

Submission

to

Senate Employment, Workplace Relations and Education
Legislation Committee

Higher Education Support Amendment (Abolition of Compulsory Up-front Union Fees) Bill 2005

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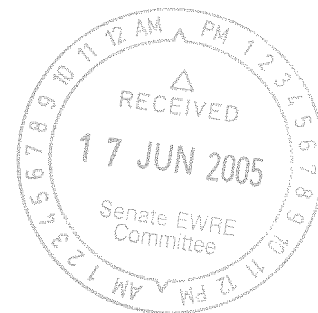
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17 June 2005

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,

Submission to the Inquiry into the provisions of the Higher Education Support Amendment (Abolition of Compulsory Up-front Union Fees) Bill 2005

I request that the attached submission, which outlines the views held by Newcastle University Sport and which contains important considerations regarding the proposed legislation, be presented to members of the Senate Committee to assist them with their enquiries and deliberations.

Thank you for your assistance in this matter.

Yours sincerely

Adrian Iakin
Executive Officer
Newcastle University Sport


Enc.

The impact of VSU on sport at the University of Newcastle

June 2005

NUSport

www.newcastle.edu.au/sport


NUSport
Newcastle University Sport

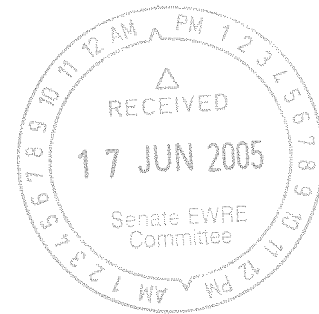
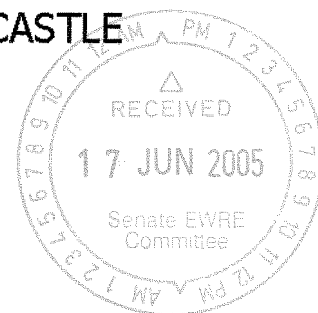


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THE FUTURE OF SPORT AT THE UNIVERSITY OF NEWCASTLE UNDER VOLUNTARY STUDENT UNIONISM



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Newcastle University Sport [NUSport] is a not-for-profit, public company limited by guarantee. NUSport operates under a constitution approved by its members and ratified by the University of Newcastle Council. NUSport is accountable to its members and is subject to regulation by the Australian Securities & Investment Commission [ASIC] under the Corporations Act 2001.

The operations of NUSport are carefully scrutinised by its vigilant Board and, as is clearly demonstrated in this submission, the sporting organisations run by members at the Newcastle Callaghan campus have been very well managed.

There are several points that it is very important to re-iterate:

- Membership of NUSport **IS** voluntary.
- NUSport is **NOT** a student organisation. It is a **MEMBER** organisation comprising students, staff and graduates and the Board of 11 directors includes just 2 students.
- Members and other users **PAY** for the services they receive from NUSport.
- Students **WANT** the facilities and services provide by NUSport.

That the facilities and services provide by NUSport are overwhelmingly wanted by students of the University of Newcastle is clearly evident in their responses to the University's 2004 Composite Student Questionnaire. *This survey of 4,800 commencing and 4,800 continuing students conducted by the University in late 2004 recorded 87.9% of commencing and 89.7% of continuing students reporting that they used The Forum Sports and Aquatic Centre and almost 80% of those respondents indicated that they were either very satisfied or satisfied with the facilities and services.* With this kind of response from the students themselves, it is difficult to understand how an argument can be mounted that the collection of a Service Fee for sport is not justified or that the portion of that fee provided to NUSport is being used for services not wanted by students or that they are paying for benefits they do not receive.

In summary it must be stressed that the General Service Charge amounts provided to NUSport and its predecessor sports association over its history, have overwhelmingly been applied to the development of facilities for the on-going benefit of students, staff, the University and the Hunter community. The funds have not only been used to develop services wanted and used by students but the facilities and services established with these funds now provide a lasting legacy for generations of future students to enjoy and from which both the University of Newcastle and the Hunter community also prosper.

The real question and the only important question to the Hunter community is "*Why would the Federal Coalition government want to destroy all this?*"

Clearly, in the interest of sport throughout Australia and in the interest of supporting regional and rural universities and their communities, the government is urged to use its powers wisely and compassionately and to modify the legislation to exempt sport and to allow universities to charge students for the provision of essential non-academic campus services.

