NUS Research

Submission to the Senate Education, Employment and Workplace Relations Committee Inquiry into

Higher Education Legislation Amendment (Student Services and Amenities, and Other Measures Bill 2009)

Presented By NUS President David Barrow

Prepared by NUS Research Co-odinator, Graham Hastings

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Executive Summary

This submission will focus on the empirical changes that have occurred on Australian campuses since the passage of the *Higher Education (Abolition of Compulsory Up Front Student Union Fees) Act 2005*. We will not be rehashing the ideological debates of previous Senate Inquiries as we believe the practical evidence shows the debate has moved on.

We will attempt to explain why the idea of creating self-funded voluntary student organisations through the *Higher Education (Abolition of Compulsory Up Front Student Union Fees) Act 2005* has failed. Even the strongest organisations, such as the Western Australian Guilds, still require university funding and are drawing on historic reserves.

The actual outcomes since the passage of the legislation fall into three broad categories:

- General collapse of student campus life, support structures and representative functions;
- University takeover of major service providers and subsidised from university revenue with either a student advisory committee within the university company or a small independent student representatative/advocacy organisation funded by the university through a service level contract
- University funding to maintain comprehensive student service and representative bodies through a service level contract

The problem with the current university funding system include:

- That the university funding for student services, amenities, representation and advocacy is unfunded apart from possible future grants for student amenities under the Higher Education Investment Fund. This means that universities are diverting funds from other areas of university activity.
- There is a huge variation in the amount of discretionary funding the universities have in their budgets to divert, ie compare the funding agreements of some Go8 universities with regional universities. This builds further structural inequalities and disadvantages into the higher education system
- Since 2005 there has been a massive shift from universities from exercising broad regulatory control over student organisations to micro-managing student service delivery either through the establishment of university companies to deliver services or detailed service level agreements with student organisations. This has led to a loss of student-driven culture and the weakening of independent representation and advocacy.

While the legislation won't fix all the problems NUS supports the passage of the *Higher Education Legislation Amendment (Student Services and Amenities, and Other Measures Bill 2009)* and the *Student Services, Amenities, Representation and Advocacy Guidelines*. A discussion of the implications of the bill in the post-2005 context and a proposed amendment is outlined in the final section of this paper.

Introduction

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NUS's starting point is democratic student control of student affairs. NUS supports the principle of universal membership of student representative organisations and draws the analogy to local governments. We believe that many of the benefits of student organisations (such as lobbying for smaller class sizes or better welfare support) are intangible and cannot be delivered on a user pays or voluntary membership basis as the benefits flow to all.

We believe that students should make a universal contribution and that this contribution should be able to deferred similar to HECS arrangements. We believe that students, not Vice-Chancellors or corporate CEOs, should be able to ultimately determine through democratic processes how their own money is used.

We do not see a strict divided between academic services and non-academic services. Participation in an enriching campus life is part of the overall educative process that gives graduates the more rounded personal development that should sit alongside the vocational skills learnt in the classroom.

Australia (and to much lesser degree, New Zealand) are unique in the world in the extent that state and federal parliaments have been preoccupied with intervening to prevent the students from exercising student control of student affairs, and more recently preventing universities from receiving the funding needed to maintain campus life activities and student support. The principle of student control of student affairs and universal student contributions is unproblematic in most parts of the world, and also enjoyed bipartisan support in Australia until the mid-1970s.

However, this submission will not be rehashing the ideological debates about VSU that were extensively covered in the Senate Inquiries in 2005 and 1999, and the many legislative debates since 1975.

This submission will be grounded in the actual empirical facts that have emerged since the passage of the *Higher Education (Abolition of Compulsory Up Front Student Union Fees) Act 2005*, and how this has changed much of the context of the VSU debate. We believe that this is the new evidence that will be of interest to Committee members.

This submission will inform the Senate on the following key matters:

- Why VSU failed on national level despite the apparent anomaly of long standing voluntary student guilds in WA;
- A Campus By Campus Outline of Impact of VSU;
- That funding to student organisations is now micro-managed through purchaser: provider service level agreements rather than the former block grant sytem;
- That on nearly half of universities that the major student service provider is now a university company;
- That independent advocacy may be compromised by the new university service providers;
- That the impact on regional campuses has been much more severe

Having established the changes since 2005 NUS will outline our specific recommendations on the bill and guidelines

PART ONE: The Western Australian Experience And Why Voluntary Student Unionism Failed On A National Level

The devastating impact of the *Higher Education (Abolition of Compulsory Up Front Student Union Fees) Act 2005* on campus life, student support, student representative and advocacy resources has been documented initially with the NUS *First Annual Report Into The Impact of Federal VSU Legislation* and subsequently with the DEEWR Summary Report *The Impact of Voluntary Student Unionism on Services, Amenities and Representation*.

In part two of this submission we will provide an outline of the major changes arising from the implementation of the *Higher Education (Abolition of Compulsory Up Front Student Union Fees) Act 2005* on public universities outside of Western Australia. In part three we will look at this impact on a thematic level.

In this section we will consider the impact of voluntary student unionism on students activities at Western Australian universities. This is important for two reasons. Firstly, Western Australia already had state-based voluntary fee legislation, *Acts Amendment (Student Guilds and Associations) Act 1994,* similar in effect to the *Higher Education (Abolition of Compulsory Up Front Student Union Fees) Act 2005,* which in practical terms came into effect in 1997, and was only partially repealed in 2002. There is over a decade of practical experience with this kind of legislation to draw upon.

Secondly many of those supporting the retention of the current federal VSU legislation (and hence oppose the *Higher Education Legislation Amendment (Student Services and Amenities, and Other Measures Bill 2009)* argue that the current voluntary membership and activity levels of the Western Australian Guilds shows that VSU can work. They argue that the failure of student organisations elsewhere to build viable organisations without substantial university funding is due to their inefficiency or failure to deliver services that students want.

NUS wishes to make some comments about the Western Australian experience with a decade of full and partial VSU that will assist the Inquiry with understanding this apparent anomaly. None of these comments are intended to in anyway denigrate the outstanding efforts of WA Guild student representatives and staff in their recruiting and revenue raising activities over this period.

Following the passage of the *Western Australian Acts Amendment (Student Guilds and Associations) Act 1994* Western Australia became the first place in the world to pass legislation to prohibit universities from requiring students to make a financial contribution for the provision of non-academic student services and amenities. The main features of the Act were:

- *It is not compulsory for any student to be a member of a student association;*
- *It is not compulsory for a student to pay any fees to a student association or any service not directly related to an educational course provided by the university;*
- *Criminal penalties for anyone who discriminates against non-members;*
- *The removal of the Guild President as a member of University Council*

The initial impact of the legislation was muted as in 1995 and 1996 the Student Guilds received compensatory 'SOS' funding from the Commonwealth. While the VSU was being debated in WA parliament the Keating ALP Federal Government inserted a section in the *State Grants (General*

Purposes) Act 1993 to 'protect the right of higher education institutions to decide the most appropriate range and level of services and amenities for their students'. The Commonwealth compensated student organisations for income lost due to state VSU legislation and also gave itself the power to reduce its grants to the offending state by that amount. This effectively meant that state Liberal governments would themselves be compensating the student organisations for income lost due to the legislation.

While no money was taken away from the states the SOS funding provided the Murdoch University Guild of Students with $725,328, the Edith Cowan University Student Guild with $1.54m and the Uni of WA Guild of Undergraduates with $1.56m. The corresponding SOS income in 1996 was Murdoch ($693,657), Edith Cowan ($1.2m), Curtin ($1.82m), and the Uni of WA ($1.66m). The SOS funding was suspended following the election of the Howard Government, although the payments for 1996 were made to those campuses that got in their applications before the change. The full impact of VSU legislation thus came into force in 1997.

This full VSU regime operated from 1997 until the end of 2002. Student Guilds were to survive on the basis of the voluntary payment of membership fees and profits made from commercial trading activities (such as food outlets and Taverns, gym hire fees). When the full impact of the *Western Australian Acts Amendment (Student Guilds and Associations) Act 1994* came into force the reduction in revenue led to a wide range of campus services and activities to be discontinued or significantly reduced in availability to students.

<u>Curtin University Student Guild</u>
14 jobs lost
Contribution to provision of campus child-care cut by $435,000
Academic Rights Support - reduced
Welfare Officers - reduced
Full Programme of Cultural Events - discontinued
Orientation Camp for First Years - discontinued
Funding for Clubs and Societies - reduced
Student Emergency Loans - discontinued
Disabled Students Department - discontinued
Sexuality Department - discontinued
Sport Library - discontinued
Subsidised Catering on Campus - discontinued
Student Conference Funding - discontinued
Student Publications - reduced
International Student Campaigns and Projects - reduced
Activities –reduced
Women's Rooms - discontinued
Weekly Campus Newsletter - discontinued
Policy support for student reps - discontinued
Women's Department - discontinued
Environment Department - discontinued
Postgraduate Support - reduced
Regional Campus Funding -reduced
Affiliation Fees to NUS - unable to pay
Affiliation Fees to Sports Peak Body - unable to pay

Edith Cowan University Student Guild
Guild became insolvent and placed under administration, eventually re-started with large injection funds from university
All 28 Guild staff lost their jobs
Academic Rights Support - lost at undergraduate level
Welfare Officers - retained only through university funding position directly
Guild Service Centres - discontinued
Full Programme of Cultural Events - discontinued
Women's Rooms - discontinued
Weekly Campus Newsletter - discontinued
Policy support for student reps - discontinued
Orientation Camp for First Years - discontinued
Funding for Clubs and Societies - discontinued
Student Emergency Loans - discontinued
Sexuality Department - discontinued
Subsidised Catering on Campus - discontinued
Personal Accident Insurance - discontinued
Off Campus Housing Advice - discontinued
Student Conference Funding - discontinued
Student Publications - reduced
International Student Campaigns and Projects - reduced
Activities -reduced
Postgraduate Support – reduced
Women's Department - discontinued
Environment Department - discontinued
Regional Campus Funding -reduced
Affiliation Fees to NUS - unable to pay
Affiliation Fees to Sports Peak Body - unable to pay

Murdoch University
Six guild staff lost their jobs,
Guild reliant on university for financial support
Academic Rights Support - discontinued
Welfare Officers - reduced
Guild Service Centres -discontinued
Full Programme of Cultural Events - discontinued
Orientation Camp for First Years – discontinued
Funding for Intervarsity Sport - lost
Funding for Clubs and Societies - reduced
Student Emergency Loans - discontinued
Sport Library - discontinued
Subsidised Catering on Campus - discontinued
Sexual Assault Referral Service - discontinued
Off Campus Housing Advice - discontinued
Student Conference Funding - discontinued
Student Publications - reduced
International Student Campaigns and Projects - reduced
Activities –reduced
Policy support for student reps - discontinued
Women's Department - discontinued
Environment Department - discontinued

Postgraduate Support – reduced staff
Regional Campus Funding -reduced
Affiliation Fees to NUS - unable to pay
Affiliation Fees to Sports Peak Body - unable to pay

University of Western Australia
28 jobs lost
University took over funding and running of sports
Academic Rights Support – reduced
Textbook Subsidy Scheme - reduced
Welfare Officers - reduced
Guild Service Centres – discontinued
Postgraduate Support – reduced staff
Policy support for student reps -
Women's Department - partly integrated into university equity office
Funding for Clubs and Societies - reduced
Student Emergency Loans - discontinued
Disabled Students Department - discontinued
Subsidised Catering on Campus - discontinued
Student Conference Funding - discontinued
Student Publications - reduced
International Student Campaigns and Projects - reduced
Activities –reduced
Sexual Assault Referral Service - reduced
Regional Campus Funding -reduced
Affiliation Fees to NUS - unable to pay

It is also worth commenting that student activism in the west has been traditionally weaker than in the eastern states. Even the Vietnam War protest movement largely bypassed the Perth campuses. The lower level of student activism translated into historically smaller allocations to representation and activist departments relative to the Guild's sporting, social and commercial activities. Representation, advocacy and activism all faced significant cuts in the late 1990s but the effects were less obvious externally at Murdoch and Uni of Western Australia. At Curtin the guild became almost exclusively focussed on commercial 'user pays' services the shift was more pronounced.

