



THE ANU OBSERVER

Meeting of The ANU Observer Board

Date: 05/11/21

Opening of Meeting: 18:15pm

Item 1 - Attendance and Apologies

Present: Konstantinos Katsanis (Chair)

Angus Brooks (director)

Sung-Jae Lee (director)

Declan Milton (director)

Alex Ellwood (director)

Joseph Oh (director)

Ali El-Zein (director)

Keeley Dickinson (director)

Absent:

Item 2 - Acknowledgement of Country

Delivered by Konstantine.

Item 3 - Previous Action Items

Konstantine - Talk to Anastasia about SSAF and other process regarding our position as a student organisation.

We received a letter from the university regarding SSAF last week, so I did not contact her earlier, but I sent an email to the Director of University Experience, James Brann. No response yet, and might not hear back anytime soon. Because of that delay I contacted Anastasia on Friday.

Item 4 - Reports

Chair Report: Konstantinos Katsanis

The past few weeks have been mostly dealing with SSAF. ANUSA, PARSA, Woroni, and Observer all met up to discuss concerns regarding the distribution of funds by the university to ANU-led organisations. That consists of a pool of about \$500,000. We decided to draft an open letter and send it to the ANU, but unfortunately that did not come to fruition because ANU eventually emailed us with a proposed allocation of

funds. We met again and discussed two major concerns: 1) that there is no clarity and transparency about how the SSAF forum is going to look like 2) there is a 10% reserve, and ANU did not consult with our organisations whether it was appropriate or not to reserve that amount.

I would like to thank SungJae and Declan for attending those meetings.

We share similar concerns to the other organisations. Although it sounds simple to ask ANU about clarification, the communication has been very difficult, with the Director of University Experience not being as responsive. I even emailed him last week with some questions and I did not receive a response. I personally think that we should use this miscommunication to our advantage. Furthermore, I also do not think that a 10% reserve is necessarily terrible. From a corporate perspective I think that it is a good idea as we deal with a lot of uncertainty about how much money will be distributed to SSAF next year. Therefore, my proposal would be to have a mid-year SSAF round as it has happened in the past.

A matter of concern to me has been that we have underspent this year, and although it has been a challenging year, I do not think we can justify this to COVID or any other difficulty. Generally, our budget was possible to be spent under any conditions, and we failed that goal. This can pose a threat to receiving further funding from the university, as they might deem that we do not need it to function. Furthermore, it seems that the majority of our officers would like more money to be distributed to allowances. I think that is a good idea at this point, however we should make it clear to the ANU, especially in emphasising the gap between our organisation and the other ones. This particularly showed during the SSAF consultation with other organisations. Generally, I did not have the time to deal with the matter with the attention required because I had to balance study and paid employment. I know other officers are on the same boat.

I would like to use the board meeting tonight to have a deep discussion about what we think of the SSAF proposal, how to respond, how to spend our remaining money, what we want to see changing, how to collaborate with other organisations, what money to redistribute to next year and what everything means for the future of Observer. I also think that we should place a KPI for achieving a spending goal. Furthermore, I would like to raise some concerns regarding meeting expectations, communication, and also the collaboration between the news and visual team. Lastly, I wanted to discuss the potential of having a governance induction for reporters before I leave, as I think they should become familiar with our governance and funding scheme.

Chair passed to Angus

Declan: Governance Training?

Konstantine: It is expensive, and ANU justifies the cost to the fact that we have received more funding to afford it. Happy to provide it myself.

Konstantine: Clarify whether we need someone qualified for the governance training, otherwise Konstantine will provide it.

Moved by Declan.

Passes.

Secretary Report: Konstantinos Katsanis

Nothing significant to report here. Focus has been on SSAF and not policies. I will work on the policies as soon as I finish exams. I would like to set up a few things before I leave, and I am hoping we will have one or two more board meetings to pass those policies.

Moved by Declan.

Passes unanimously.

Editor in Chief Report: Declan Milton

As the uni calendar rounds up, in my report, I'm going to spend a bit of time talking about our KPI.

At the start of the year, under Helena's leadership, myself, Brandon and Keeley set a new KPI of 16 articles published every month. Last year's was 13. In October alone we exceeded our KPI, publishing 19 stories. The month started off extremely strong, with an article (and sometimes two) coming out every day for the first 10 days or so. I largely put this down to a coherent editorial team, where plenty of ideas were shared, along with a more active news team. Inevitably, and like any news organisation, some weeks will be slower than others. The last fortnight or so has proved that, particularly as we come to exams, and stories tend to die down. However, the enthusiasm everyone brought at the start of the month is something I wish to replicate more consistently next year.

