



MEDIA RELEASE

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SHADOW SPORTS MINISTER MEETS TO PRESERVE UNIVERSITY SPORT

Australian University Sport officials today met with the Federal Shadow Minister for Sport and Recreation, Alan Griffin MP, to discuss the preservation of university sport in light of the Government's Voluntary Student Unionism (VSU) push.

The introduction of VSU legislation will have a catastrophic effect on more than 450,000 students and community members who utilise university sporting clubs and facilities.

Australian University Sport Chief Executive Officer, Daniel Marsden, said the estimated loss of over \$32million in funding from student fees contradicts the Federal Government's commitment to *building healthy and active Australia communities through sport*.

"Not only will the loss in funding mean an instant and irreversible erosion of sporting activity on campuses, but it represents a huge blow to community health at a time when it is reputedly a focus of Howard Government policy.

"How does Mr Howard explain this legislation when last year the Government's sports funding vehicle, the Australian Sports Commission, approached all universities asking that we sign on to their Athlete Friendly University Network?" questioned Marsden.

In today's meeting, Mr Griffin, reinforced the Shadow Ministry's discontent toward the legislation and its impact on sporting infrastructure in universities.

"The Government has clearly not thought about the ramifications of this legislation on sport at universities or the effect on the wider community. It will have a major impact on both sporting infrastructure and participation rates," Mr Griffin said.

"The Government in pushing through its ideological agenda will cause the demise of university sport as we know it."

Incoming National Party Senator-Elect Barnaby Joyce said that although he does not agree in compulsory unionism he does believe that a fee must be levied on all students for the support of the sporting infrastructure.



The full university experience includes a healthy mind and a healthy body and social interaction is facilitated through sporting activities. Senator Elect Joyce believes that the Minister will be open to managing this issue so as not to reduce the universities' capacity to engage its student body in sporting activities.

"Sport in universities is the best means for different social groups to interact and contribute to a common goal, whilst extending social boundaries. A university is both the buildings and the fields,"

"Restricting the current funding of university sport and sporting facilities could restrict students from extending beyond their studies and creating a positive dimension to theirs and university's life. For many university is one of the first serious involvements they have in sport and it is a great catalyst for them to have a greater participation in other community projects in later life" said Mr Joyce, a former rugby union representative for the University of New England.

ENDS

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