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Sent: Friday, 17 June 2005 6:25 PM
To: EET, Committee (SEN)
Subject: Submission regarding VSU



The following are key concerns I have with regards to the proposed VSU legislation.

1. Student services

The medical, dental and legal services may no longer be available without student union support. This is my fifth year of my Arts/Law degree and I am fully aware of the intensity and stress we are exposed to in high pressure courses. I have observed as countless peers have suffered from anxiety attacks and breakdowns during exam periods and many have resorted to the university counselling services to assist them through this. Many students, especially those from interstate or rural Victoria, do not have family support networks to whom they can turn when in need. It is incredibly difficult to maintain a sense of perspective during assessment time. Students often feel that their marks mean the difference between a job or unemployment at the end of their degree and the impending job insecurity only feeds into the stress surrounding the assessment process. More than half of the people I speak to have at some point had to resort to an anti-depressant or a mood stabiliser to get them through the university year. I am in no doubt that students who do not have access to the support services available through the student union would have faced breakdown or possibly self-harm in the face of this intense pressure with which we are confronted.

2. Student Community life

Bbqs, bands, o'week, clubs and societies would not be able to survive if not for union funding. These add to the fabric of the student experience. The argument that students who wish to access these facilities should pay directly for them is not realistic. The reason for this is the in order of clubs and societies to continue to grow, they need to have the ability to reach out to the student population with events, displays, marketing programs and functions – all of which need funds in the first place. These funds have to come from the union, as they would be used to support the events before they have the support of students. Universities are huge and can more often than not prove to be incredibly alienating. It is difficult to make friends and I feel that the move from high school to university is incredibly traumatic. The clubs and societies fill that gap. Initiators provide leadership and guidance for younger and newer students.

3. Discrimination and support for minorities

Most importantly, the clubs and societies are an important force in providing support for persecuted minorities and addressing discrimination. The experience for minorities on campus can be incredibly difficult. I am especially aware that Muslim and Jewish student communities suffer a great deal of discrimination and their respective clubs and societies create campaigns to

educate the university masses and support students who wish to file formal complaints. They also run positive cultural programs which create a far more multi-cultural environment, which, amongst other things, contributes towards the educational experience for all students at the universities.

Consequently, I am concerned that VSU will starve unions which in turn will stifle the student community services which are so integral to the university experience.

Kind Regards

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