



THE ANU OBSERVER

Meeting of The ANU Observer Board

Date: 29/4/20

Open of Meeting: 16:33

Item 1 - Attendance and Apologies

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

Absent:

Item 2 - Acknowledgement of Country

By Konstantinos

Item 3 - Previous Action Items

Item 4 - Reports

Chair Report: Konstantine Katsanis

The article published by Woroni obviously created a few concerns to us in regards to whether the fact that it was written by an ANU Staff would potentially influence the university's decision when it gives out SSAF next Semester. I contacted the Arbitration Panel and they requested for more specific questions. Due to some personal reasons, I had to delegate the task to our Secretary. I am not in the best state of mind at the moment, so I would prefer to deal with just the obligations of my role, which are Chair and Treasurer. Other than that, we held an OGM and we got quorum! It's probably good to think about what changes we want to pass in our next OGM. The changes have to be thoroughly thought and discussed. We want to minimise the number of times we need to amend our constitution and our regulations. It would ideally be good for the Observer to not make any amendments next year. To achieve that, we need to lay the foundations now. We do not need to pay for rent during the lockdown, because of the ANU Rent-Free Period to its commercial and retail tenants. That includes us. However, we've been charged for the first three months of the year, which are supposed to be covered, and I will see if we can get a refund.

Moved by Tristan, seconded by Angus. Passes unanimously.

Finance Executive Report: Konstantine Katsanis

No expenses made. We received the \$7,673.31 the University owed us and our current balance is \$28,839.48. I was supposed to work out a budget, but unfortunately the last few days haven't been great to do so. I hope by the next meeting I am going to have something ready. I would like to stress out that we have money for a Canberra Times subscription and emergency phone credit. I would like to see those

utilised before the end of the year and ideally before the SSAF period starts. The university will ask us what we have spent so far. I am expecting to make more expenses when the lockdown is over as a lot of the budget is going towards the office. Lastly, it would be ideal if people start thinking from now what we should bid for in the next SSAF round.

Moved by Tristan, seconded by Angus. Passes unanimously.

Secretary Report: Hayley Hands

I am going to also be using my report to voice a few concerns I have had recently, but some of this will be omitted from the public version. I apologise in advance for the negativity, but I feel it would be bad for the organisation to not have these discussions and try to find solutions. *Note: A few of these things have been addressed since writing this report, thank you for that!

Timeliness of Reports

Please message me if you know your report is going to be late or if you can't submit one, because I understand life gets in the way sometimes. Some people have done this and I am very appreciative, but I would be more appreciative if they were submitted on time.

Constitutional Change

I would appreciate it if people would message or consult me regarding Constitutional change mentioned in the Slack channels as it is a very difficult process, especially given our current situation. I don't agree with the changes that have been asked for, not for their substance but because I believe adding this material to our Constitution and then trying to pass it through ANU Council would be damaging to our reputation as an organisation. I am happy to discuss this further but please message me about it.

Jurisdictions

When it comes to questions of 'whose jurisdiction' a task is, please refer to the Team Regulations and Constitution. For example, with the tip off post, due to its relevance to the news team, it is a news job. Team leaders (e.g Editors, VCE, Executives) are responsible for relevant tasks such as updating training materials, keeping track of articles/graphics, putting up surveys/hiring posts, etc and it should essentially be the job of the Editors/VCE/Executive in charge of their respective team, or can be delegated to other Editors or Officers if necessary and if they want to. This is the primary reason I wrote the Role Overviews, which should guide (but not act as the be all end all) in making key responsibilities more clear.

Recalled Actionables and Additional Tasks

Recalled actionables are not being dealt with/communicated about between Board meetings which is stalling progress, people need to make sure they know what they are responsible for and have it completed as quickly as they are able. I feel like there are several things that I have had to bring up repeatedly often which are agreed to unanimously within Board meetings but for which there is no follow through.

I am happy to add anything I have discussed in General Business however I know I am repeating myself from the last meeting, so there may be things I have mentioned that are already being worked on and don't require further discussion.

Current and Future Plans

This week I worked on developing role overviews for all roles except Public Officer. They outline the expected time commitments and key tasks and responsibility of each Officer including the Executive

Editor role (which has never been properly defined) and Board Members. I would like these to be first passed by their respective teams as procedures as these are enforceable within their team. We can do this to see how they work and make necessary adjustments before potentially combining them into one policy. I would also like for them to be divided between the editors (3 each) to check for grammar/spelling errors before we pass them.

