

# 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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**Submitter:** Amber Jacobus, President

**Organisation:** UWS Students Association Inc

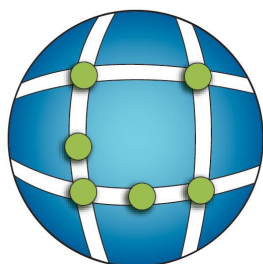
**Address:** P.O Box 630, St Mary's, 1790

**Phone:** 0410218168

**Fax:** 47360676

**Email:** [president@uwssa.org.au](mailto:president@uwssa.org.au)

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**UWSSA**  
**UWS STUDENTS' ASSOCIATION INC.**

**UWS Students' Association  
Submission to the Employment,  
Workplace Relations and Education  
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Amendment  
(Abolition of Compulsory Up-front Union Fees) Bill 2005*

**Prepared By:**

Richard Martino, Jason Markwick  
& Kell Tremayne.

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**Contact Details:**

**UWS Students' Association Inc.**  
P.O Box 630, St Mary's, 1790

**[www.uwssa.org.au](http://www.uwssa.org.au)**

**Jason Markwick**- Research, Advocacy, Welfare  
& Education Division Manager

Ph: (02) 4736-0673

Mob: 0423 415649

E-mail: [j.markwick@uws.edu.au](mailto:j.markwick@uws.edu.au)

**Richard Martino**- Researcher

Ph: (02) 9772-6488

Mob: 0404-051574

Email: [rmartino@westnet.com.au](mailto:rmartino@westnet.com.au)

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## **1. Executive Summary**

### **1.1 Key Findings**

#### **1.1.1 Quantitative:**

The survey data suggests that:

- a) The majority of students at UWS do not want VSU;
- b) The majority of students at UWS believe that VSU will have a negative impact on their University experience;
- c) The majority of students at UWS come from lower socio-economic areas with lower access to resources than students from other parts of Sydney.

#### **1.1.2 Qualitative:**

It is evident that there are some main themes that can be pulled from the six case studies conducted with UWS students. Of note were the correlating views:

- a) That compulsory student fees are similar to that of local council rates or taxes, in terms of building a resourcing a community;
- b) That VSU is not about freedom or choice;
- c) That students should have a right to a voice both within the University community as well as in the broader community, and that VSU will ultimately effect the ability of students to have that voice;
- d) That VSU will have serious impacts upon the ability for special needs and minority groups to have a quality education;
- e) That a referendum of students at UWS should be carried out so that students can democratically decide whether they want VSU or not;

### **1.2 Recommendations**

- 1) We urge the Senate not to pass VSU legislation in any form.
- 2) That if the Senate decides to pass some form of VSU legislation, that;
  - a) the Senate initiate further studies and community consultation into the impacts of VSU on students and the surrounding communities;
  - b) they allow students the democratic choice to decide this for themselves by holding referendums at each University such as was the case in New Zealand.

## 2. Introduction

### 2.1 Rationale

This submission is presented to quantify and qualify the impact of the proposed VSU legislation on students of the University of Western Sydney, UWS Students' Association, the University itself, and the Greater Western Sydney community. The submission details and debunks the 'thinking' behind the Federal Governments proposed legislation with the facts of what the Association does and those that benefit from the Association.

### 2.2 Purpose & Scope

This report was compiled as a direct result of the Federal Governments proposal of VSU legislation. The purpose of the study was to *investigate the views of students at the University of Western Sydney (UWS) on VSU related issues as well as their usage of student organisation services and facilities.*

The study was conducted in two stages, consisting of both a quantitative survey of students as well as qualitative interviews/case studies.

The quantitative stage involved a random survey of 915 students from each of UWS's six campuses. Whilst this sample gives us a fairly good representation of UWS's 24,042 EFTSU (UWS 2004) approximately 4%, the University of Western Sydney Students' Association (UWSSA) will endeavour to conduct follow up studies with larger sample groups in an effort to obtain more reliable and longitudinal data.

The qualitative stage involved case study interviews with six students each from one of UWS's six campuses, with an effort to obtain informants from diverse and special needs backgrounds. Again, UWSSA will be endeavouring to compile additional case studies for analysis in it's longitudinal study of VSU.

#### **2.2.1 Proposed VSU Legislation**

The essence of the proposed VSU legislation is to prohibit;

- a) the collection of a compulsory student organisation fee;
- b) higher education institutions from collecting any non-academic compulsory fee. (Failure on the part the higher education institution to comply with the legislation can incur a fine of \$100 per EFTSU)

Whilst the first part of the legislation essentially establishes a model for Voluntary Student Unionism (VSU), the section restricting higher education institutions from collection a compulsory non-academic fee is designed to restrict such institutions from collecting a compulsory fee under the guise of a student services fee. Hence, higher education institutions are restricted from collecting a compulsory fee which would either be used for student services, or passed onto student organisations that are restricted from collecting compulsory fees under the first part of the legislation.

### 3. Background

#### 3.1 History of UWS Student Organisations and UWSSA

UWS first opened its doors as a University in 1989. It was a federated network of universities, and had two founding members. These members, UWS Nepean and UWS Hawkesbury, each had at least one student organisation. Indeed at Hawkesbury, the Hawkesbury Students' Association has existed, back in the days of the old Hawkesbury Agricultural College, since 1929. The HSA, before the University was born, split into the HSA, and the Hawkesbury Union. UWS Nepean also had a student organisation, called the Nepean Students' Union. In 1990, UWS Macarthur joined the federated network, and brought with it the Macarthur Students' Association. The Nepean Students' Union developed a semi-autonomous postgraduate department within its structure, called PAUWS Nepean.

PAUWS Nepean helped develop the Hawkesbury Association of Postgraduate Students and the Macarthur Association of Postgraduate Students. At Macarthur, the Macarthur Sports and Recreation Association was formed, splitting away from the Macarthur Students' Association. Shortly after this development, the Macarthur Students' Association split into the Bankstown Students' Association and the Campbelltown Students' Association. In 1998, UWS announce an end to its federated network, and the eight organisations began discussions into how this restructure would affect them. PAUWS Nepean, HAPS and MAPS chose to amalgamate and in 2001 became PAUWS. The Blacktown campus chose to split away from its place in the Hawkesbury Student organisations, and in 2003 the SAUWS Nirimba was incorporated.

UWS Students' Association (UWSSA) was formed in 2004, born out of a federation restructure of the existing student organisations to better meet the growing needs of UWS students. UWSSA has a unique structure, designed to fit in with the multi-campus environment of UWS. The Association has two operational branch levels, the campus branch where each campus has its own "branch" that facilitates services to meet the needs of students at the campus level, and there is also a Central Branch that overarches the campus branches to coordinate the UWS wide services model as well as managing the organisation as a whole. Complementary to this structure is the focused service provision to local students to maximise the service delivery desperately needed while developing the critical mass which in turn generates UWS wide services.

##### **3.1.1 Current Mission Statement**

*"UWSSA shall provide representative and welfare services for the students of the University of Western Sydney. Through this role, UWSSA shall lend critical support for the University. In addition to this, UWSSA shall enhance the UWS experience, through provision of facilities, activities and services that can be accessed by the students and staff of UWS as well as members of the wider community"*



### **3.1.2 Constitutional Objectives**

The objects of the Association are to:

- Promote the rights of all Students to an accessible free public tertiary education and promote equitable access to higher education for all who reside in Greater Western Sydney;
- Advance the interests and welfare of Students;
- Promote a safe and non-discriminatory environment on the University campuses;
- Promote equitable access to services offered by the Association for Students on each campus of the University;
- Make available safe places for meetings of Students;
- Represent Students in matters affecting their education and educational environment and to promote student participation in such matters;
- Represent or arrange for representation of any Student or group of Students before any authority, provided that the student(s) wish to be represented and that such does not prejudice the interests of Students generally;
- Make representations on matters affecting Students to any member or body of the University;
- Promote the intellectual, cultural and social development of Students;
- Encourage and assist in the formation and the operation of clubs and societies by Students which are affiliated with the Association;
- Join, affiliate or co-operate with such bodies or organisations as it deems desirable in furtherance of its aims and objectives;
- Organise and assist Student social, cultural programs and social sporting activities;
- Encourage environmentally sustainable practices and behaviour in all activities of the Association and in the University generally;
- To work co-operatively with UWS Connect to promote the supply of all necessary and desirable services and amenities to Students on each University campus; and
- Do all other lawful things as are incidental or conducive to the furtherance of these objects.

### **3.1.3 Legal Structure and Good Governance Practices**

UWSSA is an incorporated Association. As an Incorporated Association, UWSSA must comply with certain regulations and rulings. However, beyond this, UWSSA has also developed practices, in line with the ASX Good Corporate Governance Guidelines, by which it operates. The Committee of the Association is the Student Representative Council and is the ultimate authority as the organisations board. Student Organisations are very unique in their nature, as participatory democratic structures outside of government with directors having a much more intimate role than most other organisations.

The Association's Accountant operates as the Chief Financial Officer of the Association and is responsible for reports and financial statements, declaring that they are accurate. This is an example of the professional development in operations that has flowed through student organisations generally across the nation with very few exceptions. Today student organisations not only fill their traditional representative functions but also have become effective professional service providers crucial to students during the course of their studies within a university community. Too often than not when student organisations come into the spot light they are pictured poorly as entities due to the pursuit of certain agendas in some quarters of the Australian political landscape, the focus has not been on the critical professional services that form the vast majority of such organisations functions, services that would disappear under the proposed legislation and the huge number of need students who benefit daily because of the current national systems.

The Department of Welfare and Advocacy is the Department that provides support for individual students, rather than attempting to focus on the collective needs of students. It is comprised almost entirely of Student Advocates (welfare caseworkers) and is headed by the RAW&E Coordinator. The department is responsible for developing, coordinating and administering the Association's massive services programs, including transport, emergency student loans, emergency food vouchers, book vouchers, second hand book shops, student service/computer centres, student accommodation network, childcare services/programs and student employment network to name but a few.

The Welfare division also exists to promote the specific needs of autonomous groups. Its role fits into both the Research and campaigns Department and the Welfare and Advocacy Support Department. It is through this particular function that autonomous groups are able to seek specialised services and advise. It is envisaged that there would be a number of student representatives that head this Office along with specialised staff, examples of the elected student positions who are linked with this department would be the International Students' Officer, the Disabilities Officer, the Queer Officer, the Indigenous Officer and the Women's Officer

The Division of Activities and Entertainment is responsible for the provision of the entertainment and recreational services that students enjoy, helping to revitalise the UWS campuses and facilitate a balanced student life. Clubs and Societies, which are primarily recreation based, also fall within this division.

This Division is responsible for the provision of funding to clubs, provide events and activities and also provide various courses of interest for UWS students. This division provides bands, BBQ, forums, cooperatives, diaries and o-week material, big festival and community events, recreational sports programs, student trips, student conferences and online services platforms.

These two service divisions are linked to an administration and finance division that facilitates the functionality of operations UWS wide with accounts, administration and receptionists. The organisation is structured as an efficient high profile service provider, accessible and functional across all campuses of the university.

### 3.2 UWSSA Services

UWSSA is a major service provider to UWS students, services that both directly and indirectly benefit the 38,000 students at UWS daily. The introduction of the proposed VSU legislation will result in ultimately the cessation of the multi-million dollar services program provided by UWSSA. With the university of Western Sydney predicting a \$3-4 million dollar deficit in 2005 there is no capacity to replace the services that would disappear under VSU.

#### 3.2.1 Core Services

UWSSA has a number of core services it provides. Some of these are services that are currently provided to UWS students, whilst others are new services being introduced for the first time in 2005. A number of activities and services have also been designed to complement official activities of UWS and to help promote UWS and UWSSA.

Core services for UWSSA include:

- **Representation, Collective (Committees & Inquiries)** – UWSSA shall represent the students of UWS as a collective. This includes UWSSA supplying student representatives to sit on committees of the University of Western Sydney and also the provision of submissions to external bodies.
- **Representation, Individual** – UWSSA provides representation on behalf of individual students. This is primarily to the University, but may include representations to other bodies as the Association, and as the situation, sees fit. The purpose of this service is to assist students in overcoming any issues that they are facing. Professional Student Welfare Caseworkers not only represent and advocate but also direct students to other organisations where they may be able to seek assistance.
- **Welfare Support** – UWSSA provides to students various types of welfare support for individual students. These services include emergency student loans, book and food vouchers, advice regarding Centrelink benefits and accommodation support. This area will be expanded to include advice to students on how to live on a budget, agreements for people wishing to share housing (flat mates) and information on avenues students can take to resolve disputes.

UWSSA has also developed an accommodation database for students to find accommodation easily along with provision of emergency accommodation for students having any emergency housing issues. These services are primarily accessed through the six, one on each campus, full-time Welfare Caseworkers.

- **Autonomous Groups, Support of** – UWSSA provides support to the various autonomous collectives, and also provides support for various theme weeks, such as Blue Stockings Week, Disabilities week, International Students Week and Gay Pride Week. UWSSA also provides specialised support and research services for some of these groups, through the employment of an Indigenous Rights and research Officer, a Women's Rights and Research Officer and a Queer Rights and Research Officer. UWSSA engages with any UWS policies, which help promote the rights of autonomous groups, and representation thereof, such as gender equity policies. UWSSA develops some of these policies on its own, and has numerous positions on its SRC to ensure that these groups retain representation on the Association's governing board.
- **Activities, Promotional and Campus Based** – UWSSA provides activities and entertainment surrounding its theme weeks, and generally, routinely throughout the year. These activities are important for providing a greater level of student life for the campuses.
- **Clubs and Societies, Funding and Development of** – UWSSA encourages Clubs and Societies to develop and foster. Clubs and Societies are an excellent means of assisting student interaction and enhancing life on campus. As clubs are run by normal students, they are reasonably simple for the Association to administer and provide for, as the workload is minimal but the affect on student life is immeasurable. Most Universities have a range of clubs, and the diversity of these clubs is astounding.
- **Insurance Cover** – In addition to normal insurance kept by UWSSA, the Association also supply's insurance cover that will cover its members 24 hours a day anywhere in the world. Included in the insurance service portfolio is Ambulance that entitles the students to free ambulance from any campus or Association activity anywhere in Australia.
- **Discounts** – UWSSA also works with various agencies and groups to assist UWS students through the provision of discounts. Unlike normal discount cards, UWSSA will actually look at providing students with discounts on their phone bills and electricity bills so that students suffering financial hardship will still be able to take advantage of the arrangements.
- **Memberships** – Through membership of UWSSA, students at UWS are members of NUS. Through this, students gain the advantage of a national voice, and, as a united students' association, shall have a much stronger influence over NUS policies. UWSSA shall also explore becoming a member of the Australasian Association of Campus Activities in order to allow students to obtain the benefits associated with this organisation.

- **Childcare, Subsidies** – The pre-UWSSA organisations often committed themselves to provide funding to the Childcare centres that are available on campus. These centres are actively involved in assisting student parents to continue to access UWS, and are unfortunately not adequately funded. UWSSA shall continue to subsidise the Childcare centres on campus this year spending \$125,000 alone on this important service to not only subsidise but reserve student access places.
- **Student Media** – UWSSA operates both a radio and publications system. In the short-term, both of these are exclusively campus-based media, with the publication only being available on campus, and the radio only able to access via the Internet. Over time, it is expected to increase the circulation of the publication and to also acquire a full broadcasting license so that everyone can access the Association's radio station or alternatively use internet media streaming.
- **Collectives** – UWSSA has numerous collectives that help empower students to become involved in their own community interests. Collectives shall receive funding from the Association and shall organise and take part in any community engagement programs that they see can.
- **Employment Service** – UWSSA continues to run a Casual Employment Service for Students. Assisting students into paid employment and find much needed income. By doing so UWSSA screens employers to ensure that vulnerable students are not abused in the workplace.
- **UWS wide Community Concert**– UWSSA runs an annual event for its students that shall be run as a UWS wide event for the first time this year. This concert, Saturate, shall involve carnival like games and food, along with a big name band. Saturate is the central music event on UWSSA's calendar.
- **Orientation** – UWSSA runs Orientation events aimed at encouraging new students to get involved in UWSSA and experience the fun of UWS. During o-week the Association assists students with enrolment and getting through the sometimes-daunting task of starting University.
- **Transportation** – UWSSA also runs shuttle buses to and from stations to campuses. This service is provided free of charge to students and assists in allowing students a reliable means of travelling from major stations to the campus so that they can arrive in time for their classes or exams. This is also a welfare issue as students leaving class late at night have, where these services previously did not exist, been attacked.

