



THE ANU OBSERVER

Meeting of The ANU Observer Board

Date: 8/4/20

Open of Meeting: 17:31

Item 1 - Attendance and Apologies

Present: Sam, Adelle, Tristan, Kon, Hayley, Angus

Absent:

Item 2 - Acknowledgement of Country

By Konstantinos

Item 3 - Previous Action Items

Item 4 - Reports

Chair Report: Konstantine Katsanis

We have been granted an extension from Access Canberra for our General Meeting. If we fail to acquire quorum, we still have until 30 June to hold a successful meeting. I still have not received any expression of interest for the two vacancies in the Arbitration Panel.

Moved by Adelle, seconded by Angus. Passes unanimously.

Finance Executive Report: Konstantine Katsanis

Allowances and Honoraria will be paid out this weekend. Congratulations to all recipients.

We are still to receive the amount the university owes us, but hopefully it will be coming through by the end of the week. Other than that, no expenses have taken place since the last report, however certain purchases, mostly for digital equipment, will be done before the end of the break.

I think we should start thinking about SSAF in the meantime. If content is going to be slowed down due to the virus over the next few weeks, it would be a good opportunity to start thinking about what Observer wants to get next year.

Kon: We are aiming to do most digital equipment purchasing by the end of this break.

Adelle: What equipment are we looking to get?

Kon: A bunch of stuff from last year, mostly live streaming equipment and hard drives.

Adelle: Why is it coming out of the office budget?

Kon: Best way to be justified is through the studio budget set up. There's plenty of money left in the office budget. It's going to be around \$300 at the most.

Adelle: Obviously office decoration is low priority at the moment but [it would still be good]

Moved by Adelle, seconded by Angus. Passes unanimously.

Secretary Report: Hayley Hands

This week we closed our survey and I collated/reviewed the responses. We will talk more about it during the discussion item but it seems there is a lot we can aim to improve on.

I received a response from Arbitration about the constitutional validity of a Zoom meeting and what will happen if we don't make quorum. Essentially due to the circumstances, as long as we make an effort to hold the meeting and follow the rest of the points in the Constitution we should be fine. Jason also personally contacted me offering to assist with any questions I have about the Secretary role. At time of writing this report I haven't written the agenda but it needs to be released tomorrow so hopefully it is released now(lol).

A reminder that reports for the General Meeting will be due at 7pm on the 14th of April. This is a hard cutoff and I will be marking any late submissions as such. They should be pretty detailed, have a look at the last General Meeting reports to get an idea of what you are supposed to write about. Please invite all of your ANU friends so we can make quorum.

As I mentioned in my Slack message, we cannot find the minutes for the last General Meeting anywhere. I have messaged Jason and Eliza to track these down but still haven't found them as of yet. It's really important we find them as we will need to pass them at this meeting.

Hayley: I put the survey results for discussion below. I also received a response from Arbitration asking about the validity of using Zoom. Jason said it would be fine if we put a good attempt. Reports due 5pm on 14th April. I also can't find the minutes for the last general meeting. May need to watch last year's livestream. Please everyone submit a report for the record. Make sure Anthony submits a report, as he didn't submit one today.

In general I feel that it is beneficial if the person who writes the report sits on the board.

Moved by Adelle, seconded by Sam. Passes unanimously.

Visual Content Executive Report: Tristan Khaw

No Report Received

Tristan: Since the last report not a lot has happened. We are making graphics. Charlie is currently interstate.

Adelle: The graphics have been really great.

Tristan: Yeah, they've taken on a bit more initiative in contacting the right person and posting in a certain way, it's been good.

Moved by Angus, seconded by Sam. Passes unanimously.

News Content Executive Report: Sam Wright

Received Late

Over the past week, we have had a large amount of COVID-19 related news and very little of anything else but this was to be expected. The campus wage theft articles will soon be drawn to a close but they have had a great response from students with some of our best traffic being related to these wage theft articles.

