

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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Background:

Victoria university student union (VUSU) is the peak representative body of the students of Victoria University. Like all unions VUSU represents and advocates on behalf of the students of Victoria University to the university and the broader community. Victoria university student union is an assembly of democratically elected students. Every student at Victoria University is encouraged to take part in the annual elections.

The students of Victoria University are diverse in age and background (both status and culture). They are higher education students, TAFE students (or both). Victoria University Student Union through its structure endeavours to accommodate all students of Victoria University.

Victoria university student union endeavours to assist all students with any concerns they have regarding their educational experience at Victoria University. Victoria university student union directs students to the student advocacy department, international office, or other relevant department, on occasion the union would take the matter up directly with the university on the student's behalf.

Victoria university student union contributes to the university experience of the students of Victoria University.

Terms of reference:

- **Assessment of the likely effect of the legislation on the provision of student services; and related consequences.**

The students of Victoria University are traditionally of a low socio economic profile. The low socio economic profile combined with the fact that the student union provides primarily representative type services, the potential to generate revenue from memberships will not sustain or even come close to sustaining the current VUSU services.

Victoria university student union has no commercial operations and no alternative source of revenue; therefore the introduction of this legislation will result in the following services being discontinued.

- 1) Student Engagement
- 2) Professional Development
- 3) Administration
- 4) Bursaries
- 5) Marketing and Publications
- 6) Campus Branches

Student Engagement

- Annual VUSU Ball – The premier social event. The ball is attended by over 500 students, and sells out within 2 weeks.

- Collectives
 - Disability – Supporting students who have special needs
 - Education – Supporting the development of a network of students who are concerned about education issues. Many of these students contribute to VUSU education campaigns
 - Environmental – Support for students who are environmentally conscious
 - Queer – Supporting students who identify as queer or queer friendly
 - Women’s collective – Support for female students who are conscious of feminist issues on campus
- Elections – Victoria university student union conducts its annual general elections each October. All students of Victoria University are encouraged to participate through nominating for a position, voting, or doing both.
- Multicultural week – Week long celebration of multicultural diversity.
- Orientation for first year students. This contributes significantly to the assimilation of new students.
- Special Projects – Support for students to excel in non-academic areas. These projects traditionally also benefit the wider community.
- Student Forums (2 per year) – An opportunity for all Victoria University students to voice their concerns on any issue related to their educational experience.
- Union Development – To promote, establish and develop campaigns of interest to students.
- V fest – Festival celebrating the diversity and creativity of students of VU. V fest is a multi-campus focused activity.

Professional development

- A number of professional development opportunities exist for VUSU reps
 - Conferences
 - Induction and Training – To provide necessary and vital training to elected representatives to enable them to contribute to university decision-making processes and an understanding of active citizenship.

Administration

- Facilitates the active involvement of over 100 elected student volunteers in university and student union decision-making processes.

Bursaries

- Executive members and student newspaper editors receive a bursary. The bursary is in recognition of the outside employment opportunities these members forgo in order to ensure the smooth operations of the organisation.

Marketing and Publications

- Annual General Report

- Annual Year Book – Students are encouraged to contribute towards the reflective piece. The annual yearbook helps students enhance the community feel of Victoria University.
- Marketing – Development and implementation of the aims and objectives of the union.
- Student newspaper – SEED – There is 6 issues per year. The editors are elected and work with students who contribute the articles.
- Website maintenance.
- Women’s magazine – A yearly magazine that allows female Victoria university students a forum to publish pieces, which are of importance to them.

Campus Branches

- Support is provided for campus branches to promote VUSU, its associated events, and campaigns.
- Vacant braches – Additional support is provided to encourage campuses with no VUSU representatives to become more active in the organisation.

Victoria university student union strongly believes life on campus should be stimulating and growth promoting. The adoption of the proposed legislation will be judged by history as a regressive, ideological and malicious attack on active citizenship by tertiary students.

Regards,
Jodie PARSONS
President
VUSU Inc.