

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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University of South Australia Students Association

Report to the to the Senate Employment, Workplace Relations and Education Committee on the activities of the UniSA Students' Association

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17th June 2005



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1 The Association

From January 1st 1991 the University of South Australia (UniSA) became a reality. A merger between the Institute of Technology and significant elements of the South Australian College of Advanced Education formed UniSA. This merger necessitated the formation of a single student association, which represented the needs of the then six campuses of the newly formed university. The New University Merger Discussion Group was the beginnings of the UniSA Students' Association. The inaugural year of the Association was 1994, with the Confederated Student Union, a combination of the South Australian Institute of Technology Union and the Council of South Australian College Student Organisations managing the intervening years. In 1994 the student amenities fee collected was set at approximately \$200 with a total income for this source at approximately 3.4 million, rising to 3.6 million in 1999, and \$3.8 million in 2001.

The UniSA Students' Association seeks to improve the quality of student life by providing services and facilities, promoting diverse student activities and representing student interests to the university and the broader community. The Associations turnover for the financial year ending 2004 was in excess of \$12 million dollars, with only \$4.3 million directly contributed by way of the Student Amenities Fee. With approximately 145 democratically elected available student representative positions and approximately 150 dedicated staff, this organisation achieved a trading surplus of over \$250,000 in 2004, saved members \$76,000 by offering a 10% discount in all our café/bars and assisted over 1,500 students with academic issues.

This report attempts to give the committee an overview of the work undertaken by the various departments of the Association which are individually examined, listing the staff resources, main activities and if applicable statistics on the number of students that are utilising the services provided.

2 Departments

2.1 Activities

The Activities department consist of a single employee, who is responsible for the organisation of the Associations' major events. There are close links between the Activities department and several other Association departments in particular Marketing. The Activities department is usually consulted on event planning, assistance at events and event logistics, by other departments. A list of the events, which are organised by this department are listed in Table 2.1, the available statistics are also included in this table. The National Campus Band Competition listed in the table below is the largest competition of its type in the world and is organised by all Student Association Activities Officers¹

¹ Email message from Anne-Maree Rourke Cultural Activities Officer RMIT Student Union, dated April 4th 2005.

Table 2.1.1 Activities organized by the Association Activities department and numbers of attendees where available. Please note that number of attendees is for 2004 except the orientation ball, which are figures for 2005.

Activity Title	Number of attendees, where available
Snow trip	92 (sold out)
Outback trip	48 (sold out)
Short course: Coffee making	58
Short course: Bar & Waiting	55
Short course: Senior First Aid	580
Footy Tipping Competition	900
Orientation Ball	750 (sold out)
Movie Nights	Averages 300, with 10 movie nights through out the year
Campus band competition	16 bands competed, 800 attendees
DJ competition	4 DJ competed, 400 attendees (joint with other South Australian universities)

2.2 Commercial

The Association has an extensive Commercial department with two levels of managerial staff with the Commercial Manager, Commercial Support Coordinator and a Stock controller all based at Central. In addition, there are managers in place for each bar/café, bookshop and cafeteria. The array of employees is indicated in (Table 2.2.1) and varies depending on the particular needs of each campus.

Table 2.2.1 Break down of full time (FT), permanent part time (PPT), casuals and trainees at all Association commercial outlets by campus.

Campus	FT or PPT	Casual	Trainee	Totals
City East	8	7	2	17
City West	10	5	2	17
Magill	6	4	3	13
Mawson Lakes	7	7	2	16
Whyalla	1	2	0	3
Totals	32	25	9	66

Since 2005, the commercial food outlet of the Association have been able to offer students a range of pricing options on campus, from lower priced sandwiches, pies, pasties and sausage rolls and hot food at the cafeterias, to coffees, cake and 'pub' style meal in the bar/café. The cafeterias are able to offer 35 different types of hot food, over 40 types of pies, pasties and sausage rolls, more than 80 types of confectionery, 25 types of sandwiches/rolls, which does not include sushi varieties and toasted sandwiches. The bar/café outlets concentrate on a different market segment and are therefore able to offer over 70 different types of hot food, 24 types of coffee and 9 varieties of tea, 8 milkshake flavours and various types of cookies and muffins. In addition, the bars are able to offer over 30 types of spirits/liqueurs, 23 types of beer, and 25 different wine options. Not every option is available in every Association outlet, however this demonstrates the extensive variety that is available to cafeteria and bar managers to choose from when stocking their particular outlets. It is very unlikely that a for-profit organisation would have the capacity to offer this wide selection of choices for students, while continuing to offer value for money.