Content wise, the last three months have been the strongest all year for Observer. The months of August, September and October have been the only months all year where we have met, and exceeded our KPI. August we published 28 articles (inc breaking graphic), and September, 21. While KPI should never be the sole metric of success, it is a pretty good indicator of how well the news team is functioning. Despite this, the last fortnight (and more generally in slower news weeks) shows that we need enthusiastic reporters ready to pitch ideas during meetings. While this theme has been a concern of mine all year, I do have growing confidence that, as our news team acquires more experience, story ideas will follow. It's been a tough balance for myself (and I'm sure

the other editors) to manage reporters stories as well as generate several article ideas consistently every week.

I had a really productive chat with Kon the other week regarding the direction of Observer for next year, given he is sadly leaving, and I will be one of two people who was at Observer in 2020. We had a discussion about the cohesion between news and visual, where there are definite improvements that need to be made to ensure we have a thriving team. I will speak more about this in this board meeting.

While next year seems a bit daunting, I am committed to treating the upcoming break as a great opportunity to flesh out some ideas and processes that will make Observer the go to student news outlet next year. If anyone has any ideas or questions, please don't hesitate to get in contact with me.

Moved by Keeley.

Passes unanimously.

Visual Content Executive: Joseph Oh

Busy over the past two days. Not to report much. I am removing three people. Will do that in the next board meeting.

Jo to send us all correspondence to

Moved by Alex.

Passes unanimously.

Finance Executive Report: Sung Jae Lee

Finance Executive Report

- \$2500 is coming from the DVCUE pool.
- Last year \$4500 rolled over. Considering we paid very little rent, we should spend money on some minor merch (stickers etc) and rollover the rest and consider adding this rollover to the allowances and honoraria budget.

SSAF Matters:

- We have been allocated \$55,000 for 2021. This is a \$8,040 increase from our 2020 allocation

- A forum is to occur regarding SSAF allocations. We have no idea when this is or if we can even contest our amount.

Current Budget & Expenditure update:

Estimated spending for the remainder of the year:

- o \$700 for Visual Equipment (already approved by Jo)
- o \$2581.65 for rent
- o \$150 for misc. supplies for the office
- o \$350 Web Admin
- o \$6,110 Honoraria and Allowance
- o \$200 for a vacuum (Office Supplies)

Thus I estimate we will spend around \$10,092 before EOY.

Since we have spent around \$23,457, I aim to rollover around \$13,365 for next year.

I would like to see it go towards honoraria and allowances.

Keeley: Did you check with the relevant teams regarding? How are you planning to talk to ANU regarding rolling over those funds?

SungJae: According to needs I have consulted with Jo, Declan and Kon. If people have needs I am happy to be contacted.

Rolling: Regarding our staff meeting with ANUSA, it came out that ANU will understand that we will need those money to roll over.

Keeley: Would they understand that COVID affected it?

SungJae: Most organisations have not spent that money and they are understanding of it.

Moved by Jo.

Passes unanimously.

Community Executive Report: Angus Brooks

The University has offered us free rent, once again, for the months of November 2021, December 2021, and January 2022.

I have not received any feedback regarding the proposed new office contract between Observer and the University. I intend to proceed on signing it within the next week.

Non essential maintenance works have resumed in the ACT, with our signage contractor reopening on November 1. There is substantial backlog that needs to be completed, however they have provided an estimated completion date of November 16 for our Observer office sign.

Despite receiving a lacklustre level of response from our team, some useful data and information was obtained from our team survey. I will speak briefly about it today and will provide a more detailed report over the weekend.

SungJae: Are we rent free for September and October?

Angus: Will find out.

Konstantine: Why survey not out by Week 12.

Angus: Busy, will have it out by tomorrow

Moved by SungJae

Passes

Web Executive Report: Angus Brooks

I have very little to report. A handful of technical issues have been resolved recently, although there are still a couple of outstanding issues with Digital Ocean. Please continue to log any issues with the website through the web_support Slack channel. I am in the process of completing my handover documentation for Nick and will continue to do so leading up to December 1.

Moved by Alex.

Passes unanimously.

Item 5 - Items for Decision

5.1 Appointing Nicholas Ang as an officer of ANU Observer in the position of Web Assistant

Declan: I just want to explain why he wants to start early. He has a few ideas and basically he would prefer to communicate them through Slack. It would also be an easier handover if he was communicating everything through Slack.

Moved by Angus.

Seconded by Declan.

Passes unanimously.