1 NEWCASTLE UNIVERSITY SPORT

Newcastle University Sport (NUSport) is the body within the University of Newcastle which is responsible for the management, maintenance, planning and development of all sporting facilities on the Callaghan campus and for the provision and delivery of a wide range of sport and recreation activities and programs.

The high quality sporting facilities managed by NUSport on the Callaghan campus are among the best at any Australian university and include *The Forum Sports and Aquatic Centre* (50m 8-lane heated indoor pool with seating for 500 spectators; 18m high climbing wall; two full size multi-purpose halls for basketball/netball/volleyball badminton and other courts sports; fully equipped weights room; 45 piece cardio theatre; RPM room; High Performance gym; dance/martial arts studio; aerobics studio; Private Training studio; NU Moves Physiotherapy; Dietitian; Massage; Café and Childminding), *Squash and Tennis Centre* (Squash Pavilion with five squash courts, Bradford Lounge, Club Committee Room and multi-purpose studio; and Tennis Centre with tennis clubhouse and eight floodlit tennis courts); *Ray Watt Pavilion* and *six ovals* of which three have lights for night play. NUSport has also recently completed construction of the *NUSport Rowing Pavilion* located next to the Hunter River at Berry Park in a cooperative venture with the Endeavour Rowing Club Inc and the Hunter Valley Grammar School. The majority of these excellent facilities were conceived, planned, designed, funded and developed by NUSport and its predecessor sporting organisations over the past 30 years.

NUSport staff run and maintain the sporting facilities, organise a wide array of sport and recreation activities on the Callaghan campus, run and supervise courses and programs, mentor and assist students in the administration of sporting clubs and organise teams to compete in Eastern University and Australian University Games and Championships.

These wonderful regional facilities and services provided by NUSport through its long record of sound, careful management of finances over decades, have been a boon for Newcastle and the Hunter region. This achievement is all the more spectacular given the little support received by NUSport from any tier of government or external funding. All this good work, all that has been achieved is now under threat – under threat from government legislation that is not just short sighted and inappropriate but irresponsible. The legislation is irresponsible because the damage it will inflict on regional universities and their communities will far outweigh any of the purported benefits that have driven its conception.

2 THE THREAT FROM FEDERAL VSU LEGISLATION

The Federal Coalition Government has stated that it will pass the *Higher Education Support Amendment (Abolition of Compulsory Up-front Student Union Fees) Act 2005* when it gains a majority in the Senate after July 2005. The legislation as tabled will prohibit any university from charging its students a fee for any service available to students on campus which does not directly relate to the student's course of study. This legislation will have a catastrophic impact on all organisations which currently receive some funding from the General Service Charge (Student Amenities Fee) including university sporting organisations like NUSport.

So what are the compelling reasons that drive the Coalition Government to decide that it must introduce strong legislation to prevent university administrations from charging students a fee for non-academic services provided to those students?

The Federal Coalition Government has said that:

- 1 It is opposed to compulsory unionism and that students should be free to decide whether they become members of any group or organisation.
- 2 Students should only pay for services they use and students should not be forced to pay for any service they don't use.

While the government publicly asserts that its main aim is to allow students the right to choose whether or not they join a campus organisation, the proposed legislation is unnecessarily draconian and it will result in many negative consequences not only for the students the government claims it wishes to protect but also for all universities and for their surrounding communities. *This negative impact will be most severe in regional areas like Newcastle, where university sporting organisations are not only major consumers of products and services supplied by local firms, but also major employers as well as major suppliers of sporting facilities and sport and recreation services and of great social and economic benefit to the entire region.*

2.1 THE RIGHT TO FREEDOM OF ASSOCIATION

It should be noted that *Newcastle University Sport* [NUSport] is a not-for-profit, public company limited by guarantee, registered in New South Wales with the Australian Securities & Investment Commission [ASIC] under the Corporations Act 2001. NUSport operates under a constitution approved by its members and ratified by the Council of the University of Newcastle. As NUSport is a public company, it is required to comply with the statutes in the Australian Corporations Act 2001 and those statutes prevent persons becoming members without their consent.

Please note that all members of NUSport have become members voluntarily. Payment of the General Service Charge to the University of Newcastle does not make any student a member of NUSport. As with membership of most other organisations, students who wish to join NUSport need to apply for membership.

