

11.9 The University of New South Wales

Overview

The University was incorporated by Act of the Parliament of New South Wales in Sydney in 1949, but its character can be traced back to the formation of the Sydney Mechanics Institute in 1843, leading to the formation of the Sydney Technical College in 1878. It is situated in Sydney's Eastern suburbs at Kensington with one Faculty, the College of Fine Arts (**CoFA**), located in Paddington.

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It has approximately 38,000 enrolled students (2006 figures - EFTSL 25,123), the vast majority of whom are enrolled at the Kensington campus. In 2006 the amenities and services fee was \$276 per student.²⁰⁸

There are two main student service organisations currently based at the University:

- e) UNSW Sport and Recreation (including the Sports Association),²⁰⁹ and
- f) Arc @ UNSW – the University’s new student service organisation which commenced operating in 2007.²¹⁰

Since 2005, UNSW has undergone some significant transitions in terms of the way services are provided and the entities which provide them. Many of the changes are still in progress.

Before VSU, all students had to join the student-controlled Sports Association which managed outdoor facilities and was the umbrella organisation for the sporting clubs.

The separately-managed Lifestyle Centre, managed by the University, provides an Olympic sized pool (divided), fitness studio, indoor cycling studio, sports hall and squash courts. It also provides access for the surrounding non-University community and has a stratified pass structure with the maximum access to facilities costing \$660 per annum.²¹¹

Subsequent to VSU introduction there has been a review process of sports and recreation which, from 1 September 2007, will result in the formation of an integrated Department of Sports and Recreation, managed by the University and incorporating both the facilities and sporting clubs. This will result from the merging of the Lifestyle Centre with the Sports Association.

In 2005, four organisations (the ‘legacy organisations’) provided non-sport student services and representation. These were:

²⁰⁸ As at 18 February 2008 further background concerning The University of New South Wales could be obtained from the UNSW web site at:

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

²⁰⁹ As at 18 February 2008 further background concerning the UNSW Sports Association could be obtained from the Association’s web site at:

<http://www.sport.unsw.edu.au/welcome.htm>

²¹⁰ As at 18 February 2008 further background concerning Arc @ UNSW could be obtained from the company’s web site at:

<http://www.arc.unsw.edu.au/default.aspx>

²¹¹ As at 18 February 2008 further background concerning the UNSW Lifestyle Centre could be obtained from the UNSW web site at:

<http://www.lifestylecentre.unsw.edu.au>

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- a) The Student Guild - equivalent to an SRC – providing advocacy, legal, childcare, clubs and societies;
- b) The Postgraduate Board – co-located with the Guild;
- c) College of Fine Arts Student Association (CoFA); and
- d) UNSW Union – ‘The Source’ – more commercially focused including catering.

The VSU legislation provided the impetus in 2005 to review the UNSW service provision and an extensive mediation process involving the above four organisations occurred over approximately 18 months. A skilled mediator was engaged to facilitate a complex and challenging change process. At the end of this process the organisations were wound up and the staff given retrenchment packages.

The Arc was formed, advertised a range of positions and began operating at the start of 2007. Although it offers many of the pre-existing services it does so in a completely different way.

From 2007, the University has provided some limited transition funding to both Sport and the Arc on a reducing basis for three years only.

Summary of VSU Impact at UNSW

In summary, the impact of VSU on the UNSW is difficult to assess accurately because of the significant restructuring which has occurred and the fact that new organisations are in very early stages of development. In the case of sport, the new structure will only be in place from 1 September 2007.

The removal of the income from the service fees has had a major impact at this university but it has been limited by the University providing transition funding which reduces slowly over the period 2007, 2008 and 2009.

One effect of the service review and restructuring appears to have been the streamlining of a service system which previously seemed to be quite fragmented. Data for some of the service organisations which existed pre-VSU was not able to be sourced for this report.

The drop in income resulting from removal of student fees does not appear to be matched by an equivalent drop in levels or quality of services provided, but it is difficult to make reliable assessments at this early stage of the transition period because of the lack of available data (from both the legacy organisations and for the Arc in 2007).

Overall the impact on the university has been assessed to be mild to moderate, with significantly differing impacts on the legacy organisations. The new Arc, in its

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current early stage of development appears to be building a focused, dynamic and responsive representative and service organisation.