Another consideration was that the 1990s transition to VSU in Western Australia took place over 3 and half years. The legislation was passed in 1994 but the Commonwealth's 'SOS' funding meant that the full impact of VSU was not felt until 1997. By contrast the current federal VSU legislation had an implementation time frame ranging from six months to a year.

A change of government in WA led to a partial and protracted repeal of the VSU legislation. NUS and CAPA employed a series of VSU project officers and consultants to assist Guild representatives with the lengthy process of the repeal. The final fruit of these efforts was the *Acts Amendments (Student Guilds and Associations) Act 2002*.

Acts Amendment (Student Guilds and Associations) Act 2002

- *It is not compulsory to be a member of the Student Guild;*
- *An annual amenities and services fee shall be set at an amount approved by the University Council, after receiving a recommendation from the Student Guild;*

- *The amenities and services fee is payable to the university council by each enrolled student, except students exempted from doing so, or made ineligible by statute;*
- *The University Council shall pay to the Student Guild a percentage of the amenities and services fee collected that is not less than the percentage of enrolled students who are members of the Guild;*
- *Regardless of the number of enrolled students who are members of the student guild, the percentage of the collected amenities and services fee paid to the Student Guild must exceed 50% of those fees;*
- *The part of the amenities and services fee not paid to the student guild is to be spent on student amenities and services in the manner agreed by the Council and the Student Guild*

Since the state VSU legislation was partially repealed in 2002 the Guilds, in anticipation of future state or federal VSU legislation, had put the extra income into their reserves and did not significantly increase their outlays. This history explains the comparative ease that Western Australian Guilds had in 2007 in adjusting to the *Higher Education (Abolition of Compulsory Up Front Student Union Fees) Act 2005*.

The more interesting question is whether the Western Australian Guilds can be held up as the model of successful voluntary student organisations that can be replicated around Australia.

The voluntary fee-paying membership of the Student Guilds in 2007 was 58.7% at University of Western Australia, 37% at Murdoch, 20% at Edith Cowan University and 17% at Curtin University. Certainly the voluntary membership rates at University of Western Australia and Murdoch University are well above the national norm.

Notwithstanding the better recruitment practices arising from decade of trial and error the higher recruitment levels also reflect the atypical nature of these two universities. They were largely unaffected by the Dawkins-era campus mergers and have nearly all their students enrolled on a single site. They have a large school leaver, full time enrolment student population. They are also not based in the CBD, so they have a captive audience to use their commercial trading services.

Student organisations at most Australian universities are not operating in this context. Edith Cowan University, a post-Dawkins merger of several geographically disparate institutions in Western Australia, is more typical. Here, the Student Guild has been in receivership and hovered on the edge of collapse until saved by large financial support from the university. For much of the last decade it has struggled to maintain more than a bare minimum of student services across its campuses. The university reported that the ECU Guild membership payments fell from $1.5 m during the VSU partial repeal to $95,000 in 2007. The Guild is being kept alive by a service level agreement with the university for $400,000 plus in-kind support.[1]

Student organisations at half of Australian campuses now no longer control the provision of the major commercial trading services. This removes even the theoretical potential for the internal cross-subsidisation of non-commercial activities and also the financial discounts used to attract voluntary members. Commercial trading now typically occurs through a university controlled service company or is leased to a private provider and leaves no scope for the evolution of

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[1] Edith Cowan University submission to DEEWR Discussion Paper, 'The Impact of Voluntary Student Unionism on Services, Amenities and Representation for Australian University Students, March 2008

Western Australian-styled Student Guilds.

The supporters of the current *Higher Education (Abolition of Compulsory Up Front Student Union Fees) Act 2005* provisions also tend to fail to mention that the Western Australian Guilds continue to require annual university grants to support their non-commercial activities: Curtin University Guild ($700,000), Edith Cowan Guild ($400,000), University of WA Guild ($200,000), and Murdoch University Guild ($106,000). The organisations have also drawn heavily on their financial reserves. The UWA Guild reported an operating loss of $280,000 in 2007, and Curtin Guild was forecasting a $255,000 operating loss.[2] Universities have also taken on the funding for some of the most expensive services. The university took direct control of sports at University of Western Australia in the 1990s, while Curtin University took direct control of childcare in 2007.

The idea of voluntary student unionism was first seriously advocated within the Liberal Party by the University of Western Australia Liberal Club in 1975. A couple of decades later Western Australia's Guilds became the first to face this radical experiment with full blown voluntary student unionism. The commendable successes that the student representatives and staff of Western Australian Guilds have had in keeping their campus life alive under a decade of state and federal VSU legislation has been used by VSU proponents to justify the retention of the current *Higher Education (Abolition of Compulsory Up Front Student Union Fees) Act 2005* provisions.

However, on closer examination we find that these voluntary Guilds continue to receive financial support from the universities, are drawing heavily on reserves, and that the two most successful Guilds in terms of membership are rather atypical in the combination of their location, campus structure and enrolment. The expectation that viable self-funded voluntary student guilds will evolve nationally through the retention of the current arrangements is unfounded. This one size fits all approach was unfortunately pursued with reckless disregard by the previous government despite warnings from nearly everyone else in the sector.

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[2] National Union of Students –WA submission to DEEWR Discussion Paper, 'The Impact of Voluntary Student Unionism on Services, Amenities and Representation for Australian University Students, March 2008

PART TWO: Campus by Campus Breakdown of non-WA campuses

The following campus by campus breakdown was derived mainly from the university submissions to the DEEWR 'The Impact of Voluntary Student Unionism on Services, Amenities and Representation for Australian University Students' review. Gaps in the information have been filled with the student organisation submissions and also more recent information from NUS affiliated organisations.

NSW UNIVERSITIES

Charles Sturt University

Change To Structure

The pre-VSU structure of individual campus based representation and service delivery reflected the origins of the university from the merger of several institutions: CSU Students Association Bathurst, Rivcoll Union (at Wagga Wagga and Goulburn), CSU Students Association Albury-Wodonga, Dubbo Students Association, Orange Students Association and the St. Marks College in Canberra.

The university had wanted a centralised Students Association and VSU allowed it to wind up the campus-based student associations. What emerged was a compromise where student committees were established on each campus site that appointed two representatives to a university-wide Student Senate. The new structure was for representation only and the university took over much of the service delivery.

Change To Revenue

Before VSU the university collected about $3.37 million in fee revenue.

In response to VSU the university set aside $1 million for the employment of 10 student support officers and some extra funds to refurbish some of the student association buildings.

Change To Staffing

All 30 FTE staff employed at the various Associations became redundant when their organisations were wound up.

Visible Impact On Students

Loss of independent academic rights advocacy. The university now provides the service directly. Despite several safeguards to deal with conflicts of interest the Bathurst campus reports that student use of the service has fallen by 83% since the university takeover.

Loss of second hand book service

Increase in prices of retail outlets taken over by university

Macquarie University

Change To Structure

Prior to VSU there were three organisations dependent on the student service fee revenue. They were: Students At Macquarie (SAM), Macquarie University Student Council (MUSC) and Macquarie University Sports and Recreation (MUSR)

The situation was complicated by the much publicised actions of the university to remove a long standing group of entrenched incumbents to "ensure that student fees collected by SAM were not misused" (Macquarie University submission to VSU Review).

The university disbanded the three organisations and has created a university controlled company U@MQ. In 2008 the university established an elected student advisory body within the structure.

Change To Revenue

Prior to VSU the university collected about $4.5 million in student service fees.

Almost $8m donated from the University's Division of Economic and Financial Studies over 2006/7, for student services provided by the Students at Macquarie and Macquarie University Sports and Recreation to continue 'business as usual'.

There is now a $5 million funding agreement but the duration is not known.

Change To Staffing

Not Reported

Visible Impact On Students

Independent student representation curtailed

Loss of independent academic rights advocacy

The university reports an increase in student participation in clubs and social sporting activities although this may reflect the opening of the new Sports and Aquatic Centre in 2007 and the changed focus of U@MQ compared to what was happening in the immediately before in the old structure.

Some sporting infra-structure projects have been delayed and fees for secondary schools to use the sporting fields have been increased.

Costs of participating in the University Games have doubled

Southern Cross University

Change To Structure

Prior to VSU the organisations dependent on the student service fee were the Lismore based Student Union (the commercial, sports and activities arm trading as Campus Central on the Lismore and Tweed Heads campuses), the Lismore-based Student Representative Council, the Coffs Habour Students Association (representation and a shop) and the Postgraduate Association (CRUX).

Since VSU the two main organisations, Campus Central and the Student Representative Council, have both been wound down. A Students Association has been established on the small new Tweeds Heads campus following the demise of Campus Central but there are no student run entities on the main Lismore campus apart from CRUX. The university runs some student services at Lismore through its Office of Sport and Cultural Activities.

Change To Revenue

Prior to VSU the university collected about $2 million from the student service fee. Campus Central received about $930,000 per annum and the Student Representative Council received about $500,000.

Voluntary membership revenue was only 50 at the Lismore campus but slightly better on the smaller Coffs Harbour and Tweed Head campuses.

