

From: Clinton and Mark [nain.angel@bigpond.com]
Sent: Sunday, 19 June 2005 3:40 PM
To: EET, Committee (SEN)
Subject: Impact of VSU Legislation



To whom it may concern,

I am a current first year student at the University of Melbourne. I am very concerned about the negative impacts the 'Voluntary Student Unionism' legislation will have on social welfare and health of university students at the University of Melbourne, and all universities nationwide.

I believe Amenities and Services Fees, or Union Fees, should be a compulsory part of university enrollments. I am also in firm belief that all students do, or should have the option to, benefit from the services, amenities, sporting activities and/or facilities and social groups these 'compulsory fees' fund.

From a personal point of view, when I first commenced study I took advantage of the Housing Service the University supplies. If it had not been for this service I would have had a much smaller chance of securing suitable accommodation for university study. Without this service it was very difficult to find households that are suitable and welcoming to students, that are also affordable, especially close to the university. In my case this service, funded by the fees my peer students and I paid, was able to help secure my welfare as a student. This service was available at no cost. Having no cost services such as these is not only important for the welfare of its students, but also the chance to perform well academically.

In another instance I used the Counseling services available on campus. Moving away from home, into a new environment can be a very distressing experience, for myself and many others. Having this counseling service provided me with the support I needed to get through this 'teething' period. The support offered by this service was priceless and I believe is essential to the health of many university student, myself included.

If this legislation passes in its current state the Union will lose millions of dollars in funding. This will obviously impact on the services unions will be able to provide for their students. Much like government taxes, these fees are used to provide services, some every student may not use. There are a range of services presently supplied for students at the University of Melbourne. There seems to be something for everyone. From the Medical Student group to the Environmental Collective.

Australian universities are a major asset to this country. Their unions provide a support network and a student life for all students in these universities. Any legislation that will damage these unions will damage Australian universities.

As I understand it, many universities rely on International students to operate effectively and competitively. There are many services on campus, provided through the union, that assist these students to thrive in Australian universities. At the University of Melbourne there is a Chinese Union group that provides assistance in providing social and support activities for many Chinese students at university. Without this group I imagine many Chinese students would suffer without the social and support services this group provides.

The list of essential services that Unions facilitate is extensive, and indeed, extends beyond these few I have mentioned. It is a right of students to be supported by the services these unions provide. Whether they be welfare services, social service, sporting services, or interest groups. I fear the quality and integrity of Australian universities owes a great deal to its Unions.

Sincerely,
Mark A. Peart
First Year Student