To give an idea of the usage rates, the numbers of individuals using each of the Association commercial outlets is given for a single day (Table 2.2.2), this information indicates that the cafeterias are currently the best patronised, followed by the bookshops and lastly the bar/cafés.

Table 2.2.2 Numbers of individuals using the Associations various outlets on a specific day (April 8th 2004). Figures for Whyalla have not been included.

Campus	Cafeteria	Bar/Café	Bookshop	Totals
City East	1070	481	879	2452
City West	1540	219	1087	2846
Magill	1438	318	483	2239
Mawson Lakes	1433	105	338	1876
Totals	5481	1123	2787	9413

The cafeterias are priced at a low margin and therefore the 10% discount for students does not apply in these outlets, however this discount is applicable in all Association bars/cafés if a student card is presented. Student feedback from our outlets are encouraged and the majority of suggestions relate to the food outlets. This type of feedback would be unlikely to occur in a profit driven outlet. Despite some negative feedback with regards to the pricing in Association food outlets a survey conducted in 2003 indicated that the Association offers very competitive prices². At the time of the price survey Eurest operated the cafeterias at City East, City West and Underdale, with Style Catering operated the Magill cafeteria and the UniSA Students Association operated the Mawson Lakes cafeteria. When the top six selling items were examined the Association was cheaper by a minimum of approximately 21% and a maximum of 27% over these outside commercially orientated driven organisations.

Textbook sales are an important component of the Association bookshops however actual sales figures are difficult to accurately estimate. The bookshops are also tailored to student needs with each bookshop offering specific study material depending on the campus. With the City East bookshop offering polo shirts and UniSA sew-on badges for nursing students. This bookshop also offers a postal service of these products to external students on request. The City West bookshop offers a wide range of art products, including paint, brushes, paper, canvas, photo film and a range of balsa wood specifically for architect students. The Mawson Lakes bookshop offers specialised calculators from Marbig Pocket at \$6.95 to Sharp EL735 \$98.50 and the Magill bookshop sells computer headphones. The range of items for sale for the convenience of student, should also be noted, with item such as bus tickets, dry cleaning and photo processing, phone cards, postage stamps, envelopes, batteries, binding and chemist items. These items are not necessarily making money for the Association but providing a convenient service for students.

² Email message from Brendan McMahan, General Manger of UniSA Students Association, dated April 4th 2005

Another service that the Association provides to students is the sale of university alumni products in the bookshops and a specific stand, staffed by the Association, at graduation day. These products are expensive to buy and store and as a consequence are not a profit-driven venture for the Association but are performed as a service to graduating students and to assist the university.

The gym located at City East offers student membership at \$105 per year and \$200 for non-students. Membership over the last three years has steadily increases with 365 new student members and over 40 new non-student members joining in 2005. These figures do not include the gyms casual member that currently stands at over 400 for 2005. The gym offers a wide range of activities including free weights, aerobics classes, qualified instructors and has recently introduced Pilates for only 5 sessions for \$25 (student price).

2.3 Employment

A single employee, who is responsible for administering this service, staffs the Employment department and also assists students find employment and liaises with potential employers. The Employment department does not charge employees or employers for the use of our service. Students are able to access job information in a variety of way: they can contact the Employment Officer, visit the employment page of the Association website and view the latest job information at each campus office. A variety of statistics listed in Table 2.3.1 give an idea of the benefits derived by students from this service and the activity generated by this department.

Table 2.3.1 Various statistics on the Employment Service provided by the Association.

