

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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Melbourne University Juggling Club

We oppose VSU

The Juggling Club was established in 1998, with very small beginnings; just a handful of jugglers who met weekly during the semester to juggle. Through the support and funding provided by our student union, the club has grown to over 100 members who meet throughout the year and spend hours every week together. Through the juggling club, many of our members have been introduced to activities such as unicycling and acrobatics, as well as juggling and circus toys such as the diabolo and poi. In addition we have camps, a formal ball, pizza nights, BBQs, and many other social events, which are a lot of fun and develop strong friendships within the group.

Many of the members of the juggling club have found their core group of friends at university in this club. We learn together, encourage each other, and we enjoy all aspects of circus together, at the same time sharing our university lives. We gain a sense of identity at the university, as the juggling club is well known around the campus. In the beginning people were surprised that there is a juggling club on campus, but now not only are we well known and recognised, but we are asked to come along and juggle at many different events at university and beyond. People loving seeing the juggling club on campus and we are strongly associated with colour and life, and this is what people look for when holding their own events, which is why we're always invited along. Our pictures often appear in glossy publications promoting the university to future and current students because we are bright, entertaining and welcoming. In turn, we get a sense of confidence, purpose and belonging, helping us stay motivated and focused on university.

An important aspect of our club is the idea of trying new things. Many of our members had no circus ability before joining, but have now discovered their ability and passion through sharing the learning experience, and being taught by people who are keen to share their skills, which in turn have often been learnt at the club. The juggling club promotes a very relaxed environment where there is no pressure and no demands of the members. People often show up for a few hours to catch up with everyone and forget to juggle as they are too busy talking to remember.

If VSU, in its current proposed model, were introduced, the juggling club would suffer.

There is currently about \$2000 available from the student union for funding social events, hire of halls, equipment, educational functions and many other things to help finance our club. We would have to drastically increase the membership fees to cover the loss of funds (current membership fee \$5 per year) or drastically change what we do and are as a club. Both would really hurt us as a club. A large number of our membership base are students who just wanted to "give it a go" because its only \$5 to join. We would be unlikely to have many new members if they had to pay a large fee to do so. Our activities would decrease in quantity and quality, and the juggling club would not be the fun place it is today. We would not be as visible, we would not be as

colourful and we would not be as successful. No matter how well we manage the changes, we are not going to be viable as club under VSU.

The juggling club urges you not to introduce VSU. We, as university students, are the very people who would have the option of paying a non-academic fee and we can see that it would hurt us infinitely more than any compulsory fee does. Our union supports us and many other clubs like us, and crippling them by introducing VSU will do no one any good, especially us. VSU just isn't worth it.

Yours,

Anna Gordon
President
Melbourne University Juggling Club