SRC 2 had its difficulties with the live blog not being posted until later on in the evening but all things considered I think everything ran relatively smoothly. Despite this, the amount of news team members who turned up for SRC 2 was fantastic and this gave everyone an opportunity to experience an SRC meeting.

I believe coordination with digital has improved and that Charlie and Amna specifically should be commended for their effort. Considering how difficult it is to talk amongst one another when our teams are spread out across several states, I think everyone has worked really well in ensuring that we are still using Slack channels and still having weekly meetings where applicable.

An area I think that us news editors should focus on is ensuring that reporters are all given equal opportunity to report on stories especially now that we have less of them. As Hayley pointed out to me on Monday, we also need to make sure we are continuing to use the Excel spreadsheet and keeping it updated.

Sam: Obviously this was a bit rushed. I am happy to write them in the future if that is easier, I'll take it as read.

Kon: You say something in the first sentence about COVID related news, is that meaning there was a lot that you covered or just that you [knew of].

Sam: Most of our news has been COVID related.

Adelle: Every article we have put out has been related to COVID. We haven't put a lot out because there hasn't been a lot of news.

Angus: Obviously this semester is going to be significantly less news, do you have plans for more explainers.

Sam: Work in progress, created a Slack channel which is a really good start.

Adelle: I might start assigning people [explainers]/

Tristan: Start them in the habit of writing articles, encouraging them to elaborate/keep a note of things they find when they're writing the article. For example if they're writing an ANUSA explainer, they should keep an eye on other [stupo] branches.

Hayley: How is the editor on duty going?

Adelle: It has been a call out who is available x day or night. It's less rigid in place, because not so much content.

Hayley: Cause of the less news, how do you determine to have an equal workload.

Adelle:

Hayley: Article assignment to reporters, I feel like some reporters may haven't had a chance to have a go with some articles, but some others had the opportunity to get more. Anything to be done?

Adelle: Keeley has gotten a lot of articles because she started on the thing, that may not be ideal. Some people don't come to news meetings, and I don't think it's fair to wait around for people not coming to the meeting to say yes or no and the people coming not to take an article.

Tristan: Just a question, is there any particular reason why we couldn't move the time of the news meeting?

Adelle: It's not that they can't make it, it's that they forgot.

Tristan: Yeah, and that's not much of an excuse.

Sam: I was in contact with Maddy, she will try and make it to the next news meeting.

Tristan: One thing for me in getting our meetings regular was contacting members over FB, contacting them the day of [in case they hadn't seen Slack] and encouraged them to set up their Google Calendar to set reminders [at varying times] to [remind them].

Sam: My only issue with FB messaging is maintaining a bit of a work/life boundary. I don't want to be popping up in people's FB inbox.

Tristan: Like I said, it was just at the start to get them used to the idea of checking Slack. For digital, stuff like breaking news sometimes doesn't matter to us. I was super apologetic but [needed to remind them to check Slack].

Moved by Tristan, seconded by Hayley. Passes unanimously.

Web Administrator Report: Angus Brooks

My main priority since my last report is investigating a future new website for ANU Observer. It is becoming increasingly apparent that the ANU Observer website is in need of an upgrade. As Observer grows our infrastructure needs improving in order to be able to keep up.

Recently, our website has been crashing when put under high load. I monitored the website closely during both SRC 1 and SRC 2, and significant technical issues were encountered on both occasions due to the demanding nature of rapid site updates, and the demand on users accessing the website, and constantly refreshing for updates. Whilst the SRC liveblogs appear to be the biggest issue at the moment, they are certainly not the only one - with crashes reported on numerous occasions outside of SRC.

I have been investigating solutions to this issue and have a vision for a fix. This will be discussed in more detail during the board meeting. This will come at a cost - it will not be a lot but I am keen to discuss in more detail further in the meeting.