Average number of vacancies per week	16
Average amount paid to employees per hour	\$16.20
Average amount paid to employees per week	\$194.40
Percentage of position related to studies	11%
Average number of employer inquires per week	Approx 16
Average number of email inquires to Employment Officer per week	30 per day

2.4 International

This department consists of a single individual employed for 4 days per week. International students generally have no local networks and therefore tend to be heavy users of Association services, however there are currently no statistics to support this impression. The Association has recognised the immediate need of international students by providing specific social activities such as multicultural week, free international cinemas nights and assisting in the organisation of the cross-university Impressions night. However, there is also a need to provide these students with an information service regarding their rights, the procedures that need to be followed and providing basic local culture information. Another unseen service provided by this department is representation on various university

committees (International Student Services Group, Student Accommodation Reference Group, International Quality Steering Group) to ensure the quality and relevance of services to international students is maintained. Input is also provided on policy development relevant to international students and representation to various schools and units to resolve specific student-related issues as these arise.

2.5 Marketing

This department is composed of two full time employees, the Marketing Officer and the Marketing Assistant, both who are employed in a full time capacity. This main objective of this team is to promote the Association and our events and activities. Two aspects of the marketing department which are relevant here are the student pack and the Association website. The student pack consists of an Ambassador card, diary, pen, highlighter, and other promotional material. This pack is produced for all onshore-enrolled University of South Australia students and the Marketing department produced approximately 25,000 individual packs in 2005. The Ambassador card that is contained within the student pack enables students to save money at a variety of venues around Adelaide. The most popular locations are various local restaurants including the Red Rock Noodle Bar, Pancake House, Matsuri Japanese, Zapata's, New Saigon, Bay of Bengal and the Broadway Hotel. On average student would save an average of around \$10 per visit. Other popular offers include joining the female-only Fernwood gym (12-months membership for the cost of 6-months) and save on Wallis theater movie tickets. Feedback from the company that supplies the Ambassador card indicates that UniSA students are the most frequent users of this card in South Australia. Students would only have to use their Ambassador card once per week over a year to earn back their entire student amenities fee.

In conjunction with the IT Officer the Marketing department maintains and up dates the Association website. A measure of the popularity of the Association website is indicated by the number of unique visitors to the site and the number of visits. For the period between June and December 2004 there were approximately 35,000 unique visits to the Association website and 80,000 visits. The two most popular sections of the website were the employment service and the accommodation service.

2.6 Recreation

This department is composed of two employees, the Recreation & Clubs Coordinator and the Recreation Administrative Assistant both individuals are employed full-time. These individuals work together to coordinate all the administration, activities and face-to-face inquiries in relation to Sports & Recreation and Clubs & Societies.

2.6.1 Sports & Recreation

In 2004 there were a total of 25 sporting clubs, 4 of which were new clubs. These new clubs were badminton, kendo, netball and ultimate Frisbee; all affiliated clubs types are listed in Table 2.6.1.

Table 2.6.1 List of all affiliated sporting clubs in 2004.

Sporting clubs 2004	
Aikido	Badminton (New in 2004)
Basketball	Ballroom Dancing
Boardriders	Cricket
Fencing	Gaelic Football
Gymnastics	Hockey
Judo	Kendo (New in 2004)
Lacrosse	Latin Dance
Netball (New in 2004)	Scuba
Men's Soccer	Women's Soccer
Soul Capoeira	Street & Inline Hockey
Taekwondo	Touch Football
Ultimate Frisbee (New in 2004)	Volleyball
	Waterski

The Recreation and Clubs Coordinator attends both the Southern University games and the Australian University games to assist individuals and teams competing at these events. UniSA was represented in the following sports: basketball- men and women, netball- women and mixed, touch football- mixed, volleyball- men and women at the Southern University games in 2004. Qualification was achieved in the men's basketball, women's basketball, mixed touch football, men's volleyball and women's volleyball. The women's volleyball team gained a gold medal coming first in the games. At the Australian University games UniSA had individuals and teams in the following sports, athletics, basketball- men and women, volleyball- men and women. The UniSA team was placed 19th overall, beating the other local universities, The University of Adelaide (21st place) and The Flinders University of South Australia (25th place).

