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Committee Secretary
House Standing Committee on Education and Employment
House of Representatives
PO Box 6021
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600
Australia

Submission to Inquiry into the Higher Education Legislation Amendment (Student Services and Amenities) Bill 2010.

Dear committee secretary,

Thank you for the opportunity to present my views regarding the proposed students services fees.

I have been studying for my Psychology degree at Murdoch University in Western Australia for 5 years. During this time I have only been a member of the student guild for one year, my first year.

I initially joined and paid the \$100 guild fee because I thought guild membership was an important part of university life. I soon realized the only benefits of membership were coffee discounts and \$5 discounts to rarely held social events, possibly once per semester. Since that time, the guild has done little to entice my membership and is still proving not to be worth the membership fee.

Murdoch university is half an hour's drive from my home, so using on-campus services such as the hairdresser and gym is not practical, I simply use local facilities close to home. Many of my class mates rarely attend campus due to work or family commitments, and would never use on-campus facilities or services.

Given these points, I think it is inherently unfair to force all students to pay for services and amenities which they are unlikely to use. Students have a limited amount of money and they are the best people to decide how it ought to be spent, particularly with regards to non-academic expenses.

It is important to be in tune with student needs, and by imposing a compulsory, unconditional fee, there will be reduced incentive for the guild to truly cater to student needs. Students will effectively have less ability to decide which services ought to be supported based on where they choose to channel their limited income.

It is my belief that imposing this fee will not improve university life for all students. Yes there are select groups that will benefit, but for the majority this fee will simply mean having less control over where our funds are distributed, as well as fewer dollars overall under the guise of improving services that we may not actually have a practical ability to

use.

To improve student services, encourage students to make their own decisions, and take the hint that if money isn't coming in, they obviously don't feel it is worthwhile. Would you spend your hard earned income on substandard services or products? No, you would make a choice based on your needs and the value for money available to you, why reward unnecessary or substandard services and amenities by ensuring a fixed income, regardless of the output or value you get? It's just not realistic or fair.

To conclude, I would urge the committee to consider a final point. The vast majority of students do not have a clue that the government is considering imposing compulsory fees upon them. If it was such a big issue, surely students around Australia would be demanding compulsory service fees? The only parties supporting this measure are those who will benefit from a guaranteed bottomless funding source - university management and lazy student unions. Most students will not. Surely the government should protect, not punish the most vulnerable.

Thank you again for considering my views opposing the proposed student services fees.

Kind regards,
Arabella Haddon-Casey