Consequently, the Federal Government argument that the major reason for the need to introduce this draconian and damaging legislation, is to protect student rights to free association and to voluntary membership of organisations, is just not true for NUSport or for many other University sports associations! While some student bodies on university campuses have used the General Service Charge as a de facto membership fee, that practice could easily be stopped without causing the serious damage to university sporting associations that will result from this proposed Act.

2.2 FEE FOR SERVICE

Firstly, students, like University staff or members of the public, are required to pay fees to use NUSport facilities or access NUSport services. The user-pays philosophy, which the Federal Coalition Government champions but which it supports and applies very selectively, **does** operate at NUSport. Students **do** pay for the services that they, themselves, personally receive. The charges that students as well as staff and members of the community pay provide the majority of funds that NUSport receives, representing about 63% of income. Grants provided to NUSport by the University from General Service Charges levied, are applied largely to the development of new sporting facilities, payment of loans for leasehold improvements and infrastructure which belong to the University (and which are used for

providing services to the University's key customers - its students and its staff) and for the maintenance and repairs of that infrastructure.

Secondly, the requirement that students should only pay for services they use is a flawed argument which the Federal Coalition Government refuses to apply to itself and for which there are countless exceptions in everyday life.

A very clear case is the use of the General Service Charge to purchase Student Personal Accident Insurance to cover students for accidental injury when they are engaged in any university related activity. The vast majority of students would not take out any personal accident insurance if it was voluntary and left up to them. They do not need insurance until they are injured. However, students are not only grateful that insurance has been provided for them when they are injured, they insist that it is their right to be covered! But who pays for this essential cover? Insurance is just an unnecessary cost unless you make a claim. *It is ironic in this debate to note that the very essence of insurance is precisely to provide **no** benefits to the majority of policy holders so that it can finance the claims of the few!* Insurance is the very opposite of user-pays. Further, the cost to individuals of purchasing their own personal accident insurance policies is collectively far more expensive than the cost of an organisation purchasing a group policy on their behalf. If individually arranged and financed insurance is forced onto students through the introduction of Voluntary Student Unionism legislation, the majority of students will simply not be insured with potentially grave financial and health consequences for themselves, their families and communities, with benefits to no-one.

All Australians are charged for services they do not use. Councils charge rates and governments levy taxes for facilities we don't want and services we don't use. The government is quite happy even to allow banks to charge customers for accounts they don't use yet it proposes not to allow universities to charge students for providing them with facilities and services essential to the well being of students during their studies. By contrast, such concern for students' financial plight was not seen when the government allowed universities to increase HECS fees to students by 25% - a direct cost increase borne by students that makes the cost of the General Service Charge pale by comparison.

If the Federal Government is so concerned about this impost on students, it could, as occurs with council rates, set a cap on the amount that can be charged by universities for ancillary services and specify the services for which the fee can be used.

What the General Service Charge has permitted university sporting associations to do is to build up the sporting infrastructure of their university, maintain that infrastructure and provide important services to students that students overwhelmingly want at prices they can afford.

3 UNIVERSITY SPORT AT NEWCASTLE - A CASE STUDY

NUSport's Mission is to initiate, develop, operate and maintain sporting and recreational services, facilities and relationships for and in support of the University and its community through Participation, Education, Facilities and Services, Programs and Activities, Athlete Development, Promotion and Publicity, and Management.

NUSport is one of five bodies at the University of Newcastle which receives a portion of the General Service Charge to provide services to students. NUSport has applied the funds it has received from the General Service Charge in accordance with its mission which has not only

provided direct support for students, but which has also supported the work of the University and resulted in numerous benefits to the Hunter community.

NUSport has made great efforts to fulfil its charter and the performance of NUSport and the earlier sports association compare very favourably with the management of other non-university sporting bodies across the country. In 1998, NUSport's predecessor – The University of Newcastle Sport Union – won the major category of *Sporting Organisation of the Year* at the inaugural Hunter Region Sports Awards. This was an outstanding achievement because this was the very first time these awards were made in the region and so the University Sports Union was being measured against the performance of every other Hunter sporting organisation over the previous decade. The excellent work done by NUSport in sport was again recognised in 2004, when NUSport won the category for *Commitment to Participation* at the 2004 Newcastle Sports Awards. NUSport has delivered for its students, for its university and for the Hunter community.