### **3.2.2 New Services**

UWSSA shall also begin providing services in 2005 and 2006 that have previously been unavailable to students of UWS. UWSSA's new services shall be made available, based on its new universal student base, so that activities previously unavailable to UWS students, in the smaller pre-UWSSA organisations, shall now become standard and expected. These new services

will also do wonders in marketing the organisation and university to its students and community.

Planned new services of UWSSA include:

- **Film Competition** – UWSSA shall run an amateur film competition for its students. Students shall be offered instruction of film making techniques, and this event shall culminate in an awards ceremony for the films submitted.
- **Film Festivals** – UWSSA shall also run Film Festivals, allowing students to enjoy cult classic films and films with political messages.
- **Talent Quest** – Each year UWSSA shall run a Talent Quest. This competition shall be run with a specific cultural feel, encouraging culturally traditional performances to help promote cultural awareness.
- **Trivia Nights** – Trivia Competitions shall be run, periodically, throughout the year. These competitions shall also encourage students to learn about events occurring around campus, with specific questions on this topic.
- **Courses, Special Interest** – UWSSA shall run numerous courses available to students, staff and the wider community. Some of these courses will be lifestyle courses, including cooking, sewing and other similar courses. Others shall be artistic, such as pottery courses. Some courses shall be designed to enhance skills of those who take them, such as First Aid and Sign Language courses.
- **Childcare, School Holiday Program** – UWS has childcare facilities for children before they attend school. However no cheap facility is available for students and staff who have school-aged children during school holidays. UWSSA shall run a school holiday program to assist these parents.
- **Publications, Promotional (Students and Graduates of UWS)** – UWSSA shall produce periodic publications for use by community firms and companies. These publications shall include essays and research written by UWS students and staff, as well as the achievements of students. The publication shall be designed to encourage local businesses to see UWS students and graduates as an excellent option for the purposes of employment.
- **Careers Expo** – UWSSA shall also invite local businesses on campus, along with trade unions and market stalls, so that they can meet, interact and recruit UWS students and graduates into their organisations.

### **3.2.3 2005 Budget**

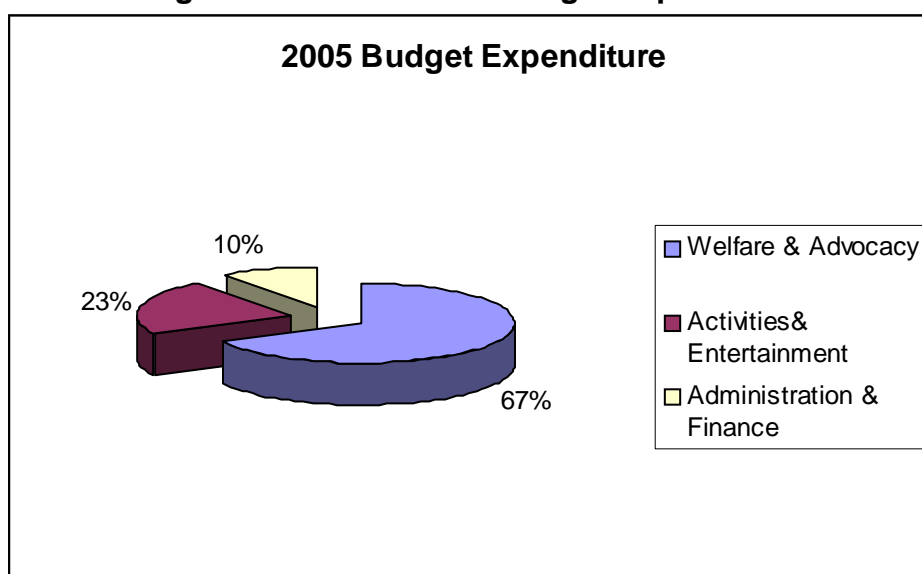
UWSSA as a major service provider meets the needs of students at a community level that the university cannot. The university has neither the budget nor experience to develop, initiate and run the services that are currently provided by UWSSA. Under an increasingly deregulated and competitive environment university students are experiencing a decline of heavy non-profit services provided by universities. Under this environment services provided by student organisation are in more demand than ever and university reliance on student organisations as these services provider to replace, rather than compliment, has increased. The services that student

organisations provide must be and need to be provided to students in the course of their studies for reasons of participation, retention and quality assurance, whether these services are direct welfare service or activities and entertainment they form the basis of a holistic education sector maximising outcomes for students and the nation. Under the proposed VSU legislation student organisations would disappear along with the services provided, most universities are not in a financial position to pick up and provide the critical student services, outside service providers are not interested in non-profit ventures and would not replace the current organisations, and clearly the question becomes who will provide the intrinsic student services crucial to the sector and students? What is clear is that the government cannot answer this question and indeed it would appear even recognise it let alone answer it.

The UWSSA 2005 budget shows an income of \$3.8 million for the year ending 31<sup>st</sup> December. The vast bulk of this income is through the UWS student services fee, \$3.5 million, which represents around \$65 per semester contribution per student. This money is then attributed to the three divisions of the Association for the provisions of services and operations UWS wide:

- Welfare and Advocacy Services Division \$2.7 million
- Activities and Entertainment Division \$900,000
- Administration and Finance Division \$400,000

**Figure 1: UWSSA 2005 Budget Expenditure**



UWSSA is running a budget deficit of \$200,000 that is met from limited savings the organisation has made. The reason the operating deficit exists is because there were no avenues for savings without decreasing services to students, services that have been classified as critical such as campus transport. It should also be noted that the Association's operations and services were independently costed/audited in 2004 by FERRIERS Chartered Accountants,

the report costed services to UWS students provided by UWSSA at \$4.7.<sup>1</sup> The FERRIERS report analysed and costed the Association's operations to the dollar and was used internally for operating cost of services structures, the report was also presented to the UWS Board of Trustees as part of UWSSA's business plan and application for services fee allocation. The Association in 2005 was allocated \$3.5 million of the UWS services fee collection and was forced to cut \$1 million dollars of services to students in 2005, the resulting loss of services in 2005 has hurt UWS students and reduced the Association's service profile to a critical core. With the proposed legislation this critical core of services would be decimated with, as pointed out previously, no plan or reasonable expectation for replacement by the university or government sector. Again the question that spurs from the proposed legislation, not answered by the Federal Government to date, is who will and how will these critical student services be provided?

### **3.2.4 Student Representatives**

The constitutional representative functions are core to the participatory democratic structure of the organisation and evolved around the Association's representative needs in a functional and stakeholder construct to best represent members in accordance with the objectives of the organisation. UWSSA's governing board structure under the constitution comprises of the following positions:

- President;
- General Secretary/Treasurer;
- Activities, Entertainment & Clubs/Societies Officer;
- Publications Officer;
- Education Officer (Vice President);
- Women's Officer;
- Welfare Officer;
- Indigenous Officer;
- Cultural/Anti-Racism Officer;
- Environment Officer;
- International Officer;
- Disabilities Officer;
- Queer Officer;
- Hawkesbury Campus Organiser;
- Penrith Campus Organiser;
- Campbelltown Campus Organiser;
- Bankstown Campus Organiser;
- Parramatta Campus Organiser;
- Nirimba Campus Organiser.

The roles these elected positions would have within the organisation are as follows:

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<sup>1</sup> FERRIERS Chartered Accountant is a highly regarded independent accountancy and audit firm based in Sydney with many high-end corporate clients. FERRIERS are also used as the Macquarie University external auditors.



The President is the chair of the SRC or governing board (management committee) of UWSSA and also serves as the face of the Association. The President shall be indirectly elected from a pool of general representatives who were directly elected by the students of UWS.

The General Secretary/Treasurer is the administrative head of the Association. The General Secretary oversees all the administrative functions of the Association.

The Education Vice-President deals with educational matters that affect students. The reason for this role being a vice-presidential one is to reflect the core service aspect of the portfolio. The Education Vice-President shall also act as the President in the absence of the President.

The Welfare Vice-President deals with welfare matters, including educational access issues, affecting students. This portfolio, being the second primary function of the Association, also serves as a vice-presidential role. The Welfare Vice-President acts as President in the absence of the President and the Education Vice-President. At any time, at least one of these four representatives must be able to be contacted in case any need of the Association arises. This means that all four of these representatives would not be able to attend a conference(s) outside of Sydney at the same time.

The Bankstown, Campbelltown, Hawkesbury, Nirimba, Parramatta and Penrith Campus Organisers act as the representatives of the six UWS campuses to the governing board. This allows issues on the ground to be brought to the attention of the SRC. The Chairpersons also chair the Campus Branch Councils and are the face of the Association at Campus levels.

The Activities, Entertainment/Clubs and Societies Officer is the student representative that oversees the operations of the Division of Clubs, Activities, Recreation and Entertainment. Although this role is representative in nature it is important to ensure that the most visible division of the Association, with the exception of the Communications, Advertising, Marketing and Promotions Division, is adequately funded and considered.

The Cultural/Anti-Racism Officer is similar, in some aspects, to the 'autonomous groups' portfolio. However it differs in numerous aspects, and where it does hold similarities, such as the representative nature, the position needs to reflect numerous 'autonomous groups' as if they are not autonomous. It is a difficult act to perform; yet the position shall be a cornerstone of the UWSSA structure. This position is responsible for assisting students overcome their cultural issues and to also help them celebrate their cultural identity, and shall also promote cultural events and anti-racism campaigns.

The Disabilities Officer, International Students' Officer, Indigenous and the Women's Officer are the first set of representatives of autonomous groups in UWSSA. The student representatives must come from their respective

constituencies and are involved in all aspects of student representation, not just those of welfare or educational issues.

UWSSA has identified that most people seem to consider these representative positions to be purely about welfare services but they are more than this and form an affective focused portfolio approach to problem solving. UWSSA is inclusive of other constituencies by allowing these representatives to take part in all aspects of the decision-making processes of the Association. UWSSA also notes that some of these groups have a very significant population, with women making up 52% of UWS students and mature age students making up 30% of UWS students.

The Environment Officer operates out of the Research, Advocacy, Welfare and Education Division and is responsible for the Environment portfolio. UWSSA recognises the importance of operating in an environmentally sustainable manner, and as such has an Environment Officer on its governing board.

Indigenous, Queer Representatives are the other set of representatives of autonomous groups. It is noted, for the purposes of recognising the significant advantages to catering for large constituencies that 10% of students identify as queer.

### **3.2.5 Stakeholders**

The services and representation the Association provides directly and indirectly benefits many stakeholders. Students, the University and Greater Western Sydney community are the primary stakeholders that benefit greatly through the existence of UWSSA.

- ***On-Campus Students***

On-Campus Students benefit from the majority of available services of the Association. On-Campus Students, which represent a large majority of the members of UWSSA, shall also be able to take part in forums and access Association Offices to seek assistance or make suggestions.

- ***External Students***

UWSSA provides representative services for External Students. External Students have access to all UWSSA services but are specifically targeted as unique stakeholders via electronic means from the Association's website, they vote in elections (through electronic ballots) and are able to contact the Association for advice and assistance. The Association's website ([uwssa.org.au](http://uwssa.org.au)) includes information regarding how to contact Education and Welfare Advisors, information on how to access services of the Association available to external students, interact with other students through web based forums and collectives, use employment and accommodation services. External students are also able to obtain some traditionally on campus resources, such as the Association's publication, through subscriptions. All discounts and benefits of membership are also to become a web based function in the future as the Association furthers it's service foot print to accommodate external students.

- ***International Students***

The Association shall continue to work closely with the International Students Department within the University to ensure that the experience of International Students is a strong one. UWSSA endeavours to help International Students to not only experience Australia, but also to provide a cultural experience to Australian Students. UWSSA provides ongoing support services geared towards issues specific to International Students and works hard to make sure that International Students are made aware of their rights. International Students shall also have their own representative on the SRC.

- ***Mature-Age Students***

Almost one-third of UWS students are over the age of thirty, making mature-age students a large constituency. Although many activities of the Association are geared towards younger students, mature-age students benefit from other services provided by the Association. These services include the childcare subsidy and the Association's School Holiday Program. The Association shall, in the future, explore the possibility of providing scholarships exclusive to mature-age students to assist these students in an added expense upon their households.

- ***Students with a Disability***

Students with a Disability face a certain stigma and a number of challenges when accessing their right to an education. These problems are even more greatly enhanced when access to campuses is difficult or even impossible. UWSSA plans to conduct an Access Audit for mobility and vision-impaired students and staff in 2005. It shall then begin running a campaigns and work with the university and community groups to upgrade facilities to ensure that all students and staff are able to access facilities of UWS. UWSSA also works closely with the Disabilities Unit to develop programs and policies to assist students with a Disability. UWSSA in 2005 shall also adopt an 'access' policy so that all services shall be accessible to all students. Students with a Disability shall be entitled to their own student representative on the SRC.

- ***Women Students***

Female students make up 52% of the student population at UWS. The Association plans to provide for this group by employing a specific Women's Support officer and also provides Female Students with their own representative on the SRC. Grievance Advisors are made available at all large UWSSA events and awareness campaigns shall be run to ensure that Women remain safe on campus. Blue Stockings Week, which is a week devoted to Women in Education, and International Women's Day shall be annual events in the UWSSA calendar. Women also have access to Women's Space on every campus by the end of 2005.

- ***Indigenous Students***

Indigenous Students have needs unique to their culture and background. UWSSA recognises that it is important to assist Indigenous Students to be

able to access their education and to assist in this process. UWSSA is close to implementing an indigenous partnership program with the local indigenous communities and institutions shall be put in place on each campus in an empowerment model to better Indigenous access and retention. The Association also provides Indigenous Students with a representative on the SRC. Courses shall be made available teaching traditional Australian Arts and cultural awareness campaigns shall be adopted by UWSSA as part of an indigenous students and communities project in 2005.

- ***Students Who Identify As Queer***

Queer Students are also entitled to representation on the SRC. In addition to this, Queer Events, such as Gay Pride Week, and Remember Matthew Sheppard campaigns are standard events of UWSSA. Queer Students will also have access to A Queer Students' Support Officer employed by UWSSA in future expansions of services. UWSSA shall also run Homophobia Workshops, to assist in teaching students and staff how to operate in a queer friendly manner in 2005-6. In addition to this, Queer Students shall also be able to access Queer Space on each campus by 2005.

These stakeholders listed are but a few examples of how the Association is a pivotal institution in the university and student community. As UWSSA expands services, the more our stakeholders benefit in more critical and varied ways. The VSU legislation would see a vast and large number of individuals, as well as the collective stake-holders, significantly disadvantaged as the pivotal role the organisation plays in these relationships laps. Again the government in proposing the current form of VSU has failed to completely research, analyse and understand what is being taken away and how it will be replaced as there is no doubt that the services are of a critical nature.

## 4. Greater Western Sydney & UWS Communities

### 4.1 Greater Western Sydney Demographics

The campuses of University of Western Sydney (UWS) exist within the Greater Western Sydney region. The population of the GWS area was 1.673 million in mid-2001, which represents 42 per cent of all persons in the Sydney Statistical Division area and some 27 per cent of all persons in New South Wales (ABS, 2001).

The index of relative social disadvantage<sup>2</sup> suggests that Greater Western Sydney (998) is more disadvantaged than Sydney Statistical Division (1,027) and New South Wales (1,007). Bankstown (969), Blacktown (964) and Campbelltown (964); LGAs that have UWS campuses are considered more disadvantaged than Greater Western Sydney. See Table 1 for a summary of these scores for the LGAs within the Greater Western Sydney.