The impact on the Sports Association is assessed as severe as it appears that the income, staff expertise and the benefit of a long Sports Association history and culture could be significantly diminished.

The impact on the Lifestyle Centre is assessed as mild as it had already been functioning as a relatively autonomous provider operating on a commercial basis.

The impact on the Student Guild and the Postgraduate Board is judged to be severe because the organisations are in the process of, or have been legally wound up, and now cease to exist. Representation and the representative council are considered a vital service of the Arc and form a distinct department.

In 2007, the first year of the new structure, difficulties are being experienced in filling some elected positions, particularly post-graduate and indigenous office bearers, as well as an overall understanding of how student representation can be best supported within the Arc structure. However, most of the student collectives are still extremely active as is the student publication, Tharunka.

The impact on CoFA Student Association is assessed as mild to moderate as most of its functions at the Paddington site seem to have been retained, although its specific identity as a representative organisation has ended.

There is a question about the amount of corporate memory which may have been lost to the University as a result of the restructure. Although the expressed opinions of University sources are that there are sufficient numbers of on-going staff who carry corporate knowledge from the legacy organisations, it is difficult to assess the impact of it at this time. This also has both positive attributes and drawbacks as the Arc establishes itself as the new student organisation with a different organisational focus.

A more detailed summary for each major service organisation follows below.

Impact on Sport at UNSW

Sporting facilities offered include: basketball, cricket, football, gym, hockey (pitch being sold), netball, rugby, sailing club, sauna, soccer (two soccer fields being sold), squash, swimming pool (olympic size, split for multi-purpose use), table tennis, tennis, and baseball (diamond being sold).

The UNSW Lifestyle Centre (indoor facilities) and the UNSW Sports Association are two key providers on campus with very different identities. The Lifestyle Centre is operated and managed by University staff on a commercial basis whereas the Sports Association is student-controlled with University staff appointed. Further details of each body are shown below.

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Sports Association (SA)

This is the umbrella organisation for all of the UNSW sporting clubs. It has a long history of being the student body responsible for the provision and coordination of sporting and recreational options at the University. Currently, 42 clubs exist under the auspices of the UNSW Sports Association.

It offers annual grants to member clubs to assist in the delivery of sport and recreational options to members, assisting the financial costs of coaching, field and court hire, equipment costs, etc. Pre-VSU, student service fees of \$88 were used to support the activities of the SA.

For 2007, student membership fees of \$88/year were levied (\$99 staff, \$125 alumni). In addition, participants paid the cost of joining a particular club. The take-up rate of memberships has been poor. The SA has experienced a substantial loss of income for 2007 (see table below) and will cease to exist in its current form as a result of the restructure of Sport & Recreation at the University.

Lifestyle Centre

The Lifestyle Centre has not been reliant on student service fees to cover its operating costs. For its income of approximately \$4.3 million in 2006, income derived from the services fee for club access to facilities has been \$300,000. The latter figure has been the only direct exposure that the Centre has had to the service fees, although there is a hidden factor of resources emanating from Student fees which may have been previously available for capital development.

Most of its revenue is derived from purchasing of single visit or periodic passes by individual students, staff and groups (the latter including a significant school student swimming program). A variety of sport, recreation courses and activities are being offered on a user-pays basis. The costs are differentiated between UNSW students/staff and members of the public – the latter group pay 10 to 20 per cent more depending on the service being provided.

The swimming pool is an important facility for the Lifestyle Centre - its usage rates have been consistent over the period being studied here. It is about 25 years old and represents a capital funding challenge as it would be approaching its normal life span, hence it would be expected to be soon requiring capital funds to refurbish it. Such funds could previously have been sourced from student fees.

Emerging Issues

It is reported that over a number of years there have been tensions between the above two organisations. Clubs' access to facilities bookings seems to be at the heart of these tensions with differing perspectives between SA student groups and the Centre over what is a reasonable level of club access to the Centre's facilities.

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The Lifestyle Centre provides some dedicated access to facilities for clubs and also provides for individual users from the University and surrounding community. Balancing the access needs appears to be challenging, where clubs are competing with each other for access to limited facilities. These tensions seem to have been heightened by the introduction of VSU and clubs receiving considerably less funding.