NUSport plays an important role both within the University and in the Newcastle and Hunter community by:

- Providing sport and recreation services to students, staff, graduates and the community, attracting over 1,000,000 visitations annually to NUSport facilities.
- Supporting academic programs through the provision of teaching space for Physical Education and Physiotherapy, course placement and work experience for students, and student insurance.
- Providing facilities and programs used by 62 local schools.
- Supporting the development of Hunter athletes through provision of facilities and support programs. This includes the Newcastle Knights, Hunter Jaegers, NUSwim Swimming club, NSW Institute of Sport athletes and many others.
- Promoting education and training through teaching accredited courses in fitness, sport and recreation in conjunction with TAFE NSW and by providing funding for university sporting club officials to undertake accredited sports administration, coaching, first aid, and other courses related to the management of sport.
- Providing an extensive range of high standard facilities for the community which would otherwise not be available in Newcastle.
- The world class sporting facilities at the University Callaghan campus developed by NUSport and its predecessor have helped to attract elite athletes, teams and events to the Hunter area bringing with it substantial economic benefits to the whole region. Elite teams which have used NUSport facilities include the Dutch Olympic Swim Team; Argentinean Olympic Swim Team; Sydney Swans AFL Club; Anzac Rugby League Test Team; Waikato Chiefs Rugby Union Team; Townsville Crocodiles NBL Team; and many others. Highlight events brought to the region by NUSport include the 2002 Eastern University Games and the 2003 Australian University Games.
- More than 60% of the General Service Charge received for sport over the past 20 years has been invested into leasehold improvements, facilities maintenance and student accident insurance - all being a direct contribution to the fabric or operations of the University.
- The University's status has been enhanced through the provision by NUSport of high standard non-academic support services which:
 - Improve the prestige and standing of the university in comparison with its peers through the Good Universities Guide (5 Stars for Life Support).
 - Attract more students to study here in what is seen as an attractive, supportive and friendly environment.

- Extensive positive publicity has been generated for the University by NUSport through advertising, publications, co-branding, and from visiting high profile sports personalities and teams.
- The sport and recreation facilities and services offered by NUSport provide important recreation outlets for university staff which helps to boost staff morale. In addition NUSport has hosted Health Fairs for University staff to assist staff to assess their health and develop healthy lifestyles.
- NUSport is often a point of contact for prospective students who are seeking information about enrolling in a university which not only has their preferred course of study but which also offers specific sport, recreation or training facilities.
- NUSport provides employment opportunities for students as well as work experience placement for some courses.
- Supporting important worthy community causes and charities such as the Cancer Council (NSW Cancer Council Daffodil Day and Relay for Life).
- The best example of Community Engagement at the University of Newcastle is through the activities, programs and services provided by NUSport.

The VSU Legislation threatens to stop all this very good work. In the Hunter region, NUSport facilities are used by thousands of school children and community members and by elite athletes and sporting teams *every week*. None of these wonderful facilities and opportunities *for the Hunter community* would have been possible if VSU had been in place 10 years ago!

It is particularly important to recognise that NUSport's achievements are not just the result of the hard work of its paid professional staff but also due to the huge input of generations of dedicated, unpaid volunteers who have given up so much of their own time for the benefit of others. Those efforts have been underpinned by funds received from student contributions.

4 IMPLICATIONS OF THE PROPOSED VSU LEGISLATION

4.1 REGIONAL FACILITIES DEVELOPED BY NUSPORT

NUSport believes the application of the legislation in its current form will severely undermine its current and future plans for provision of quality sporting and recreational infrastructure for Newcastle students and the Hunter community.

In 2005, the University of Newcastle is celebrating its 40 Year Anniversary. The sporting facilities on the Callaghan campus and those off campus controlled by NUSport, cost over \$20 million to develop and are valued at over \$30million currently. The vast majority of these excellent facilities were conceived, planned, designed, funded and developed by NUSport and its predecessor, over the past 30 years. Contributions from government sources to this development have been minimal. Government grants were received only in the University's formative years through the Australian University Commission and totalled about \$362,000.

The development of the excellent sporting facilities that now exist on the University of Newcastle Callaghan campus were underpinned by the funding received through the universal contributions made by students to sport and recreation through their payment of the General Service Charge.