**Table 1: Index of relative social disadvantage in LGAs of Greater Western Sydney**

<b>LGA</b>	<b>Index of relative social disadvantage</b>
Auburn	932
Bankstown	969
Baulkham Hills	1,128
Blacktown	964
Blue Mountains	1,071
Fairfield	905
Hawkesbury	1,036
Holroyd	982
Liverpool	956
Parramatta	1,004
Penrith	1,009
Camden	1,051
Campbelltown	964
Greater Western Sydney	998
Sydney Statistical Division	1027
NSW	1007

Source: ABS 1998 – Australia in Profile: A Regional Analysis, Cat No. 2032.0)

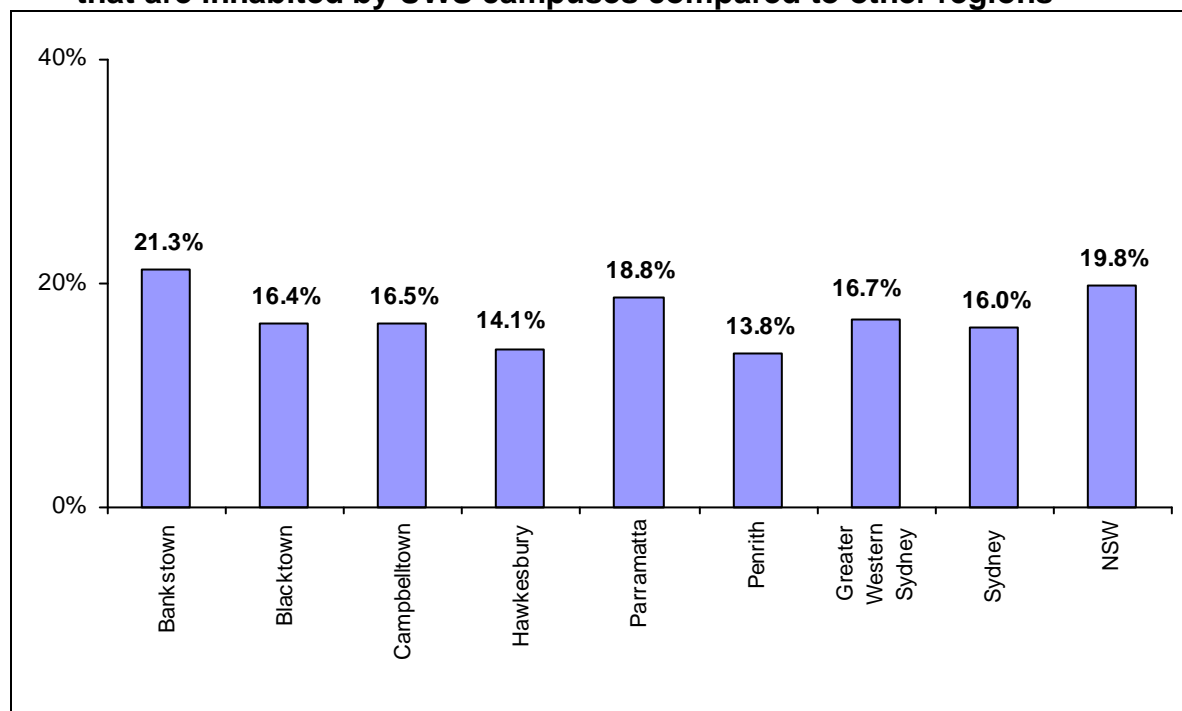
The UWS campuses of Bankstown and Parramatta have higher proportions of households earning less than \$400 per week compared to other local government areas (LGAs) in Greater Western Sydney. Approximately one in six households (16.7 per cent) in the Greater Western Sydney region earned less than \$400 per week in 2001. This is similar to Sydney as a whole, where

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<sup>2</sup> The Index of Relative Social Disadvantage is based on an index created by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) from the 1996 Census of Population and Housing. The lower the score on this index of disadvantage, the more disadvantaged an area is supposed to be. The index is *not* linear and care must be taken when interpolating the results. An area with a score of 700 is not twice as disadvantaged as an area with a score of 1,400.

16.0 per cent of households earned less than \$400 per week, but lower than New South Wales as a whole, where almost one in five (19.8 per cent) earn below this amount (ABS, 2001). Figure 2 provides a summary of the LGAs of UWS campuses compared to Greater Western Sydney, the Sydney Statistical Division and NSW.

**Figure 2: Percentage of households earning less than \$400 in the LGAs that are inhabited by UWS campuses compared to other regions**



Source: ABS 2001, Census Basics

## 4.2 UWS Demographics

As can be seen in Table 2, the main LGA's in which domestic UWS students reside are those LGA's listed by the ABS as LGA's with higher levels of relative social disadvantage (See also Table 1). Table 2 and Figure 1 also suggest that there is great number of domestic UWS students who live in LGA's where there are larger proportions of households earning less than \$400 per week.

**Table 2: UWS Enrolments by Permanent Home Residence, Domestic Students, 2004**

LGA	Postcode	Total Domestic Enrolments			
			PARRAMATTA	A2150	258
			CAMDEN	A2570	257
			CANTERBURY	A2196	239
			BLUE MOUNTAINS	A2774	237
			HOLROYD	A2161	236
			CAMPBELLTOWN	A2565	235
			FAIRFIELD	A2177	232
			SUTHERLAND	A2234	228
			BANKSTOWN	A2190	226
			BLACKTOWN	A2768	215
			HAWKESBURY	A2753	210
			BANKSTOWN	A2213	205
			BAULKHAM HILLS	A2151	196
			HURSTVILLE	A2210	187
			PARRAMATTA	A2142	187
			BAULKHAM HILLS	A2118	185
			PENRITH	A2760	183
			AUBURN	A2141	180
			BAULKHAM HILLS	A2125	171
			PENRITH	A2749	169
			PARRAMATTA	A2146	167
			CAMPBELLTOWN	A2558	164
			CAMPBELLTOWN	A2564	159
			HORNSBY	A2126	159
			BLACKTOWN	A2766	157
			CANTERBURY	A2195	152
			PARRAMATTA	A2117	150
			Other		11255
			<b>Permanent Home Residence</b>		<b>29506</b>
CAMPBELLTOWN	A2560	923			
LIVERPOOL	A2170	877			
FAIRFIELD	A2176	737			
HOLROYD	A2145	685			
BLACKTOWN	A2148	647			
PENRITH	A2750	596			
BAULKHAM HILLS	A2153	558			
LIVERPOOL	A2171	483			
PENRITH	A2747	481			
FAIRFIELD	A2166	452			
LIVERPOOL	A2168	442			
BLACKTOWN	A2770	427			
PENRITH	A2759	398			
BLACKTOWN	A2147	397			
BANKSTOWN	A2200	383			
BAULKHAM HILLS	A2154	371			
FAIRFIELD	A2165	365			
BLACKTOWN	A2763	361			
CAMPBELLTOWN	A2566	358			
BLACKTOWN	A2761	328			
HOLROYD	A2160	322			
BLACKTOWN	A2155	321			
BLACKTOWN	A2767	313			
HAWKESBURY	A2756	300			
PENRITH	A2745	295			
BLUE MOUNTAINS	A2777	289			
AUBURN	A2144	278			
CAMDEN	A2567	260			
FAIRFIELD	A2164	260			

Source: UWS DEST Submissions 1 and 2, 2004

## 4.3 Summary

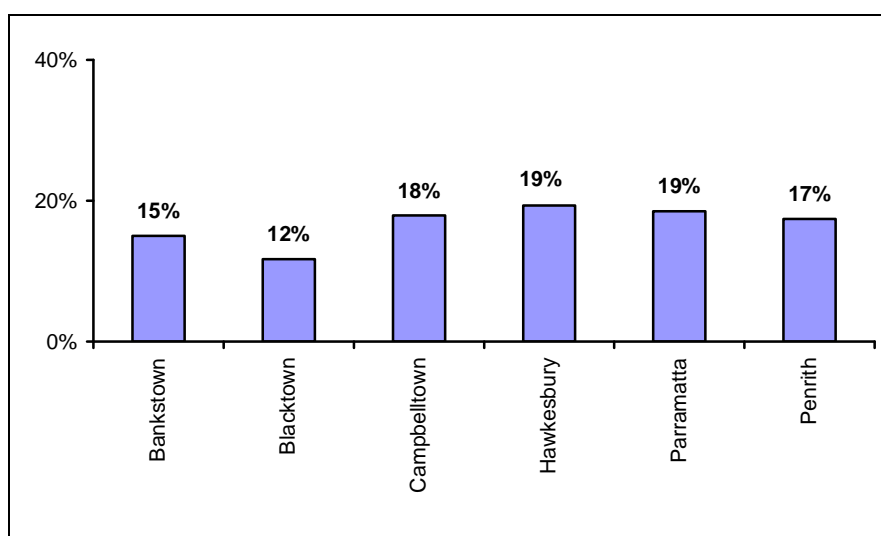
It is evident that Greater Western Sydney and UWS have a unique set of communities with higher proportions of relative social disadvantage and ultimately lower access to resources. The envisaged impact of VSU on the provision of resources within UWS communities will further increase this disadvantage within UWS and the broader Greater Western Sydney communities. This will ultimately see Students at UWS who are already statistically disadvantaged, becoming disadvantaged even further through the disintegration of resources and services on campus.

## 5. UWS VSU Survey Data

### 5.1 Student Demographics

A sample size of 915 students was surveyed in the UWSSA Student Services & VSU Survey 2005. These students were surveyed across the six UWS campuses, with 137 students (15.0 percent) enrolled at Bankstown, 107 students (11.7 percent) enrolled at Blacktown, 164 students (17.9 percent) enrolled at Campbelltown, 177 students (19.3 percent) enrolled at Hawkesbury, 169 students (18.5 percent) enrolled at Parramatta and 159 students (17.4 percent) enrolled at Penrith. Two students did not answer this question. This is shown in Figure 3 below.

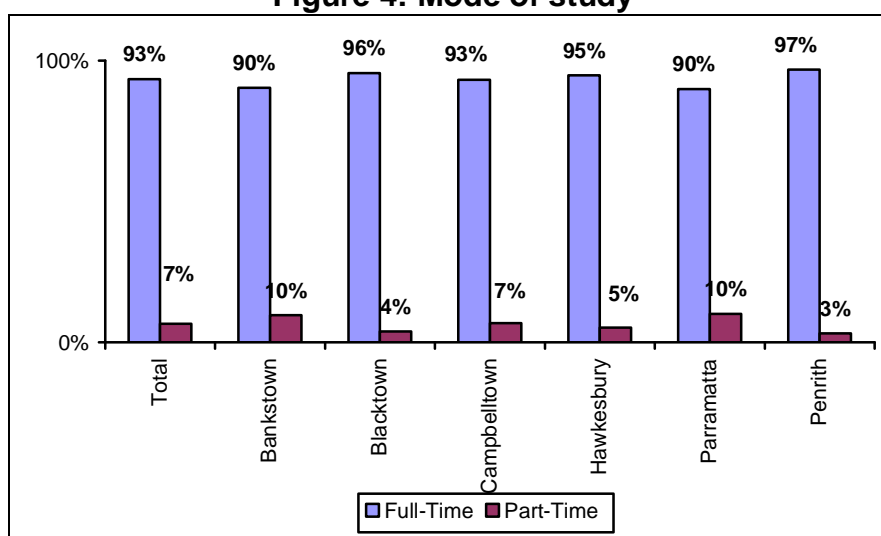
**Figure 3: Campus you are enrolled in at UWS**



N=913, Source: UWSSA Student Services & VSU Survey 2005

The majority of students were full-time (93 percent) compared to part-time (7 percent). An analysis of the ration of full-time to part-time students is provided Figure 4 below.

**Figure 4: Mode of study**

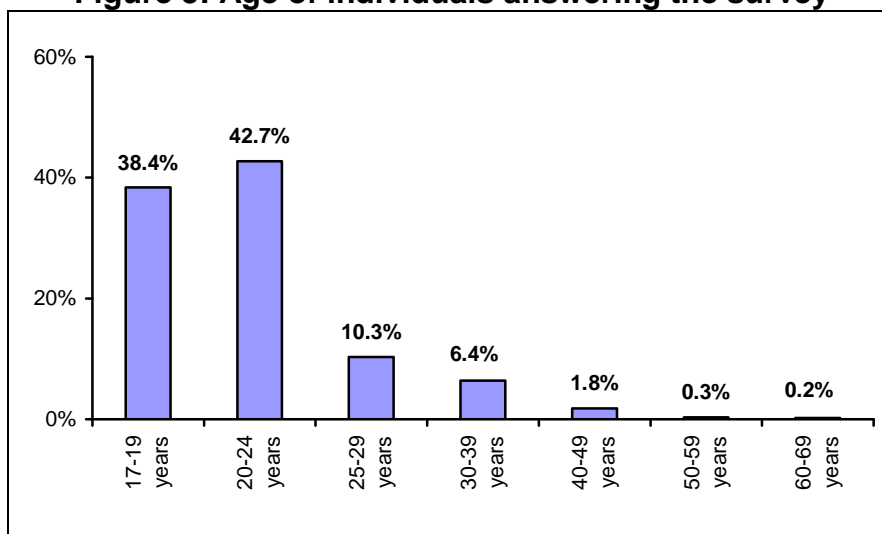


N=903, Source: UWSSA Student Services & VSU Survey 2005



The majority of students generally were aged under 25 years (81 percent) Figure 5 provides an illustration of the patterns of usage of the student bar across campuses.

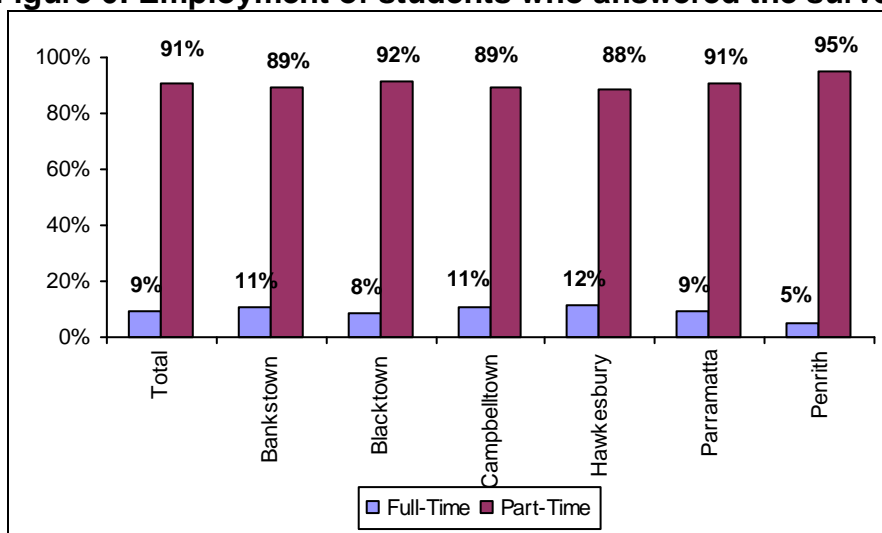
**Figure 5: Age of individuals answering the survey**



N=907; Source: UWSSA Student Services & VSU Survey 2005

Of the 915 students who were surveyed, 653 (71 percent) were in some form of employment. The majority of students were employed part-time/casual (91 percent) compared to full-time (9 percent). There were no discernible differences across the campuses. An analysis of the ration of full-time to part-time students is provided in Figure 6 below.

**Figure 6: Employment of students who answered the survey**

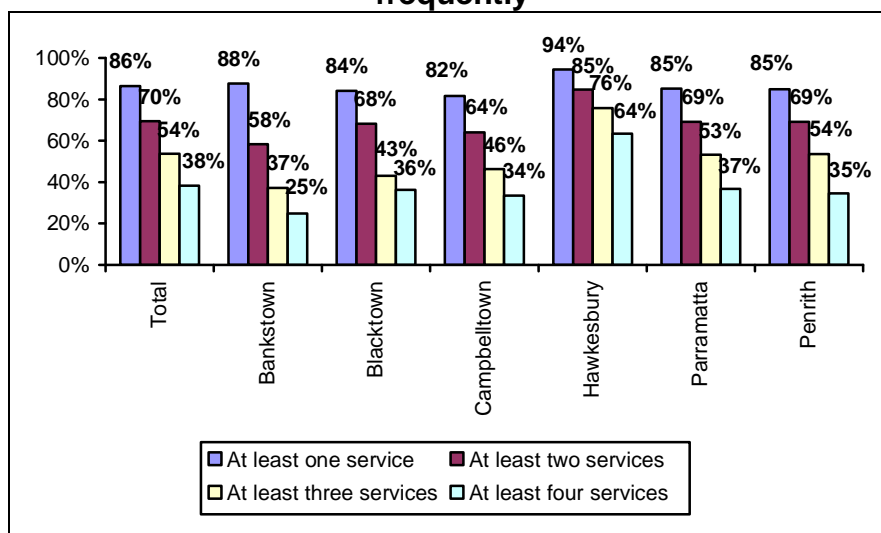


N=653, Source: UWSSA Student Services & VSU Survey 2005

## 5.2 Student Use of Student Services Overview

The vast majority of students (86 percent) accessed at least one service frequently across all campuses of UWS. There was a reasonable amount of variation between campuses, with Hawkesbury (94 percent) having the highest and Campbelltown (82 percent) having the least utilisation of services on this measure. Figure 7 provides an illustration of the patterns of usage of the university services across the campuses of UWS.