By next Board Meeting I intend to create a Handover Policy which will be a document that departing members are strongly encouraged to fill out in order for us to retain institutional memory.

Additionally(depending on how busy I get) I want to create a Risk Management policy and, if I receive KPIs from the news team, create a 'Vision' document similar to the ANU Sport example provided at the Governance training.

Also, Eliza recommended during our meeting at the start of the year that we develop a better conflict management/resolution policy in addition to our Code of Conduct which I intend on doing within the next few weeks.

Actionable: Editors to review Role Overview.

Moved by Tristan, seconded by Sam. Passes unanimously.

Visual Content Executive Report: Tristan Khaw

Visual Content Executive Report

Visual Team Report

Visual Team has suffered a drop in output and communication this week due to mid-semester exams. Unfortunately, my team members did not adequately communicate this to me before the week began, and many assignments were not covered or had to be covered by me.

In an attempt to remedy this, I called each of them individually to touch base. Hopefully, after the mid-semester crunch is over, normalcy will return.

Explainer Videos

During my conversation with Charlie, we discussed the idea of doing video-format Explainers as another form of content. The challenge is that it would have to be done almost entirely solo so as to avoid contravening the social distancing orders. Additionally, it would have to be Charlie presenting it as he has the equipment. Charlie said he would have a look at our explainers and see if inspiration strikes him. We would need to work together to develop a good, professional script.

Progress on Website and Graphic Development

As mentioned in the visual team report, we have encountered a stall in communications. Amna has been promising to deliver her templates to me however she has been delayed a lot. I do not want to push her too much as it was a stressful exam period for many of our members, however I will need to keep on top of it for this week.

Editorial Team Conflicts

With the understanding that everyone (myself included) has been under a lot of stress recently and that my own performance has been less than exemplary, I would like to state on the record that I am dissatisfied with the Editorial Team during this last period.

Firstly, I fear that we are reverting back to old habits with regards to inter-team communications. The article tracker has been a great help, however we must make sure that it is kept up to date on an ongoing basis. This is the responsibility of the Editorial Team as leaders and as the people responsible for the long term vision of the organisation. If deadlines are pushed back, it is important for the document to be updated to reflect that as soon as possible and the relevant people contacted.

As a follow on to the above, there have been multiple instances of assignments being delivered with insufficient time for my team to cover them. As much as possible, I have worked to ensure that all assignments with reasonable deadlines are covered by my team and, if necessary, by me.

On top of that, the lack of communication regarding deadlines and other stuff is coming back. Look, I understand that people are hard to contact during this period of time. However, I cannot hope to instill good time management habits in my team when neither they nor I know if the deadlines will be moved again.

Visual Team is happy to help share the burden, even if it is slightly outside our usual duties. But the onus is on the news team and their team leaders to ask us nicely.

Adelle: Just a couple of things, I was pretty absent for the last week or so, I have had a chat to Anthony about the jurisdictional thing. I brought it up on Monday and have let him know it isn't your jurisdiction. Another thing, would it be possible to do a backlog of very generic graphics? Obviously we haven't had the best communication but sometimes articles come up with [less than a day's notice].

Tristan: I am just waiting for an Officer to give me the new templates they've made. We have had an issue this week due to mid sems where people aren't doing what they're supposed to do. Other than that, once that template is done and for you as well Angus we can pass that on to the other teams.

Adelle: The article you refer to had been edited/re-edited a lot of times. I hadn't realised you had done that additional effort, it's just that usually that type of decision would not have fallen on visual at all.

Moved by Angus, seconded by Sam. Passes unanimously.

News Content Executive Report: Anthony Lotric

- Our Yurt article provided further evidence for my assessment that articles that people will link their friends to in the comments will do great numbers. Obviously, we should not artificially skew our content towards the lowest common denominator, or use click bait tactics. Nonetheless, we should capitalise on articles like this as much as possible when we get them, as they help us to expand our readership by drawing people in who are usually uninterested in Uni news and stu pol.

- Our more hard-hitting articles (Proctorio, Wage Theft), have also done quite well in terms of engagement and the number of people who reacted to them, although the number of actual unique readers was not much more than usual. Even so, these articles have a massive impact, and can (as we see in the SRC agenda), influence student politics from week to week.

- I have also been happy with our rolling coverage on COVID related developments (for instance the year 11 marks change, and the impact on exchange students etc.) It is certainly good that we have moved away from what was probably an overreliance on breaking graphics (an overreliance which, I will note, was understandable in the circumstances, when events were moving very quickly and many of us were in the process of moving, etc.).