It is critically important to understand that even though NUSport and its predecessor planned developed and funded most of these wonderful facilities on the Callaghan campus, the sporting facilities do **not** belong to NUSport – they belong to the University of Newcastle. NUSport has used funds from the General Service Charge to provide students with amenities of lasting value through leasehold improvements to the University. These sporting facilities and the services they enable and support will continue to be available to future generations of students as well as to the Newcastle and Hunter community. The income received from the General Service Charge has been invested by NUSport into the local Newcastle and Hunter community and economy.

The particular significance of NUSport's development of sporting facilities on the Callaghan campus is that students in Newcastle would not otherwise have had the opportunity to access either the range or the quality of facilities that are available to persons who live in metropolitan areas. In developing The Forum Sports and Aquatic Centre, NUSport played a significant regional role by providing sporting facilities for students and the Hunter community which governments at all levels should have provided for Newcastle. Confirmation of the high standard of the sporting facilities developed by NUSport and the importance of such facilities to the Hunter was most clearly demonstrated in the lead up to the 2000 Sydney Olympics, when NUSport's facilities, and particularly *The Forum*, were the linchpin of all Hunter region proposals attempting to entice overseas Olympic teams to train in the Hunter Valley.

4.2 FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT

NUSport believes the application of the legislation in its current form will severely impact upon NUSport's ability to service its debts.

More than 60% of the General Service Charge received for sport over the past 20 years has been spent on leasehold improvements, facilities maintenance and student accident insurance - all being a direct contribution to the fabric or operations of the University. This prudent investment has produced many benefits for students, the University and the community.

After a decade of planning and saving by NUSport's predecessor (the Sports Union), the University approved, in July 1995, the construction of *The Forum Sports and Aquatic Centre*. The construction cost of the centre was \$15.25 million which was funded through \$5.1million of accumulated Sports Union savings, a loan of \$5 million and the balance contributed by the University for access to the facility for academic use. The \$5 million loan to the Sports Union was for a 25 year period to be repaid at \$200,000 p.a. plus interest. The loan was secured on financial projections which assumed ongoing receipts from the General Service Charge. While NUSport has paid off \$1.8 million of the principal, it still owes \$3.2 million of this loan. The proposal to introduce legislation to remove funding from NUSport and other well run university sporting organisations which provide important services to students and their community, is simply irresponsible. It must be stressed that:

- NUSport's predecessor entered into its financial arrangement for funding the construction of The Forum and obtained a \$5 million loan in good faith based upon the prevailing circumstances at the time.
- NUSport's predecessor had every reason to believe that funding from the General Service Charge would continue when it sought and obtained the \$5 million loan.
- It is unconscionable and irresponsible for the Federal Coalition Government to use its unexpected control of both Houses to force responsible, well managed sporting associations into penury and some into insolvency without adequate time to adjust

their operations. The community expects (students and staff at universities are members of the community) Governments in a democracy to be measured and reasonable in their approach and not to act dictatorially.

It should be noted that NUSport has taken note of the Federal Government's opposition to the General Service Charge and has taken active steps to become less reliant on the General Service Charge. NUSport is quite efficient in its operations and its reliance on the General Service Charge has been steadily declining. In 1993, the General Service Charge represented about 75% of income and this dropped to about 37% of income in 2004. If the General Service Charge funding is to be removed then NUSport needs **more time** to adjust.

Very responsible management by NUSport has seen about 60% of the General Service Charge income spent on facilities development and maintenance over a period of 20 years. This income has not been used to prop-up operational inefficiency.

NUSport is an independent public company legally separate from the University of Newcastle. Funds provided to NUSport from the General Service Charge are directed to services and facilities for students by NUSport. NUSport has provided students with very cost effective services. The services provided by NUSport are particularly important at this period in the University's history as the University is facing a financial crisis and will be incapable of filling any void in the provision of essential student services that NUSport will cease to provide if the current VSU legislation is passed.

An area of major significance for sporting organisations that is often overlooked is the contribution made by volunteers. The General Service Charge **supports** and **significantly leverages** unpaid work done by many volunteers. Sport relies heavily on volunteers and the VSU Legislation will make many of the University volunteer run sporting clubs unable to continue when the funding they receive through the General Service Charge is withdrawn.

4.3 UNDERMINE THE FUTURE OF AUSTRALIAN SPORT

NUSport believes the application of the legislation in its current form will undermine Australia's sporting future. It will curtail student participation - especially amongst women - undermine our sporting prowess and significantly hinder the opportunity universities have to contribute to the nation's future sporting potential.