In 2008 the university provided a grant of about $130,000 to keep CRUX, the Coffs Harbour Students Association and the Tweeds Head Students Association afloat as part of a service agreement. In addition the university allocates about $200,000 to fund its own student support services.

Change To Staffing

The closure of the Student Union and SRC resulted in the loss of 200 jobs.

Visible Impact On Students

Closure of Student Union and SRC

Loss of independent academic advocacy services

Loss of dental service

Loss of the textbook loans scheme

Loss of the honours scholarship program

Reduction in active clubs from 25 to 5

Loss of the monthly stipend paid to volunteer directors and officers in the surviving student associations

University of Newcastle

Change To Structure

Prior to VSU the organisations dependent on the General Service Charge revenue were the University of Newcastle Union, Newcastle University Sport, Newcastle University Students Association, Newcastle University Postgraduate Association, and Ourimbah-based Campus Central.

The major structural change was the winding up of the main trading and activities body, the University Union and its replacement with a university-run entity, UoN (Services).

Change To Revenue

Prior to VSU the university was allocating $6.25 million from the General Service Charge: $2.65 million to the University Union, $1.79 million to Sports, $0.74 million to the Students Association, $0.12 million to the Postgraduate Association and $0.97 million to Campus Central.

Following VSU the university has entered into service level funding agreements with the organisations. In 2007 the total grant was $1.9 million. However, $1.13 million of this went to the new university run entity, UoN (Services),

Change To Staffing

Widespread cuts across the board, for example reduction in Students Association from 7 to 3 staff.

Visible Impact On Students

Reduction in sport and clubs membership

Severe reduction in subsidy for participation in inter-university sport

Reduced funds for infrastructure maintenance and development (the Lismore infra-structure is ageing, while the Ourimbah campus is new it needs more infra-structure as students numbers rapidly expand on this campus).

Fewer social and cultural events

Funding for postgraduate students reduced

Parent Room closed

Publication of student media cut from 7 issues a year to 4.

Print services cut

Second hand bookshop closed

Emergency loans cut

Weekly BBQ reduced

Increase in food costs on campus

Grievance officer cut to part time.

University of New England

Change To Structure

Prior to VSU the organisations dependent on the General Service Fee revenue were the UNE Union (commercial trading and activities), UNE Students Association, the UNE Postgraduate Association and UNE Sports.

Following VSU the UNE Union, UNE Students Association and UNE Postgraduate Association were dissolved and have been replaced with a university run entity, UNE Services, that has rudimentary undergraduate and postgraduate student advisory committees within the company. UNE Sports continues as a separate entity.

Change To Revenue

Prior to VSU the university collected about $1.85 million per annum from General Service Fee revenue. About $1.4 million went to the Union, Students Association and Sports Association and $0.45 million went to UNE Sports.

The university now provides $300,000 per annum to support UNE Services (a grant of $230.000 and $70,000 of in-kind support) and $66,000 for the TUNE FM student radio station. Sports UNE receives a grant of $200,000 which leaves it $250,000 per annum worse off.

Change To Staffing

Services UNE staff reduced from 94 to 56 since 2006

Staff reductions by 31 for Sport UNE (loss of 31 casuals and half the full time staff)

No direct staff support for student representation since VSU

Visible Impact On Students

Student advocacy services and welfare services, an important element in student engagement, suffered staff reductions and are no longer independent

Student representation massively de-prioritised in new structure, funding for undergraduate and postgraduate representation is $10,500 in 2008 (compared with the $670,000 in 2005)

Student employment opportunities in the broader local community significantly compromised, student union was a major employer in the town

Loss of publications and student newspaper

Loss of transport for external students during residential schools

Loss of external students' social receptions, morning and afternoon teas

Loss of student barbeques, entertainment, particularly in the way of big named bands, lunchtime quizzes and debates, pool competitions, creative arts workshops and competitions (eg photography and short story);

Minimal support for clubs and societies

Sport UNE facilities, services and programs adjusted in light of the reduction in available funds which has reduced opening hours and led to the scrapping of some community programs

University of NSW

Change To Structure

The pre-VSU organisations were: UNSW Union (The Source) – commercial trading, social and cultural activities, subsidised food (about $1m); majority student control on governing board: UNSW Student Guild – representation and advocacy, activities, media, childcare (Pooh's Corner), clubs and societies: UNSW Postgraduate Board –postgraduate representation and advocacy, computer labs, postgrad childcare (Pooh's Corner); UNSW Sports Association – sports clubs and recreational facilities; College of the Fine Arts Students Association –student representation and service provision at COFA.

Following VSU the organisations have been dissolved and replaced with a single student controlled entity, Arc@UNSW and the university has taken direct control of the sports and recreation services, childcare and the food outlets.

Change To Revenue

Prior to VSU the university collected about $9.5 million per annum from the student services fee.

The university has contributed about $16 million over 2005-09 to moderate the impact of VSU on students.

Change To Staffing

At least 30 redundancies, many staff put on short-term contracts

Visible Impact On Students

Introduction of additional membership fee for sports participation over and above club membership resulted in a 22% reduction in participation. This fee was discontinued in 2008

70% reduction in funding for sports clubs

University of Sydney

Change To Structure

The pre-VSU structure was:

CAMPERDOWN AND DARLINGTON CAMPUS: Split Structure
University of Sydney Student Representative Council.
University of Sydney Union.
Sydney University Sport.
Sydney University Postgraduate Representative Association

CUMBERLAND campus has its own Student Guild. The Cumberland Student Guild is responsible for representation, advocacy, food, sports and recreation and a bookshop.

The SYDNEY COLLEGE OF ARTS had its own small Student Association.

The only structural change brought about VSU was that the Sydney College of the Arts Student Association has been incorporated in the University of Sydney Union.

Change To Revenue

Prior to VSU the university collected about $14 million per annum from student service fee revenue.

Post-VSU the university funding support has been the most generous in the country with the mix of grants, in-kind support and writing off debts adding up to $30 million over 2007-9.

Change To Staffing

There were at least 25 job losses

Visible Impact On Students

Most of the visible services and representative activities have remained intact at the main campus due the generosity of the university funding agreement. The SRC emergency loans scheme has been discontinued.

However, the Cumberland Student Guild, which more closely follows a business model, has made substantial cuts to clubs and sporting funding, shut down its accommodation and employment services and shed 8 full time staff positions.

University of Technology Sydney

Change To Structure

The principal student organisations were and continue to be the UTS Students Association (representation, media and advocacy) and UTS Student Union (commercial trading and activities)

Change To Revenue

Prior to VSU the university collected about $8 million in student organisation fees.

Before VSU the UTS Students Association receive $1.75 million from the membership fees, the university now provides $480,000 of in-kind support and to fund some specified services. Voluntary contributions are small. Drawing on reserves that will soon be exhausted.

Before VSU the Student Union was receiving just under $6 million from membership fees. Its grant from the university is not reported.

Change To Staffing

All permanent staff at the UTS Students' Association took voluntary redundancies because of the uncertainty about the future viability of the organisation and the shift of employment to short-term contracts. New staff level much lower than before.

Visible Impact On Students

Academic rights casework staff reduced from four to two; service no longer provided at Kuring-gai campus.

Loss of policy research support

50-80% cut in department and campaign budgets

Reduction in frequency and print run of student newspaper

Cuts to club funding grants and social and cultural programs

Increase in child care fees by $20 -$30 a week

Cessation of annual grant to Community Legal Centre which gave students access to free legal advice

13% decline in sport club memberships during 2005-7.
30% decline in membership of social and cultural clubs over 2005-7

Retail prices at catering outlets and newsagencies increased by 15% over 2006-7

University of Western Sydney

Change To Structure

After some controversy the numerous small site campus student organisations turned into a single university-wide Students' Association in 2004 (with branch sites at Penrith, Parramatta, Bankstown, Campbelltown, Hawkesbury and Blacktown). There is also a cross-campus Postgraduate Association.

The uwsconnect was established in January 2004 as part of the student organisation restructure for the primary purpose of providing sports & leisure, retail, food & beverage, and other services to the UWS community.

These three organisations continue to operate.

Change To Revenue

The university collected about $9 million in student activities fee revenue per annum prior to VSU ($4.9 million to uwsconnect, $3.5 million to the Students Association and $0.6 million to the Postgraduate Association).

The university has committed to providing $2.3 million funding for 2007-9 (uwsconnect $1.6 million, Students Association $0.45 million, Postgraduate Association $0.25 million). There is also some funding for O-Week, childcare and in kind support for infra-structure.

Change To Staffing

Not reported but there were at least 35 job losses in 2006

Visible Impact On Students

Campus Life activities significantly reduced

Shuttle bus service cancelled

Social sport reduced

Clubs and Societies greatly reduced

Lower voter interest in student elections

Concerns about independence of advocacy services directly funded by the university

University of Wollongong

Change To Structure

The pre-VSU structure was: Wollongong University Undergraduate Students Association (WUSA), Wollongong University Postgraduate Association (WUPA), University Recreation and Aquatic Centre is run by a university company, with only a single student on the Management Board. UniCentre is another university company that plays the role of the traditional University Unions running the bars, childcare, commercial services, leased and religious spaces.

This continues to be the structure.

Change To Revenue

Prior to VSU the university collected $3.87 million from the student amenities fee with the majority of funding going to the two university companies.

The Postgraduate Association had its income from membership fees drop from $225,000 in 2006 to $5,500 in 2007. The university is only offering very limited project-by-project funding. The organisation is only existing on its reserves which are close to exhaustion.

The Undergraduate Association used to receive about $900,000. Now it receives regular funding for an academic advocacy staff member and bids for limited funding on a project by project basis. The organisation is only existing by drawing on its reserves.

Change To Staffing

All staff at the postgraduate and undergraduate associations have been made redundant although a staff member has been employed to provide advocacy, URAC reports some staff losses

Visible Impact On Students

Cuts to student magazine, a second hand bookstore, an independent advocacy officer, emergency short-term loans, free weekly barbecues, clubs and societies, and representative departments

Loss of independent postgraduate academic advocacy staff

Sport clubs grants abolished, increased charges has led to a 60% drop in membership of sporting clubs; 50% of sporting clubs have folded; participation in lunch-time sport is down 30% since 2005, programs for elite athletes abolished

VICTORIAN UNIVERSITIES

Deakin University

Change To Structure

Deakin had already consolidated its various student organisations spread across Geelong and eastern Melbourne into a single entity, Deakin University Students Association (DUSA) prior to VSU. DUSA continues to operate post-VSU as an independent student controlled entity although it is reliant on direct university funding to supplement its commercial revenue and the small income from voluntary contributions from students.