The Recreation department operates a UniSA Sport Scholarship program, which is in its second year. The Scholarship program was initiated to encourage elite athletes who study at the University of South Australia to continue with their sport while maintaining their studies. Five scholarships were awarded in 2004 to international, national and state athletes, totalling \$3,400. The Recreation department also operates a very successful free hire services to students with camping equipment being popular with both local and international students. An improvement in 2004 was the creation of an online booking system, which allows students to access the service 24-hours per day.

2.6.2 Clubs & Societies

The Clubs and Societies component of the Recreation department had 73 affiliated club in 2005 (Table 2.6.2), with 45 clubs in the School/Faculty/Program category, 21 were Cultural/Religious/Political clubs and 7 Social/Special Interest clubs. A total of 10 new clubs were accepted and affiliated by Clubs & Societies in 2004.

Table 2.6.2 Selection of the clubs and societies affiliated with the UniSA Students Association 2005

Club Title	Location	Club Title	Location
Absorb (Theater club)	Magill	Nursing Students Society	City East
Adelaide Japanese Animation Society	City East	Occupational Therapy Students Association	City East
Applied and Visual Arts Exhibition Club	Underdale	Organisation of Planning Students	City East
Association of Civil Engineering Students	Mawson Lakes	Overseas Christian Fellowship	City West
Bangladeshi Students Association	Mawson Lakes	Pakistan Students Association	Mawson Lakes
Bach of Electronic & Electrical Social Team	Mawson Lakes	Physiotherapy Students Association	City East
Baha'I Society of UniSA	City West	Pi Club (Mathematics)	Mawson Lakes
Bhartiya Club	Mawson Lakes	Psychology Postgraduate Networking Club	City East
Builders Organisation of Staff & Students	City East	Rostrum	Mawson Lakes
Chinese Students and Scholars Association	City West	Ru-Si Buddhist Society	City East
Club Foot (Podiatry Association)	City East	South Australia Pharmacy Students Association	City East
Computer Systems Association	Mawson Lakes	School of Communication Research & Postgraduate Students	Magill
Friends of the Environment and Recreation Management	Mawson Lakes	Society of Mechanical Engineers	Mawson Lakes
Fellowship of Christian University Students	City East	Society of Postgraduate Information Engineers	Mawson Lakes
Fourth Year Industrial Design	City West	Student Exchange Association of South Australia	City West
French Club	Magill	Student Media, TV & Print Media	Magill
Geoinformatics & Surveying Students	City East	The J Club (Journalism)	Magill
Glass Club	Underdale	UniSA Biotech Society	City East
Glazed Over	Underdale	UniSA Islamic Society	City West
Indonesian Students Society	City West	UniSA Liberal Club	
International Postgraduate Club	City West	UniSA Pride Collective	City East
Lutheran Students Fellowship	City West	UniSA Students Association Labor Club	City West
Magill Association of Computing Students	Magill	UniSA Students with Disabilities Association	Magill
Malaysian Students Association	City East	Universe	City West
Marketing Students Association	City West	Vietnamese Students Association	Mawson Lakes
Medical Radiation Students Association	City East	Visart Peer Mentor Club	Underdale
Mining Engineering Students Association (MESS)	Mawson Lakes	Vizcom (Visual Arts & Communication)	City West
Non-Beige Club	Underdale	Whyalla Society Work Club	Whyalla

In 2004 the Recreation Department also organised various short courses for students. The courses included but were not limited to the Responsible service of alcohol, Effective meeting, Event management, and Get that Job. The total number of individuals that participate in Association clubs can gauge the level of participation in this department; in 2004 this figure was approximately 4000 individuals.