From September 2007 the two bodies will merge into a single University Department: Sport and Recreation, managed by the University and with a Sports Council (with possibly student, alumni and staff membership) acting as an advisory body. Although 'merge' is the term being used, it appears that the SA is effectively being absorbed into a changed Lifestyle Centre.

Table 11.9.1
UNSW Sports Association Activities pre and post-VSU

Variable	Pre-VSU – 2005	Post-VSU – 2007
Memberships Sports Association (all sporting clubs)	4,294	1800
Budgeted Income	\$1.9 million	\$1.45 million (actual \$150,000 in 2007)
Total Funding (including transition funding)	\$1.9 million	\$1.5 million
Students Intervarsity Events attending	470	685 (N.B. UNSW hosted East Coast Challenge)
Staffing Numbers (Sports Association)	9 EFT	6.5 EFT (loss of GM, High Performance Manager, Club Development Officer)
Elite Program Scholarships (second tier)	\$20,000 – \$90,000	None

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Table 11.9.1 above provides some figures to illustrate some of the pre and post-VSU impact on Sports Association activities.

In addition to the changes shown in the table above, the University is selling a key part of the sports infrastructure – the facilities at Little Bay which is situated off-site near Maroubra. Facilities lost to UNSW Sport from the sale and redevelopment of the site are an all-weather hockey pitch, two soccer fields and a baseball diamond. It is not clear whether or how the facilities to be lost will be replaced.

The recorded numbers of sporting clubs memberships has shown a significant decline. It is not clear whether this data accurately depicts the numbers of participants (or, for example, whether students are still participating in clubs without purchasing current memberships).

A funding decline of \$400,000 in 2007 can be observed. The practical implications of this are still being assessed but there are some obvious impacts. These are the removal of second tier scholarships and a loss in Sports Association staffing and organisational capacity. Anecdotal evidence suggests that the loss of the 3 key staff has had a huge impact on the Association because of the key roles that they played and accompanying the loss of corporate memory. The organisation exhibited some symptoms of significant stress.

As documented in the Overview above, the Arc is the new student life body at the UNSW. Following a complex mediation process in 2006 between the four legacy student organisations, funded by the University, Arc @ UNSW was setup with a significantly different organisational structure to provide many of the services that were provided by the previous student organisations – it is an organisation in ‘start up’ mode in 2007. A leading business consultancy firm was also engaged to assist in the development of the Arc governance and business model in the last part of 2006.

The Arc is situated primarily at the middle (Western) end of the campus in two buildings – The Blockhouse and the Roundhouse. It also has a presence at COFA and has strong branding presence (via a distinctive and colourful logo) throughout the Kensington campus, particularly via seven convenience and snack food shops.

The Contact service is also a service provided by the Arc and is situated in close proximity to the University-provided counselling, medical and dental services in the centrally located Quadrangle building.

Arc Structure

The Arc is a separate legal entity from the University and is an incorporated company limited by guarantee. The University believes that the Arc has managed to maintain a student services and representation organisation which can create and fulfil a sense of campus community.

The Arc is governed by a Board of Directors, which is described by the Arc as ‘cleverly constructed’, ‘apolitical’ and has a vision which focuses on member

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services. It consists of 13 members, two of which are University appointed, two are alumni, the Managing Director and eight elected students including a student elected chairperson, the President of the Representative Council and the Convenor of Clubs and Activities Management Committee.

Services

A major change for the Arc from the pre 2007 service arrangements is that the University has taken over catering (previously run by the Union), has leased spaces for private food providers and is currently developing a food and retail master plan. The Arc operates the Roundhouse bar and subleases space within the Roundhouse and Blockhouse for a small number of food outlets.

With the exception of catering and childcare, most services which were provided by the legacy organisations, are being provided by the Arc but they have been significantly restructured. Pre-existing services not managed by the Arc include emergency student loans, parents' rooms and research officer positions. The Arc believes it has increased accountability and responsiveness to its stakeholders.

The University and the Arc have a three year service agreement, the details of which are deemed to be 'commercial in confidence' but it is believed that the service agreement includes a payment by the University of \$2million per annum for 2007, 2008 and 2009. Eventually the Arc is expected to be self-funding and sustainable – a strong formative influence here is the Arc's business-focused model.

Membership for 2007 has been 'opt-in' with 18,000 students (60 per cent) joining at no charge. They received a free diary and can vote in elections and this cohort forms an important basis of Arc stakeholder communication. The Arc is in the process of developing its 'member value proposition' over 2007 so that it is well-placed to offer targeted services in 2008, possibly for a membership fee. 2007 is seen as a transition year regarding user-pays and membership payments.