**Figure 7: The percentage of students utilising Association services frequently**



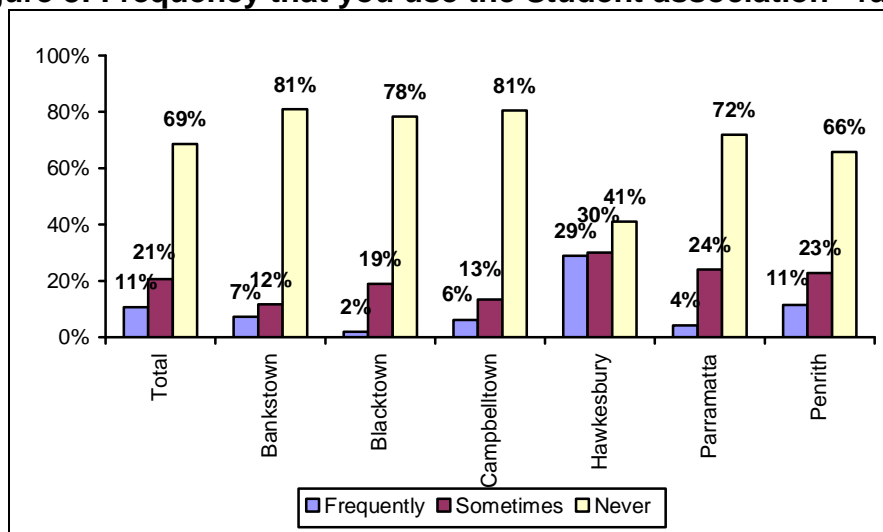
N=913, Source: UWSSA Student Services & VSU Survey 2005

## 5.3 Student Use of Welfare & Critical Needs Services

### 5.3.1 Student Association Rallies

A majority of students did not use the student association rally or action services, with 69 percent of all students across all campuses never accessing the student association rally or action services. Rally and action service utilisation was considerably higher at the Hawkesbury campus compared to other UWS campuses. Figure 8 provides an illustration of the patterns of usage of the student association rally or action services across campuses

**Figure 8: Frequency that you use the Student association - rallies**

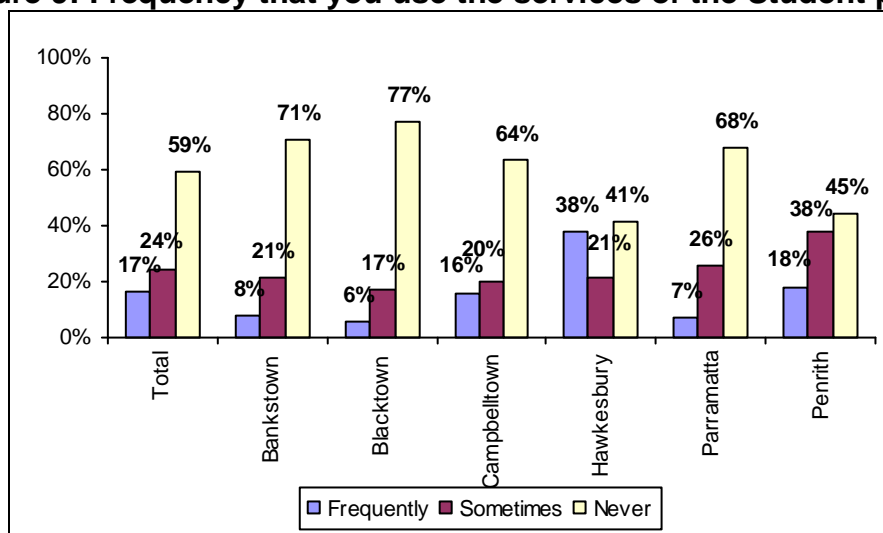


N=907, Source: UWSSA Student Services & VSU Survey 2005

### 5.3.2 Student Association Paper

A total of 41% of students surveyed across UWS campuses indicated that they had used the Student Association paper either frequently or sometimes. Student paper service utilisation was considerably higher at the Hawkesbury and Penrith campuses compared to other UWS campuses. Figure 9 provides an illustration of the patterns of usage of the Student Paper services across campuses

**Figure 9: Frequency that you use the services of the Student paper**

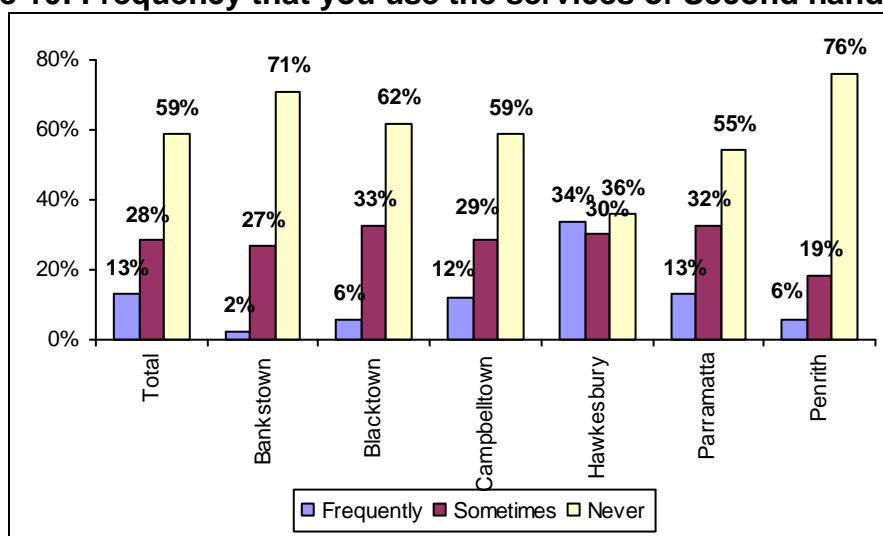


N=885, Source: UWSSA Student Services & VSU Survey 2005

### 5.3.3 Student Association 2<sup>nd</sup> Hand Book Service

A total of 41% of students surveyed across UWS campuses indicated that they use the Students Association 2<sup>nd</sup> hand book service either frequently or sometimes. Second hand book service utilisation was considerably higher at the Hawkesbury campus compared to other UWS campuses. Figure 10 provides an illustration of the patterns of usage of the second hand book services across campuses

**Figure 10: Frequency that you use the services of Second hand books**

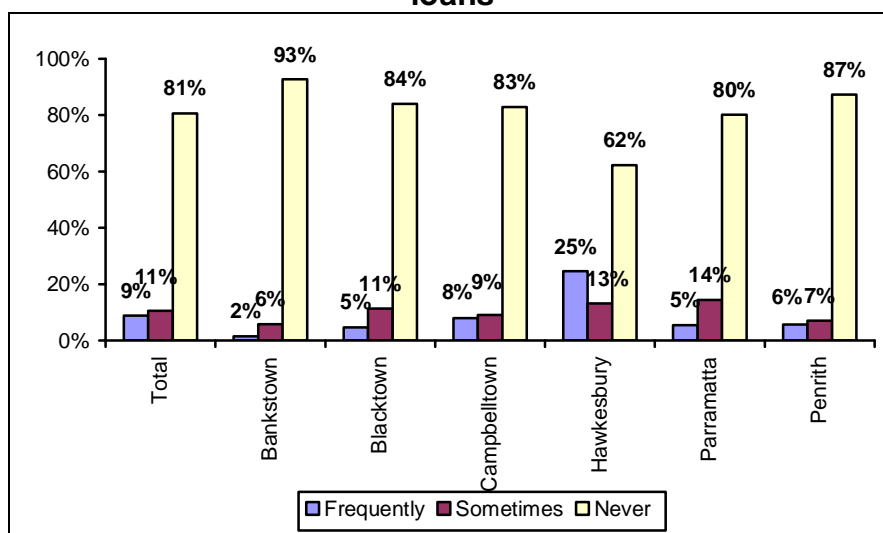


N=909, Source: UWSSA Student Services & VSU Survey 2005

### 5.3.4 Student Association Loan Service

A total of 20% of students surveyed across UWS campuses indicated that they used the Students Association loan service either frequently or sometimes. Student association loan service utilisation was considerably higher at the Hawkesbury campus compared to other UWS campuses. Figure 11 provides an illustration of the patterns of usage of the student association loan services across campuses

**Figure 11: Frequency that you use the services of Student association - loans**



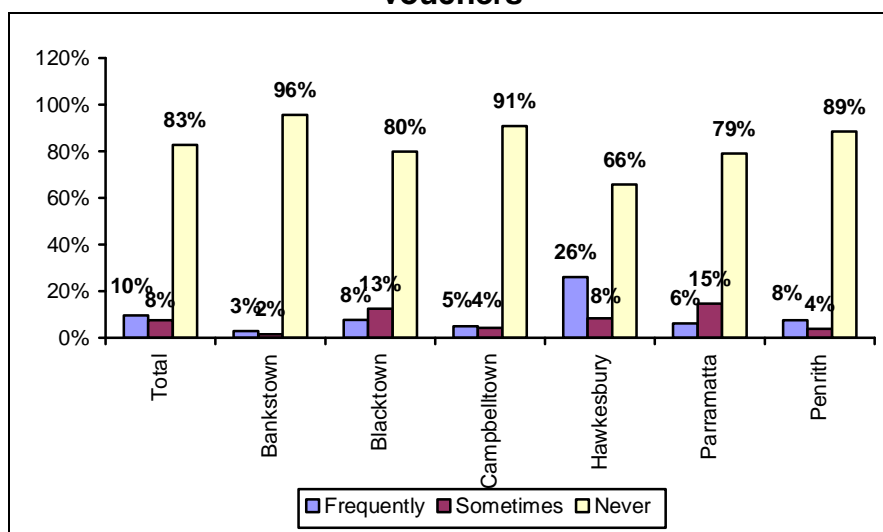
N=909, Source: UWSSA Student Services & VSU Survey 2005

### 5.3.5 Student Association Emergency Food Voucher Service

A total of 18% of students surveyed across UWS campuses indicated that they used the Students Association emergency food vouchers either frequently or sometimes. Emergency food voucher service utilisation was considerably higher at the Hawkesbury campus compared to other UWS

campuses. Figure 12 provides an illustration of the patterns of usage of the emergency food voucher services across campuses.

**Figure 12: Frequency that you use the services of Emergency food vouchers**

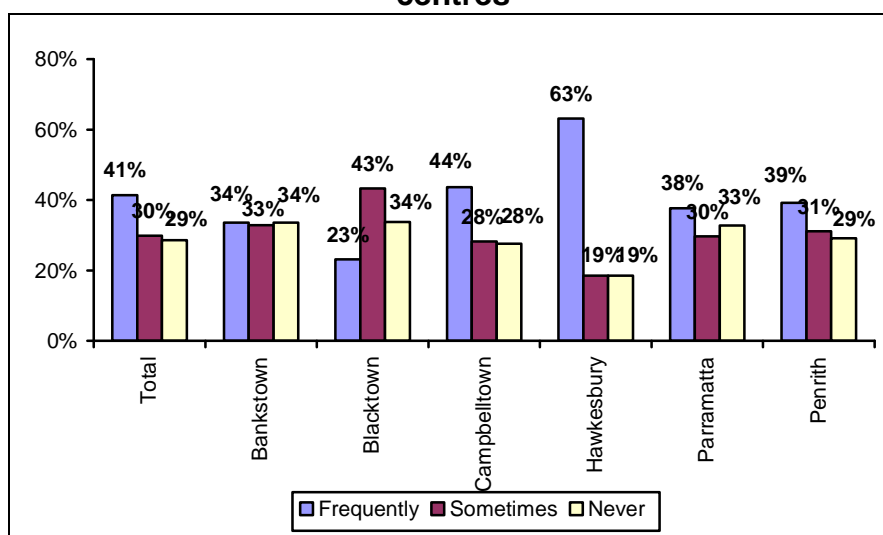


N=895, Source: UWSSA Student Services & VSU Survey 2005

### 5.3.6 Student Association Computer Services

A majority of students (71%) used the student association computer services, with all students accessing the student association computer services frequently (41 percent) and sometimes (30 percent) across all campuses. Figure 13 provides an illustration of the patterns of usage of the student association computer services across campuses

**Figure 13: Frequency that you use Student association – computer centres**



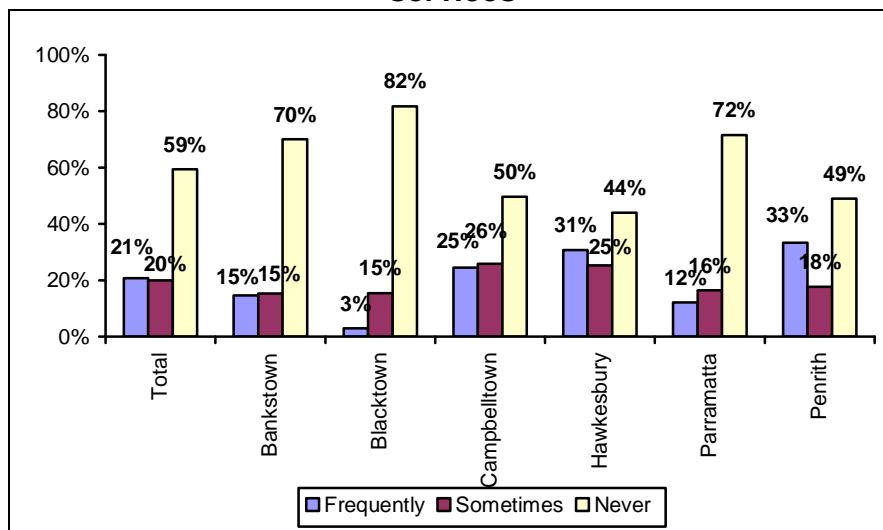
N=885, Source: UWSSA Student Services & VSU Survey 2005

### 5.3.7 Student Association Bus Services

A total of 41% of students surveyed from all campuses indicated that they used the Student Association bus service either frequently or sometimes. There was a lot of variability of bus service usage across UWS campuses due

to some services being offered on some campuses and not on others. Figure 14 provides an illustration of the patterns of usage of the student association bus services across campuses.

**Figure 14: Frequency that you use the Student association – bus services**

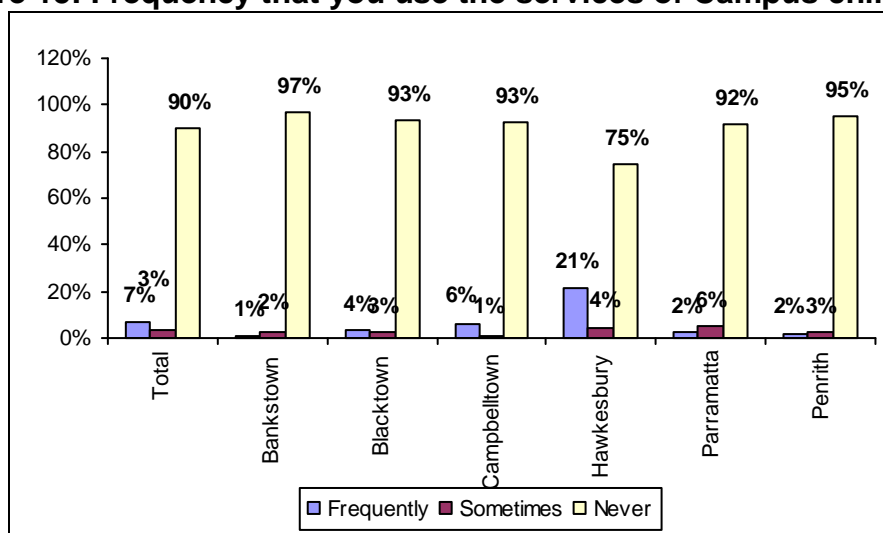


N=884, Source: UWSSA Student Services & VSU Survey 2005

### 5.3.8 Campus Child Care Centres

A total of 10% of students surveyed across UWS campuses indicated that they used campus child care services either frequently or sometimes. The highest patterns service usage of Campus Child Care services is at the Hawkesbury campus. Figure 15 provides an illustration of the patterns of usage of the services of Campus Child Care Centres across campuses.

**Figure 15: Frequency that you use the services of Campus child care**



N=882, Source: UWSSA Student Services & VSU Survey 2005

### 5.3.9 Summary

The survey data demonstrates that there exists a good usage pattern for many of UWS Student Associations' welfare and critical services. Whilst there are some services which have a lower total usage pattern, these are niche

services which are targeted towards a smaller percentage of the University community such as child care.

