



### **Student Services Levy Report and Proposals**

This report summarises the results from the Student Services Levy survey, and AUSA's recommendations for the setting and allocation of the Compulsory Student Services Fee in 2018. In making these recommendations we have drawn on the responses from the 1003 students who filled out the survey jointly run by the University of Auckland and AUSA.

### **Survey Results**

The survey was divided into three main questions. How important services were to students personally, to the student community, and whether some services should be prioritised more, less, or about the same.

There were four particularly clear and consistent results from the survey. First, that Health and Counselling was important and should be prioritised more. 70% of respondents thought Health and Counselling should be prioritised more, 73% thought it was important to them personally, and 47% considered it important to the student

body generally. These responses were significantly more decisive than any other service offered through the levy. In addition, a number of comments highlighted long wait times, underfunded counselling services that do not meet demand from students, and the need for greater support for students suffering with mental health illnesses.

The second clear response was that chapel and prayer services should be prioritised less. 47% of recipients considered they should be prioritised less, and another 47% considered they should be prioritised about the same. Further, while 7% of recipients considered these spaces to be important to them personally, but a small majority thought they were important for the wider student body. It is important to note that this survey is not necessarily representative of the wider student body: chapel and prayer services are important for many students who may not have filled out this survey. Additionally, chapel and prayer services is one of the services funded the least under the CSSF, at \$157,000.

The third consistent response was the need to rationalise the distribution of funding between faculties. In the comments section of the survey, a large number of students were concerned about the fairness of faculty funding, particularly from CAI, Science, and Arts.

The fourth common response was the need for more student study spaces, and the protection of libraries and specialist resources.

These four clear responses were the most decisive. However, in addition to these, students wanted to see a greater prioritisation of:

- Sport and recreation (34%);
- CDES (30%);
- Advocacy (27%);
- Pastoral care (26%); and
- Clubs (25%).

The only service where a majority of students wanted a lower prioritisation was for Chapel and Prayer services (47%).

## Proposals

### a) Prioritise and make improvements to University Health and Counselling

The clearest priority from the survey was improving health and counselling. This trend has been seen over a number of years, with students consistently rating this as the highest priority service funded under the levy. In light of this, we suggest:

- Freeing up resources within Health and Counselling by:
  - allowing some aegrotat and compassionate consideration processes to be dealt with through faculties;
  - reducing the current number of 'no show' appointments.
- Better meeting demand for health and counselling services. Particularly, we are concerned about low to medium priority students' accessibility to these

services, as many students still report long wait times.

- Focusing on developing resources and staffing capacity who focus on prevention, to help students before problems manifest themselves more seriously. For example, the expansion and better promotion of initial and group counselling sessions that students can access before seeing a clinical psychologist.

### b) Increase funding for AUSA welfare services

In addition to health and counselling services, students considered pastoral care and advocacy as areas that are important and could be better prioritised. In response to this, we propose a \$40,000 increase in funding AUSA's welfare support services.

AUSA's welfare services provide important pastoral and economic support to students in need. These services include providing food bags, hardship grants, textbook grants, dental grants, as well as special spaces and support people for marginalised and minority groups on campus. However, demand has been outstripping supply for these services. For example, in the last six years, the number of hardship grants awarded has increased by 200%. All our services are student-run, but increases in student demand is stretching our capacity to provide and grow these services as student volunteers and executive members who change office every year.

Better funding for our welfare services directly responds to a number of needs highlighted by the Student Services Levy survey. With this money, we will:

- Grow the number and quality of welfare services on offer to students.
- Focus more on running events and initiatives to help and raise awareness of mental health such as the Wellness Week that will be running for the first time in week 7;
- Free up resources to be able to hire a staff member from our budget-line who will focus on welfare. Their role will have an administrative and events focus. This will enable the grants schemes to be processed more efficiently and with more consistency from year to year;
- Better support the student leaders currently running welfare, and allow them to focus more on growing welfare programs, and supporting and engaging students than completing burdensome administrative tasks.

### **c) Increase funding for AUSA Advocacy**

72% of students considered that student advocacy was important to the student body, and it was ranked fourth as the service that needed to be better prioritised.

We are proposing to fund two extra streams within AUSA's Advocacy branch. First, we want to put an additional \$15,000 into AUSA Advocacy. AUSA Advocacy provides free, confidential support and advice to students on issues ranging from tenancy disputes, disciplinary actions from the

University, and issues students have with their courses or programmes. It is run by two student leaders who work part-time, and our long-serving Advocacy Manager, Denise Lazelle. Over the last few years, demand has markedly increased for this service - which is mainly run by volunteers. The number of cases heard by the 18-person office in semester one was up 35% from what it heard over the same period in 2016. Greater funding will assist the Advocacy Office to continue increasing, and better support its volunteers.

Second, we would like to increase funding into our Class Representatives system. The quality and scale of the class representative system is growing. This year, AUSA worked with the University to make changes to the Class Representation Policy and Guidelines. We have increased the numbers and quality of our trainings, created new resources for class reps, and are better supporting class reps when they have complaints or issues with their classes. However, we see there is still room for growth. We would like to increase the hours of our class representation coordinator, and allow them to spend more time in the education policy space supporting the Education Vice-President, and class reps facing challenges in their class. This is important, but only possible through additional funding.

Together, we are proposing a \$30,000 increase for advocacy funding. This will be split evenly between AUSA Advocacy and Class Reps.

#### **d) Increase the number of student study spaces on campus**

Although the provision of study spaces is not decided by the allocation of CSSF money, a common issue raised by students was the importance of student study spaces and libraries. Many students thought Libraries and Learning Services should be better funded to provide this, that more study spaces should be created, and unsurprisingly, that the CAI libraries should not be closed.

We suggest that the University prioritises providing study spaces to students, especially those whose libraries have recently closed.

In particular, we ask that:

- Students are involved and have a voice in the reconfiguration of the General Libraries;
- In the short term, old library spaces are turned into student study spaces;
- In the long term:
  - the Gateway building includes spaces for students to study;
  - the University partners with AUSA to develop a strategy for the future of student spaces on campus.

#### **e) Assess and rationalise the balance of funding from the CSSF between faculties**

A common issue raised in the report was the imbalance of funding between faculties. In particular, the low level of

funding received by CAI was highlighted by students who were concerned about the higher levels of funding received by similarly sized faculties such as law.

We ask for a review and full break down in the division of faculty funding. This information is not well publicised, and it is not clear how decisions are made, and why faculty funding is distributed the way that it is. Faculty funding should be allocated fairly, based on the number of students and need rather than historical funding decisions.

#### **f) Rationalise the funding for chapel and prayer services**

The least supported service in the survey was expenditure on chapel and prayer services, with 47% of respondents favouring a lower prioritisation. In light of this, we ask for a rationalisation and breakdown of how this money is spent.

However, AUSA is not proposing to reduce the proportion of the levy spent on chapel and prayer services. These results have to be viewed within their context. Chapel and prayer services are a key component of pastoral care, which was considered by students as one of the most important services offered via the levy. Further, this survey is not fully representative. Chapel and prayer services are well used, and are important for a large number of students, particularly international students and minority groups. The University also has statutory obligations to provide spaces for some religious practices. Finally, Chapel and Prayer services currently have some of the lowest proportion of funding under the levy, with only \$157,000 allocated towards maintaining them.