Change To Revenue

Prior to VSU Deakin University was collecting $5.8 million from the General Services Fee with $4.8 million going to DUSA with $1 million kept by the university to run some core student services directly. The full time internal mode General Service Fee was $350 a year.

Since the passage of the VSU legislation a voluntary fee of $40 per semester was collected in 2007 from 17% of students for a premium members discount scheme. The university used its own revenue to provide $2.025 million of funding in 2006, and a further $1.5 million in 2007 and 2008.

Change To Staffing

DUSA has substantially reduced staffing levels resulting in loss of employment for the individuals and also a significant reduction in the professional support available to DUSA and its volunteer student representatives. Opportunities for students to obtain casual employment on campus with DUSA have also diminished.

Visible Impact On Students

Unlike the situation at most other universities DUSA has taken the decision that its academic rights advocacy services should only be available to the minority students who have paid the voluntary membership fee.

Funds have been allocated for basic maintenance of sporting and recreation facilities but no major maintenance, upgrades or expansion have been possible since 2005, other than through grants won as part of the VSU Transition Fund.

Services and activities such as multicultural days or cultural events, legal advice, book subsidies, emergency loans, printing/binding services, tenancy advice, International student family network program, the student leadership program, free or subsidised sporting equipment, elite athlete funding and distance student support hot-line have been discontinued.

Other services have been reduced including student social and networking events, student magazine and newsletters, financial and administrative support to clubs and societies.

The university has indicated that it perceives that the effectiveness of student representation under VSU has eroded to the extent that is looking to hold its own elections of the student body to fill vacancies on some university committees rather than relying on DUSA appointees.

La Trobe University

Change To Structure

Prior to VSU the General Services Fee revenue was distributed to the La Trobe University Union (the Union), La Trobe University Sports and Recreation Association (SARA), La Trobe University Students Representative Council Inc. (SRC), La Trobe University Postgraduate Association Inc. (LUPA), La Trobe University Childrens Centre, Wodonga Students Association Inc. (WSA), Bendigo Students Association Inc. (BSA) and various other university services were also subsidised at the Bendigo campus.

Since VSU the university has taken over direct control of the two largest service entities by disbanding the Union and SARA. The functions of both organisations are now incorporated under the University's Division of Student Services with an elected Guild Board acting in an advisory capacity.

The representative organisations - SRC, BSA, WSA and LUPA - continue to exist, albeit dependent on university funding that is well below their pre-VSU levels.

Change To Revenue

The pre-VSU income from the General Services Fee was around $7 million. The voluntary fee income in 2007 was $225,000. The university allocated $3.3 million to support student services and another $335,000 to take over the repayment of a loan associated with one of the Union's buildings.

The impact on the Wodonga campus has been less because there are a significant number of TAFE students who are the VSU legislation does not apply to.

Change To Staffing

31 jobs were abolished during 2006-7

Visible Impact On Students

Privatisation of some food outlets

Union's Childcare Centre Closed

Funding for Clubs and Societies reduced by 25%

Sports funding has been halved and it is much more expensive for students to take part in the University Games

Student radio closed and funding for student newspaper halved

Honoraria for SRC office-bearers reduced by 80% and the policy research support staff positions have been abolished

Dental, second hand bookshop and taxation services run by SRC have been closed and the legal service transferred to the university

Monash University

Change To Structure

The structure at Monash is very complex, reflecting the original Clayton's campus merger with several other major campuses in the late 1980s and early 1990s. The pre-VSU Amenities Fee was divided between Monash Students Association-Clayton, Monash Union of Berwick Students, MUGSU-Gippsland, Monsu-Caufield, Monsu-Peninsula, Monash Pharmacy Students Association-Parkville, Monash Postgraduate Association, Monash Sport, the Careers and Employment Service and Monyx (predominantly a joint university: student organisation commercial trading entity at some Monash campuses).

Following VSU Monyx was wound down and some of the areas that it managed such as Sports and Careers were moved to direct university control.

Change To Revenue

The pre-VSU revenue from the Amenities Fee was $13.5 million. Following VSU the university set aside $4.55 million from its teaching and research funding to support core activities and amenities as determined by consultants Phillips KPA. The university also increased many of its user pays charges such as parking permits, shuttle buses, academic record transcripts which was used to provide further subsidies for student services. Students could opt to purchase a Monash Community Card to obtain a 20% discount on these user pays charges and other commercial services. This user pays charges and community card generated a further $2.1 million in 2007. The community card was discontinued in 2008. The total grant in 2007 came to $6.55 million.

Change To Staffing

We are not aware of the exact number of job losses across the range of student organistions at Monash but there were certainly significant reductions in line with the 40% reduction in funding.

Visible Impact On Students

General cuts across the board and reduction is services and representative activities rather than outright closures.

Substantial increase in user pays charges for parking permits and academic transcripts, introduction of $2 fee for previously free inter-campus shuttle bus services

Many full time jobs have been turned into part-time which reduces the spans or hours services are available to students

O-Weeks in 2007 and 2008 were noticeably under-resourced

Serious shortfalls in the capital development and maintenance needed for Monash sport facilities

Loss of staffing for Transport Office, Indigenous Office and Research and Policy Support at Monash-Clayton

Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology

Change To Structure

Prior to VSU there was the RMIT Student Union (which took 37% of the fee revenue) and the RMIT Union (which ran the commercial, cultural and sporting services and took 60% of the fee revenue). RMIT kept 3% for its own cache of student support services.

The university took over the commercial services (leased spaces, food outlets, bookshops and general retail facilities) and sports facilities from the RMIT Union. Childcare, tax service, legal service were also moved to the university.

Change To Revenue

Prior to VSU the revenue collected from the Compulsory Non Academic Fee (for higher education students) and the Student Services and Amenities Fee (for TAFE students) was $9.2 million.

RMIT set aside $4.0 million for student service provision in 2007 with the Union receiving $1.42 million and the RMIT Student Union receiving $1.3 million. The university took control of the RMIT Union's $4.4 million of reserves and allocated the money on student facilities projects.

Change To Staffing

Staffing levels across the range of services that used to be provided by the RMIT Union are 40-50% of the pre-VSU level.

Staff levels at RMIT Student Union reduced from 29.9 EFT to 13.5 EFT.

Visible Impact On Students

Transfer to university control leads to decline in service delivery quality due to lack of understanding of how to deliver services in a way that student want, loss of institutional memory through loss of experienced staff

Loss of information centres that were the shop front for student life activities at RMIT

Student Rights Staff employed by Student Union reduced from 6.4 EFT to 3.6 EFT. Student Union also likely to lose funding for last research policy position in latest round of funding negotiations

General cut of around 60% to RMIT Student Union services and activities. Student Union has reduced office hours on all campuses and centralised many of its functions at the main city campus. The impacts of VSU continue to be hardest felt on the smaller outer suburban campuses at Bundoora and on the TAFE campuses, where services have been drastically reduced.

Funding for student radio scrapped.

In the most recent funding negotiations the University has forcing through a further shift in funding and funded activities in the Student Union away from advocacy, student rights support and representation and towards student activities, campus life and clubs and societies.

Swinburne University of Technology

Change To Structure

Prior to VSU the Swinburne Student Union was the primary student organisation operating across all Swinburne's six campuses.

Following VSU the university ceased funding to the Swinburne Student Union and established a university-run company, Swinburne Student Amenities Association, to run many of the core services formally run by the Student Union. Students act in an advisory capacity and have minority representation on the management board.

The Student Union has continued to operate, at a very diminished level, by spending its remaining reserves and a small amount of income from voluntary student contributions. The university has relocated the Student Union at least three times.

Change To Revenue

Prior to VSU the university collected $3 million from the General Service Fee on higher education students and a further $1 million from TAFE students.

The university has not tried to collect a voluntary fee from students but the Swinburne Student Union has directly collected a small number of voluntary fees.

The university provides an annual grant of around $1 million per annum to the Swinburne Student Amenities Association (which mainly comes from the general service fee still charged to TAFE students).

Change To Staffing

All staff formerly working at the Swinburne Student Union were made redundant or did not have their contracts renewed although some have moved across to the Swinburne Student Amenities Association

Visible Impact On Students

International student fees have been increased to provide another revenue stream to the Swinburne Student Amenities Association

Sporting services and facilities have been negatively affected, a situation exacerbated the failure of Swinburne to receive funding from the VSU Transition Fund.

Concerns that the shift of the student rights advocacy service from the Student Union to a university-run company means that there is a potential for conflicts of interest to arise in more serious cases

Student publications and legal service have been discontinued

Los of independent policy support for student representatives

Reduced funding for clubs and societies

University of Ballarat

Change To Structure

The University of Ballarat Students Association is the principal student organisation at this multi-campus dual (higher education/TAFE (campus). This continues to be the case following VSU although the university has taken control of the commercial trading services formerly run by the Students' Association.

Change To Revenue

The Students' Association has been the least financially affected of all Victorian student organisations. There are several factors to explains this: the majority of its students are VET students and continue to pay compulsory fees, prior to VSU the General Service Fee was much lower than most other Victorian campuses and the association offered a much narrower package of services, representation and activities, also clubs and societies have long collected much higher membership fees than elsewhere in Victoria.

Nevertheless the introduction of VSU resulted in a loss of about $900,000 in income. The university has diverted about $400,000 of its own funds to offset this loss. The Association has also got 45% of students to purchase a $55 'membership' offering on and off-campus discounts. However, all students are able to access the services.

Change To Staffing

A number of administrative, management and retail staff have been made redundant due to VSU.

Visible Impact On Students

Current services are at least marginally sustainable although there is no opportunity to develop vital new services such as an academic advocacy or enhanced pastoral care.

University of Melbourne

Change To Structure

The overall structure at the University of Melbourne was not changed by VSU: Melbourne University Student Union Ltd, University of Melbourne Student Union (a legal entity remaining handle the bad debts arsing from the collapse of the student union in 2005), the University of Melbourne Postgraduate Association; and the two university run entities, Melbourne University Sport and Children's Services).

Change To Revenue

Prior to VSU the Amenities and Services Fee annual revenue came to $12.7 million.

The university committed to providing a transitional fund of $7 million in 2007, and later to a total of $22 million over 2007-2010. This has been supplemented with a Melbourne University Student Union members discount scheme that about 24% of students took out in 2008. UMPA offered a $66 subscription fee.

Change To Staffing

Loss of 40 permanent staff positions.

All but two of the permanent staff at UMPA were made redundant and were replaced with contract positions.

Visible Impact On Students

Across the board cuts to funding for campaigns and programmes run in the interest of students and for the professional support for student representatives and volunteers. Loss of policy research at UMPA.