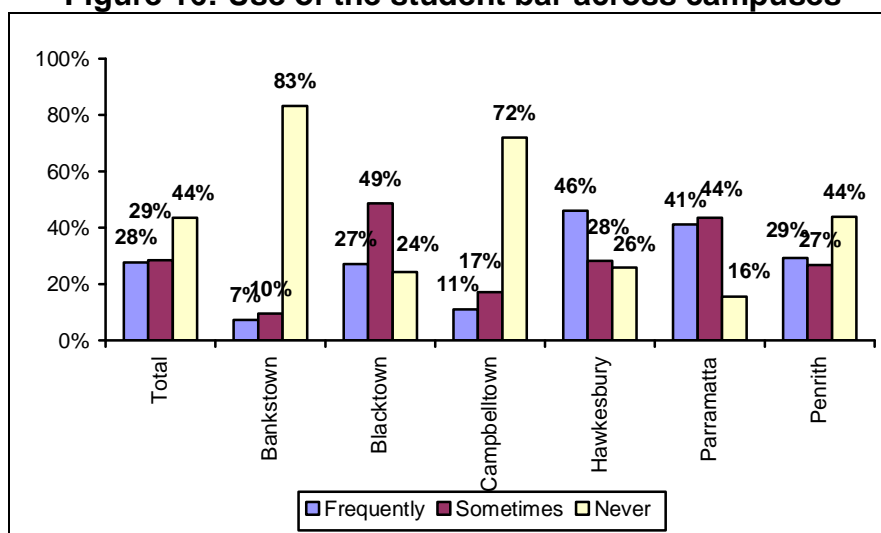
## 5.4 Student Use of Activities, Entertainment & Sports, Food Outlets & Bars

The provision of commercial services including the student bars, café's & food outlets as well as sporting services are provided at UWS by UWS Connect. UWS Connect is a limited by guarantee not for profit company, that subsidises the above services to the student community.

### 5.4.1 UWS Connect Student Bars

The majority of students generally accessed the student bar, with students accessing the student bar frequently (28 percent) and sometimes (29 percent) across all campuses. There was a lot of variation between campuses, with Bankstown and Campbelltown having the least frequency of use. Figure 16 provides an illustration of the patterns of usage of the student bar across campuses.

**Figure 16: Use of the student bar across campuses**

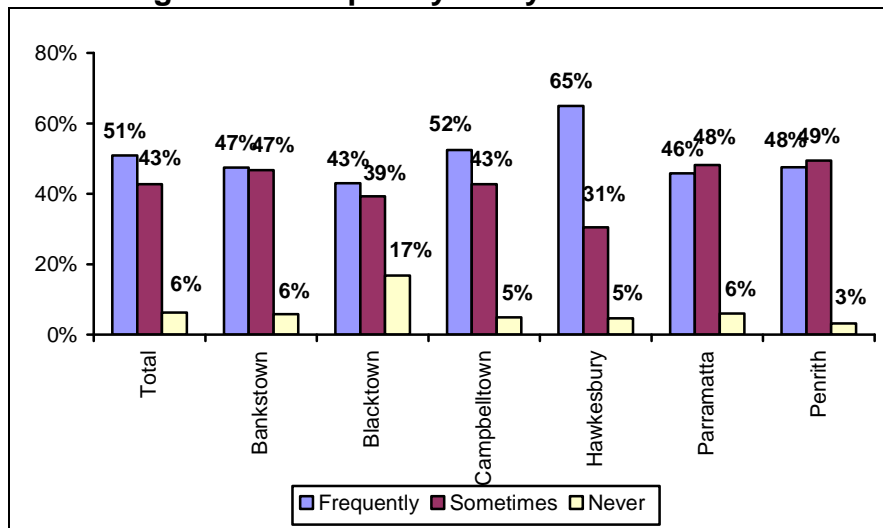


N=909, Source: UWSSA Student Services & VSU Survey 2005

### 5.4.2 UWS Connect Student Café's

A vast majority of students used the cafe, with students accessing the cafe frequently (51 percent) and sometimes (43 percent) across all campuses. Figure 17 provides an illustration of the patterns of usage of the student cafe across campuses.

**Figure 17: Frequency that you use the Cafe**

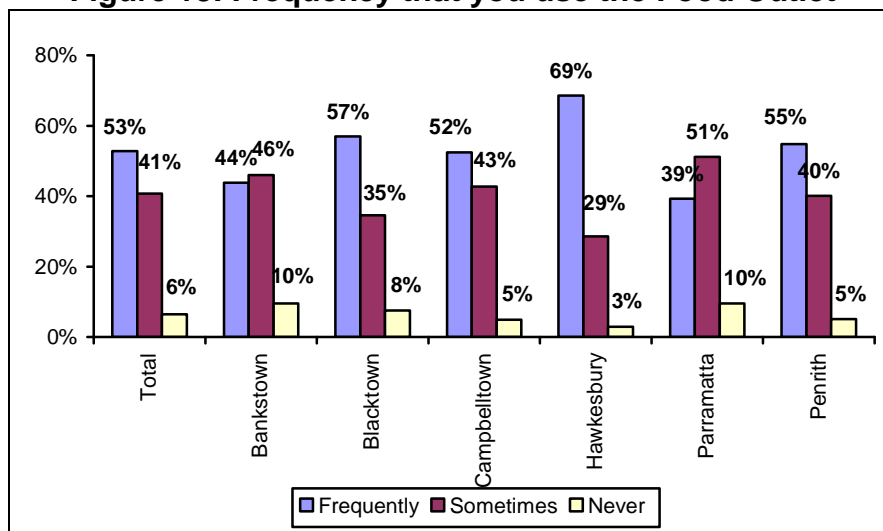


N=910, Source: UWSSA Student Services & VSU Survey 2005

### 5.4.3 UWS Connect Student Food Outlets

A vast majority of students used the food outlet, with all students accessing the food outlet frequently (53 percent) and sometimes (41 percent) across all campuses. Figure 18 provides an illustration of the patterns of usage of the food outlet across campuses.

**Figure 18: Frequency that you use the Food Outlet**



N=909, Source: UWSSA Student Services & VSU Survey 2005

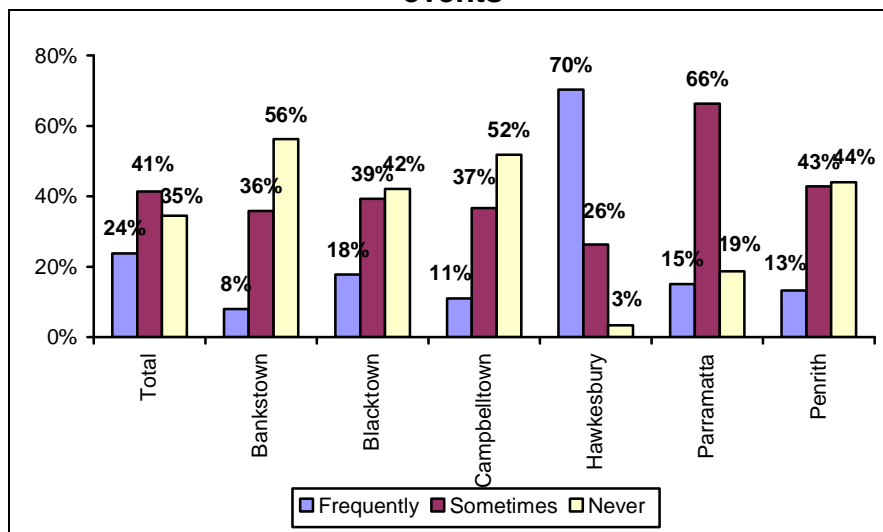
### 5.4.4 Student Association BBQ & Events

A majority of students used the student association BBQ's and events services, with all students accessing the student association BBQ's and events services frequently (24 percent) and sometimes (41 percent) across all campuses. These services were accessed by considerably more students that



were enrolled at the Hawkesbury campus. Figure 19 provides an illustration of the patterns of usage of the student association BBQ's and events services across campuses.

**Figure 19: Frequency that you use the Student association – BBQ and events**

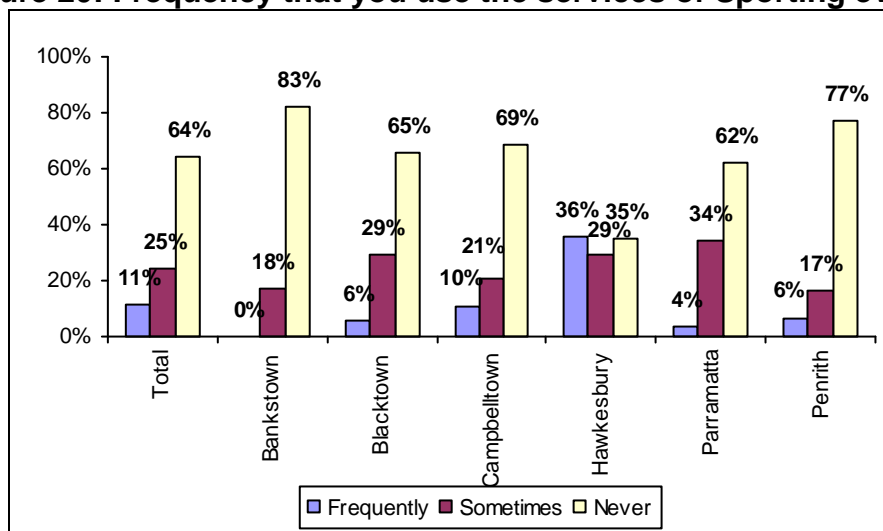


N=905, Source: UWSSA Student Services & VSU Survey 2005

#### 5.4.5 UWS Connect Student Sporting Events

A majority of students did not participate in sporting events services, with 64 percent of all students never accessing the sporting events services. Sporting events were accessed by considerably more students that were enrolled at the Hawkesbury campus. Figure 20 provides an illustration of the patterns of usage of the sporting events services across campuses.

**Figure 20: Frequency that you use the services of Sporting events**



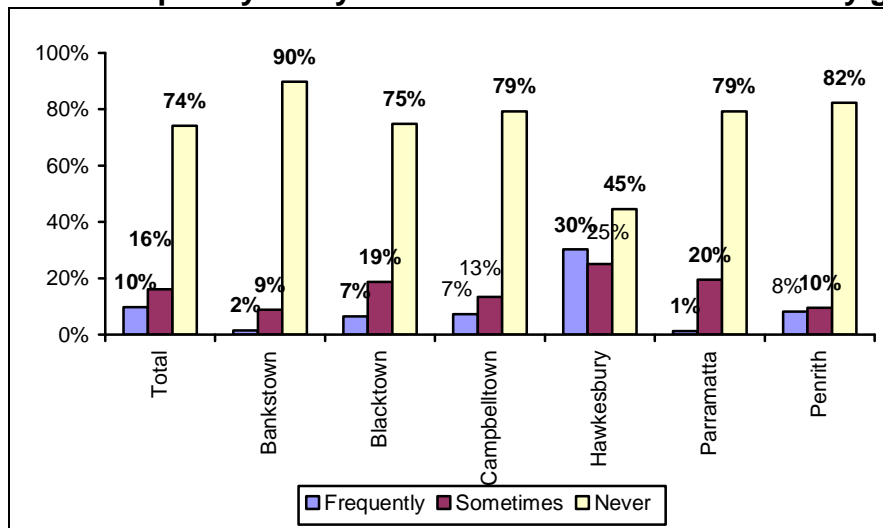
N=909, Source: UWSSA Student Services & VSU Survey 2005

#### 5.4.6 UWS Connect University Games

A majority of students did not use the services for the university games, with 74 percent of all students across all campuses never accessing the services

for the university games. Utilisation of services for the university games was considerably higher at the Hawkesbury campus compared to other UWS campuses. Figure 21 provides an illustration of the patterns of usage of the services for the university games across campuses.

**Figure 21: Frequency that you use the services for university games**



N=907, Source: UWSSA Student Services & VSU Survey 2005

#### 5.4.7 Summary

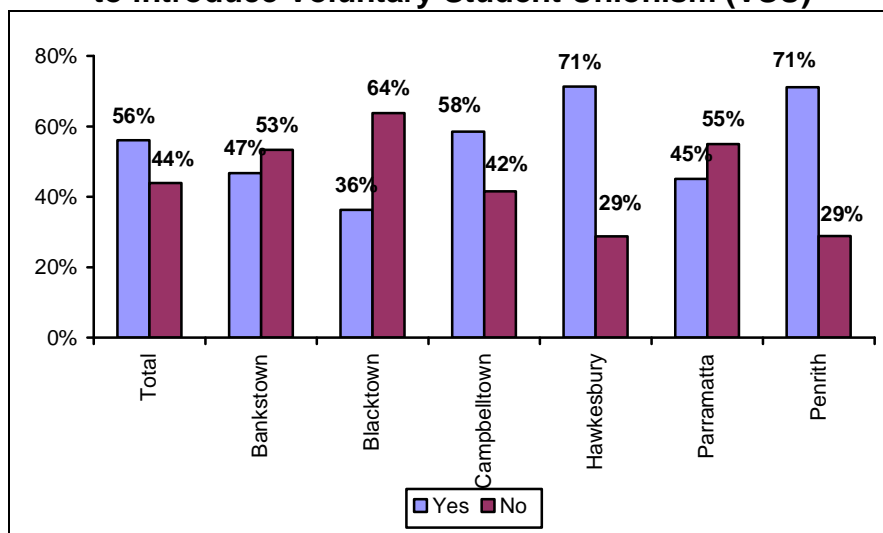
The survey data indicates that there is a good use of hospitality, activities & entertainment, and sporting services by students at UWS. Food outlets and cafes were of particular use with 94% of total students surveyed, indicating that they used these services either frequently or sometimes.

### 5.3 Student views on VSU issues

#### 5.3.1 Are you aware of the current plans of the Federal Government to introduce VSU?

A majority of students (56 percent) were aware of the current plans of the Federal Government to introduce VSU. Figure 22 illustrates that a higher proportion of students enrolled at Hawkesbury and Penrith had an awareness of this issue, than at other campuses.

**Figure 22: Are you aware of the current plans of the Federal Government to introduce Voluntary Student Unionism (VSU)**

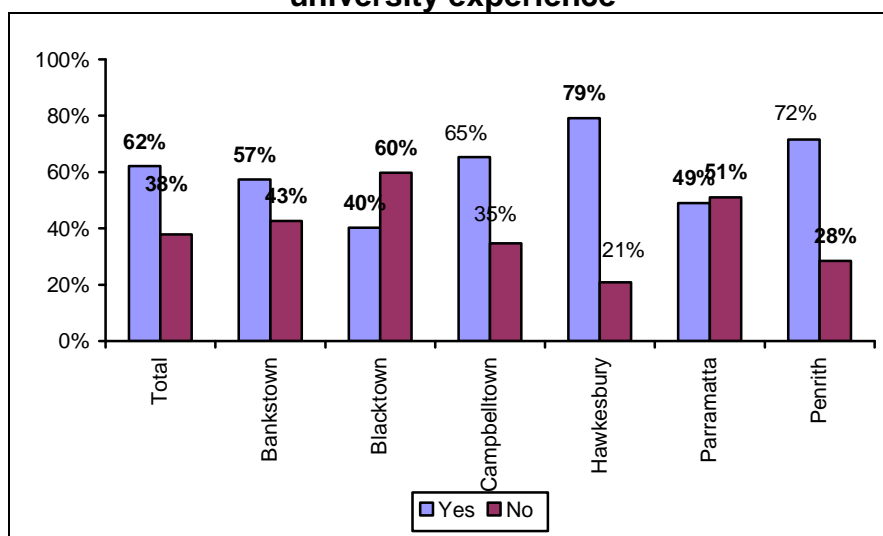


N=878, Source: UWSSA Student Services & VSU Survey 2005

#### 5.3.2 Do you think that VSU will have a negative impact upon your University experience?

A majority of students (62 percent) think that VSU will have a negative impact upon their university experience. Figure 23 shows that this is particularly evident for those students on the Hawkesbury and Penrith campuses.

**Figure 23: Do you think the VSU will have a negative impact upon your university experience**

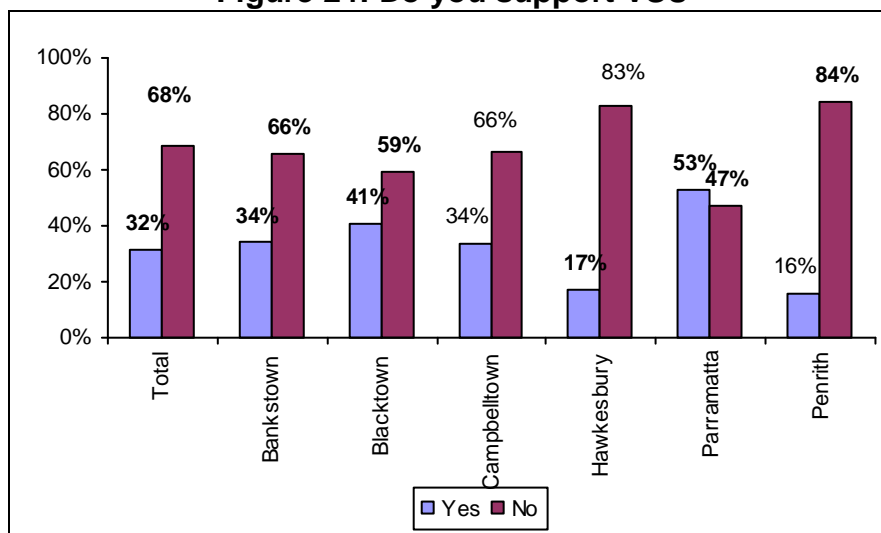


N=826, Source: UWSSA Student Services & VSU Survey 2005

### 5.3.3 Do you Support VSU?

A majority of students (68 percent) do not support VSU. Figure 24 illustrates that the strongest resistance to VSU are students enrolled at Hawkesbury and Penrith campuses. Least resistance to VSU is at the Parramatta campus.