Item 6 - Items for Discussion

6.1 SSAF

6.1.1 ANU Proposal

6.1.2 Discussions with SSAF recipients

6.1.3 Response to the University

Konstantine and SungJae describe the situation and express their concerns regarding the university's letter, and the conversation with ANUSA, PARSA and Woroni.

Keeley: Push ANU with transparency, how are they planning to spend the 500k.

Declan: Agree with SungJae regarding the allocation. We raised the rent, and they used the rent as one of their arguments. I am not particularly keen on the argument that if we get that 500k then we are going to divide this by percentage. Because Woroni is bigger doesn't mean they should get it. We should make it clear that we have some really strong financial interests for the reserve fund.

More discussion *in camera*.

Konstantine: Forum before or after student consultation?

SungJae: I reckon we drop out of the joint letter, and itemise concerns. Draft an independent letter and send it to James Brann. Make it clear that we still share the same concerns with ANUSA.

Declan: Can you relay your argument why you want to particularly exclude ANUSA?

SungJae: I don't think they have everyone's best interests at heart. They clearly have goals on their own, and don't want Observer to be marginalised. 10k is nothing to them but a lot to us. I am not 100% convinced that we share the same concerns. I don't think we should be represented by ANUSA.

Declan: I agree. What do we expect ANUSA to react to?

Konstantine: I think ANUSA will respond appropriately, but they might also not like that we don't go as a united front. Which ye, in that case, they might rally the students. I think they might also be unwilling to have a productive discussion in the future if we do not continue emphasising to them that we share the same concerns.

Keeley: I think we should push to continuous meetings.

Konstantine: I think that is a good idea.

SungJae: I think ANUSA will proceed with writing a letter. I think our priority would be to push for the forum to happen as soon as possible.

Declan: I agree with writing our own letter.

Angus: I agree.

Procedural Actions

Outcomes:

Discuss the reserve matter in the forum.

Raising concerns regarding non-student organisations. SungJae thinks ANUSA will go for that whether we want to or not.

For the response:

Have the forum as soon as possible. Existing board members.

Allocation numbers: Are they final or to be decided after the forum.

What is the reserve about, so we are not unprepared for the forum.

Have the forum before the allocations become public.

In the future, question:

How much money does ANU reserve?

Konstantine: Regarding Allowances and Honorarium, I am not sure if ANU will like the idea that we are chucking a lot of our money to that line item.

More discussion *in camera*.

SungJae: I don't think we should worry so much about Allowances and Honorarium.

Keeley: Get the next board members to attend our next board meetings.

6.2 Expenditure

6.2.1 Overview

6.2.2 Planned Expenditure

6.2.3 Reallocation of funds

6.2.4 Expenditure KPI

400-500 dollars for vacuum

Jo has a list \$ <700

13000 remaining

Everyone: To come up with a reflection with how we spent money this year.

6.3 Letter from ANUSA

Alex: Georgie messaged me if she can use the graphic and told her she can use the one from the drive. She said she got the image from Slack.

Declan: I take a bit of responsibility for this. The current situation being news and visual communication is not efficient. We might need to give visual more time to make graphics.

Jo: Are we still using that planned content sheet?

Keeley: Yes.

Konstantine: Have you guys thought of having a meeting?

Declan: Yes, we might be able to have Jo jump on for 10 minutes to discuss what we are going to produce.

Alex: We do news and Jo comes in at the end?

Jo: I like it. I think Editors meetings should be for the news.

Editors: To investigate how that graphic was there in the first place, and whether it was on Slack or the drive.

Declan: To prepare a response and share it to the board channel.

6.4 Governance Induction

Konstantine: I was thinking it might be good if I introduce reporters and visual team members to our governing structure. Help see bigger picture.

Editors and Jo: Ok.

Editors and Jo: Ask reporters and visual team if after exams they would like to get an induction to governance things.

Item 7 - Other Business

7.1 Clubs Ball

Konstantine: Are people keen? We can get an Observer table.

Everyone: Yes.

Konstantine: Not sure what the ticket prices are.

Declan: Talk to your connections and I will post.

Item 8 - Recall Actionables

Konstantine: Clarify whether we need someone qualified for the governance training, otherwise Konstantine will provide it.

Konstantine: Draft a letter and send it to the Director of University Experience. Respond to ANUSA that we will not proceed with a joint letter, but that we are happy to continue on future conversations up to the forum.

Everyone: To come up with a reflection with how we spent money this year.

Editors: To investigate how that graphic was there in the first place, and whether it was on Slack or the drive.

Declan: To prepare a response and share it to the board channel.

Editors and Jo: Ask reporters and visual team if after exams they would like to get an induction to governance things.

Closing of Meeting: 20:38