as skeletons of their previous existence.

A similar outcome could be expected at UNSW, with three significant pressures already making sport inaccessible to some students. Sport is becoming increasingly expensive to play, there are more students wanting to participate, which dilutes the subsidy available per student, and the Sports Association has limited alternative revenue streams. It is clear that the pressure to sustain the financial operations of sport at UNSW already falls heavily on its students, and VSU could terminally threaten some of the more vulnerable sporting clubs.

To continue to support the basic level of club operations at their present standard, which in most cases is sufficient but in some cases inadequate, substantial additional revenue will need to be found. This money goes towards club and player registrations, facility hire, playing and training equipment, repairs and maintenance to equipment, and umpires and referees, with present funding covering approximately 57% of club expenditure on these items, and 24% of total club expenditure. In addition, the club structure is directly supported by a full-time club development officer and a full-time finance officer, along with the indirect support of other Sports Association staff.

### Social sports

The Sports Association conducts eleven social and lunchtime sports competitions on campus. Sports played include indoor soccer, oztag, basketball, volleyball

and table tennis, with up to 150 teams competing each year. These competitions are a fantastic way of allowing students to participate in a regular organised sport competition without the commitment of midweek training and weekend travelling and playing, and also allow players new to a sport or intimidated by the club structure an entry to the game. Students can form teams from within their faculty or school, or from a number of different schools, strengthening their ties to existing friends and meeting new ones.

This program should be able to remain self-funding and sustainable in a VSU environment.

### Recreation courses

The success story of the Sports Association in recent years has been the burgeoning Recreation Courses program. Up to seventy separate courses are conducted each session, covering activities as diverse as ball and racquet sports, dance and movement, extreme adventure, martial arts and combat and water sports. Recreation courses serve a variety of purposes including introducing students to the sport or activity, allowing for a short-term commitment to an activity rather than a full season, enabling students to participate in a variety of different activities throughout the year and enabling clubs to reach new markets, as well as providing all of the cross-faculty and broader educational benefits detailed above.

The Recreation Course program is presently, in conjunction with the Social Sports program, self-funding. However, in many cases the courses are run by Sports Association clubs, usually via the volunteer efforts of club members, so the maintenance of a thriving club structure is essential to continuing to provide this service under VSU.

### Coaching

The Sports Association shares the University's commitment to providing an excellent educational experience, and values highly the input and contribution of its coaches and instructors. At the same time, expectations of coaches in terms of the standard of care they provide whilst teaching has escalated. Considered together, it has become imperative to engage only qualified and National Sport Organisation accredited coaches and instructors, and to provide a support structure within the Sports Association to administer this. Up to 150 accredited coaches and instructors will be engaged by the Sports Association for constituent clubs in 2005, and whilst many will coach on a voluntary basis an increasing number are paid.

VSU will have a strong impact in two areas of coaching. At the elite end of competition coaches are employed to guide high performance programs in sports such as rowing, Grade cricket, National League water polo and Sydney AFL, and paid accordingly. For other clubs accredited coaches are required to not only enhance the experience of playing the sport for club members, but to cover risk management liabilities that increasingly arise. A loss of ability to pay these

coaches may in endanger the ability of the Sports Association to conduct certain sports, and certainly to offer sports at the level they are currently played.

### Facilities

The Sports Association and clubs utilise all of the University's sport and recreation facilities, including swimming pool, indoor sports courts, martial arts rooms, tennis courts and squash courts, as well as the University grounds at Little Bay, David Phillips fields and the Village Green. The Sports Association pays commercial rates for the use of these facilities, and the facilities the Sports Association use subsidise the operations of other University sporting facilities. A Service Level Agreement between the University and the Sports Association enables subsidised use of the grounds by student clubs. The student capital fund has also contributed almost \$2.5m in recent years to capital upgrades of sporting facilities.

VSU would have a significant impact on these facilities and student access to sport and recreation. A loss of funding to subsidise these facilities would cause either a closure of the facilities, denying students and the community access to an essential resource for their sport and health, or a need to increase prices and attract a corporate market at peak times, which will have the same effect of restricting access to students.

### Capital equipment

The Sports Association and clubs contribute annually to provisions for the upgrade and replacement of capital equipment such as rowing, dive, sailing and ski boats, trailers, martial arts mats and the like. These contributions enable students to participate in sports and acquire new skills that may otherwise be financially inaccessible due to the sports' high capital costs, and underpin several of our most popular clubs.