Negligible investment in refurbishment of facilities and maintenance at a time when the Parkville campus is substantially growing and the university is fundamentally transforming itself to a graduate model

Sporting club membership has declined by 10-25% and grants to sporting clubs have been substantially reduced; participation in the University Games is much lower as subsidies to cover costs of participation have been cut

Reduction in means-tested rebates for accessing child-care services, this has led to 20% reduction in students accessing the subsidised places.

Victoria University

Change To Structure

Prior to VSU there was the Victoria University Student Union, Victoria University Postgraduate Association and the International Students Association. Since VSU these have merged to form the Victoria University Student Association.

Even prior to VSU the university was unusual in that it kept most of the revenue from the General Service Fee to directly run its own student support services. Even the staff of the student organisations were employed directly by the university.

Change To Revenue

Prior to VSU the university collected $3 million per annum from higher education students and $1.5 million from TAFE students. The university decided on equity grounds not to collect fees from the TAFE students even though the VSU legislation does not apply. This means that the university faced a loss of $4.5 million per annum in revenue for student support services.

The new Victoria University Students Association has no significant income streams from voluntary contributions or commercial trading. It is reliant on tiny one-off grants from the university.

Change To Staffing

All staff working in the former student organisations were made redundant or re-deployed within the university. The new Students Association has no staff.

Overall loss of 22 university staff.

Visible Impact On Students

Loss of Student Resource centres which were the key shop-front hub for relating to students on the smaller campuses

Student Medical Service and Health and Drug Education Service discontinued

Reduced Student Recreation Services and opening hours for Fitness Centres at smaller campuses

Subsidies for clubs and sports programs have been cut and offered on fee for service basis

Postgraduate representation has ceased to function

Most student representative position are elected unopposed, less student involvement

QUEENSLAND UNIVERSITIES*

Griffith University

Change To Structure

Prior to VSU the Nathan, South Bank, Mt.Gravatt and Logan campuses had UniLife (a university controlled entity that ran sporting and recreational activities) which 70% of the Student Services Charge revenue with the remaining 30% going to the Student Representative Council and Postgraduate Association. At the Gold Coast campuses the functions were combined into a single Student Guild.

Since VSU the Student Representative Council has collapsed although the university has plans to help develop campus based students associations.

Change To Revenue

Prior to VSU the university was collecting $6.5 million per annum from the Student Services Charge. The university now provides $2.4 million per annum from its own revenue for what is believes to be 'essential' services and amenities.

The SRC and Student Guild tried unsuccessfully to collect voluntary fees which have failed to generate additional significant income streams once costs of establishing the voluntary membership programs were taken into account.

The Student Guild is also drawing on its remaining financial reserves. UniLife has no reserves as they were nearly exhausted the year prior to VSU due to a number of building projects.

Change To Staffing

Griffith Gold Coast Student Guild reports a loss of 35% of staff and there were also substantial job losses across the Brisbane campuses.

Visible Impact On Students

Loss of student representation at Brisbane and Logan campuses

Loss of independent Advocacy and Academic Rights support, legal advice, free movies, Orientation Camp and student magazine at Gold Coast campuses

While the university did receive $3.5 million in 2007 for the development of a sports precinct at Mt.Gravatt under the VSU Transition Funding there is little funding for future refurbishment and maintenance of facilities

Reduction in number and opening hours for food service operations and students charged full market prices, no service for evening students

Withdrawal of student subsidy for childcare

Increase in user pays charges on sport and recreational activities, subsidy to participate in University Games considerably reduced

James Cook University

Change To Structure

The James Cook Students Association was and remains the principal student organisation at James Cook. The two main campuses are located in Townsville and Cairns.

Change To Revenue

Prior to VSU the university collected $2.5 million in Student Association fee revenue. In 2008 about 10% of student paid a nominal voluntary fee of $40 that gave them access to discounts and welfare services.

The university has provided grants of $300,000 in 2007 and 2008 and the Students Association is using its remaining reserves to operate with a $200,000 deficit. In the medium term this is unsustainable. The university has taken over the leasing of food outlets and the running of childcare services.

Change To Staffing

54 full time and permanent part time staff were made redundant due to VSU. Many of the remaining 15 remaining permanent positions were downgraded in terms of salaries but had additional duties included to cover the smaller workforce.

Visible Impact On Students

The number of campus clubs and societies has reduced from 50 to 20 due to diminished financial support from the Association

Despite the university receiving $4.5 million for a new fitness facility at Townsville (under the VSU Transition Funding program) there has been a decline in inter-collegiate and social sports and recreation, participation in University Games has fallen from 300 to 50.

O-Week program of activities severely reduced

Refectories at both campuses have reduced opening hours and substantially increased prices

Overall decline in vibrancy of student life

Closure of Centrelink Service at Cairns campus

Closure of Legal Service

Reduced frequency of student newspaper

Decline in independent academic rights advocacy service

Queensland University of Technology

Change To Structure

QUT Student Guild was and remains the principal student organisation across QUT's campuses although it has undergone a major restructure due to VSU.

Change To Revenue

Prior to VSU the QUT Student Guild received about $6 million from the Guild Fee revenue. Following the introduction of VSU the university commissioned an external review of student service provision by the Guild and university. On the basis of review the university granted $400,000 per annum to the Guild for 2007-9, $300,000 in 2010 and $200,000 in 2011.

Change To Staffing

Extensive cuts to all areas

Visible Impact On Students

Higher user pays costs for external legal services, childcare fees, entertainment and social activities, photocopying, safe sex consumables

Staff for sport services reduced from ten to two, reduced funding for sports clubs and participation in University Games

Guild textbook bursaries abolished

Advocacy and student support staff cut from 15 to 4

University of Queensland

Change To Structure

The two main organisations that were funded from the student service charge were the University Union and UQ Sport. Both organisations continue with reduced funding.

Change To Revenue

Prior to VSU the annual combined grant to the University Union and UQ Sports was $7.5 million (the university kept some of the student service charge to run its own student support services).

This amount was reduced by 50% in 2006 and the university now makes a recurrent annual grant of about $2 million to the two organisations. As part of the deal the University Union relinquished ownership of its buildings to the university.

Change To Staffing

Extensive job losses across the board for the University Union and UQ Sport

Visible Impact On Students

Large cuts to professional support to students on welfare, legal, tenancy and academic advocacy matters

Large cuts to professional policy and portfolio support for student representatives

Costs to students to use UQ sports facilities increased from 50% of the cost of outside providers to 90%.

Substantial increase in prices for catering and retail outlets

University of Southern Queensland

Change To Structure

The University of Southern Queensland Guild was and remains the principal student organisation at the university.

Change To Revenue

Prior to VSU the university collected $1.8 million in Guild Fees per annum

The Guild entered into a three year service contract with university and increased the number of non-students on the Guild Management Board to equal the number of student representatives. The university provided $2.1 million over three years with the grant reducing by $100,000 each year.

The Guild stated in its submission to the VSU Review believes that $600,000 allocation in 2009 is insufficient to maintain the operation of the Guild and will begin to wind down the organisation unless a funding solution is found.

Change To Staffing

Media reports that there were about 130 job losses due to VSU, remaining staff facing heavy work loads, little scope for promotion or pay increases

Visible Impact On Students

Decline in students accepting representational positions

The impact on sporting infra-structure has been masked by a one-off $5 million grant to the university in 2007 to upgrade sporting infrastructure and facilities at the Toowoomba, Wide Bay and Springfield campuses under the VSU Transition Fund program. In the long term the infra-structure needs funding to be maintained and eventually further upgraded.

University of Sunshine Coast

Change To Structure

University of Sunshine Coast Student Guild was and remains the principal student organisation at the university. Student service provision and support even before VSU was much smaller and narrower than most universities due to the small size and recent creation of the university. The university shares the space with a high school which the Guild also supports.

Change To Revenue

Income has fallen from about $500,000 per annum to a few hundred dollars from voluntary contributions.

The Guild wrote in its submission to VSU Review that it expects that it will cease to be able to provide functional and effective services sometime in 2009 unless the funding situation changes

Change To Staffing

Staffing has been reduced from five full time positions to one casual position

Visible Impact On Students

To reduce rental the Guild has relocated from a central location on campus to small demountable on outskirt of campus, diminished visibility in campus life

Cut or loss of to professional academic advocacy and welfare support

Cuts to club support

Loss of regular Wed lunch-time music performances and fortnightly cheap BBQs

*Details about Central Queensland University not known as it is not affiliated to NUS and has not made information about the VSU on it Students Association arrangements publicly available. It did receive several grants under the VSU Transition Fund for sporting facility upgrades.

SOUTH AUSTRALIAN UNIVERSITIES

University of Adelaide

Change To Structure

Dissolution of the Students Association and Postgraduate Association. The Sports Association, Clubs Association and Overseas Students Association continue to exist but have lost their professional administrative/ policy support staff. The Adelaide University Union (AUU) has taken on some of the lost portfolio of services and activities but mostly in a very limited way as the AUU has faced its own severe cuts.

A Student Representative Council has been established within the AUU but the elected positions are all unpaid and there is little administrative or professional policy support.

Change To Revenue

Before VSU the AUU (and its affiliated Associations) had an annual fee revenue of $4.5m. In 2008 the AUU is budgeting that its revenue will be $1.5m.

The running of Union House Food and Beverage Services have been outsourced by the university to the National Wine Centre

The main income source for the AUU is the university funding agreement that in 2007 was $700,000 but in 2008 was increased to $1.2m.

AUU charged a voluntary fee of $99 but the student take-up was very low; there was no fee in 2007, a nominal $20 membership fee is being tried in 2008 with over 1,200 joining

Change To Staffing

Staff from the five Associations were made redundant or had their contracts terminated.

The Adelaide University Union made 100 of its staff redundant.

Visible Impact On Students

Diminished capacity for effective representation on university decision-making bodies

Reduced participation in democratic processes such as nominations for campus elections

Lower visibility of campaigns and activities

Increased social isolation experience by International Students

Very diminished capacity to pay affiliation fees to maintain state and federal co-ordinating and representative structures (NUS, CAPA, Australian University Sports)

40% drop in participation in sporting clubs

Union House and food and beverage facilities no longer student controlled, loss of democratic accountability and student driven-campus culture

Closure of Arts and Craft Centre

Flinders University

Change To Structure

Dissolution of the six student controlled organisations (University Union, Students Association, Sports Association, Clubs and Societies Association, International Students Association, Postgraduate Students Association.

Replaced with university controlled entity, Flinders Campus Community Services. The university is the sole member of the FCCS and it appoints the majority of directors to the FCCS management board.

A Student Council, of elected student representatives, acts as an advisory sub-committee. Apart from the president who is paid a token honorarium the Council is entirely voluntary with little administrative and no professional policy support.