2.7 *Research*

The Research department consists of two employees, the Research & Policy Officer and the Postgraduate Research Officer. This department specifically provides administrative support and advice to the President and the two Vice-Presidents as well as providing updates on issues occurring in the higher education sector, policy writing, submissions and support to the Association Council

2.7.1 **Postgraduate**

A proportion of the Postgraduate Research Officer time is specifically dedicated to assisting in the organisation of social activities and publication for the postgraduate community. Over the last 12-months these have included;

- A postgraduate networking event, run for the first time in 2004 (130 attendees)
- Pizza and Beer Day (approx 50 attendees)
- The 2004 Postgraduate Awards, where both university staff and postgraduate students are recognized for outstanding achievements (150 attendees, both staff and students)
- A bi-monthly newsletter *The Postgraduate* (mailed to over 300 students)
- The comprehensive Postgraduate Guide, which is mailed out to over 350 students and is available to all postgraduate via the Association website.

In addition, representation to the university on specific postgraduate issues has included the Division of Business & Enterprise restructure, postgraduate students concerns about librarians staffing levels, negotiation on the university on the statement of minimum resources, and assistance with issues raised at the Research Degrees Committee and Research Policy Committee.

2.8 *Student Advisory Service*

There is currently a total of six staff employed in this department, which translates to 5.2 full time equivalents. The full-time employees include the City West, Magill and the External Student Advisory Officer, while the City East and Mawson Lakes positions are currently at 3 days per week. There is an Acting Coordinator position; the individual currently employed in the Coordinators role is also responsible for any specifically postgraduate issues. In addition to the above mentioned employees the Student Services Manager at Whyalla deals with academic advice as the need arises.

The total number of issues dealt with by all Student Advisory Officer has been increasing for the last three years, with over 1000 issues in 2002, 1632 in 2003 and a slightly decline in 2004 (1515). A break down by campus, which does not include all issues considered, is shown in Table 2.8.1. A change in the way statistics were collected occurred in 2004, hence the change from campus to division. This table again illustrates the increase in the needs of University of South Australia students for academic advice. Whether this increase is driven by a greater awareness of the Association advisory service or a greater emphasis on procedure by the university is unclear. An increase in the advice sought by specific student groups is also illustrated (Table 2.8.2), with both external student and postgraduate student numbers

seeking advice from the Association showing an upward trend. The information for international students is less clear as statistics are only available for 2004.

Table 2.8.1 Number of issues by campus over the last three years, normally there is one issue per student. Please note the change in record keeping in 2004, with statistics presented by Division rather than campus in this year.

Campus							
Year	City East	City West	Magill	Mawson Lakes	Underdale	Whyalla	Totals
2002	192	221	189	160	33	40	835
2003	179	507	297	195	83	41	1302
Divisions							
	Business & Enterprise	Education, Arts & Social Science	Health Science	Information, Technology, Environment & Engineering			Totals
2004	323	444	323	182			1272

Table 2.8.2 Number of issues per year for specific student groups.

Year	External	International	Postgraduate
2002	182	N/A	38
2003	226	N/A	104
2004	260	122	159

Table 2.8.3 Number of high workload issues dealt with by the combined Student Advisory team.

Year	Academic Review	Final Grade Appeals	Academic Misconduct
2002	186	136	62
2003	286	115	73
2004	117	142	98

An important area of the academic advisory service that needs to be highlighted is the independent nature of this service. Student Advisory Officers guide students through the often-complex university procedures with regards to appealing their final grades, and academic misconduct hearings among other issues. To adhere to the required principles of nature justice that are enshrined in Australian law, the university is required to provide students with independent advice on these matters. It should also be noted that while the number of cases listed (Table 2.8.1) may not appear to be high compared to the number of students studying at the University of South Australia, the nature of this service is that some types of cases can require up to six months to resolve (Table 2.8.3). In addition, table 2.8.3 demonstrates that the number of these high demand cases have increased over the last two years, with specific reference to final grade appeals and academic misconduct.

Additionally, in a similar fashion to the International department, Student Advisory Officer provides advice to the university on policy and procedural issues. The main area where interactions with the university occur is with the almost annual revisions to the Assessment Policy & Procedure manual, and other policies affecting students.

