

11.13 University of Southern Queensland

Summary of Impact

In summary, the impact of VSU at USQ is assessed as mild to moderate at present, with impacts on the operations of the campus services organisation, the USQ Student Guild, assessed as follows:

- mild to moderate on the finances of the Guild generally with the loss of \$910,000 in membership income. The effect of this is presently being ameliorated by a three year funding and service agreement with the University which is due to expire at the end of 2009. Even with this agreement there has been a reduction in staff numbers, including the abolition of the Deputy General Manager position, the abolition of the Publication and Marketing Department (three positions), a reduction in the range and quality of services provided, and the suspension of capital works projects;
- moderate on the provision of sporting services with funding cuts impacting on the elite athlete programme, participation in social and college sport, sporting clubs, recreation programmes and inter-university sport. Capital works projects and major maintenance/upgrades of existing facilities have been suspended; and
- mild to moderate on other services with a reduction in funding for many clubs and societies, the closure of the Pot Belly Café, and cessation of marketing activities.

Overview of the Campus Services Organisations at USQ

USQ opened in 1967 as an Institute of Technology, later developed as a College of Advanced Education and was redesignated as a university in 1992. It now has more than 26,000 students from more than 100 countries and over 1400 staff.

International students make up over 30 per cent of the student population, and per capita, USQ is arguably the most multicultural university in Australia with more than 100 nationalities represented. About 75 per cent of students study off-campus either in Australia or their own country, which gives USQ the strength of a large university, but the on-campus closeness of a small university. However, this on-campus/off-campus ratio also reduces economies of scale in the provision of student services.

11. Impact at the In-depth Interview Universities

USQ has three campuses in Australia: in 2005 the EFTSL at the main campus at Toowoomba was 11,657, while the Fraser Coast Campus had 434 EFTSL, and the Springfield Campus had 3,267 EFTSL.²²⁷

The USQ Student Guild is established under the *University of Southern Queensland Act* as an incorporated body, with a Constitution approved by the University Council. It is governed by a Board of Directors comprised of two University nominees, one of whom is the Chair, six elected students and four non-students. The Board is responsible for the Governance and policy direction of the Guild on behalf of the members.

The Guild is the social, cultural and sporting centre of the University, providing a wide range of activities and services to all students of USQ. It has spent over \$8 million since 1996 on the construction, provision and fit out of campus sporting and recreational facilities for USQ students and staff. It is a non-profit organisation and receives the majority of its funds from the University. Other income is generated from its commercial trading areas. In 2006 the Guild's total income was of the order of \$6 million with an operating surplus of \$634,000.²²⁸

Overview of Impact on Amenities Fees and Subsequent Support Measures

Total Guild estimated income from membership fees across all USQ campuses in 2005 was \$1.783 million, based on a student membership fee for students in the 4350 postcode of \$45.10 per course, \$26.40 per course for other students resident in Australia and no fee for overseas students and students not residing in Australia. In 2006 membership income dropped to \$873,000, a reduction of \$910,000 or 49 per cent.

The Guild has entered into a three year funding and service agreement with the University which runs until the end of 2009 to allow it to continue to provide services to students, particularly in the areas of advocacy and representation. Details of the agreement have not been made public, nor is there any indication of what will occur once the term of the agreement expires, although it is anticipated that some funding assistance will continue. In the meantime the Guild will maintain a programme of recreational, cultural and sporting activities and continue its facility management.

USQ received VSU Transition Fund grants in the first round for the following campuses:

- Toowoomba - \$4.2 million for the redevelopment of outdoor sports facilities;

²²⁷ As at 18 February 2008 further background concerning the University of Southern Queensland could be obtained from the USQ web site at:

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

²²⁸ As at 18 February 2008 further background concerning the University of Southern Queensland Student Guild could be obtained from the Guild's web site at:

<http://www.studentguild.com.au/DisplayPage.aspx?GroupId=28585&ID=4042>

11. Impact at the In-depth Interview Universities

- Hervey Bay - \$200,000 for outdoor multi-use facilities; and
- Springfield - \$600,000 for outdoor practice facilities.

Following the introduction of VSU:

- the Guild continued with a membership model with no membership fee, but students are required to register to be members;
- efforts continued to find other sources of income (e.g. the TAFE students in town but the gym is already near capacity and the students are located 4-5 km from USQ which imposes a travel restriction); and
- the Guild reduced staff numbers by some 25 per cent and discontinued direct financial support for inter-university sport/university games.

Detailed Impact on USQ Student Guild

The Guild is an incorporated body. Its Board oversees its operations in the best interests of its members. Over the last 10 years the Guild has demonstrated that it can combine a strong culture of responsiveness to the needs of students and the USQ experience, with the ability to manage and operate facilities and commercial operations on sound business principles.