Figure 24: Do you support VSU



N=826, Source: UWSSA Student Services & VSU Survey 2005

### 5.3.4 Summary

It is clearly visible that the majority of students sampled indicated that they thought VSU would have a negative impact on their university experience, and that they **did not support VSU**.

## **6. Welfare Case Work Study**

UWS Students' Association (UWSSA) is a service provider structured in three divisions across the six campuses of the University of Western Sydney. UWSSA provides activities, entertainment, representation, advocacy, welfare and infrastructure programs for 38,000 members. The primary, or core, division of the Association is the Research, Advocacy, Welfare and Education (RAW&E) Division through which the vast majority of services are run.

UWSSA employs six full time professional Welfare Caseworkers, one on each campus, within the RAW&E Division. The Association's welfare case workers are the heart of the RAW&E Division's service provision primarily charged with the role and responsibility therein to deal with student welfare cases that are not limited to academic issues. Welfare Caseworkers routinely provide critical welfare support services such as emergency food vouchers, emergency student loans, grievance handling, discrimination support, physical and mental abuse advice, advocacy and representation. The Association's Welfare Caseworkers meet the critical, or 'coal face', student problems helping students during their times of need and crisis when there is all too often no where to go.

UWSSA, as an organisation, is the result of a federation restructure of seven individual student organisations. A wealth of experience and knowledge has been consolidated into one of the nations largest student organisations. The efficiency savings of the federated structure has resulted in more services, more programs and more critical need projects UWS wide. The goal of the restructure was to reach a new level of professional and accessible services to meet growing student demand for support programs. UWSSA in 2005 will spend in the order of \$2.5 million on welfare programs and support services. While this is a massive service program past lessons and experience indicates that this new focused push is predicted not to meet student demand at UWS.

### **6.1 Scope**

At the start of 2004 the Parramatta and Penrith Students' Association, founding member organisation of UWSSA, undertook a nine-month, March to November, longitudinal survey of student welfare casework on the Penrith campus to better plan and focus the important services and resources of the Association to maximise critical services impact. The study objective was to quantify the demographics of students and student welfare cases, types of cases, services used and analyse conclusively the student support levels required when looking UWS wide.

A survey tool was designed and distributed to student cases that required more than one consultation with the Penrith campus Welfare Caseworker. Throughout the nine-months, regular assessments of the survey research project were conducted to assess student participation. An estimated 90% of qualifying students who visited the campus caseworker participated in the

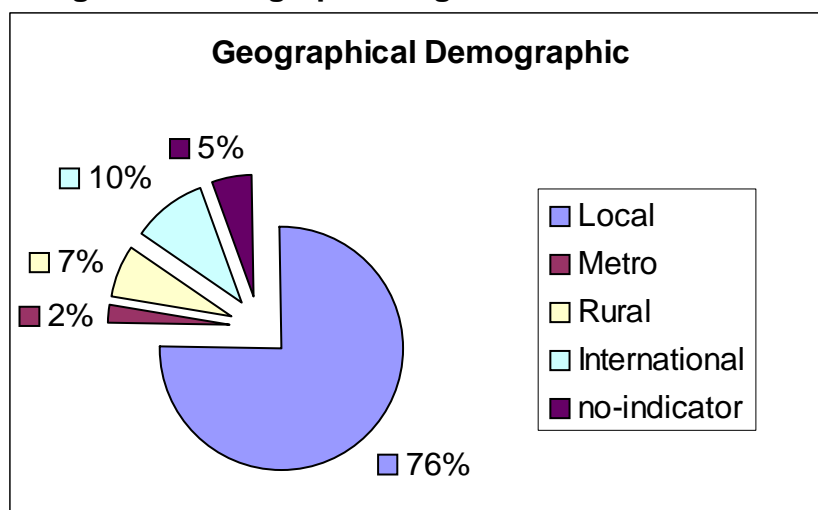
survey. The results of the survey are provided with analysis and conclusions in this report.

While the research was to be used for internal strategic planning and to further future internal research projects, UWSSA provides the results of the nine month Welfare Casework study to the Senate inquiry into the proposed VSU legislation, as a measure of the impact the lose of these critical student services provided by the Students' Association at UWS and indeed similar organisations around the nation. It should be made very clear that UWS Student's Association would struggle to survive the introduction of the proposed VSU legislation and if it were to survive it would be due to the cutting of the organisation's programs and services such as the welfare caseworkers.

## 6.2 Demographics of Student Cases

A total survey size of 205 collected over nine months, March 2004 to November 2004, on the Penrith campus. Figure 25 shows the geographic origin of those student cases surveyed. It shows that the strong majority of cases are from local students at 76%. The next most frequent were International students at 10%, then rural students at 7%, then Metro students at 5%. This result strongly reflects the University's student population, predominantly from the Greater Western Sydney area and the socio-economic demographic therein (See Table 2). 2% of surveys did not indicate a geographic origin.

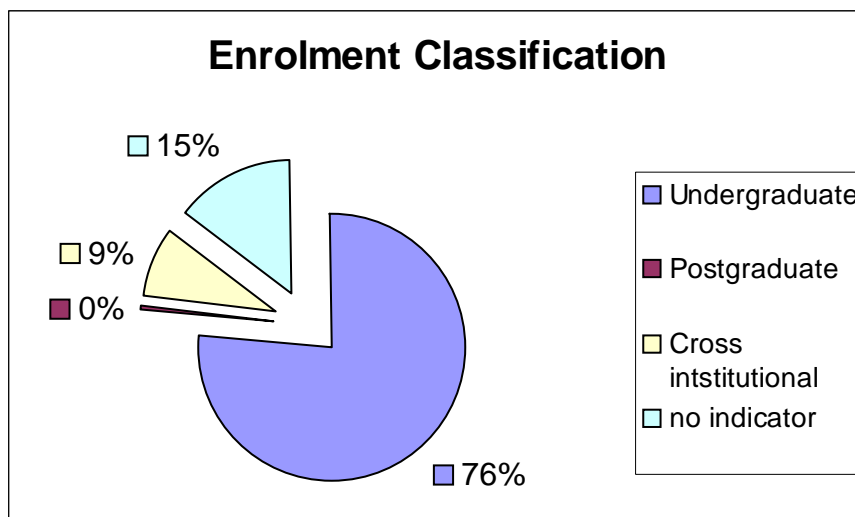
**Figure 25: Geographic origin of the student cases**



n=205, Source: PPSA Student Case Work Survey 2004

The majority of student cases were undergraduate at 76% followed by Cross Institutional students, Figure 26 illustrates this.

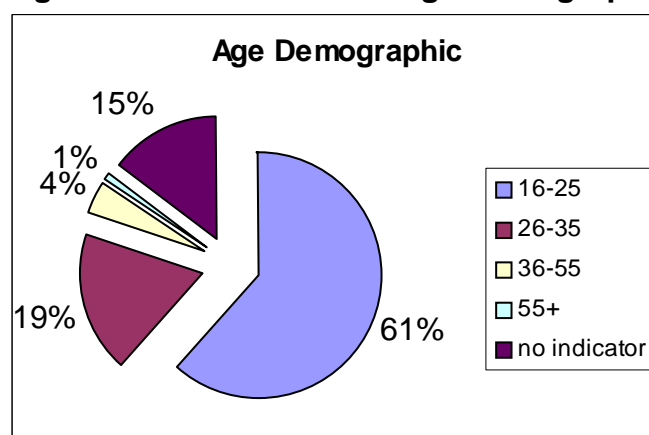
**Figure 26: Student Case Enrolment Classification**



n=205, Source: PPSA Student Case Work Survey 2004

Figure 27 shows the age demographic of the student cases surveyed. The majority of student cases were aged between 16-25 at 61%. There were 15% no indication on this demographic question.

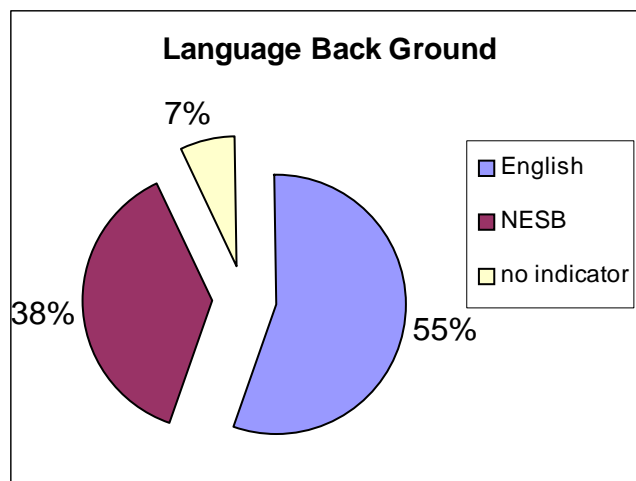
**Figure 27: Student Cases Age Demographic**



n=205, Source: PPSA Student Case Work Survey 2004

The majority of student cases are from an English speaking background at 55%, a large percentage come from Non English Speaking background at 38%, and 7% of surveys did not indicate a language background demographic. See figure 28.

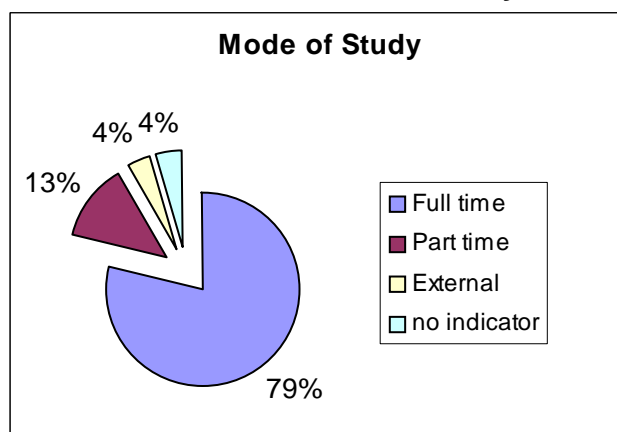
**Figure 28: Student Cases Language Background Demographic**



n=205, Source: PPSA Student Case Work Survey 2004

Figure 29 shows the mode of study of the student cases surveyed. The majority of cases are Full-time students at 79%, 13% are Part-time and 4% were external.

**Figure 29: Student Cases Mode of Study Demographic**

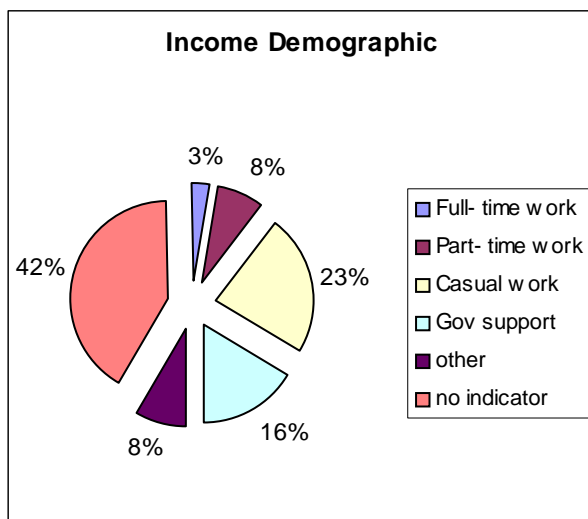


n=205, Source: PPSA Student Case Work Survey 2004

The primary source of income demographic shown in Figure 30 reveals that 42% of student cases chose not to indicate, 23% get there income through casual work, 16% indicated that there income comes from Government support, 8% indicated an "other" source of income and 3% surveyed were in full-time employment.



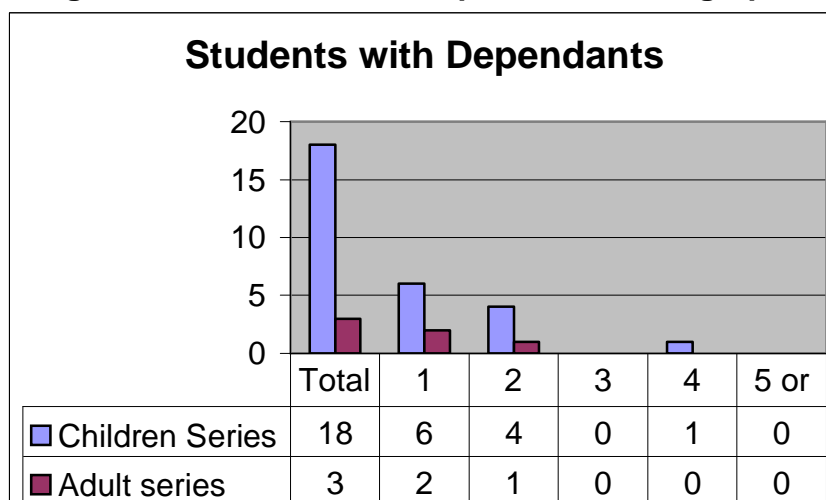
**Figure 30: Student Cases Primary Income Demographic**



n=205, Source: PPSA Student Case Work Survey 2004

The total number of students with dependants totalled 21 out of the total 205 sample size. Of those 21 students, 18 indicated they had children dependants and 3 with adult dependants. Six students had 1 dependant child, four had 2 and one student indicated 4 children. Two students had 1 dependant adult and one student indicated that they had 2 adult dependants. This data is illustrated in Figure 31.

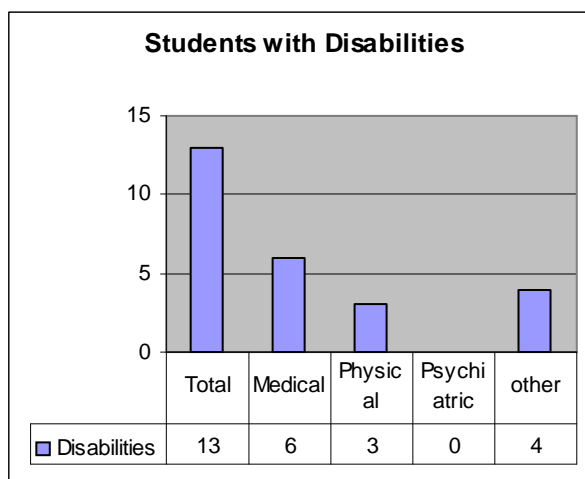
**Figure 31: Students with Dependants Demographic**



n=205, Source: PPSA Student Case Work Survey 2004

There were a total of 13 student cases where the student had a disability. Six students indicated a medical disability, three physical and four indicated a disability that was not listed. Figure 32 represents this data.

**Figure 32: Students with Disabilities Demographic**

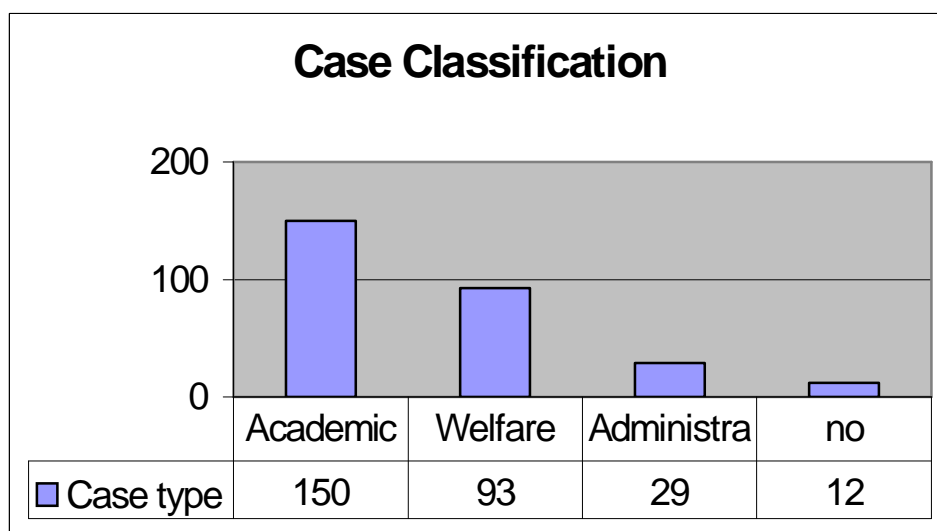


n=205, Source: PPSA Student Case Work Survey 2004

### 6.3 Student Case Work Classifications and Breakdown.

Figure 33 indicates the classification of the student cases and the number of therein. There were 150 student cases that were Academic issues, 93 were Welfare issues and 29 cases were with sector/university administration issues. While the sample size was 205 students the total number of “specific” case types do not meet the simple total number as many student cases are dealing with multiple issues.

