



PARLIAMENT OF AUSTRALIA
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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Media Release

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Windsor welcomes VSU Amendment support from Barnaby

Attached is a copy of a story in the Canberra Times from last Saturday June 25 2005 written by Andrew Fraser with comments from National Party Senator elect, Barnaby Joyce about the Voluntary Student Unionism Bill currently before the Federal Parliament to which Mr Windsor has tabled an Amendment.

The Bill will be debated on the return of the Parliament in August.

“Mr Joyce has committed himself yesterday (Friday) to supporting Mr Windsor’s Bill, which would quarantine the political aspects of student unionism from the many services provided by student union fees” according to the Canberra Times story.

“I welcome Mr Joyce’s public support for my amendment and look forward to a positive outcome on this issue,” Mr Windsor said.



Govt faces split over student union plan

By Andrew Fraser
Political Correspondent

The Federal Government faces a split over voluntary student unionism, with incoming Nationals senator Barnaby Joyce committing himself to amending Education Minister Brendan Nelson's Bill.

Senator-elect Joyce's declaration of support for the amendments of Independent MP Tony Windsor means the Government will not have a straight Senate majority on the Bill when it comes before Parliament in August.

However, the Opposition, which has vehemently opposed Dr Nelson's plan to end compulsory student unionism, does not support the Windsor amendments either.

Mr Joyce committed himself yesterday to supporting Mr Windsor's Bill, which would quarantine the political aspects of student unionism from the many services provided by student union fees.

Like Dr Nelson, Mr Windsor believes students should choose to be union members and join their political campaigns if they want to, but he maintains that the many services currently provided by student unions must continue to be properly funded.

Mr Joyce said Mr Windsor's Bill

reflected the policy of the Victorian and NSW branches of the Nationals and he expected the federal Nationals to endorse it too.

"I've spent a lot of time talking about that just in that brief time I was in Canberra [this week] and I think we're starting to get a bit of movement on that," he said.

While "no one" wanted compulsory unionism, "we've got to get out and provide universities with the ability to support their sporting facilities . . .

"As a senator, I'm there to represent my state. So when the National Party in Queensland gets on-side with it, and I hope they do, then off we'll go. It's two separate issues. I think everybody is pretty clear about that."

Mr Windsor's amendments were tabled in the House of Representatives late on Thursday night, leaving him six weeks to push his case before Parliament resumes after the winter recess.

The New England MP said he had been very pleased with the "overwhelming constructive and supportive responses from universities across Australia".

Mr Windsor's amendments would

ensure that a "higher education provider must not require a person to be or to become a member of an organisation of students" and pay its fees unless the provider had "established a fund to be applied by or on behalf of the university towards academic support, academic advocacy and international student services, student welfare, cultural sporting, health, and artistic purposes".

Mr Windsor includes student newspapers among those purposes.

Labor's education spokeswoman, Jenny Macklin, said Mr Windsor's amendment was well-intentioned but pointed out that some student services were hard to define, citing non-academic student advocacy.

These could still fall through the gaps and be shut down. "Prescribing a limited number of students' services is not the answer to the Howard Government's attack on university campuses.

"Labor supports the current arrangements where individual campuses can assess and determine what student services are needed for different student bodies."