

# Services fee defeated

*“This is a very sad day for university sport”*

The Liberal National Coalition has combined with Family First senator Steve Fielding to defeat a bill that would have seen university students pay \$250 a year to help fund campus services.

The defeat of the legislation, worth more than \$170 million a year, would have helped to pay for sport, health, counselling, child care and other services hit by the Howard government’s introduction of voluntary student unionism.

The Rudd government said its proposed change did not amount to compulsory student unionism because the fees could not be used for

political purposes.

National Union of Students national president David Barrow warned the bill’s defeat in the Senate would lead to a decline of services on campus.

Universities will be unable to start charging the fee next January unless the legislation is passed by September 14, which will put pressure on the federal government to speed the delivery of promised new budget funding to the sector.

Minister for Youth Kate Ellis said the Coalition had delivered a blow to students but the government remained committed to rebuilding services on campus.

Universities Australia chief executive Glenn Withers warned the sector was having to eat into funds for teaching and research to cover the costs of student services.

“Students most in need will suffer the most from the failure of this legislation to pass the Senate. Without proper support for student-sensitive services such as advocacy, counselling, health, and legal support, students from lower socio-economic backgrounds are particularly vulnerable to dropping out of university studies should they face significant up-front costs in accessing these services,” he said.

Don Knapp, chief of Australian University Sport, accused the Coalition of “deliberate distortion” in opposing the bill.

“This is a very sad day for university sport as a key contributor to community health and fitness and a breeding ground for national and international athletes,” he said.



## Learning all things Aussie

Hawthorn Football Club’s Michael Nguyen (pictured left) introduces Swinburne international students Arthi Rajagoplan (middle) and Abbas Rajagopalan (right) to Aussie Rules football as part of a workshop preparing them for the Australian job market. As well as teaching the students about the rules of the game, Nguyen gave them a chance to learn how to handball and kick a football.

“I work with a lot of people who are new to Australia and one of the best ways to introduce them to Australian culture is through football,” he said.

“Things such as learning about the game and picking a team to barrack for can really help international students become part of Australian society.”

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