Change To Revenue

Prior to VSU the student organisations collected about $3 million in membership fees. This was supplemented with commercial operations such as food, drinks and gym memberships, etc.

Under the current arrangements there is no FCCS membership fee (not even a voluntary one).

The university funds the employment of 3.5 FTE staff for academic rights advocacy and welfare counselling (available for free to all students). Most of FCCS's income now comes from commercial trade, gym memberships and the introduction of user pays charges to access services (such as for the employment service).

Change To Staffing

Following the passage of the VSU legislation all staff in the five of the six organisations were made redundant with only some of the core University Union staff continuing into the FCCS. The sum of redundancy pay outs came to just under $1 million.

The new staffing level in the FCCS is much lower than overall staffing levels under the previous structure – a 38% reduction in full time staff and 35% reduction in casual staff

Visible Impact on Students

Complete loss of student control of facilities and services developed by student contributions over 40 years apart from the nominal budget for the advisory Student Council

While advocacy staff levels have been maintained they can no longer be regarded as fully independent as they are now university employees, conflict of interest

Severely diminished capacity for effective representation on university decision-making bodies

Loss of student media such as Student Radio and *Empire Times* newspaper

Reduced participation in democratic processes, hard to find candidates to fill international student, sports, and clubs and societies positions on student council

Lower visibility of campaigns and activities

Collapse of International Students' Association has increased the social isolation experience by international students

Very diminished capacity to pay affiliation fees to maintain state and federal co-ordinating and representative structures (NUS, CAPA, Australian University Sports)

Higher sport club membership fee and more venue hire fees (previously mainly free)

User pays charges for the Employment Service

University of South Australia

Change To Structure

The University of South Australia Students' Association (which ran representation and services on all campuses) was rebranded as UniLife. The new UniLife organisation no longer runs commercial services on the six campuses.

Change To Revenue

Prior to VSU the university collected $4 million in Student Amenity Fees that mainly went to the Students' Association. There was no voluntary fee in 2007 but a nominal $20 voluntary premium membership fee has been introduced in 2008.

The current service agreement with the university to fund non-commercial representation and activities currently is around $330,000 per annum. The university has taken direct control of the contracts for running commercial services on the campuses.

Change To Staffing

Under the old structure there were about 90 permanent and casual staff plus plenty of casual student labour.

UniLife now employs only nine full time permanent staff and one part-time permanent staff member.

Visible Impact on Students

In 2006 the Students Association closed all its offices and shops on the five campus sites and temporarily re-located all its remaining staff in the Playford Building on the City-east campus. This led to the widespread belief that the Association had shut down. Since 2007 the university has made sites available to UniLife on all sites but in some cases the sites are obscure and away from the main student traffic. In short UniLife has a severe visibility problem.

UniLife's lack of visibility is reinforced by the fact that it no longer runs the campus food and beverage services

Sport and other club memberships are only available to those who pay the voluntary premium membership fee

Very diminished capacity to pay affiliation fees to maintain state and federal co-ordinating and representative structures

Loss of professional International Student Adviser position

Severely diminished capacity for effective representation on university decision-making bodies

Considerable reduction in number of office bearer positions and honoraria (particularly problematic to maintain a balanced spread for a university with six campuses)

AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY, NORTHERN TERRITORY AND TASMANIAN UNIVERSITIES

Australian National University

Change To Structure

The four principal organisations funded from the General Services Fee continue to exist: ANU Students Association, Postgraduate and Research Students Association, ANU Sports and Recreation Association and the University Union (the commercial trading arm).

Change To Revenue

Prior to VSU the university collected $2.5 million from the General Services Fee.

The university allocated $1.16 million in 2007, and $1.05 million in 2008. The University Union was not funded as it has a range of commercial outlets and leases to draw upon. Funding for Sports and Recreation fell from $800,000 to $300,000. Funding for the Students Association has fallen from $450,000 to $270,00 (2007) and $315,000 (2008) plus a one-off grant of $55,000 to support clubs and societies.

Attempts to introduce a voluntary membership-based discount card failed.

Change To Staffing

High turnover of staff in Sports and Recreation Association, now running at 50% per annum

Reduction in hours for Students Association welfare, legal service and administration staff

Visible Impact On Students

50% drop in number of non-sporting clubs and societies

Lack of revenue for future upgrades of computers and student facilities in Students Association

Abolition of annual publications such as alternative course handbook and ANU student survival guide

Reduced times when welfare and legal support services available

Sports and Recreation is struggling to maintain the cost of facility maintenance (which is 45% of total income)

33% increase in cost of fitness centre memberships

Cash subsidies to sports clubs have reduced by 40% that has contributed to a 14% decrease in sport club membership

Charles Darwin University

Change To Structure

The Charles Darwin Student Union was the principal student organisation at this dual VET/university institution. The Student Amenities Fee was also used for a Sports Association and a subsidy to the University Childcare Centre.

Post-VSU CDU Student Union no longer exists. The University is now handling student grievances (ie complaints against itself), amenities, activities, IT support for clubs and some catering. Other catering has been outsourced.

The university has established a separate (largely self-funding) company, Charles Darwin University Amenities Ltd, to coordinate support for surviving sports association and postgraduate association from vending machine income and rental from the eateries. The university reports that "the lack of student involvement" in this project "has proven problematic."

Change To Revenue

Prior to VSU the university collected about $800,000 from the Student Amenities Fee ($640,000 went to the Student Union, $130,000 to the Sports Association and $30,000 to the University Childcare Centre).

The university has spent some money on refurbishing the eateries at the Casaurina and Alice Springs campuses and the construction of a student square at Casaurina. However, it has been unwilling to significantly fund the Student Union or its corporate successor

Change To Staffing

All staff at the Students Union lost their jobs.

Increased workloads on university staff in the Equity and Support, Finance and Assets Services and IT Management Services Divisions trying to pick up the shortfall.

Visible Impact On Students

Collapse of Student Union

Loss of independent academic advocacy and professional support for student representation

Childcare fees increased to cover loss of subsidy

Student consultation at the faculty level occurs through focus groups rather than representation

University of Canberra

Change To Structure

Prior to VSU the three principal organisations from the Amenities and Services Fee were the Students Association, Postgraduate Association and University Union (including commercial trading, sports, clubs and societies).

Following VSU the university took over the University Union with the university as the sole member.

The Postgraduate Association has collapsed

Change To Revenue

The University lost $1.3 million per annum from Amenities and Service Fee income. It does receive a small grant of $150,000 for the three years that can be used solely to fund Clubs and Societies.

Prior to VSU the Students Association received about $650,000 per annum from the Amenities and Service Fee. The university initially refused to fund the Students Association which left it to survive largely on its own cash reserves. Following the change of Vice-Chancellor the university has entered (in late 2007) into a service level agreement in return for funding of $250,000 per annum. The Association has also taken over the management of a residential college which may be additional income stream in the future.

Change To Staffing

A 19% reduction in staff levels in the Union (including reduction of full time staff from 26 to 21).

All staff in Students Association made redundant. Some new positions have been created but overall drop from 7 FTE to 4 FTE. Loss of corporate memory.

Visible Impact On Students

Loss of postgraduate association

20% increase in prices of Union's commercial services

50% reduction in student membership of clubs and societies, number of clubs reduced from 55 to 35

Decrease in frequency of the Curio student newspaper

Subsidies for students to take part in national sporting events scrapped

Capital works for new student infrastructure frozen

University of Tasmania

Change To Structure

Prior to VSU the representation and service provision was provided by the Tasmanian University Union at the Sandy Bay (Hobart) campus and the Launceston Students Association.

As part of the post-VSU arrangements the university has insisted that the two organisations merge.

Change To Revenue

Prior to VSU the university collected $2.4 million from the Services and Amenities Fee revenue. While the university ran some of its own student support services it did not use the Services and Amenities Fee revenue to fund these services.

The university has established a complex Student Services Fund (a one off $3.5 million contribution from the university and $1 million from student organisations) which is to fund the university to purchase services (via a service level agreement). The university also put in $400,000 per annum for three years to cover transitional operating costs. This model delivered about $700,000 in 2007. There are concerns about the future level of returns from this investment fund in light of the economic recession.

Childcare, accommodation and sports are now delivered through a university business enterprise

Change To Staffing

About 10 staff positions have been abolished

Visible Impact On Students

Severe reduction in funding support for clubs and societies – down from $130,000 before VSU to $15,000 in the new structure

Reduction in representative honoraria and funding for departments/campaigns

PART THREE: Thematic breakdown of post-2005 developments

Marketisation and Micro-Management Of Student Run Services

The most profound shift that has occurred since the implementation of the *Higher Education (Abolition of Compulsory Up Front Student Union Fees) Act 2005* is that the purchaser-provider model has replaced the democratic model as the major dynamic of student service delivery. This completely shifts the terrain of the policy debate over VSU.

Prior to VSU most university councils had some limited oversight role over student organisation budgets. Usually they required that externally audited annual financial reports were presented to the Council or a delegated subcommittee and set the annual compulsory fee. Unless there was serious financial mismanagement the university did not try to micro-manage what students did with their own money. The major determining factor shaping the pool of services, representation and activities at a campus was democratic control by members (annual elections, referenda, general student meetings).

This principle of student control of student affairs was only fettered by normal legal and financial regulation. The introduction of Victorian VSU in 1994 led Victorian universities to establish formal funding agreements with student organisations to ensure that compulsory fees were only used for the range of activities approved by the legislation. A few universities outside of Victoria also began codifying their relationship with student organisations into formal service level agreement contracts.

The federal VSU legislation has meant that most universities are now directly funding at least some of their campus student organisation activities. Instead of providing a pot of money to be allocated according to students' democratic will as occurred before VSU this funding now occurs through the university entering into a service contract where the university purchases the service supplied by the student organisation. The level of service is specified by key performance indicators. Even student representative services can be 'purchased' and performance indicators such as frequency of attendance at university meetings can be established,

The fact that universities are now using their own money has meant that service level agreements and key performance indicators are much more specific and rigorously enforced than in the past. The funding is tied to delivering very specific programs and activities specified by the university rather than a block grant to the organisations.

While there still are elected student representatives most of the funding for their activities is now micro-managed to an unprecedented degree through service level agreements.

The partial exception to this is the University of Melbourne which has allowed the student representatives to retain a portion of their funding as discretionary funding over and above the contractural service level obligations with the university.

University Takeovers of Student Services

The second major change that has occurred since 2005 is that the major student service provision provider is either the university directly or a company established by the university. Typically these companies have the university as the sole voting member and elected student representatives are marginalised in an advisory sub-committee, with perhaps a single student representative on the management committee of university appointees.

