

11. Impact at the In-depth Interview Universities

11.12 University of South Australia

Summary of Impact

In summary the impact of VSU on the University of South Australia is difficult to assess accurately across the student services and representation areas. Significant restructuring has occurred and the organisations are in the early stages of development. However a preliminary overall assessment as moderate is suggested.

The removal of compulsory amenities and services fees has had an impact at the University but it has been reduced by the university providing some transition funding in the short term. The long term situation is not clear.

The annual Student Amenities Fee (SAF) income that the University received in 2005 was approximately \$4.5 million. The Student Association provided discounts to students through its pricing differential program of approximately \$80,000 in 2004 and 2005. This benefit is no longer available to students. International and postgraduate students no longer have access to a dedicated staff member.

Overview of the University of South Australia

University of South Australia is an urban “new generation” public university founded on 1 January 1991 through the amalgamation of the South Australian Institute of Technology and the Magill, Salisbury and Underdale campuses of the South Australian College of Advanced Education. It is one of Australia’s major technology universities.

Whilst it was established in 1991 it traces its history back to the nineteenth century in South Australia. In 2006 there were 33,722 students enrolled at the university with an EFTSL of 22,563. It had 2,157 EFT staff.

The University has two campuses in Adelaide CBD (City East and City West) and campuses at Magill, Mawson Lakes and Whyalla.²²⁵

Overview of the University of South Australia Students Association

The Student Association was restructured as a consequence of the introduction of VSU. Prior to this restructure it operated a wide range of services typical of student unions:

²²⁴ As at 18 February 2008 further background concerning Sydney University Postgraduate Representative Association could be obtained from the SUPRA web site at:

<http://www.usyd.edu.au/supra>

²²⁵ As at 18 February 2008 further background concerning the University of South Australia could be obtained from the UniSA web site at:

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

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- commercial services including retail outlets, cafeterias, cafes/bars at 16 venues;
- training courses for staff;
- student employment service;
- sport and recreation clubs, including involvement in Australian University Games and awarding sport scholarships;
- hire service;
- clubs and societies;
- short courses;
- social activities such as Orientation Ball, snow and outback trips and bands;
- student advisory service supporting undergraduate, postgraduate and international students; and
- gymnasium.

The Association now focuses on student representation and providing support for student activities including sport and recreation groups, cultural activities and communications.²²⁶

Detailed Impact on University of South Australia Student Association

The Student Association is an incorporated body. Students have the option to be members of the Association without payment of any membership fee. In 2005 the Association was responsible for the delivery of a wide range of services to students. Its commercial activities covered cafeterias, bars, a bookshop and gyms with revenues from trading areas of approximately \$8.2 million and total revenues of approximately \$13.3 million. Included in this is the Student Amenities Fee of approximately \$4.5 million. At this time there were approximately 67 full-time and part-time staff and 50 casual employees.

The Association is no longer responsible for commercial activities and has a staff EFT of 9.5 and a budget of approximately \$800,000. It has undergone a substantial change in governance and management structure.

Services closed or reduced by the Association following the introduction of VSU include:

- all commercial operations have either been outsourced or transferred to the University;

²²⁶ As at 18 February 2008 further background concerning the University of South Australia Student Association could be obtained from the Association's web site at:

<http://www.usasa.unisa.edu.au>

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- funding of sporting clubs reduced from \$140,000 to \$21,400;
- members of sporting clubs have reduced by approximately 30 per cent
- sporting clubs are required to meet the costs for facilities, uniforms and insurance;
- inter-university sport received funding of \$16,684 in 2005 and now receives no funding at all;
- no funding for sport scholarships, short courses and athlete support programs;
- a major reduction in recreation and general activities;
- second hand bookshop closed, however is now re-opened on a trial basis;
- employment service closed;
- financial support for student newspaper substantially reduced;
- trips subsidised to the outback and ski fields no longer available, however a self funded ski trip has occurred;
- fitness centre/gymnasium now operated by the University's School of Health Sciences
- multi-purpose facilities and outdoor sporting centres now externally operated
- shower, change and locker facilities now operated by the University.

The Association has introduced an opt-in membership with approximately 15,000 out of 22,000 students choosing to opt-in at no charge. While there is no differentiation in the provision of services between members and non-members the Association has access by e-mail to those students who opt-in. Membership also makes students eligible to nominate for positions and vote in the Student Association elections.

To promote membership of the Association a campaign was run based on a \$10 joining fee. For this fee students received an Ambassador Card, Diary, University Books discount vouchers, Backpack and pen. The Ambassador Card provided discounts at restaurants, hotels, cinemas and attractions and a 5 per cent discount at Coles and Woolworths. So far it has proved a waste of time and effort. The lack of take up may well have been affected by a lack of staff present at University enrolment and re-enrolment times.

The current staff consists of a General Manager, four Student Advisory Officers, an Activities Officer, a Clubs and Societies Officer, a Research Officer and Administration Officer and another part-time staff member. The Student Advisory Officers provide help to students to resolve any problems affecting their academic performance. The role is a critical one in supporting student's rights.

It is understood that the University is satisfied with the relationship it has with the Association. The major issue facing the Association is the current lack of student participation in its activities, and in particular getting students to nominate for the

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coming election of representatives. It is a common perception with both University staff and students that the Association no longer exists.

Table 11.12.1
Income Staffing Clubs and Societies and Sport for 2005 and 2007

	2005		2007	
	\$000s		\$000s	
Income:				
• trading activities	8,200		-	
• Student fee	4,500		-	
• Services	600		48	
• Membership	-		5	
• University grant	-		600	
• Interest	-		267	
Total Income	13,300		920	
Staff	EFT 60	Casual 50	EFT 9.5	Casual 0.5
Recreation Staff	EFT 2.5	Casual 3	EFT 1	Casual 1
Sporting Club members	3,297		2,027	
Clubs and Societies	49		52	
Funding for Sports Clubs	\$140,000		\$21,400	
Funding for Inter-university Sport	\$16,684		\$0	

The Association is working hard to raise its profile and is planning to have club representatives on the four major campuses. It is also working on improving its website, particularly with an interactive capacity for clubs and societies. For example students will be able to join a club, pay the fee, check results, locate the next game and communicate with each other.

The Association is also working with students to improve the newspaper by paying for articles and giving it a more student focus. A questionnaire is under development to send to all students focusing on what it is that they want and if a service does exist how they rate it. This is being worked on with the active involvement of the University.

The Association can continue to operate within the funding of \$300,000 provided by the University, however its only other substantial source of income is from interest received on its reserves. The funding agreement with the University will continue until 2010.

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In conclusion the Association is concerned that its profile with students has been substantially reduced and that this has had a flow on effect resulting in a lack of involvement by students.