VSU will most likely hit hardest the capital intensive clubs, although not necessarily in the short term. Recreational clubs such as underwater, outdoors and water ski attract very high levels of patronage and are very cheap to operate once the capital equipment has been purchased. The equipment and reserves clubs have on hand at present could sustain operations for a time, potentially up to a few years, but without constant topping up of the reserves fund the clubs would become unsustainable once their equipment becomes exhausted and unsafe to use.

### High performance sport

Reflecting the status of UNSW as a leader amongst Australian universities, and UNSW's reputation as a university of outstanding quality, Sports Association clubs enters teams into some of the highest level competitions available, including National League Water Polo, the Sydney AFL competition, Sydney Grade Cricket, the Sydney Winter Baseball League, State League Soccer and State Cup Touch Football, and clubs such as badminton, judo and rowing



regularly enter individual and team competitors into national and international tournaments. High performance sport enhances the reputation and brand of the University locally and internationally, attracts better athletes to study at UNSW, encourages other students to participate in sports and club activities, provides pathways to excellence for students in both their studies and their sport, and lifts the standards of performance and coaching at the University.

VSU would have a devastating effect on high performance sport at UNSW. Entering teams and individuals in elite level competition requires considerable resources for coaching, facility hire, equipment, travel expenses and community involvement, and only rarely attracts sponsorship to support these resources. Already the clubs competing at a high performance level for the University are under the greatest financial strain, even accounting for additional funding provided to the small number of clubs competing at this level.

### **Scholarships**

The Sports Association coordinates and funds a tiered scholarship program for outstanding student athletes at UNSW. Founded in 1988, UNSW developed the first Australian university sports scholarship scheme. The fund has since provided for over 150 high achieving athletes. Scholars are assessed on the basis of their sporting ability, leadership qualities, potential to contribute to the wider life of the University, and circumstances which might otherwise hinder a successful transition to UNSW. The development of a comprehensive mentoring system adds immense value to the scholarship, aligning scholars to mentors for their sport, study and career. An academic mentor has been established within every faculty to assist the scholars combine their sporting schedules with their academic requirements, and by providing flexibility for study the scholarship enables students to balance an elite sporting and academic life. Up to twenty Ben Lexcen Scholarships and forty Sports Scholarships are awarded each year, with the 2005 group comprising four Olympians, a World Cup winning cricketer and numerous other national and state title holders.

The Ben Lexcen Scholarship program will not be financially affected under VSU as scholarships are paid from an endowed fund in the UNSW Foundation. However, the sports scholarships are paid from annual contributions of the clubs and Sports Association which would dry up in a VSU environment. Further, the most beneficial part of the scholarships for most students is the assistance provided through academic mentors and networking opportunities, which is administered by a full-time staff member within the Sports Association, a position that would become unsustainable under VSU.

### **Australian University Games and Championships**

The Australian University Games (AUG) is Australia's largest annual multi-sport event. AUG provides a unique opportunity for university athletes, many of whom are of Olympic standard, to compete against each other in a national event, and attracts close to 7,000 participants each year in 26 sports. AUG is complemented by a series of Australian University Championships as well as the qualifying Eastern University Games. UNSW sends approximately 600 students to EUG, AUG and the various championships.

Under VSU the support universities provide to Australian University Games and Championships would be the first withdrawn. The centralised structure of Australian University Sport, which coordinates the Games and Championships, is quite expensive and funded predominantly by member universities. No doubt a level of informal competition will continue to exist, but with much lower levels of organization and at considerable cost to participants.

### Support staff and administration

To support the programs, activities and functions that allow 13,000 students to participate in sport and recreation each year the Sports Association maintains office facilities and staff on campus, as well as a governance framework required of a semi-autonomous body of UNSW. As noted above, the Sports Association provides staff in the following areas:

- Manager
- Club Development
- High Performance: Athletes and Coaches
- Marketing Communications
- Finance
- Administration and Events
- Recreation Programs
- Judo Programs

Services provided to Sports Association members, in addition to those above, include:

- office facilities, computers, printers, a photocopier, telephones, stationery etc
- IT and web hosting services
- centralised administration of club finances including banking, payroll, GST reporting, accounts payable and receivable and monthly reporting
- marketing of clubs, courses and UNSW
- insurance coverage (through UNSW)
- auditing of clubs and the Sports Association
- a Sports Association ute for towing trailers and boats
- function and meeting rooms
- event management
- advice on how to access sport and recreation opportunities both at the University and in the community

Under VSU it is likely that these support services would no longer be available to sporting clubs on campus.

*Gary Jones  
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UNSW Sports Association*