

11.3 Flinders University

In summary the impact of VSU at Flinders University (**Flinders**) is assessed as mild to moderate overall with impact on the individual campus service organisations assessed as follows:

- moderate in the short term for the student union and sports body Flinders Campus Community Services Inc (**FCCS**) with a 45 per cent reduction in full-time staff and the amount of on-going long term financial support from the University unknown;
- severe for the Student Association (Student Council) which pre-VSU had five staff positions. The functions previously fulfilled by the Student Association ; and
- severe for the postgraduate association with very diminished support levels and no staff.

FCCS, which trades under the name Flinders One, faces an unknown future with respect to on-going funding. Its commercial operations are required to return at least break-even results.

From the organisation's point of view, duplication and waste have been reduced through the merger of the former six separately incorporated Flinders student organisations and it now has a closer working relationship with the University.

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Overview of the Campus Services Organisation at Flinders University

Flinders University is a public university established in 1966 in suburban Adelaide at Bedford Park, eleven kilometres from Adelaide CBD. In 2007 it has 15,110 students with (approximately 43 per cent part-time and external), 631 academic staff and 946 general staff. External teaching occurs at Port Lincoln, Renmark, Mt Gambier, Warnambool (Vic), Darwin and Alice Springs (NT).¹⁹⁰

As a direct result of VSU, Flinders One was established in July 2006 to take over all student service functions by the merger of the six former student organisations at Flinders, namely:

- Flinders University Union;
- Students Association;
- Sports Association;
- Postgraduate Students Association;
- International Students Association; and
- Clubs and Societies Association.

Flinders One is an association incorporated under the *Associations Incorporation Act* 1985 (SA). It does not operate under a student membership model. The University is the sole member of the association.¹⁹¹

Overview of Impact on Flinders One

Total income from compulsory amenities and services fees in 2005 has not been ascertained. From other sources (refer to Table 5.1 above) it is estimated the amount was between \$3.0 and 3.4 million. The General Manager of Flinders One was not prepared to disclose the extent of support provided by the University in 2007.

Following the introduction of VSU:

- the six student organisations were merged;

¹⁹⁰ As at 18 February 2008 further background concerning Flinders University could be obtained from the Flinders web site at:

<http://www.flinders.edu.au>

As at 18 February 2008 the ten most recent Annual Reports (1997-2006) for Flinders University could be obtained from the Flinders web site at:

http://www.flinders.edu.au/about/governance/annual-reports/annual-reports_home.cfm

¹⁹¹ As at 18 February 2008 further details concerning Flinders One could be obtained from the Flinders One web site at:

<http://www.flindersone.edu.au>

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- a membership model was not introduced

To assist with the transition to VSU grants totalling approximately \$2.0 million were provided by the University from the reserves of the previous organisations. A portion of this was used to fund redundancies resulting from merging the previous six student organisations into one organisation. The University also currently funds the FCCS student support and advocacy service.

The University received a grant of approximately \$2.7 million from the Federal Government's VSU Transition Fund for an upgrade and expansion of the fitness facilities to enable full commercial operations. Staff advised that the sporting clubs have become more independent and responsible, self incorporating and acting with more vision. The sports grounds consist of approximately six hectares and the larger areas are two football grounds and six soccer pitches.

The six previous student organisations had separate boards and management/administration structures. Flinders One was established in July 2006 arising out of negotiations between the University and the six organisations to form the new student services body.

Flinders One is incorporated with the University as its only member. Its Board comprises external directors and a Chair who has a casting vote. A new General Manager has been appointed by the Board.

A detailed analysis of the financial situation is not possible because the General Manager was not prepared to release the historical financial data or annual reporting data on the basis that it was prepared for internal purposes only.

Flinders One is responsible for the delivery of sport and fitness services, food and beverage services and retail outlets on a commercial basis. The University funds the student support and advocacy and counselling.

Table 11.3.1
Flinders One Changes in staff levels

	Full-time	Part-time	Casual	Total
Early 2005	27	21	102	150
July 2007	15	15	66	96
Δ in Staff Count	(12)	(6)	(36)	(54)

A reduction in expenses has been achieved mostly through a combination of staff redundancies or voluntary departures as shown in the Table 11.3.1 above and by way of a reduction in the range of services offered and their restructure. It is not planning

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any capital works projects on the campus other than the upgrade and expansion of the fitness facilities.

Commercial Operations

Flinders One is responsible for food and beverage services and two retail shops. It also receives a percentage of the rent collected by the University on the other commercial outlets – NAB, Post Office, Chemist, Photo Shop, Travel Agent, Hairdresser and Optometrist. These are approximately 2,000m² of commercial space.

Services closed or reduced following the introduction of VSU include:

- closure of the student newspaper;
- ceased support for an external student radio timeslot;
- ceased funding clubs and societies which previously received approximately \$40,000;
- reduced funding for activities/recreation programs;
- reduced opening hours for some campus services;
- charge of \$2 introduced for the student diary;
- reduced funding for Orientation week activities;
- Parent Centre (occasional childcare and vacation care) closed in June 2007;
- diminished support for postgraduate students;
- research officers no longer employed;
- entertainment/functions now run on a break even basis;
- attendance at AUS events no longer supported;
- the previously free employment service now has a fee of \$20 per semester;
- water ski boat sold;
- sporting clubs now operate on a user pays basis. Funding in 2005 was \$65,000 and is now nil; and
- inter-university sport competition in 2005 received \$44,600 which reduced to \$4,000 in 2007.

A total of sixty clubs and societies with 998 members have ceased to operate since the introduction of VSU and eleven sport and recreation clubs with 272 members have also ceased to operate. Sporting clubs do participate in local community sporting competitions with 24 clubs and 42 teams.

Flinders One expects to continue to maintain and operate its sporting services and facilities at their current level.

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On the basis of information provided on a range of selected food and beverage items from 2004 to 2007 the price increase has been approximately 20 per cent.

Because of the old organisational structure of six separate organisations there was no co-ordinated overall capital development program. The building occupied by Union related and commercial activities is 40 years old.

The University provides support for building repairs and maintenance, grounds maintenance, security and does not charge rent for the commercial spaces. It has also provided funding for a safety upgrade to the Parent Centre (since closed) and an upgrade to oval lights.

Flinders One is reliant on advertising/sponsorship income to support some of its activities, particularly student entertainment, orientation activities and the like.

The long-term future of Flinders One may well be uncertain but without access to detailed financial information it is not possible to express an informed view. In 2007 it budgeted for a deficit of \$150,000, however on current activities it is expected to finish the year with a \$50,000 deficit.

Overview of Impact on the Student Council

As set out above the Student Council is now part of the amalgamated organisation – Flinders Campus Community Services. The Student Council is an amalgamation of the Postgraduate Students Association, the Flinders International Students Association and the Clubs and Societies Association.

The Student Council is made up of the following office bearers – Women’s Officer, International Officer, Queer Officer, Indigenous Officer, Postgraduate Officer, Activities Officer and Recreation Officer plus seven ordinary members and the President. It receives an annual budget of \$16,000 from Flinders One.

The Student Council focuses on representation, activism and safeguarding student interests. It has no staff and its application to the Flinders One Board for staff has not been successful to date.