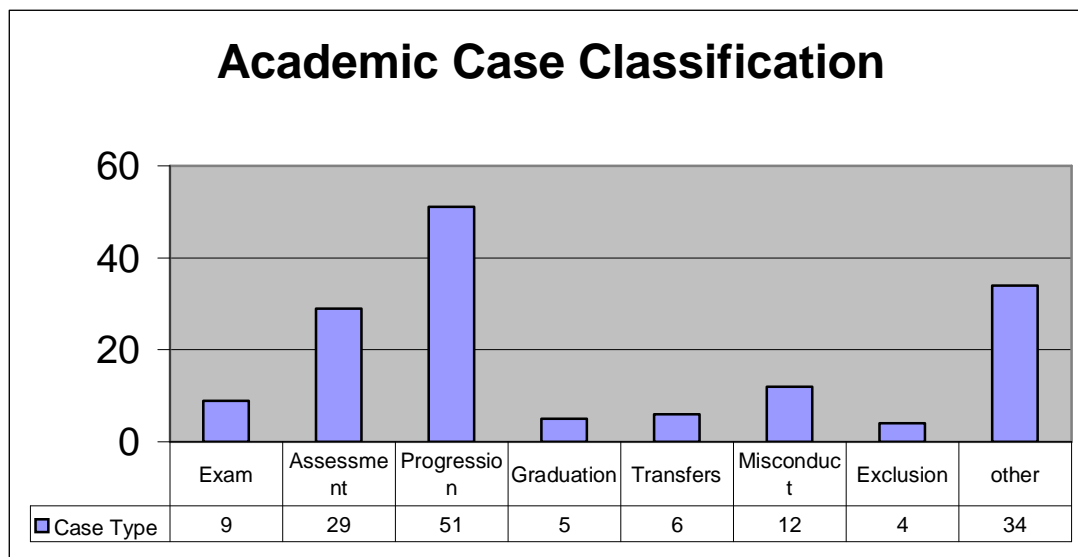
**Figure 33: Student Case Classifications**



n=205, Source: PPSA Student Case Work Survey 2004

Figure 34 further illustrates the types of cases within the Academic classification, and numbers therein. The majority of students with academic cases indicated that their case was specifically to do with “Progression” (51). The next highest specific type of academic case was “Assessments” (29). A high number of students indicated that their academic case was specific to an area not listed (34).

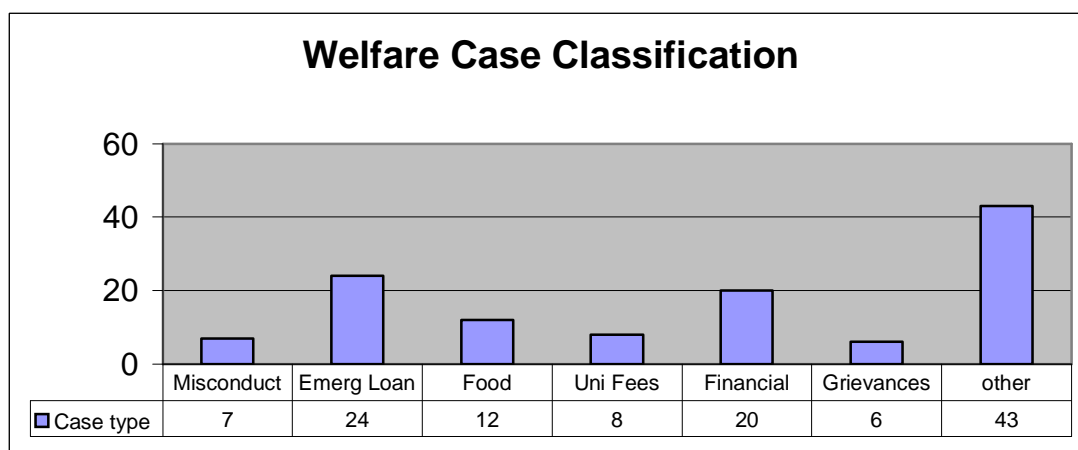
**Figure 34: Student Academic Case Classification Break Down**



n=205, Source: PPSA Student Case Work Survey 2004

Figure 35 further illustrates the types of cases within the Welfare classification, and numbers therein. The majority of students with Welfare cases indicated that their case was specifically to do with general student welfare, or “other”, issues (43). The next highest and specific type of Welfare case was “Emergency Student Loans” (24). A high number of students indicated that their welfare case was specific to Financial issues (20), a large number of student cases were for Emergency Food Vouchers (12).

**Figure 35: Student Welfare Case Classification Break Down**

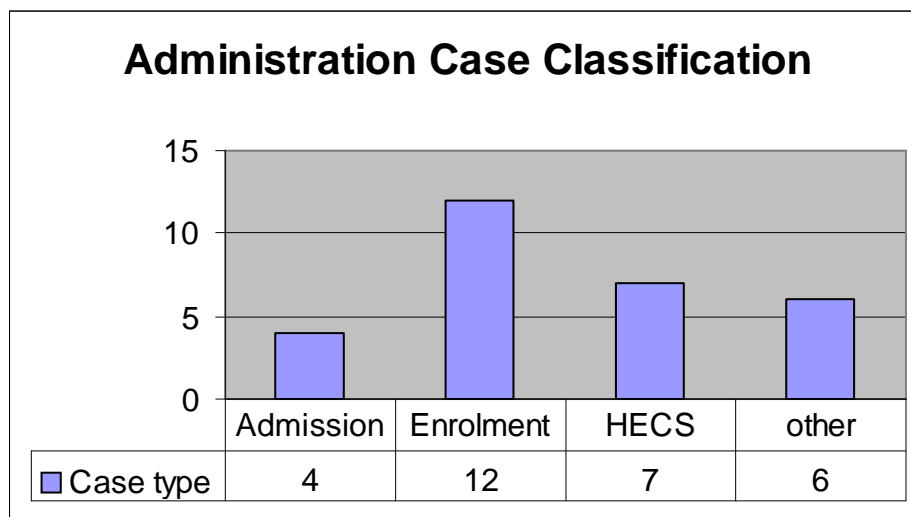


n=205, Source: PPSA Student Case Work Survey 2004

Figure 36 further illustrates the types of cases within the Administration classification, and numbers therein. The majority of students with administration cases indicated that their case was specifically to do with

University Enrolments (n=12). The next highest type of Administration case was dealing with HECS (n=7).

**Figure 36: Student Administration Case Classification Break Down**



n=205, Source: PPSA Student Case Work Survey 2004

## 6.4 Summary

The total number of cases that require more than one consultation, such cases are regarded internally as critical, was high at 205 for the nine month period on the Penrith campus. From this survey result we can reasonably map out that the total UWS wide welfare casework load to be in the order of 800 cases for a nine-month period as past history has show that generally critical welfare case load on each campus are similar, the UWSSA longitudinal research project is mapping out this very trend.

As a proportion of undergraduate EFTSU on the Penrith campus, approximately 7,000 in 2004, a more indicative picture of student usage of this one critical welfare service of the Association becomes more evident. Taking the undergraduate EFTSU as 7,000 for the Penrith campus and the nine-month casework total of 205, a very large 3.5% of UWS undergraduate students on the Penrith campus has in a nine-month, standard academic year, present to the Association with a critical welfare case.

Moving to a UWS wide level 3.5% of EFTSU in 2004, total of 24,042, would indicate therein that UWS wide critical casework load would be in the order of 850 critical student cases. This indicates the level of critical service required by the UWS student population but also without question shows the massive benefit UWSSA brings to the student community through it's services.

The survey also indicates through a number of different demographic indicators that of the critical welfare case-work a large proportion are from disadvantaged, high need and marginalised groups of students, for example:

- 38% of cases were students from Non English Speaking Background

- 6.5% of cases were students with Disabilities
- 10% of cases were students with Dependants
- 24% of cases were over the age of 25, being mature aged students.
- 76% of cases were from local students, which have higher proportions of households earning less than \$400 per week compared to other local government areas (LGAs).

What the Penrith campus critical welfare casework survey indicates is that those in most need use these services, therefore the most needy and vulnerable would suffer from the implementation of the VSU legislation that would result in these welfare services disappearing and student organisations no longer exist. The flow on affect of the student organisation disappearing would also see all the welfare programs go along with it, with the implementation of VSU not only would the caseworker service not be available but the emergency student loans, emergency food vouchers and so on would not be operating. The further flow on to the students families, be they reliant on or have dependants of there own, would be significant as parents are asked to help absorb burdens previously addressed independently with the help of the Association or simply those dependant on students go without. When you are hungry and don't have any food or means to get food, such are many parent cases coming to the organisation, to say sorry just doesn't help.

The types of cases presented is also important to note, of the 205 critical cases:

- 150 were academic in nature
- 93 were welfare related
- 29 were administrative cases involving enrolment and HECS for example.

When looking at the high number of academic cases the Association services benefits have real weight if we consider that it is absolutely plausible to assume that the service may have kept 150 students in University. With the cost of education to the nation rising, and also to the individual, all efforts must be made to address retention and completion rates. With every student that drops out they are invariably burdened with HECS debts to pay off without the benefits. With every non-completion the nation has an unrealised investment. Issues of retention and completion must be addressed, these are evidently done so through the services the Association provides.

The Association as it exists to service and represent students deliver real outcomes, often for the most vulnerable, needy and disadvantaged. The introduction of VSU, by attacking the services and organisations that provide them, is attacking the very people that most rely on these services; the most vulnerable, needy and disadvantaged. Through the research into the confines of only one of the Association's many critical welfare services, the proposed legislation can be seen for what it is; ill conceived, ill-planned and irresponsible in not showing any foresight into the sector at the national, state or local level and the impacts it will have.

## **7. Student Case Studies**

Semi-structured interviews were carried out with six students from UWS, with an attempt to get a good cross section of the university community. Students were selected based upon getting a representation of:

- a) each of UWS's six campuses;
- b) special needs and minority groups.

### **7.1 Case Study 1**

Robert is 24 and goes to Hawkesbury campus studying Animal Science. He grew up in the Hawkesbury region, and came to University as a mature age student after working on various farms and vineyards.

#### **VSU Legislation**

"I am definitely against VSU in any form"

"The main reason I am against VSU is not because of the loss of services, although that may happen, but because it is an attempt by the government to silence students"

#### **Campus Culture**

"VSU will kill campus life"

"There will be no money for clubs & societies"

"Activities such as band nights, trips to the snow, the bars themselves will all disappear under VSU"

"Basically students will just go to class and there will be nothing else"

"Clubs & societies will need to try and find alternate funding which will be very difficult for them to do. This will probably mean that many clubs and societies that help enrich students lives on campus will disappear"

#### **Advocacy, Representation and Research**

"We wont be able to provide welfare case workers and researchers, this means that if students have a problem with the university or with a lecturer, we wont be able to support and represent them"

#### **Student Fees as Building a Community**

"I think student fees are like insurance, you may not need the service to begin with, but if you need it, it's there"

"Also, by paying a fee, you are supporting your fellow students by providing them with services which I may not need, but they may need... It's about being a part of a community"

“User pays wont work... It cant work”

“It’s like paying tax... I don’t mind contributing to services and representation that benefits the community as a whole, not just myself as an individual”

### **Under a VSU Environment**

“I would pay a voluntary fee”

“We would need to run a large education campaign to show students why it is important to pay a student fee”

“I think that a fair few students would pay”

### **Representation**

“We will probably lose our National Union of Students which is our biggest voice”

“When there is no opposition to the Govt. they will try to bring in full-fee paying degrees, cut courses, and this is ultimately bad for students”

“If full up-front fees were to come in, I could not afford to go to Uni”

### **UWSSA Departments**

“We have many departments of UWSSA that represent individuals that are often marginalised at Uni”

“At campuses like Hawksbury and in society generally, there have been instances of sexual harassment and assault upon women and queer students”

“Our departments fund things like the womens room as well as educating students about these issues”

“We are running campaigns about refugees through our multi-culturalism/anti-racism department, looking also at students of UWS at the moment who have been taken from Uni and put into detention centres because of problems with their Visa’s”

“These departments will be significantly impacted upon by VSU because the organisation will not have enough funding to resource these portfolios properly”

### **UWS Impacts**

“UWS is one of the poorer campuses in Sydney, and VSU will have a greater impact on UWS than other campuses. We also have students from lower socio-economic areas attending UWS, and they will be more effected by this legislation than richer students”

**If you could say one thing to a student**

"I would say that we will lose student advocacy, so if they have a problem with the uni there will be no1 there to support them. And that there is high probability that they will lose a large majority of services on campus"

**If you could say one thing to the University Administration**

"Please make it clear that the university as a whole does not support VSU"

**If you could say one thing to the Senate Committee making a decision on VSU Legislation**

"Please don't pass it. If you are going to look at VSU legislation, let us have referendums on campus. Come out and talk to the students themselves, and ask them about how VSU will impact on them. Don't just make a decision based on your party line.

## 7.2 Case Study 2

Joan is 21, based at Penrith, doing an arts degree in social and cultural analysis.

### **VSU Legislation**

"I am definitely against VSU"

"I would prefer to pay my fees, knowing that someone else who needs a student loan could get it, even though I might not need the loan myself"

"We need to look at how students in the most desperate situations will be effected by VSU"

### **Campus Culture**

"I have noticed that the majority of students do not have the time to engage in campus life, due to work or family commitments which is sad in terms of trying to build a campus culture"

### **Advocacy, Representation and Research**

"As a regulator, the student association is really important, in terms of what the university is doing because so many individuals fall through the cracks"

### **Student Fees as Building a Community**

"You pay your taxes and rates every year, and I might not use the local pool, or the hospital. The association is very similar... not every person is going to benefit from every service the association offers, but the majority of people will use something"

"Students are in a community... They are in a University community and I think it's very very cold to shut people out because you don't benefit 100% from 100% of your student fees. I think we need to be a bit more community minded and think about other people that may be in worse situations than you"



### **Under a VSU Environment**

"If VSU were to come in, we would really need to define what our main functions were, whilst we provide activities for students, this is not the focus of what we do... Welfare is the focus of what we do. We give about \$125,000 a year to the different child care centres around the campuses to subsidise child care for students, and under VSU we are going to have to review whether this is something that we can afford to do"

### **Representation**

"The student association helps giving students a voice"

"A lot of students don't have time to look out for one another, and by having student representatives, it means that students always have someone to talk to about any problem they have, or get the support they need to speak out about a certain issue and not be fearful of being victimised"

### **UWSSA Departments**

"I believe that having spaces such as a womens and queer space are important because there is still sexist and homophobic behavior on campus"

"On International Womens Day, I was handing out flyers on respect for women on campus, and some guy told me to lift up my top, so I see a real need for departments such as the womens department running education campaigns and providing space for women"

"Our disabilities officer has been doing great stuff to ensure the university is providing adequate resources for students with disabilities. For example, there were many areas being accessed by students with disabilities which didn't have height adjustable chairs"

### **UWS Impacts**

"The other thing is that there are many people employed by student organisations across Australia that could lose their jobs"

"I think VSU will have further reaching impacts upon UWS. Dr Nelson said in one of his speeches on VSU that why should students have to pay higher prices for a sausage roll when they can walk down the road and get one cheaper. Well Dr Nelson, walk down the road here and see what you will find to eat, you will probably find a cow pat in a paddock, or you can walk 20 minutes down the road to a service station and buy a hotdog"

### **If you could say one thing to a student**

"I would say hey, do you use the café? Do you use the bar? Do you use the food outlets? Guess what, without universal student unionism and that compulsory fee, there could be no services like that o campus"

### **If you could say one thing to the University Administration**

"You know what VSU will do to UWS campuses and our reputation as a University, why are you not out there being louder and standing side by side"

with the student organisations in the media and public forums rather than hiding because you are scared”

**If you could say one thing to the Senate Committee making a decision on VSU Legislation**

“Assuming that they had heard all the arguments, to look at the issues and the facts, not just to listen to the rhetoric about freedom of association because that is hollow and it doesn’t correspond in this situation. And to really look at what they want the future generations at universities to be like”

### 7.3 Case Study 3

Edward is a 24 years old, studying a Bachelor of Law at Campbelltown.