University club-based sporting and recreational opportunities provide a basis for greater female participation than the community norm. With 53% of the broader University population being women, the loss of a vibrant sport and recreation industry within the University sector will undermine further the opportunities available to women. The opportunities for sport and physical recreation provided on university campuses are an important vehicle for increasing women's participation. For example, 43% of all Australian University Games' participants (based on 2003 statistics) are women and it is clear that University clubs contribute to the health of the nation through the comprehensive range of sporting/recreational opportunities they offer. All this is underpinned by universal student contributions.

University clubs also integrate heavily into community sporting fixtures – from First Grade to a wide variety of social grades. *The University of Newcastle* enters over 60 teams in 14 different sports in Newcastle district competitions each year and provides the only

opportunities in the Newcastle region for participation in a range of sports such as Fencing, Kendo, and Ultimate Frisbee.

In short, University sport not only provides important opportunities for developing participation in community-based sport – especially for women – it also provides and maintains quality facilities for a great many non-university/community-based teams.

On a separate point, the international student market contributes an estimated \$5 billion to the Australian economy each year. Quality student-oriented sporting and recreational services are part of the showcase of services currently available to prospective international university students. Quality facilities and a wide range of sporting opportunities for students form part of an important global selling strategy for Australian universities when promoting their businesses overseas. Again, these facilities have been provided mostly from student funds not government funds and governments should be looking to support these efforts not destroy them!

Finally, sport is synonymous with Australia and the development of our sporting potential and that of individual sportsmen and women should not be undermined. Over 300 university sporting scholarships are provided annually to aspiring athletes, many of them Olympic aspirants. In most instances, University sporting associations provide the financial support for these scholarships. These financial contributions are at levels that rival and complement the Government's own contributions through the Australian Sports Commission. This recognition of sporting excellence is underpinned by compulsory student contributions.

4.4 SUPPORT FOR ACADEMIC PROGRAMS AND TEACHING

NUSport believes the application of the legislation in its current form will undermine and limit the important role that NUSport plays in assisting the University in its core business of teaching and learning.

NUSport has from its inception not only worked hard to develop a strong relationship with the University of Newcastle in support of the University's strategic directions, but has itself placed a very high priority on facilitating and advancing learning and education as one of its constitutional objectives. NUSport's constitution and its Strategic Plan (NUSport Towards 2008) are aligned with those of the University and in particular, NUSport:

- enhances the University's Organisational Performance and reputation through its focus on excellence eg: The Forum Sports and Aquatic Centre has been granted High Performance Centre status and NUSport has been granted Official Program Partner status by the New South Wales Institute of Sport (NSWIS);
- provides support for the University's Teaching programs through its strategic alliance with all five (5) Faculties; the provision of teaching spaces (approximately 1,000 students use NUSport facilities weekly for academic courses); the provision of opportunities for student placements; personal accident insurance for students on work experience or placement, and partnership with TAFE to deliver nationally accredited courses providing qualifications in fitness, sport and recreation;
- helps the University in fostering its links with the Newcastle Community;
- provides assistance in the areas of Student and Staff support; and

- attracts students to the University. In particular, the University's International Development Services (IDS) unit promotes NUSport to all overseas destinations in its recruitment of international students, contributing to this \$5 billion education industry.

NUSport's excellent facilities and services helped the University of Newcastle attain the maximum **5*** (Stars) rating for Life Support in 2004 in the Good Universities Guide. The Guide clearly recognised the value and importance to students and to the University of having good facilities and services on the Callaghan campus. NUSport's strong support for education within the region was recognised at the 2004 Newcastle Sports Awards when it was selected as a finalist in the '*Commitment to Education*' category.

4.5 ROUNDED EDUCATION AND CULTURAL DIVERSITY

NUSport believes the application of the legislation in its current form will undermine the important role Sport plays in facilitating the richness and cultural diversity of University life.

Cultural diversity and the feeling of "community" are developed on campus through non-academic activities. Sport and recreation at university enhances and broadens the experiences of students. Whether campus-based, regional, national or international opportunities, these activities contribute to, and provide a foundation for, the rich cultural diversity that exists on many Australian campuses. In fact it serves to extend the university environment beyond a student's studies and helps create a positive dimension to University life for tens of thousands of students.