Currently about 15 universities have such arrangements compared to about 3 in the pre-2005 context. The changes are outlined in Table 1 below. While there was considerable variation in previous arrangements most universities supported the principle of student control of student affairs and allowed elected student representatives to manage a wide range of student services in consultation with professional managers employed by the student organisations.

This democratic control allowed the range of activities and services to be "student-driven" and responsive to the people who were paying the fees through annual elections and referenda. The caveat is that many universities did keep back some of compulsory student amenity fee revenue to run some of their own student services that were complementary to the student controlled services.

The third biggest public benefit that flows from universities (after the benefits of teaching and research activities) are those that flow from an active student–driven culture. Just think about how many comedians got their start in a university revue, how many politicians across the political spectrum were once student politicians, how many journalists started off editing the campus newspaper, and so on. Even those that stuck with the original vocation they first enrolled in were exposed to a more rounded education through being involved in a robust campus life.

This benefit is even harder to quantify than teaching and research. However, it is clear that there is a huge difference is student being passive consumers of university run services compared with being active participants shaping their campus culture. Many of the positive attributes that universities like to claim for their graduates arise from this student-driven culture. Examples of student driven culture include clubs and societies (including administrative support and grants for clubs), student media and student control of venues, meeting spaces, art galleries, entertainment and theatres.

Comments from student respondents to an NUS survey[3] on campuses that have established university student service companies were either negative or as the University of Canberra respondent commented that the service providers were "*very supportive but misguided*."

A Wollongong University respondent commented: "*Student driven culture is supported through 'UniCentre' which is the corporatised service provider on campus with minimal student representation. Student culture is very much for students to be able to add something to their CV rather than anything more spontaneous or traditional*."

The University of New England respondent said that: "*Services-UNE has a positive attitude genuinely want students to fully experience university life. At times students feel UNE uses them as a marketing tool to promote UNE without having earned the privilege first. For example, the VC had a happy hour for students during the middle of exams*."

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[3] NUS, *First Annual Report Into The Impact of Federal VSU Legislation,* 2007

A La Trobe respondent that the university's support for funding student-driven culture was: "*Not very good. The service provision body at La Trobe - the La Trobe Guild -has effectively been taken over by the university, with the student board now playing an advisory role only. The student legal service, previously operated by the (student controlled) SRC, has already been taken over by the Guild, and we fear their intention is to take more services out of student control.*"

In short there has been a profound shift on many universities away from active "student control of student affairs" to "Vice-Chancellor control of student affairs" where students are passive consumers of whatever some university company bureaucrat thinks is good for them.

Table 1: University Takeover of Student Services or Service Providers	
Charles Darwin University	Student Union defunded and subsequently closed down, student services run directly by university or private contractors (for example cafe at Alice Spring campus supplemented with small business funding from DEST VSU Transition funding), student advocacy service run from university equity and support service. The university has established a self-funding company, Charles Darwin University Amenities Ltd. for sports and postgraduate services.
Charles Sturt University	Most of the non-representative student services provided by the previous campus based organisations have either been discontinued or provided directly by the university
Flinders University	All representative and service organisations shut down, service provision through the university controlled Flinders Campus Community Services (the management council consists of a university appointed chair, five external university appointees, two appointed students and three elected students. There is a sixteen person elected student advisory subcommittee but there are no paid office bearers. The university is the sole legal member. The elected student council has a purely advisory function
Macquarie University	Students At Macquarie (the University Union), Student Council and Sports and Recreation were disbanded; university has established a company, **U@MQ** with students elected to an advisory body
La Trobe University	University Union and Sports shut down. The non-representative/advocacy services are now run by the new university-owned student services company, La Trobe Guild which is connected to the university Division of Student Services. The elected student council that used to manage the former union is now just an advisory committee.
Monash-Clayton/Caufield/Peninsula	The major commercial trading operations currently run under Monyx (a joint

	company of campus student organisations and the university) have come under direct university control
RMIT	University has taken over the commercial services and sports facilities previously run by RMIT Union. Childcare, tax advice service and legal service are also now run by the university.
Southern Cross University	Student Union and SRC at Lismore wound down. A small range of student services are run by the university's Office of Sport and Cultural Affairs
Swinburne University	The Student Union has been defunded but is still running on reserves. University has established a company Swinburne Student Amenities Association that is now funded to run many of the services previously run by Student Union including academic advocacy, university is the sole member and the Vice-Chancellor has made all the appointments to its initial Board of Directors, there are plans in the future for four of the nine directors to be elected students
University of Canberra	Non-representative and advocacy services are now run by a university services company, University of Canberra Union with the university being the sole legal member
University of Newcastle	University Union has been wound up and replaced with a university company, UoN Services
University of New England	Student organisations shut down and replaced with Services UNE, a university company that runs the commercial services and offers academic and welfare advocacy, elected postgraduate and undergraduate representatives function as 'elected' subcommittees. Sports continues as separate entity
University of South Australia	University has taken over commercial services and facilities, Students Association still runs representative and advocacy functions
Pre-VSU University Takeover of Organisations/Provision	
Griffith University	Campus Life on Brisbane campuses
University of Wollongong	Unicentre
Victoria University	University ran most non-

	representative/advocacy services prior to VSU; University now directly runs the student advocacy service
Limited University Takeover or Outsourcing of Student Services	
Curtin University	University has taken over childcare service
James Cook University	Childcare centre and careers/employment staff now run by university, university takeover of stationery shop and gown hire, licensed café has been outsourced
Monash- Clayton	Long term plans for university to take over childcare
Monash Gippsland	Careers program now run by university
University of Queensland	University has taken over all building and car parks previously owned by the Union
University of Wollongong	Childcare subsidies are now funded from university

Loss of Independent Academic Rights and Welfare Advocacy

Advocacy refers to the support given to individuals with problems and disputes they may have with university, Centrelink, plus related migration, taxation and study visa matters. This differs from student representation which deals with systemic matters that may require a change of faculty or university or government policy and impacts on a number of students.

Student organisations since the 1970s have employed professional staff to deliver welfare and academic rights advocacy services to support students. This was linked to the opening up of universities to students from more diverse backgrounds including disadvantaged communities in Australia and much larger enrolments of international students.

Broadly these advocacy services can be divided into:

ACADAMIC ADVOCACY: professional support for disputes with faculties and the university over: admission and selection policies, preclusions, accusations of plagiarism and other disciplinary matters, re-marking assessment, breakdown of relationship with lecturer or supervisor, inadequate course provision, course material fees, and appeals to higher levels of the university structure about decisions. Most of these processes are aimed at achieving mutually acceptable outcomes within the university system without seeking expensive intervention in outside courts, although disputes do sometimes send up in court.

WELFARE ADVICE: advice to access the full range of potential Centrelink benefits: Austudy, Youth Allowance, Newstart, Pension Education Supplements, Family Benefits, financial and tax counselling, support with Centrelink appeals, emergency loans, how to access university scholarships and other support programs, advice on how to access to accommodation and

counselling programs, migration act issues for refugees, student visa restrictions on paid work for international students

These services complemented, rather than duplicated, the suite of student support services run directly by the universities. The impact of the *Higher Education (Abolition of Compulsory Up Front Student Union Fees) Act 2005* on many outer suburban and regional campuses has led to many of these formerly student controlled run services to be delivered either directly by a university department or through a university controlled service company.

In many cases, particularly smaller campuses, a single staff person delivered both academic advocacy and welfare advice.

Issues:

- The conflict of interest issue is most obvious when it comes to academic advocacy where the university is supposedly meant to advocate against itself. This conflict could become mare stark with more serious cases of misconduct by senior university staff that may be referred to outside ombudsman or legal courts. At least one university student service company has acknowledged this conflict of interest and created a charter for independent academic advice and advocacy for its advocacy service including the review of such cases by a university panel. Many of our affiliates report that university employed advocacy staff seem to be less willing to push hard on matters involving systemic failures with the university or a particular faculties.

- Regardless of whether or not such processes provide some formal protection against conflict the reality is that students will widely see services as being compromised. For example when the Charles Sturt University took direct control of the advocacy services post-VSU at the Bathurst campus the number of students using the service fell by 83%. Students need to have confidence that their advocacy support staff really will fearlessly work in their interest.

- Affiliates also report that student controlled advocacy services are better tailored and adaptive to meet the qualitative needs of individual students. University run advocacy services are usually delivered in a quantitative case management approach with pre-determined blocks of time allocated.

- Often academic advocacy issues are intertwined with welfare advice issues, eg a common example is that a student contacts their student organisation after being notified by the university that they are at risk of preclusion for unsatisfactory academic progress, it turns out that the students was working an excessive amount of paid work because they were unaware of a university or Centrelink program. Welfare and academic advocacy services are best delivered holistically

- Academic and welfare advocacy should also inform student representation. Systemic problems with academic rights or welfare support programs can be identified, addressed and reform proposals developed by the campus student representatives and the National Union of Students where applicable.

- In summary academic and welfare advocacy services should be delivered by student organisations (via funding agreement contracts with university) to avoid perceived and

actual conflicts of interest, maintain the holistic one-stop shop approach to academic and welfare advocacy and to inform student representatives to reform systemic problems.

Impact on Regional Campuses

VSU has had a major impact of regional students despite the temporary support to sporting infrastructure provided by the VSU transition fund that National Party MPs successfully lobbied for in 2005.

Students at most regional universities have fared much worse than their metropolitan counterparts in terms of loss of services, independent representation and advocacy services, educational enriching experiences and opportunities to develop the skills needed to develop the next generation of regional community leaders.

This is largely because many of the metropolitan universities have much larger pools of discretionary funding to provide large subsidies to ensure that a broad portfolio of services, representation and campus life can be maintained. For example the University of Sydney has allocated $30 million over the 3 years to preserve most visible aspects of campus life as it was before VSU. The University of Melbourne has similarly allocated $22 million over 3 years.

Table 2 (below) outlines the impact on VSU shows that many regional universities have not been able to provide substantial funding for this which has led to the collapse of student organisations and severely curtailed campus life (voluntary fees have been tried on several regional campuses and failed to generate sufficient income to maintain campus life and representative structures).