**VSU Legislation**

“I don’t agree with VSU, because it is based on a flawed argument, that we shouldn’t pay for things that we don’t use. And it will mean a degeneration of services on campus and a reduction in campus experience”

“From an ideological standpoint the Liberals talk about freedom of association. Beneath that is a thinly valid attempt of silencing progressive dissent from the student movement”

**Campus Culture**

“Campuses will be boring places, but over the long term VSU will have the effect of screening out people who are less able to cope with student life”

**Advocacy, Representation and Research**

“It will deprive students of the established mechanisms for representing themselves, in the long term it will not stop students having a voice”

**Student Fees as Building a Community**

“Paying your student fees is very similar to paying council rates. Without the fees, it is extremely difficult to develop the community”

**Under a VSU Environment**

“Will also mean that wealthier students get better access to Uni”

**UWSSA Departments**

“VSU will essentially screen out anyone who has special needs including queer identifying students”

**If there was one thing you could say to a student**

“VSU is inevitably going to debase campus life. And for the small amount you need to pay you get far more than you would from a commercial transaction, and you get the benefit of contributing to campus life”

**If you could say one thing to say to the University Administration**

“Decision that they make in regards to student associations will effect campus life, therefore student experience and will ultimately come at a cost for the university”

**If you could say one thing to the Senate Committee making a decision on VSU Legislation**

“The attempt to silence student dissent is futile, and it inconveniences the vast majority”

**7.4 Case Study 4**

Simone is a 32 year old mother of two studying a Bachelor of Commerce part-time for the past five years. She enrolled as a mature age and grew up and lives in Revesby, approximately 10 minutes from the Bankstown campus.

**VSU Legislation**

“I am against VSU because it will have fundamental impacts upon student democracy and student service provision”

**Campus Culture**

“As a studying mother, child care subsidies that the students association provides are very important to me being able to have time to study and interact with other students on campus”

“Part of me wishes I had gone to University straight out of school because then I could engage a bit more with campus life. But I do still get involved when I can, and the students association helps with this by putting on social and cultural events”

“Without student services such as BBQ's, the bar, bands and so forth, we are going to find more students are dropping out of University, because University has to be about more than just coming to uni, doing your lecture, your tute, and then going home or to work”

**Advocacy, Representation and Research**

“I like that there is a place you can go when you have a problem with the bureaucracy Many, many times throughout the course of your degree, subjects get cancelled, or people get un-enrolled such as some friends of mine who turned up to uni one day to find that they had been un-enrolled by the computer for no reason”

“There are a lot of issues just talking about myself, and you just can't battle the University system on your own. Often the buck is passed that many times, that you just don't know where to go. The student association has a knowledge and expertise basically of who to talk to get things solved and where to go for help”

**Student Fees as Building a Community**

“Student fees are like council rates. Everyone pays their council rates, but not everyone uses every single service, but it does benefit the greater good”

### **Under a VSU Environment**

"If VSU comes in, and if we are looking at a situation of up-front fees a little further down the track, it is going to mean that a lot of the people from our communities will not be able to go to university"

### **Representation**

"Student organisations are run democratically by students, for students. If we take that away, I question whether many of the services will get provided at all, and if they are, if they will be provided with the students best interests at heart"

### **UWSSA Departments**

"The minority groups basically won't get a look in under VSU. They don't have a great deal of voice, and the students association, bring them together, and whilst they are very different in a lot of respects, they can collectively be a voice for students who often don't have a voice"

### **UWS Impacts**

"People like myself who are studying with children, really don't have the extra time to be arguing with the university or, going into tutorials that are that big you don't have time to ask the tutor questions, or traveling across multiple campuses because the subjects for their degree are offered on 3 or 4 different campuses or the university has cut courses on their home campus. They really need the access to child care, the access to additional help that can be provided by the students association"

### **If there was one thing you could say to a student**

"If you have children, or at some stage you may have children who you will want to attend university later on, and those children need to be able to come to a quality institution and receive a quality education. So it's just not about today, or I am finishing this year, it's about making sure that democracy, advocacy, welfare and student representation, is all still existing for the future students"

### **If you could say one thing to say to the University Administration**

"To remember that the focus of a university has to be upon its students. And that when they are considering students needs, it's not about what the University thinks is better for the students, it's about what students think is better for students"

### **If you could say one thing to the Senate Committee making a decision on VSU Legislation**

"Students are the future for our nation, and if we can foster in them more than just the academic skills they get in their degree's, but also some sense of responsibility, participation, care, supporting others, I think the outcome will be a far more positive result"

## **7.5 Case Study 5**

Jocelyn is 20 year old an Indigenous student studying a combined Communications and Law degree majoring in Public Relations. She attends the Parramatta campus.

### **VSU Legislation**

“Originally I was in support of VSU but I didn’t really know much about it. Now that I know a little more about it, I would say that I am swaying more against VSU”

“I think a lot of my friends are pro VSU because they are tight with money and they don’t know much about what the Students’ Association does, they don’t know about a lot of the behind the scenes representation that the organisation does”

### **Campus Culture**

“VSU will have a big impact on campus culture, especially the multi-cultural events and societies which the Association funds and organises”

### **Advocacy, Representation and Research**

“I think that the representation that the Students’ Association provides to Indigenous students is extremely important. Because we have such a small percentage of the University population that are Indigenous students, and an even smaller percentage of that population that have the time to get involved, we do need the support of the Students’ Association to help resource those that do want to get involved in helping build the University community”

### **Student Fees as Building a Community**

“I don’t pay my fees so that I can use the welfare services, I pay them so that the person sitting next to me in my class can use the services provided by the Students’ Association if they needed to, and in my opinion that’s more important”

### **Under a VSU Environment & UWS Impacts**

“We only have two Aboriginal education centers at UWS out of six campuses, and there have been moves in the past to close one of those down. If it wasn’t for the Students’ Association, it would have been closed down back in 2001. If VSU were to come in, I can see support services and Indigenous student numbers at UWS diminish”

### **UWSSA Departments**

“Many of the Indigenous students that I know are not aware of the services that are offered by the University such as free tutoring services and scholarships. I think that the Association helps link up Indigenous students with these services”

### **If there was one thing you could say to a student**

"We were actually talking about VSU in one of my communications classes, what I said to them was that there is a lot of things that go on that they don't see such as the representation and the welfare services. A lot of them have a very misrepresented view of what the Association does"

**If you could say one thing to the Senate Committee making a decision on VSU Legislation**

"I think that if they want to bring in VSU, why don't you let us decide if this is the best thing for our university and our students"

**7.6 Case Study 6**

Debbie is 30 year old mature age student studying Community Welfare at the Bankstown campus. Previous to coming to University, Debbie volunteered in community aid programs in Africa, helping women and communities to look at ways of generating income through traditional arts and crafts.

**VSU Legislation**

"I don't agree with VSU, I think that by making the student fees voluntary that students are not necessarily going to pay and that would have a direct effect on student organisations on campus"

**Advocacy, Representation and Research**

"My main concern is students being able to have a voice, having that link between the University itself and the students, so looking more at those services such as advocacy and welfare"

"Taking it more to a broader level as well, students have always had a voice in the political arena about international campaigns such as war and refugees and things like that, and I think that it's an attempt by the Liberal Government to break down that voice"

**Student Fees as Building a Community**

"I think student fees are extremely important in building a university community. Without them I think that the university communities will directly suffer"

**Under a VSU Environment & UWS Impacts**

"I guess a lot of students would see VSU as a sense of choice and that a user pays system would work, but I think it's more than that, it's more than just paying for the services that you use, it's also about having a presence on campus, having that link to the University which you can't necessarily pay for as such"

"I don't really think it's about freedom, I think that if VSU was to come in a lot of the services will disappear, so where is the choice in that"

**UWSSA Departments**

"I think that under VSU most of the Associations departments which resource the voices of minority groups on campus will deteriorate. They need money to run their campaigns and to be constantly raising awareness and ensuring that the rights of minority groups on campus are being looked after"

**If there was one thing you could say to a student**

"For first year students it's really a case of starting at the beginning and explaining what student organisations actually do, and that becomes in itself a relevant argument for why we should be opposed to VSU"

**If you could say one thing to the University Administration**

"From what I understand the Vice-Chancellor actually supports student organisations and is against VSU, as d most of the lecturers that I have spoken to, they are equally concerned about the effects that VSU will have on students and student services"

**If you could say one thing to the Senate Committee making a decision on VSU Legislation**

"I think the Senate and everyone else that are making decisions about VSU, really need to stop and think about what's important for students and how this is realistically going to effect them"

## **8. Debunking the VSU Myths**

UWSSA strongly believes that the arguments for VSU are fundamentally hollow and extremely hypocritical.

### **VSU is about freedom for students, the freedom to choose.**

If voluntary fees are about freedom, then why do we pay compulsory council rates and taxes? We pay them because Australia is built on the notion of helping each other and furthering our communities. Similarly, the university community is no different.

### **VSU is about the choice not to be a member of the Association.**

Under the UWSSA Constitution, students can elect that their fee does not go to the Association and hence forgo membership to us. However, their fee must still be paid and will be directed to other parts of the University such as the library and ultimately still following the philosophy of contributing to the University community.

### **A user pays system benefits everyone.**

A user pays system does not benefit everyone it benefits those that can afford to pay for services. Further, if a user pays system is in the best interest of the community then why is the Federal Government not also looking at reforming the current tax and rates structures to allow tax and rate payers to only pay for the services that they use. They are not because it is an extremely individualistic and selfish argument to make and contravenes the very essence of what Australia prides itself upon... 'Mateship' and 'helping your neighbor'.

### **The majority of students don't want to pay compulsory fees**

The majority of students sampled in our survey indicated that they did not support VSU. A compulsory fee like taxes or rates, when people are first asked whether they would pay them, their initial response is that they probably wouldn't pay them because most people including students are often tight for money. Once people think a bit more about the social importance of community compulsory contribution to services, most people would undoubtedly pay them.

### **Student organisations are corrupt and inefficient**

There have certainly been cases of corruption within student organisations in the past. However, if we use this argument as the impetus to dismantle student organisations then we must similarly apply this standard to all forms of government due to the numerous historical instances of corruption throughout all forms of government in Australia.

### **Student organisations are too political**

Ultimately, student organisations are inherently political bodies by nature. The aims and objectives are to further the interests of our members and community through various outlets. You could say that this is no different to other forms of government who attempt to further the interests of an LGA, a State or a Country. If students are unhappy or feel that the ways in which student organisations represent them is not relevant enough to them, then



they have the democratic right to voice opposition, or run for student councils, boards or committees. Advocacy, representation and lobbying are political behaviors and do not equate to 'party' politics.

**Student organisations have a monopoly on student services**

This is very true. Student organisations generally have a monopoly on most services which are generally run to break even or at a loss to provide affordable services, but most importantly controlled by students. What is the alternative? Privatised services which run to make profits which will not go back into university communities? We have seen the effects of this kind of privatisation on numerous public services who's prices have often increased dramatically and generally still operated within a monopolised or oligopolised market. Undoubtedly, if privatisation of student outlets on campuses were to take place, the majority would be operating without any form of competition.

## **9. Conclusion**

The evidence presented in this report indicates and establishes that the proposed VSU legislation will have far reaching negative impacts upon UWS students, the University and broader Greater Western Sydney communities. It has been demonstrated that the Greater Western Sydney and UWS communities have increased needs for social and welfare based services, and that representation is integral for the culturally diverse and socio-economically disadvantaged communities in structuring and organising effective service delivery systems to see these needs are met.

The UWS Students' Association plays an extremely important role in both of these domains, providing social, cultural and welfare services to students as well as representing them within the UWS and broader communities. Whilst no one can be certain what the precise impact of the proposed legislation will be, we do know that funding arrangements under such legislation would only decrease and ultimately so would our ability to provide our services. It would seem likely that when, as in UWSSA's situation, a non-commercial not for profit organisation loses \$3.5 million in income out of an annual \$3.8 income stream, not only will the operations of the organisation significantly decrease but any financial analyst would advise that the organisation has a bleak future.

If we also look at other examples of VSU such as in Western Australia, it is clear that we could also be looking at a situation of insolvency due to our lack of commercial service provision to subsidise non-commercial services. In this event, all the services provided by UWS Students' Association would completely disappear. The obvious problem with non-commercial not for profit services such as those which our organisation provides, is that without guaranteed funding they can not exist. Within Australia as well as most other countries, we understand the need for these services to exist, especially within the communities where there is increased need such as Greater Western Sydney, and we use the collection of compulsory fees called rates and taxes to fund these services. The compulsory community contribution system operating within the University community, focused on funding provisions to students, is of the same concept and value and is in place in almost every other country around the world. Australia and New Zealand seem to be the only countries who are going down the VSU road.

The assumption that student organisations are simply unions is an incorrect one, a simple play on words to further certain agendas. Student organisations play a pivotal role in the development of the university community as does a local council. When students make the voluntary choice to become a member of that community, as you would when you move to a new suburb or to a new country, you should be obliged to contribute financially to the development and well-being of that community as you do when you pay local council rates or when you pay your taxes to the State and Federal Governments.

The context of this point is furthered when government structures do not provide the services to the community, as in the University community environment, due lack of funding. Student organisations have provided services and representation for their respective communities as government

has increasingly failed to do so. The current proposal is, in light of the above, ill conceived and irresponsible as it takes away critical services to University communities but fails to make any plans to replace or take on these responsibilities currently provided for by student organisations.

The data of this study overwhelmingly reflects this notion with the majority of students at UWS sampled in our study stating that they do not want VSU and that they believe that it will have a negative impact upon their university experience. This is further reflected within the case studies with students sharing very similar attitudes regarding VSU and the impacts they believe it will have on their university experience and quality of education. The results of our welfare case work study further emphasis the integral role our organisation plays in providing services and representation to students from culturally diverse backgrounds and students with special needs. VSU will ultimately reduce our ability to provide these services in any meaningful manner, if at all. Students at UWS do not want VSU and are scared of the power imbalance that will open up without proper representation and advocacy.

What is also of interest is the consistent theme within the case studies, of students comparing UWSSA and other student organisations to that of a local council. The fact that student organisations are directed by students who are elected under democratic processes, means that student organisations both have a greater capacity to provide services and representation that are relevant to members of the student community, as well as enabling members of that community to actively participate within the organisation. If student organisations such as UWSSA are lost under a VSU environment, so to would these processes which increase both participation and the capacity to provide relevant representation and services. This would be a significant blow to the democratic system of student government across Australia, as in many cases VSU will realistically mean the total or at least partial disappearance of such a system.

The type of democratic system which is practiced by UWSSA, as do many other student organisations, can be described as 'participatory democracy'. This is the concept that the organisation is directed not only by the elected representatives, but also through students actively participating within the organisation. This is achieved through our collective structure which allows students to directly input and vote on various issues directly related to the specific portfolio which the collective operates within. This essentially gives any student a direct voice on almost any issue that they would like to be heard on. It is this process which UWSSA believes significantly helps build the university community by involving its members to actively participate in its decision making. Again, under a VSU environment, there is the high possibility that this system will cease to exist.

In the case of commercial services such as food outlets, cafés and bars, the situation at UWS would more than likely be a partial privatisation of these services whereby the University would provide leases to external companies to operate these services under the current monopolised market. The effect of

such an arrangement would be extremely detrimental for a number of reasons.

Firstly, the current arrangements with commercial services at UWS, is that they are highly subsidised and provide cheap and affordable products to students. Students also have direct control over the prices and types of products offered. Many student run commercial outlets also have a commitment to employing students so that they both have a job which is flexible enough to maintain whilst also being student. Under a privatised model, there are no checks and balances to ensure that prices can be regulated under a monopolised environment and profits from such services will not go back into the community. There is also an increased likelihood that there would be lower levels of student staff employed within these outlets once they are privatised, and that wages for these students are also likely to decrease.

Secondly, the University would essentially be attempting to generate income from the leasing of these established services which were paid for by compulsory student fees, to make up for the shortfall in Federal Government funding. Private companies benefit from the lack of pricing regulation and a monopolised environment, the Federal Government benefits from masking there lack of funding to UWS by forcing universities to make up shortfalls by generating their own income, but students on the other hand lose out in every way because they will not only lose control over these services, but they will also be paying higher prices.

Whilst it is clear that UWS and Greater Western Sydney are somewhat unique, it would also be fair to say that the proposed legislation will have similar effects on all university communities around Australia. This study demonstrates that there is a need for much more research to be conducted both within UWS as well as other communities on which the proposed legislation will impact. UWS Students' Association will be conducting a large longitudinal study of VSU and we urge the senate to conduct its own inquiries and research into the impacts that this legislation could have on communities throughout Australia on both a macro and micro level. As we see, and our research indicates, the proposed legislation as having significant impacts on numerous communities across Australia, we further emphasis the need for community engagement and feedback before legislation of this magnitude is considered.

The UWS Students Association sees absolutely no benefit for students, universities or communities in the introduction of any form of VSU, and concludes that the single and sole purpose of the proposed legislation is to attempt to silence dissent to the Federal Government by progressive student organisations and movements across Australia by removing the mechanisms which provide them funding. We also find it inherently perplexing and strange that the Federal Government would attack community democracy and compulsory acquired fees when their ability and privilege to argue such a position is built upon those very same structures.