Students not only acquire physical skills through University sport, but professional attributes that extend well beyond the development of sporting prowess. There are many skills that a student acquires as a result of playing, administering and generally becoming involved in sport. Developing skills in decision making, in management, in committee roles, officiating and team building are all opportunities available to those who are active in the administration of University sport. These are important skills for future leaders and the sporting environment at University is ideal in helping students hone these attributes.

In addition, university sport plays an important role in a student's social development. Lifelong friendships are born through sport in the general Australian community and University sport is no different in this regard. University sport is as important to campus life as sport is to community life. NUSport supports 29 sporting clubs on campus and in 2004, 344 teams participated in NUSport's intra-mural social sport competitions.

4.6 SUPPORT FOR COMMUNITY

NUSport believes the application of the legislation in its current form will significantly diminish the level of support that NUSport will be able to provide to the Newcastle and Hunter community.

NUSport has a very significant role in the sporting life of the Hunter region and the income that it has received from the General Service Charge has provided many flow-on benefits to the Newcastle and Hunter community. A key benefit is the provision of high standard facilities that would not otherwise be available and which help to both retain top athletes in the Hunter who wish to pursue their sporting goals and which also help promising athletes reach these

higher standards. Facilities developed by NUSport which cater for the elite level athlete include the Forum 50m heated indoor swimming pool which was very successfully used by the National Dutch Swim Team in their preparations for the 2000 Sydney Olympics (they were very pleased with the facility and with their results in Sydney!), the Stadium court use by the Hunter Jaegers National Netball League team and the NUSport High Performance Gym which has been used by the Newcastle Knights and many visiting elite teams. Benefits provided by NUSport to the community include:

- Over one million visits to NUSport facilities by local residents, visitors and guests.
- Use of NUSport facilities by elite athletes and elite sporting teams. National and international teams attracted to the region to use NUSport facilities included the Dutch Olympic Swim Team; Argentinean Olympic Swim Team; NSW Swimming Team; Sydney Swans AFL squad; City Rugby League squad; Anzac Rugby League Test Team; Waikato Chiefs and Canterbury Crusaders Rugby Union Teams; World Cup Rugby squads from Romania and the USA; Townsville Crocodiles NBL Team and many others.
- Support for regional sport through participation by University Clubs and university teams in local sporting competitions.
- NUSport supports the Hunter Academy of Sport and the NSW Institute of Sport.
- Provision of facilities for schools for school sport and school carnivals – 62 schools used NUSport facilities and services in 2004.
- Approximately 60 community organisations including sporting groups used NUSport facilities in 2004.
- NUSport currently employs over 130 Hunter based residents.

It is relevant to note that one reason why NUSport's contribution to the development of sport in this region is so important is precisely because governments have not been forthcoming. Before The Forum Sports & Aquatic Centre was built on the Callaghan campus, there was no 50m heated indoor pool in the Newcastle area even though it is the sixth largest city in Australia. Recently, the Newcastle community noted with bewilderment the Federal Coalition Government's decision to fund the development of stadium facilities at the Central Coast and in Melbourne but not in Newcastle. Indeed, development of community infrastructure for sport by all levels of government in Newcastle has been poor compared to other areas of the country, and Newcastle has relied heavily on the initiative and hard work of its own community to move ahead. Consequently, this latest threat to sport at the University of Newcastle by government will further disadvantage the Newcastle community.

4.7 FINANCIAL BENEFITS TO THE REGION

NUSport believes the application of the legislation in its current form will dramatically impact upon NUSport's capacity to employ staff.

NUSport brings considerable financial benefits to the Hunter region. Regional economic benefits include:

- Financial input into the region from staff employment and staff spending.
- Economic benefits through the goods and services both purchased and supplied by NUSport. NUSport is an industry business generator.
- NUSport organised events attract tourism and bring groups to Newcastle and the Hunter which assist a multiplicity of other industries. For example, the Eastern

University Games hosted by NUSport and Australian University Sport in Newcastle in 2002, and the Australian University Games hosted in 2003, were conservatively estimated to have directly injected respectively, over \$1.5 million and \$4.5 million into the local economy.

- NUSport facilities are used as a major magnet in marketing the University of Newcastle to international students whose presence is vital to the Hunter economy.

In conclusion, in the interest of sport throughout Australia and in the interest of supporting regional and rural universities and their communities, the government is again urged to modify the current legislation to exempt sport and to allow universities to charge students for the provision of essential non-academic campus services.

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