



Voluntary Student Unionism

CHANGING THE FABRIC OF UNIVERSITY LIFE

"While no one disputes the importance of academic achievement, a university is a site for the development of creative talent, socialisation and comradeship. These in turn are nurtured by a campus that offers support to sporting clubs, musical, dramatic and debating societies, student newspapers and other platforms for the interchange of ideas.

The University of Sydney Union has successfully filled this role for many generations as a result of compulsory student unionism. A weakening of its status can only lead, in the long run, to an arid and lifeless campus and the perception of the university itself as a degree-shop instead of what it should be - an alma mater".

John Bell AM OBE, Director and founder, Bell Shakespeare Theatre Company.

"Australian Universities produce some of the greatest minds in the world. Part of what makes a mind brilliant and creative is the richness of its experience – not just in the classroom, but outside it, in the larger world of people and ideas. Funds provided by the student Unions allow students to create and to explore a model of their world in microcosm. I fear that without Unions to support and foster diversity, this model – and students' experiences of it – will be sadly impoverished".

Dr Fiona Cowie, Usyd Uni Medalist and Associate Professor of Philosophy at the California Institute of Technology, Pasadena, Ca.



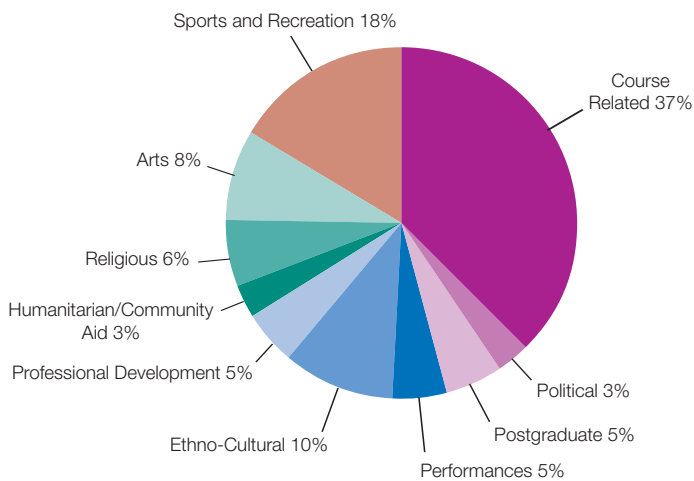
UNIVERSITY OF SYDNEY UNION

June 2005

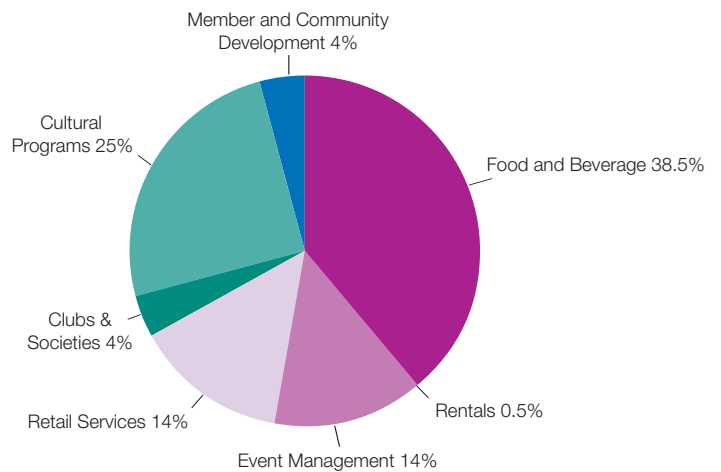


All gone with VSU

Categories of Clubs & Societies Expenditure



Total Expenditure 2005



"The University of Sydney Union is not just about food and coffee. Its about providing the cultural and social necessities that create a well rounded graduate, well prepared for the outside world. I can't thank the USU enough for the opportunities they afforded me".

Adam Spencer, Media & Broadcasting personality and University of Sydney Senator.

An open letter to the Prime Minister, The Honourable Mr John Howard MP.

Dear Prime Minister,

In March of this year your Education Minister, Mr Brendan Nelson MP, introduced a Bill to Parliament (the Higher Education Support Amendment Act 2005) that would drastically change student life in the higher education sector. We, the undersigned, unanimously agree it would be a change for the worse.

The introduction of this Bill will mark the end of student organisations that currently provide essential campus services for students and which enhance the cultural, sporting and social fabric of Australia's diverse youth.