- Our coverage on Proctorio has also been very strong, and we have avoided oversaturating readers by providing a different angle in some of those articles (for instance focusing on the use of the code of conduct by the Uni in the most recent one). In general, it is good for us to develop this editorial aptitude further, as there will be many cases where we have to do a number of articles on one issue while wanting to ensure that we are not just publishing monotonous updates. For example, we may well want to do more wage theft articles, but we need some narrative hook other than "here is some more wage theft! And some more wage theft! And even more wage theft over here!".

- Further to that thought, we need to make it clear in our constitution that Observer is student oriented, and that we should never act as a mouthpiece for the University. Obviously we can incorporate comments from Uni sources, but we need to ensure that anything we get from them is subjected to a critical lense. I can't think of an occasion while I have been at Observer when we have done this, but it is worth ensuring that it is made clear to future Observers. From what I can see, one of the major criticisms made about student media orgs is that they are co-opted by the University itself.

- We have had some issues with reporters and deadlines over the last few weeks. These issues have related both to time and day deadlines.

- With this all-in mind, we have to be ready to treat more open ended, investigative stories with more leniency regarding deadlines. While we still need to set them, and reporters should always give good reasons for breaking them, we can extend deadlines in these cases after they have been passed as there are often rolling developments, and usually more people that must be contacted.

- I have noticed that a number of our recent stories have had quite bland headlines. I have responded to this by asking my fellow editors and myself to workshop them as much as possible in the editorial board channel. Better headlines are crucial for boosting engagement on individual posts. As an example, look at the headline of our recent ANU confessions article: ANU CONFESSIONS RETURNS FOLLOWING CRITICISM OVER CONTROVERSIAL POST. It didn't specify the specific controversy, which I suspect created a sense of *click here to hear more* for Schmidtposting browsers. It also has a dynamic, action-oriented feel, as it cites a "return" which happened after "criticism" which was directed at a specific post

- On the morning of the day that this report is read, Bec and Myself will be meeting with the VP and head of engagement of PARSA. This is to address the fact that we have, admittedly, been not as good at our coverage of postgraduate affairs and politics as we could be. Resolving this issue should be relatively simple, as we are always looking for more news we can cover, and this provides another avenue through

which we can receive it. There has also been some uncertainty as to whether or not we are on their mailing list, which I will also try to resolve.

-It has simply been the case that the news that has come across our desk as editors during this crisis has been far more critical of the University than ANUSA. We should, however, ensure that we are not missing such news because of this likely temporary shift in the landscape of student politics.

Sam: We did decide, I thought Anthony and I were going to have a joint report but that didn't seem to happen. I did ask for a copy to be sent to me but I didn't get sent one except by Hayley. There are a few highlights, our Proctorio articles have been awesome, the Yurt was a breath of fresh air. Congrats to Hayley on the PARSAs explainer. Obviously as Tristan pointed out in his report, I don't think it is covered as extensively [in ours], there are some issues that I think we can all recognise in communication between visual and news team.

Kon: I would like to ask if you guys had a discussion about whether a third person will sit on board.

Adelle: We decided no.

Hayley: Who will take over your spot on the Board?

Adelle: One of the newer editors.

Tristan: If quite a few editors are leaving soon, is anyone being trained?

Moved by Tristan, seconded by Angus. Passes unanimously.

Web Executive Report: Angus Brooks

Since the last meeting of the Board I have been focused almost entirely on the new Observer website, which will have been launched by the time of this board meeting. There will no doubt be some glitches that will need to be resolved - or adjustments that need to be made to better suit Observer - and therefore would be very keen to hear about possible improvements that can be made to the new site. Thank you to team executives for their feedback so far - I would love to get more feedback from other Observer officers or other members of Observer/the ANU community. Feel free to email me with any feedback that you may have for the site - angus@anuobserver.org - particularly about any glitches or things that are broken. My next big 'project' for Observer will be to redo the Google Drive and hopefully make it more functional and useful for our teams

Kon: When I went on the website, are we supposed to be able to click the scrolling icons. But they didn't work? Also for the Google Drive, I rearranged it last year so there's probably some things [I can help with].

Moved by Tristan, seconded by Adelle. Passes unanimously.

Item 5 - Items for Decision

Item 6 - Items for Discussion

6.1 Role Overview Documents

Adelle: I think with the Editor one it referred to itself.

6.2 Performance (Confidential Item)

6.3 Proctorio article and Arbitration (Confidential Item)

Item 7 - Other Business

Item 8 - Recall Actionables

Meeting closed at 17:17