Kon: So, obviously you have postponed your plans to get an [assistant] to pass knowledge down, do you think you will start from like term 3?

Angus: I do really want to get another person on. I mean I could do it digitally but it's probably easiest if we wait for term 3.

Moved by Sam, seconded by Tristan. Passes unanimously.

Item 5 - Items for Decision

Item 6 - Items for Discussion

6.1 Survey Results/Internal Survey (Appendix A)

Hayley: Hopefully there will be some things we can work on. Let's talk about q3: breaking graphics and catch ups; way too many. Good feedback for digital. 5 people said that stupid stories are their favourite.

Tristan: Bias towards it probs. Attracting these kinds of people.

Hayley: Would be good if everyone send me questions for an internal survey. Good to get feedback from the team.

Kon: It was literally 5 people, that's obviously a very small number but a lot of the time we don't get many to respond. However, I think you have a number of people who just want to screw around with the survey result. I think the reliance on breaking graphics and catch ups in general. I'm not relying on the survey results but from what I've heard from talking to people.

6.2 Content Output and SSAF

Kon: For this point I don't want this to be a discussion, I would like to say a few things for a few minutes and not really be interrupted. I think it's a really important one. The bidding for SSAF will occur next semester, we don't know if it has been affected by COVID, but we should start thinking about it a little bit. Just to give a bit of background, Observer has this year received its largest pool which is like \$8000 more than last year which is really good. The uni really likes what we're doing, part of the reason we received that was because we didn't receive money for the digital editors role. They didn't think that was the case. Anyway, my point is though that we need to maintain that amount and increase the [bid] a little bit.

Probably following the same approach as last year, however as I mentioned before I have noticed there has been a slow down in content output. We have set a goal of releasing 3 articles a week although we don't achieve that every week. Although we have exceptional circumstances at the moment, during the break there was a week where we didn't release a single article. I think this has been going on for a while that generally I want to express some of my concerns is that we have set a goal of three when... We need to be able to justify our SSAF bid in that our content is timely and accurate.

I have been with 3 teams from 2018 to now, and I think there was more content coming out in the past. I know we had 5 editors in 2018 but now we have set a goal of 3 articles a week when we have 4 editors. This means one of the editors is [maybe doing something else] but it's not an article per editor which would be ideal. I have also noticed that there have been stories that are getting released days later than when they have been announced. I have received feedback that [we are not being timely in our reporting]. I'm not considering what they're saying to be 100% the truth because there are many other factors. We have 4 editors, a lot of reporters, more than we've had before. And yes, we are in this really bad situation but it's not a problem that just started a couple of weeks ago or a month ago, I think even last year many people had concerns about how much content/how quickly we're getting it out. In the past, content has been released on the day. We should think about whether it would be fine to publish an article [on the day] or to wait. Everyone knew the story by the next day and people may not be interested. Is there a way to be faster in the content we are producing. Is there a system we can put in place to get it out quicker. If we are having trouble with requesting comment from certain bodies, is there a way the Board can interfere and talk to them? There should be a way to get things out even if the articles are shorter. People want to read about something happening... Canberra Times and New Yorker report on the same things, one covering a story before the other does not mean we [don't cover the issue].

Tristan: So that it doesn't sound like Kon is ragging on news team, I think we all agree that there has been trouble with hiring people and editors. Sam and Bec are new, so for a while we were running with 2 editors. Communication has improved a lot. I just wanted to add that the role of the KPIs should be that it will allow us to track these things so that it doesn't sound like [grudges are being held] and the Board can look at KPIs and judge whether we are up to standard. I think some of the things that might help are integrating the systems we've made. For example,

delayed comments are sometimes genuine and sometimes because things get lost and where people are up to [in reporting]. In meetings with the editors there has been a concerning trend where deadlines are being pushed back.