2.8.1 External

The Externals department while providing specific services to external students in the area of academic advisory as indicated above also provides an additional range of services. These services include a;

- Monthly newsletter entitled *LineOut* (emailed to all external students, mailed to 50-100)
- An email discussion group for external students (currently 108 subscribers)
- An Association student pack that contains additional resources including Unibooks order forms and remote access library forms.
- A 1800 telephone service that accesses the Association reception.

It should also be noted that all Association services are available to external students with extra effort by the Externals department to include these students in Association events such as providing these students with the opportunities to win movie night tickets, and specifically promoting events such as the Snow and Outback trips to these individuals.

2.9 Student Services Manager

Student Services Managers and Student Services Assistants are the public face of the Association. There are currently 5 full-time Student Services Manager and 4 full-time and 2 part-time Student Services Assistance employed by the Association. The Association offices at each campus provide a wide range of services to students including binding, providing change for vending machines, cheque writing, equipment hire (including BBQ's), fax facilities, kitchen facilities, laminating, locker hire, photocopying (B&W and color), printing (B&W and colour), safe sex products, and scanning facilities. In addition to all these services, many of which would not be provided on campus otherwise, the Student Services Manager provides financial assistance to students via emergency student loans, the second-hand book sales service, student grants and the childcare subsidy. To illustrate the Association services utilisation at the campuses offices, the 2004 figures for City East are presented in Table 2.9.1. The Association offices at each campus also sell the tickets for the events run by the Association. Another service to student is the childcare subsidy, which in 2004 had a total of 31 successful applications, paying out more than \$2,800 to eligible students.

Table 2.9.1 Overview of the activities carried out at the City East office of the Students Association for the period covering January to December 2004.

Service provided	Number issues
Student loans	126 loans
Movie tickets	639 tickets
Second hand book sales	317 books
Photocopier	Approx 110,000 photocopies
Cheque writing	49
Fax facilities	534 (local, std & international)
Lockers	New issues 162, total 400
Overheads	Approx 535 overheads
Printing	Approx 528 pages
Student grants	18, varying amounts

2.10 Other

The Association offers a range of other miscellaneous services that are detailed below.

2.10.1 Student Accommodation

Whilst the Student Housing Service is a separately incorporated body, the Association, in 2004, provided an amount of \$42,000 in addition to other means of support that were non-financial. The total value of the support package offered by the Association would be in the range of \$50,000. The Association provides this assistance to ensure students with low-incomes are provided with accommodation options. To ensure that this organisation maintains a student rather than a profit focus a single student representative sit on the board of this organisation.

2.10.2 Student Accident Insurance

All students are covered by the Association personal accident insurance policy, with over 30,000 students, associate members and Association staff being covered by this policy. The scope of the cover includes 24 hours; 365 day per year cover with some provisions that are only available while on campus or engaging in university, course or sporting activities, and placements. The policy covers medical expenses for injury, total disability (permanent or temporary), and partial disability (permanent or temporary), and can also include income insurance.

2.10.3 Women's Room

Women's' room are available on three campuses including City East, Magill and Mawson Lakes. The rooms are specifically designed to enable female students to have a safe, quiet environment to socialise, chill out and be able to breast feed in private if the need arises. The facilities in the Women's rooms include a microwave, a bed, couches, free tea/coffee making facilities, information pamphlets on women's issues and free feminine hygiene products. The Magill women's room was refurbished last year at a cost of approximately \$500.

3. Conclusion

Individually, the services provided by each department may not appear to be essential, however collectively all the services provided by the Association ensure that students attending UniSA are exposed to a wide variety of social, sporting and recreation activities. In addition, the Association tries to assist students by providing employment opportunities, food discounts, and representation within the university community, along with advocacy and advice. The misconceptions surrounding student organisations has seen the introduction of voluntary student unionism legislation. This lack of understanding may see the curtailing or lose of vital but unprofitable services, if the Senate passes the currently proposed legislation. The UniSA Students' Association believes that students will be the ones to suffer and miss out on vital developmental opportunities if the currently available services are reduced by the introduction of voluntary student unionism.