



Sharon Grierson MP
Federal Member for Newcastle



28 April 2005

NATIONAL DAY OF ACTION TO DEFEND STUDENT SERVICES

Federal Member for Newcastle, Sharon Grierson, today supported the National Day of Action to protest against the Howard Government's plan to cut essential services at the University of Newcastle.

The Government's legislation to end automatic membership of student organisations will threaten services such as childcare, health facilities, food subsidies, entertainment and events, sporting and cultural clubs, accommodation advice, and counselling and student support.

The University of Newcastle's student organisations are a vital part of campus life, and without the wide range of services they provide many students would be unable to complete their degrees.

The Howard Government has ripped \$120 million in funding out of the University of Newcastle since 1996, and it simply will not have the money to replace these services.

This is an ideologically driven push by a Government intent on destroying a collective funding arrangement which has served students well for many years. Although every student does not use every service made available by their fees, automatic membership means those services are available should they be needed.

This is the simple principle upon which our taxation system has rested throughout Australia's history - individuals contributing so that the whole may benefit. The Howard Government's 'survival of the richest' approach is as much an attack on this principle as it is an attack on student services.

It also means that the people who provide those services will no longer have jobs. The University of Newcastle is one of our biggest employers, often providing part-time work for struggling students and young people, and cuts to student services will mean cuts to job opportunities for these people.

On this National Day of Action the Government must rethink its plan to destroy student services and gut a vital part of the Newcastle community.

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