The Guild has spent over \$8m on modern facilities, such as the Clive Berghofer Recreation Centre, acquired ownership of a sports ground worth \$2.4m+, and has also been active in seeking alternative income streams; for example, it acquired a taxi licence and it operates vending machines throughout Toowoomba. It presently has reserves of around \$1m, although it is also making allowance for employee entitlements.

In anticipation of the introduction of VSU the Guild paid off or reduced borrowings it had made for capital improvements.

Its main facilities/services include:

- Clive Berghofer Recreation Centre containing:
 - fitness centre (the USQ Works)
 - concert venue
 - three international standard multipurpose courts

(built and equipped by the Guild in 1996, at a cost of \$8.5 million, on University land with no known formal tenancy agreement – 6,800m², estimated replacement cost \$18 million);

- Students Club – estimated at 700m²;
- Guild Offices – estimated at 300m²
- Refectory and associated spaces – estimated at 2,400m²

11. Impact at the In-depth Interview Universities

- Souths football field (with two club houses, owned by Guild – 2.5 hectares, purchased in 2003 for \$950,000);
- 3x3 tennis courts (three new courts built in 2005 for \$350,000, remainder in 1996 – total area 5,250m²);
- organisation of competitions and supervision of activities on:
 - the University ovals – four and one planned (8 hectares with 2 hectares planned),
 - rugby league ground (with clubhouse – included above), and
 - AFL/cricket oval (with clubhouse – included above);
- social sport;
- children's programmes;
- support for many social, cultural and sporting clubs and societies;
- legal service (free);
- taxation advice;
- academic advice;
- student assistance;
- counselling;
- security bus;
- ID cards (University ID cards are produced and paid for by the Guild);
- accident and death insurance cover;
- commercial tenancies (physiotherapist, massage therapist, office spaces for various sporting organisations);
- website (\$100,000 budget - \$40,000 for website, \$40,000 to University to maintain computers and access, \$20,000 to replace computers);
- second hand textbook exchange;
- binding, laminating, facsimile access;
- lost property;
- lockers;
- food and beverage outlets:
 - Fast n Fresh Refectory,
 - Coffee Club,
 - Central Bean, and
 - USQ Club;
- Fraser Coast Campus:
 - no sports infrastructure but the Guild has an agreement with the local PCYC for gym membership,
 - provision of a part-time staff member,

11. Impact at the In-depth Interview Universities

- other Guild services such as appeals and grievances, legal support, etc via website;
- Springfield Campus:
 - provision of sporting equipment,
 - provision of staff member shared with University, and
 - other Guild services such as appeals and grievances, legal support, etc via website.

The main negative impacts of VSU have been:

- under pressure to use reserves for operating expenses;
- staff reductions through redundancies and resignations (5 out of 20 “frontline” staff - not counting the casuals associated with catering etc) and on-going uncertainty for the remaining staff about their future. In the process the number of students employed reduced from 25 to 5 per cent;
- loss of \$910,000 in ASF income;
- need to protect staff entitlements in an uncertain future;
- suspension of much needed upgrading (e.g. the suspended floor in the Clive Berghofer Centre);
- cancellation of capital programmes for improving facilities offered (e.g. aquatic centre);
- reduction in involvement in Orientation Week;
- reduction of services and closure of some facilities has encouraged students to go into town for entertainment where they then access other services (businesses in town have been quick to target students with special deals);
- sporting scholarships for elite athletes worth about \$15,000 discontinued in 2007;
- reduction in funding for inter-university sport/university games and championships from \$35,000 in 2005 to nil in 2007;
- reduction in athletes attending inter-university sport/university games and championships from 300 in 2005 to 120 in 2007;
- reduction in the number of clubs and financial support from \$10,000 to nil; and
- marketing and communications to students downgraded (lost - magazines, supplement in local newspaper, student diary, student handbook, wall planner).

The main positive impact of VSU has been that the Guild has developed a closer relationship with the University. Considerations for the future are:

11. Impact at the In-depth Interview Universities

- capital funds will be required for major maintenance, upgrading and/or replacement;
- negotiations with the University on the Clive Berghofer Centre and its equipment;
- negotiations with the University on the sale of the Souths Football Field (sale/transfer to the University as part of an on-going relationship versus a commercial sale to a developer);
- negotiations with the University on the services to be maintained and the funding and service agreement to take effect after 2009;
- development of a wider range of services and facilities to increase the use of facilities in non-core time (e.g. a crèche in the Clive Berghofer Centre);
- changes in student behaviour (spending less time on campus, becoming less involved);
- development of programmes to draw on the local community (for example Kids Active Programme);
- possible further reductions in the range and quality of services offered; and
- community expectations of access to a range of facilities and services from a “local” organisation and community member.