Prime Minister, let's set the record straight: a student union or guild is not a trades union. Student organisations across Australia's Universities provide approximately \$250 million dollars in campus services, amenities, clubs and societies, sporting facilities, student advocacy, childcare, entertainment, online services, social programs, mentoring, catering, debating and more. These are services paid for by students for students.

These services will be cut unless this legislation is withdrawn or amended. To provide these essential services, student unions, like governments, cannot operate with a user pays system.

We, the undersigned, object to the Federal Government's plan to deprive Universities of the right to levy fees which provide the services and amenities that contribute so significantly to the value of a university education.

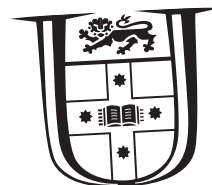
We urge you, the Prime Minister, as well as the Education Minister and all MPs and Senators, to amend the tabled legislation so as to afford the next generation of leaders the same opportunities from which you benefited.

Yours sincerely,

John Bell AM OBE
Adam Spencer
Prof. Vaughan Carr
Tim Freedman
Dennis Watkins
Jim Coombs
Prof. Ken Hillman
Bruce Meagher
Choong Seow Yong
Reg Livermore
Julian Morrow
Graham Bond
Sascha Horler

Neil Armfield
Peter FitzSimons
Anita Hegh
Henri Szeps
Michael Gow
Bob Hughes
John Frost OAM
Justice Jim Macken
Patrick Nolan
Dr Stuart Khan
Ted Marr
Anna Booth
Assoc. Prof. Jan Mears

Prof. Rufus Clark
Prof. Percy Allan AM
Dr Ann Daniel, Prof. Emeritus
Matt Laffan
John Schaeffer OAM
Dr Fiona Cowie



UNIVERSITY OF SYDNEY UNION



The impact of VSU

Voluntary Student Unionism (VSU) would have a devastating impact on a range of vital services provided by the University of Sydney Union (USU), irreparably damaging the student experience and reducing Sydney University's capacity to compete strongly in international educational markets.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

- The University of Sydney Union is the responsible manager of approximately \$26 million per annum.
- VSU will mean a cut of over \$7 million in fee income.

REGIONAL CAMPUSES

- Services would be closed on regional campuses, such as Canberra and Dubbo Base, Westmead Children's and Dental, Concord, Royal North Shore and Royal Prince Alfred hospitals. Further impact would also include cuts at the Conservatorium of Music, Camden Farm and the Phillip St Law School.
- Rural and regional students would miss out under VSU: they particularly rely on university non-academic services to provide a 'home away from home'.

STUDENT SPACES ON CAMPUS

- 8,000 sq. metres of public open space used as wet weather areas, study areas, amenities and common space would have to be leased to the private sector. This would leave under 20 sq. centimetres per student.
- \$1.909 million average per annum spent on building capital investment plus building maintenance of \$2.9 million annually will be cut.

CHILD CARE

- Under VSU fees at the USU's three day-care centres would rise from \$63 to \$112 per day (or an extra \$2,580 per child per annum).
- Students unable to pay these commercial rates would be forced to discontinue their studies.

CLUBS AND SOCIETIES

- More than \$1.027 million per annum would be withdrawn from registered clubs and societies which involve more than 50 percent of students.
- The estimated cost to join a club or society would increase from an average of \$5.00 to \$240.00 per person per annum.
- This is likely to mean the closure of clubs such as the Sydney University Drama Society (SUDS), the Sydney University Musical Society (SUMS), Red Cross Society, the Evangelical Union and Muslim Student Association to name but a few.

SCHOOL TUTORING FOR DISADVANTAGED HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS

- Closure of the \$210,000 per annum School Tutoring Program for disadvantaged children which helps some 300 local school students.
- This program is supported by 200 Sydney University student volunteers who enjoy practical teaching experience from this program.

CULTURAL & ARTS PROGRAMS

- Campus based social and cultural activities for students would be cut by \$1.7 million, hampering the University's "student experience" profile, having a major economic impact on our international markets.

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Australia is out of step on this issue. Renowned universities, such as Harvard, Yale, Oxford, Cambridge, Stanford, Berkeley and Princeton, all have compulsory membership for student service organisations – that cost on average four times more than the Australian fee.