



THE UNIVERSITY OF  
WESTERN AUSTRALIA  
*Achieve International Excellence*

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OFFICE OF THE VICE-CHANCELLOR

VICE-CHANCELLOR

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Our ref: F13039 PC/3001/04.11.2010  
Your ref:

4 November 2010

Mr Glenn Worthington  
The Committee Secretary  
House of Representatives Standing Committee on Education and Training  
PO Box 6021  
Parliament House  
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Mr Worthington

**Higher Education Amendment (Student Services and Amenities) Bill 2010**

I am responding to the call for submissions to the inquiry into the above Bill.

Given there has been only a 5 working day period in which to respond I am attaching the relevant extract from the submission this University made to the Commonwealth on the same matter in March 2008.

This University remains a strong supporter of the Amenities and Services Fee. We have a very good working relationship with our excellent Student Guild, and services to students are handled in an effective partnership. The Guild's contribution to the quality of the student experience at UWA is a widely-acknowledged best practice exemplar nationally and the University has been happy to pass the Amenities and Services Fee income to the Guild (and to the independent Sports Association) to provide a range of services which we view as integral to the UWA student experience.

The proposed Student Services and Amenities fee is **not** a Guild membership fee, and while modest, will be critical in maintaining the vitality and involvement of the student body in providing a quality student experience. I urge your committee to support the Bill.

Yours sincerely

Alan Robson  
Vice-Chancellor

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**Extract from  
Response to  
'The Impact of Voluntary Student Unionism on Services, Amenities and Representation  
for Australian University Students' Discussion Paper – February 2008**

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1. The University of Western Australia welcomes the Labor Government's clearly-stated commitment to the provision of services and amenities to university students and is particularly pleased that the adverse impact of VSU legislation is being addressed so early in the new Government's first term.
2. The University's general position on VSU and the provision of student services comes from the perspective that the student learning experience is a holistic one in which a wide range of student services, amenities and activities contribute significantly to the successful completion of a quality university education. The evidence internationally clearly suggests that the quality of the student learning experience is influenced even more by the quality of the experience outside the classroom than within it. The quality of student engagement with all aspects of their university experience is a major determinant of their eventual success.
3. The University's particular position on VSU/student services is that the most effective model is one in which the University is committed to providing excellent services and amenities, and works in partnership with the student body, in the case of UWA primarily through the Guild, which is equally committed to the same goal.
4. The strength of that partnership and commitment is dependent, in our experience, on both partners' ability to commit meaningfully, individually and jointly, to the effective provision of student services and amenities.
5. Historically, The University of Western Australia has made a sustained financial commitment to the provision of such services as child care, health care, counselling, sporting and cultural facilities, as part of its mainstream commitment to the provision of a high quality educational environment for its students. The Guild has also made a sustained financial commitment to the provision of complementary – there is relatively little overlap - services to students, including advocacy and representation, financial counselling and assistance, education support, social, cultural, sporting and recreational activities.
6. The characteristics of the UWA model that have made it successful (and acknowledged widely in the sector as the benchmark for successful management of VSU/amenities and services fee and the University/student relationship) include the following:
  - (i) The Guild exists under the UWA Act 1911 and by statute, as an independent body. It is governed by statute, regulations, by-laws and rules. It is accountable, by statute, to the Senate (the University's governing body) for its activities, for its use of funds, and for its performance. Its audited financial statements are reported to Senate annually and Senate approves the annual level of amenities and services fee (ASF) and its distribution.
  - (ii) The Guild represents all students. All students can vote in its elections, though only members can stand for office. Membership is voluntary, and was throughout the period from 2002 when the amenities and services fee to the University was compulsory.

- (iii) The annual amenities and services fee has been set at a modest level, currently \$120 p.a. for a full time student and less for part-timers and off- campus students. There has been a very high rate of voluntary membership (~75% in 2008) and voluntary payment of the ASF (~60% in 2008) indicating that students see a clear value proposition in both membership and payment. The University collects the fee and passes it directly to the Guild (and the Sports Association<sup>1</sup>) with only a small proportion withheld for administration costs. No funds are appropriated by the University for services and amenities.
  - (iv) The University is a keen advocate of a strong and independent Guild and has a very close working relationship with the Guild through its Executive and Council. The contribution made by the Guild to the life of the University is considerable and acknowledged as such by the Senate and the University Executive. The ability of the Guild to retain financial independence is compromised by the current VSU legislation which prohibits a compulsory amenities and services fee.
7. It is our view that the WA framework for VSU was successful. That is, the explicit legislative separation of Guild membership from the payment of a modest amenities and services fee, 'solved' the political problem of VSU while retaining the financial capacity of the Guild to operate efficiently and effectively. The University could work satisfactorily under such an arrangement again should the Government so decide.

11 March 2008

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<sup>1</sup> The UWA Sports Association is an independent incorporated body following separation from the Guild in 1987. The ASF is distributed 70% to the Guild and 30% to the Sports Association.