There appears to be a strong commitment to volunteering on campus with the Orientation Yellow-shirt Program being the 'biggest ever' in 2007 in terms of participation and sponsorship. There are many other well established volunteer-based activities and programs which appear to be continuing in similar style to previous years.

Finances and Facilities

It is estimated that pre-VSU the combined campus services organisations at UNSW had a \$30 million turnover which has now reduced to approximately \$8 million in 2007. Current Arc staffing numbers are approximately 70 EFT permanent and about 85 student casuals.

The Arc has significantly less staff than the combined staffing numbers of the previous legacy organisations resulting from consolidation of services provided and reduced administration needed to run and maintain one organisation, as opposed to

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four separate organisations. However, there are some key positions which are not in the current structure which need to be reconsidered before 2008.

Some assets and cash reserves from the legacy organisations are available to the Arc. It is estimated there is approximately \$4 million in cash reserves (one source described the Arc as 'cashed up').

These reserves are expected to be exhausted after the Arc makes its contribution to much-needed renovations which are planned to occur in the Blockhouse and the Roundhouse. Both of these buildings are looking very 'tired' and impractical, having been built in the 1960's and not having been refurbished since. Currently parts of the Blockhouse are vacant because of a leaking roof - the University will fund this repair.

Some of the funding could come from cash reserves but this is likely to be insufficient for the scale of works needed. Capacity to raise additional funds is limited as the buildings are owned by the University - options are currently being explored.

From 2006 to 2007 there has been a net loss of space to student organisations – exemplified by a significant vacant area on Level 1 in the Quadrangle building (which was previously occupied by the Guild and Postgraduate Board) now reverting to general University use. However, the Arc is now able to provide services out of one central location, from the Blockhouse and Roundhouse precinct, and requires less space due to the reduced staffing numbers. With the planned refurbishments it is anticipated that greater useable space will be available to provide student services in the coming years.

The Arc is reviewing the use of space (for example, in the Blockhouse) and working towards increasing its commercial income from services or tenancies in one and possibly more locations.

Student Development including Clubs, Volunteer Programs and Activities

Student engagement seems to be a strong cultural feature of this campus. The Clubs service has been streamlined (described by one source as 'making it easier for clubs') and the resultant service has been described as improved in terms of its access and sophistication of operation.

On the limited data available (measurable data is being collected for 2007) resources and support for student clubs appear to have been improved via the Arc. There are two affiliated and 148 clubs having interim registration, a manager with two full-time staff and various casual student co-ordinators to support them. The Arc is providing \$110,000 funding for clubs in 2007 – this figure compares favourably with other similar-sized Australian universities.

Representation

One Department of the Arc is Representation with the President being an Arc board member. It provides representation on a wide range of student issues through a

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Representative Council whose members and officers are elected by students. It also provides the support for various for student collectives, which have remained active through the transitional period.

Although there is no direct staffing at present, the Arc Representative Department has access to the internal services offered by other Arc departments such as Marketing, Venues and Events, Corporate Services and Advocacy. It is envisaged that this department will also have staffing provided before the end of 2007.

In the first year of the new structure, difficulties are being experienced in filling some elected positions, particularly post-graduate and indigenous office bearers, as well as an overall understanding of how student representation can be best supported within the Arc structure. However, most of the student collectives are still very active as is the student publication, Tharunka.

Student Support Services

The Student Support Department offers both legal representation to students and advocacy services. These services are provided on both the Kensington and Paddington campuses. During 2007, there has been significant growth of the support provided to students and it is a strategic imperative of the Arc to continue this growth through increased staff numbers and services that are offered.

Future Opportunities

As can be seen from the above description, the Arc is in an organisational building phase for 2007. It is currently focusing on core services and in positioning itself for the post 2007 period. Income increase is possible via increased commercial activity and from membership subscriptions.

A major building refurbishment planning process is underway for the Blockhouse and the Roundhouse. This should provide more usable space generally and increase the Arc's capacity for more commercial income.

The impression given by all sources is that there is a lot of energy, goodwill and capacity in this new organisation, with strong support by the University. On early indications, it appears to be operating effectively and efficiently.