Table 2 Regional Impact of VSU		
	Pre-VSU Fee Annual Income	***VSU Impact***

Central Queensland University	$2.66 million	Unknown - commercial-in-confidence
Charles Darwin University	$0.8 million	Charles Darwin Student Union has collapsed University has established a company, Charles Darwin University Amenities Ltd. to support sport and postgraduates. The company is mainly self-funded from vending machine and rental leases. The university reports that the lack of student involvement with the company is problematic
Charles Sturt University	$3.37 million	All campus-based student organisations wound up although there are some volunteer student committees have been established to serve on central university committees University has allocated $1 million to employ its own student support staff and to refurbish some student facilities.
James Cook University	$2.5 million	Students Association is still operational but has shed two thirds of its staff and is operating on a $200,000 budget despite an annual grant of $300,000 from the university University has taken over the leasing of food outlets and childcare provision
Southern Cross University	$2.0 million	Lismore SRC and

		University Union have collapsed. Very limited services now run at Lismore by university Office of Sport and Cultural Activities University provided grant of $0.13 million for postgraduates and student organisation at Coffs Habour and Tweed Head

University of Ballarat	$1.14 million	The university provides a grant of $0.4 million, this is subsidised with some voluntary fees from a members discount scheme, The university had a much narrower range of services than elsewhere even prior to VSU. These services are reported as being 'marginally sustainable' under current arrangements.
University of Newcastle	$6.25 million	The main trading and activities, body, the University Union, has been wound up. It has been replaced by a university company, UoN (Services). It receives funding from the university of about $1.13 million Representative and sporting organisations receive about $0.8 million from the university
University of New England	$1.85 million	The University Union, Students Association and Postgraduate Association have been dissolved. The university has established a company, UNE Services. There are rudimentary undergraduate and postgraduate committees but only in an advisory capacity The university provides a

		grant of $0.3 million to UNE Services UNE Sports continues but with less than half of its previous funding

University of Southern Queensland	$1.8 million	University allocation of $0.6 million in 2009 Guild has stated that it believes the allocation is insufficient to maintain the operation of the Guild and will begin to wind up unless a funding solution is found.
University of Sunshine Coast	$0.5 million	Guild reliant on voluntary contributions amounting to a few hundred dollars Has been shifted from central location on campus to small demountable on edge of campus
University of Wollongong	$3.87 million	Major service provision prior to VSU was by university companies, UniLife and the Recreation and Aquatic Centre. Representative organisations now receive funding only for a single academic rights advocacy officer, plus irregular small scale funding on a project by project basis. Both the undergraduate and postgraduate association have only survived so far even in a limited capacity by drawing on reserves which are close to exhaustion

While VSU has had an effect on all universities and students, these effects have been considerably exacerbated in regional communities. The table shows that the VSU legislation an alarming loss of student-driven campus life activity, representation, and in some cases even the

most basic services. Regional universities have less money than large city-based universities to divert from core teaching and research activities to subsidise the continuation of student services, culture and representation. They also tend to be based smaller campuses with less opportunities to cross-subsidise non-profit activities with commercial income streams.

Universities were meant to be able to access a broader capital development pool as part of the Higher Education Invest Fund to cover the costs of major infrastructure projects related to student services & amenities. The recent stock market crash has wrecked most of the optimistic funding projections for university capital development projects. This may partly explains why the government has gone back to a compulsory fee as a funding source.

Students don't just need services and infra-structure. Regional universities were particularly successful at winning grants for new sporting infra-structure under the VSU Transition program. Yet most regional universities report that since VSU that membership of sporting clubs and participation in inter-university sporting events has plummeted as subsidies to participate have dried up. This sporting example highlights a more general point. A vibrant campus life is more than buildings and infra-structure. It is important that there are mechanisms to fund what goes on inside the buildings or on the sports pitches.

NUS also cannot stress enough the importance that regional students need a voice. Regional students face a variety of circumstances that affect their welfare, learning and financial situation differently from typical suburban students:

- Students from regional/rural backgrounds participate in higher education at only 71% the rate that metropolitan students, students from isolated backgrounds participate at 44%
- regional students defer to take a gap year as twice the rate of suburban students,
- the impact of the asset test on farming family eligibility to student financial benefits, particularly in the context of the severe drought
- petrol price rises have a bigger impact as regional usually have to travel bigger distances to get to campuses or paid work and there are little or no public transport options
- the more limited housing options, our Gippsland affiliate reports that some students are sleeping in their cars
- are more likely to be studying via external or mixed mode, even internal mode students are more likely to have some teaching via video relays
- small size of many regional campuses make the provision of services unsustainable without a subsidy

Regional students deserve to have effective mechanisms to be able to raise their issues with university and quality assurance bodies as well as state and federal governments.

Unfortunately the current VSU arrangements create another structural disadvantage to be faced by regional students compared to many metropolitan students. NUS believes that regional students should not be denied the opportunity to be heard, to participate in an educationally and personally enriching campus life, and to receive adequate support services in a higher education system where regional and isolated students continue to be significantly under-represented.

PART FOUR: Implications of *Higher Education Legislation Amendment (Student Services and Amenities, and Other Measures Bill 2009) and Guidelines*

The Bill

The evidence that we have submitted in the previous sections establishes the case that attempt to create self-funded voluntary student organisations through the *Higher Education (Abolition of Compulsory Up Front Student Union Fees) Act 2005* has failed. Even the strongest organisations, such as the Western Australian Guilds, still require university funding and are drawing on historic reserves.

The actual outcomes fall into three broad categories:

- General collapse of student campus life, support structures and representative functions;
- University takeover of major service providers and subsidised from university revenue with either a student advisory committee within the university company or a small independent student representatative/advocacy organisation funded by the university through a service level contract
- University funding to maintain comprehensive student service and representative bodies through a service level contract

The problem with the current university funding system include:

- That the university funding for student services, amenities, representation and advocacy is unfunded apart from possible future grants for student amenities under the Higher Education Investment Fund. This means that universities are diverting funds from other areas of university activity.
- There is a huge variation in the amount of discretionary funding the universities have in their budgets to divert, ie compare the funding agreements of some Go8 universities with regional universities. This builds further structural inequalities and disadvantages into the higher education system
- Since 2005 there has been a massive shift from universities from exercising broad regulatory control over student organisations to micro-managing student service delivery either through the establishment of university companies to deliver services or detailed service level agreements with student organisations. This has led to a loss of student-driven culture and the weakening of independent representation and advocacy.

The *Higher Education Legislation Amendment (Student Services and Amenities, and Other Measures Bill 2009* provides a funding source (a compulsory student services and amenities fee)

for universities and potentially should flatten the vast gulf in the level of student service provision between different universities (ie regional compared to Go8).

There is nothing in the bill *per se* that will restore greater student control of student affairs, indeed the bill explicitly permits higher education providers to not hand over any of the student service and amenity fee revenue to student organisations. The bill also retains the current arrangements regarding voluntary membership of student organisations. The bill is far from what NUS wants but we support the bill being passed to provide long tem funding stability for student services.

NUS strongly supports the income contingent repayment arrangement through SA-HELP as this will alleviate domestic student difficulties with up front payment of the fee. We do note that the bill excludes most permanent residents from eligibility for the SA-HELP loans and recommend that the government look at making HELP loans also available to them.

NUS recommends that the *Higher Education Legislation Amendment (Student Services and Amenities, and Other Measures Bill 2009* be supported by the Senate, subsequent to the amendment about the compliance requirements of the *Student Services, Amenities, Representation and Advocacy Guidelines* (as outlined below)

The Guidelines

Student Services and Amenities Fee Guidelines

As we have described above since 2005 the purchaser-provider model has replaced democratic model as the major dynamic of student service delivery. Student organisations no longer receive a block grant that elected student representatives can allocate according to democratic processes. Instead the universities purchase services (including representation and advocacy) through detailed service level contracts that are monitored through key performance indicators.

While NUS would support a return to democratic block grant system we believe that is extremely unlikely that most Vice-Chancellors would relinquish their new powers and restore the block grants. Most universities have service level agreements with their student organisations that will run at least until the end of 2010. We expect that most Vice-Chancellors will establish new service level agreements once the current ones expire.

This changes the whole logic of regulating what kinds of activities and services are permitted to be funded from a compulsory amenities and services fee. The policy intent of pre-2005 regulatory legislation (such as list of approved activities created under the Victorian *Tertiary Education Act 1994* by the Kennett Liberal Government) was to restrict expenditure on left-wing socio-political causes by democratic student bodies.

The practical effect of these guidelines on post-2005 universities is to restrict what services that Vice-Chancellors may purchase from student organisations and/or university service companies and/or a private provider. We are unaware of any serious case being made that the Vice-Chancellors are making reckless purchasing decisions requiring the federal parliament establish a prescriptive list of approved activities in the guidelines.

The real political purpose of these guidelines seems to be to find a compromise in the Senate amongst those who are rehashing the pre-2005 VSU debates rather than a belief that the Vice-Chancellors are currently out of control.

The list of allowable uses of the fee is taken from the Kennett legislation and contains the subsequent amendments to the Kennett legislation to allow for the funding of student media and administrative support for clubs and societies. NUS supports the inclusion of student media and support for clubs and societies as the cornerstones of a vibrant campus life, as are all of the other allowable uses specified in the Guidelines.

NUS does not support the Student Services and Amenities Guidelines as they undermine student control of student affairs, but we do recognise that in order for the overall legislation to get passed that these Guidelines may address the concerns of some Senators.

The Student Services, Amenities, Representation and Advocacy Guidelines

NUS supports these guidelines as they establish minimum benchmarks for higher education providers rather than proscribe what can be funded.

NUS, in particular, welcomes the requirement that a higher education provider must provide funding for independent academic advocacy services, the conduct of student elections and 'adequate and reasonable support services and infra-structure for student representatives'.

The latter is essential for student representation to be meaningful and effective rather than tokenistic. We believe that there should be on-going consultation by DEEWR with the higher education sector about defining what the necessary resources for effective student representation should be and also identifying best practices.

NUS believes that the training for student representatives can be further improved through the development of a national training curriculum for student representatives on university committees and is working with other sector organisations on the initial stages of this project.

NUS notes that the only requirements arising from these guidelines to fund student controlled activities are related to student representation and possibly independent academic rights advocacy (an ''independent' advocate could also be an external legal service although unis tend to want to keep dispute resolution in-house). Under these guidelines it would still be permissible for all other services to be contracted to a university service company or private provider as the university sees fit. The guidelines provide little impetus to change the post-2005 arrangements apart from representation and advocacy.

The biggest problem with this guideline is that it doesn't seem to be legally enforceable. The proposed 19-67(4) clause of the bill states:

Subsection 19-65(1) does not apply in relation to the Student Services, Amenities, Representation and Advocacy Guidelines.

If you look at 19-65(1) of the *Higher Education Support Act* is states:

(1) A higher education provider must comply with the requirements of this Act, the regulations and the Guidelines made under section 238-10.

NUS is somewhat mystified why these Guidelines should be exempted from the compliance requirement of the Act. Unless there is a compelling technical argument to justify this **NUS recommends that 19-67 (4) of the bill be deleted**.

While the Student Services, Amenities, Representation and Advocacy Guidelines fall short of what NUS wants we do support the passage of these guidelines.