



Australian Vice-Chancellors' Committee
the council of Australia's university presidents

Media Release

51/05

Monday 5 December 2005

Rational approach on student services and amenities Bill needed

Amendments to the student services and amenities Bill are proposed by Australia's Vice-Chancellors which would allow universities to:

- charge a fee to sustain campus life,
- ensure that membership of student organisations is voluntary,
- guarantee that no funds from compulsory student services and amenities charges are used to support student political activities, and
- subject the process to stringent financial control and external auditing.

At the recent Australian Vice-Chancellors' Committee (AVCC) meeting, AVCC members – the heads of 38 of Australia's universities – endorsed this proposal.

"The AVCC calls on Parliamentarians to take a rational approach when the Bill is debated (listed for debate in the House of Representatives this afternoon) and recognise that universities need to provide services and amenities," AVCC President Professor Di Yerbury said.

"Certain services and amenities in an affordable and convenient form are needed to support students at university, especially on campuses where there is a dearth of nearby facilities.

"University is not, and should never be, simply about a student attending academic classes. It's about developing the whole person, academically, socially and culturally.

"Passage of the *Higher Education Legislation Amendment (Abolition of Compulsory Up-front Student union fees) Bill* in its current form would be the death-knell of many essential services on campuses throughout Australia," she said, "while others could not be maintained at their current level and affordability."

"In 2005 universities collect approximately \$170 million in student services and amenities fees. Less than 15 % of those funds (\$25 million) are expected to be directed to student associations and political activities.

"Under the Vice-Chancellors' proposal, universities will be able to collect the \$145 million needed to sustain essential student services and amenities, while subjecting the process to financial control and external auditing," Professor Yerbury said.

The AVCC calls upon Parliamentarians to seek an amendment to the current Bill to allow universities to charge a student services and amenities fee. This will ensure that Australian university students continue to have a rounded educational experience that academically, socially and culturally better equips them for competing in the global workplace.

- ends -

See over page for the AVCC Student Services and Amenities Proposal

Media Inquiries: Callista Punch
Ph: 02 6285 8206 **Mob:** 0400 166 691

For all the latest from and about Australia's universities visit the AVCC website: www.avcc.edu.au



Australian Vice-Chancellors' Committee
the council of Australia's university presidents

AVCC Student Services and Amenities Proposal

In response to the *Higher Education Support Amendment (Abolition of Compulsory Up-front Student Union Fees) Bill* currently before Parliament, the AVCC urges the Government to consider the following student services and amenities proposal which would allow universities to continue to provide student services on campus:

1. Universities should be able to determine the level of any student services and amenities charge set as a condition of enrolment.
2. Universities should levy differential fees for part-time and external students consistent with their likely access to and usage of the services and amenities provided.
3. Each university should be responsible for the effective use of the student services and amenities charge to ensure efficient use of the funds. They should inform students of the services and amenities which will be supported by the funds raised by the charge.
4. Student services and amenities charges should be used solely for the support of student services, facilities and amenities. These services and amenities can include health, welfare, dental, childcare, study support, sporting, artistic, cultural, and specific international student services and internal student advocacy and representative functions.
5. Funds from compulsory student services and amenities charges should not be used to support student political activities.
6. Each university should ensure that an external auditor confirms that the funds raised from student services and amenities charges are used to support the services and amenities the university has stated will be supported by the charge, and that no funds from compulsory charges are used for student political activities.
7. Universities should ensure that membership of all student organisations is voluntary.

November 2005

Media Inquiries: Callista Punch
Ph: 02 6285 8206 **Mob:** 0400 166 691

For all the latest from and about Australia's universities visit the AVCC website: www.avcc.edu.au