Sam: Although I was a little... I saw that other media beat us to articles about privacy concerns, I feel like when Kon said if two media organisations cover something it is an important point for us to remember that we can still publish articles even if others have beaten us to it. In addition, I believe [more information] will make articles better. Unfortunately, commenters were a bit slow but I don't have any suggestions.

Adelle: I have a list of things I want to go through. The reality is that yes we have a lot of reporters but they are untrained and we cannot give them a same day deadline. I had to give myself contributing reporting credits on several articles this semester because of my contributions. ANU Media have not [liked us giving same day deadlines]. I would love if we could have articles first and articles that are better but it means nothing if people don't [click on our articles because they think we have the full story]. Up until this week, there was only one article that I didn't [do an edit on], I don't have the capacity to do the equivalent of 4 people's jobs.

Tristan: Just wanted to check if there is anything digital can help to support your team or that we can do as an organisation to help support. We're not in a position to judge, so what can we do to help support you through this problem? What actions could we take to help get through? To add to this, the SSAF stuff, we always have to deal with the fact that we have direct competitors but we should not have our only barrier being that we are better than them; they aren't our standard. I have a feeling this content slowdown might be questioned at the General Meeting. It might be a good idea for us to have reasons as well as solutions to our problems.

Kon: Before we move on, I just want to express how we can help each other in this situation. Just to wrap it up with the SSAF thing, it's because we need to be able to justify when questioned by different organisations. For everyone else, it can be [a stressful process] we need to be able to defend what we've done and show what we're doing.

Angus: When it comes time to SSAF, all the competing organisations will be in the same boat as us. Other organisations are at reduced capacities. I don't think it's going to be... everyone will be understanding.

Kon: It will definitely be different considering the circumstances this year, it is something good to [keep in mind].

6.3 KPIs

Hayley: Given the circumstances, I just wanted to see if teams wanted to review their KPIs as we are working in a reduced capacity.

Tristan: Currently we don't have anything to cover. I don't think there is anything worth tracking that will give us good data.

Adelle: We will probably need to and may be worth discussing with the rest of the team.

6.4 Third News person sitting on the board

Kon: We mentioned briefly earlier on that it would be good for the person who writes the report to sit on the board. Also because we have 3 executive teams, having another news editor would give them [more equal representation]. I think when we approved Bec for instance, she was not interested in [being on the Board]. But, I think it would be good if we had 3 people because we have 3 executives.

Adelle I don't have strong feelings on this.

Angus: Would we consider putting someone on Visual Team?

Hayley: We can't do that.

Recall actionable.

6.5 Officers use of Social Media

6.6 Website Overhaul and IT upgrades

Angus: So as you know I had plans for an upgrade for a while. Recently and throughout this year, particularly during SRCs there has been issues with the site crashing. I have noticed that this is because the site can't handle all the edits being made, the constant refreshing from people on the blog etc. I am keen to [improve this] as soon as I can. The issue is that I have a budget of \$0 for this.

Kon: We have the misc. Budget which is like \$400 for random stuff or incase we need to buy something extra. I think we have only \$310ish left(?)

Angus: I don't have an exact cost but I have my eye on a piece of software which is just under \$60 USD and is a one off purchase. We will also need around an extra \$5 a month to increase server capacity.

Kon: Tell me how much and the annual cost, so we can buy the software from the misc. Digital budget. To clarify for Tristan the microphones can come out of the office fitout budget because we are getting the money we didn't receive last year.

Tristan: I have a concern as a board member that we are mixing the categories. We need to have an actual look at the finances before we commit to anything, even if we have to reduce spending on the microphones. I want to ensure we stay above board. Some sort of financial review of the budget to ensure transparency.

Kon: I can prepare something like that but personally if the money is going to be below \$300 it should be fine for this year. I will prepare a document about the expenses made so far.

Angus: So we are allowed to mix the categories?

Kon: It should be fine coming from digital but ideally it should be coming out of subscriptions or software.

