

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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Wholefoods Restaurant

Submission to Senate Inquiry

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

The impact of Higher Education Support Amendment (Abolition of Compulsory Up-front Union Fees) Bill 2005 on Wholefoods Restaurant, Monash Student Association (Clayton) Inc.

Wholefoods Restaurant is a collective run restaurant and an intergral part of student life at Monash University's Clayton campus. Wholefoods is a department of the Monash Student Association (Clayton), and whilst collectively run, works closely with the association. The implementation of Higher Education Support Amendment (Abolition of Compulsory Up-front Union Fees) Bill 2005 would have a negative effect to Wholefoods Restaurant, its customers and staff, as outlined below.

Training

As a restaurant run by volunteers and paid staff, Wholefoods has an extremely flexible ability to offer training to large numbers of people. Volunteers work anywhere between 1 and 15 hours per week, some on a one off basis, some volunteering every week for years. The most common experience of volunteers is that of volunteering for one university semester (3 months), learning skills and then finding paid employment elsewhere in the hospitality industry. Every semester in excess of 100 people receive our training, with qualified staff giving both group and on the job training to volunteers. Wholefoods has the ability to provide this valuable training because of our financial relationship with the Monash Student Association, with Amenities Fees giving us the financial security to provide this service to large numbers of students.

Community

One of the most important qualities of Wholefoods is its ability to foster a community atmosphere. In particular International students and exchange students seek out this community on campus, many of our volunteers fit into either of these demographics. Many of our volunteers also come from rural or regional areas, moving to a university where they also may not know anyone. Community spaces are fast disappearing at Monash University, and an economic rationalist approach toward higher education dictates that focus is solely on classes and assessment, rather than the overall student experience. Wholefoods provides this experience for students, providing weekly social events, an open atmosphere for volunteering, and a relaxing space for study.

Higher Education Support Amendment (Abolition of Compulsory Up-front Union Fees) Bill 2005 would threaten all of these positive aspects of Wholefoods. Our abilities to provide volunteer training, community support and a wide range of low cost food would be severely diminished by this legislation. Support from the Monash Student Association would disappear, and our operation would become focussed on finances, rather than community development. Wholefoods would no longer be able to offer volunteer training and support, and its ability to cater to and foster communities would disappear.