Tristan: So we had a bunch of stuff that was overbudget or not budgeted for and that's all I've been hearing, I haven't heard of things being underbudget or undercost so I want to have a proper look at this. I am happy if instead we choose cheaper alternatives in the mean time.

6.7 Provision of information as requested by Arbitration

Adelle: We should credit visual graphics anyway.

Tristan: I think on that that the byline is most important, contributing stuff like graphics can be down the bottom. On your thing, I think it would be best if we didn't give them the tracker but instead a redacted list. To extend onto that I prepared that Google sheet with stat tracking.

Kon: I just thought that it would also be good for the Board to have information about who is doing what. I found myself not knowing what reporter to nominate for Honoraria so I have a tendency to not be able to say that X reporter can get this amount, but I may also want to have some information about it. The secretary this year happens to be in the news team but other times we cannot expect this [to be the case].

Tristan: I think the way the system I envisioned would work is that one table would be a dump so anything that you hear you put into the table, and the event tracker would be the relevant information that is available to people. I can have a look at [doing that].

Recall actionable: Tristan

6.8 Stakeholder Relationships [Request for Confidential Discussion]

Moved by Hayley, seconded by Tristan. Passes unanimously.

Item 7 - Other Business

7.1 Team Vibe Check

Item 8 - Recall Actionables

- **Third person on Board.**
- **Tristan spreadsheet for Arbitration.**

Meeting closed at 19:10

Appendix A

Observer Survey (5 Respondents)

Q1. Which of these are you?

- Current Undergraduate Student (4/80%)
- Current Postgraduate Student (1/20%)
- Former Student
- ANU Staff
- Other

Q2. Overall how satisfied or dissatisfied are you with ANU Observer this year?

- Very satisfied
- Somewhat satisfied (1/20%)
- Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied (3/60%)
- Somewhat dissatisfied
- Very dissatisfied (1/20%)

Q3. What are your biggest criticisms of ANU Observer this year?

- Could be faster
- Too many breaking graphics without follow up stories
- Seems to be a bigger focus on weekly wrap ups rather than news when it happens this year
- Poorly edited, heavily rushed and overwhelmingly biased

Q4. Which of the following words would you use to describe ANU Observer's news content?

- Reliable (2)
- High Quality (2)
- Useful (3)
- Timely (1)
- Accurate (2)
- Factual (3)
- Biased (1)
- Boring
- Poor Quality (1)
- Unreliable

Q5. Which of the following words would you use to describe ANU Observer's visual content? (2 skipped)

- Reliable (1)
- High Quality (1)
- Useful (1)
- Relevant
- Diverse (1)
- Appropriate
- Consistent (1)
- Irrelevant
- Poor Quality (1)
- Unreliable

Q6. What would you like to see from ANU Observer's website in the future?

- Categorise your articles by the author like we used to. It means people can use it as a portfolio in the future.
- More actual news stories

Q7. How responsive have we been to your questions or concerns about our content?

- Very responsive (1/20%)
- Not so responsive (1/20%)
- Not applicable (3/60%)

Q8. How often do you consume ANU Observer's content?

- 2+ times a week (1/20%)
- Once a week (4/80%)

Q9. What are your favourite/most useful types of content from us?

1. Student Politics stories (4)
2. Explainers (4)
3. Residential Stories (3)
4. Written catchups (3)
5. Academic College stories (3)
6. Campus stories (3)
7. Liveblogs (2)
8. Strikes/protest stories (2)
9. Analysis pieces (1)
10. Livestreams (1)
11. The term in photos (1)
12. Fortnightly 5 (0)

Q10. In what other ways could ANU Observer improve and what would you like us to do more of?

- I like your new videos, keep them up. You should try live interviews. I'm sure Lachy Day's ego would make it impossible for him to ignore an offer to do an interview on ANUSA's response to corona.
- Be more timely in your reporting
- Try and be more objective in your reporting and do more extensive research before publishing