



THE ANU OBSERVER

General Meeting 2023-10-24

Agenda

Location: ANU Observer Office and Zoom Hybrid

1/25 Childers Street

Time: 1800

Item 1: Meeting Opens and Apologies

- 1.1 Acknowledgement of Country
- 1.2 Apologies: Hannah Farrow

Item 2: Minutes from the Previous Meeting including Matters Arising

- 2.1 Minutes from the Previous Meeting

https://docs.google.com/document/d/16GseaT7PX_O0CaYNDteOW0xuXpBRQUNXEK-J1gs-z9o/edit

Pass: Hannah
Moved

Passed by majority

Item 3: Reports and Matters Arising

- 3.1 Report of the Chair of the Board (Appendix A)
- 3.2 Report of the Chair of the Editorial Committee (Appendix B)
- 3.3 Report of the Visual Team (Appendix C)
- 3.4 Report of the Web Executive (Appendix D)
- 3.5 Report of the Community Executive (Appendix E)
- 3.6 Secretary's Report (Appendix F)
- 3.7 Finance Executive's Report (Appendix G)

Statements have been read by individuals

Passed by Hannah Farrow
Seconded by Sacha Von Tonman

Item 4: Items for Decision

Item 4.1 amend the constitution to completely eliminate COO

Passed by James Weatherman
Seconded by Ryan Bourke

Item 4.2 amend the constitution and the team regulations document to include the 'sub-teams' provision

Passed by James Weatherman
Seconded by Brianna Elliott

Passed by Majority

Item 5: Elections

Returning Officer: Roxanne Missingham

Candidate statements will be read out.

Editor x 2:

Rowey Worner Butcher

Sophie Felice

Finance Executive

Maddy Burns

Visual Content Executive

Shé Chani

Arbitration Panel Members

Oscar Wycisk

All positions are uncontested, all nominations are successful.

Passed by Hannah Farrow

Seconded by Nuria Olive

Passed by majority

Item 6: Items for Discussion

Honorary Life Members 2.2.1. The Board may appoint any individual to be an Honorary Life Member of Observer. 2.2.2. Honorary Life Members are granted all rights accorded to regular members, with the exception that: a) Honorary Life Members may not contest elections. 2.2.3. An individual may refuse honor

6.1 Board agrees to make Hannah Farrow Honorary Life Member

Pass by James Weatherman

Seconded by Mackenzie

Passed by majority

Item 7: Other Business

Item 8: Date of next meeting and Close of Meeting

May 20th

Passed by Hannah Farrow

Seconded by James

Passed

6.42pm

Appendix A: Report of the Chair of the Board and Appendix B: Report of the Executive Editor combined

Prepared by Hannah Farrow, Editor-in-Chief and Chair of the Board of ANU Observer

Date: 24/10/23

Over the past year, I have witnessed remarkable growth and positive transformations that have not only expanded our team but have also enhanced the culture, communication, and output of our publication. ANU Observer I believe has really reached its greatest presence on campus as of now, with articles being discussed in ANUSA meetings, being reposted by other students and broader discussions on campus. The articles I really believe that ANU Observer has reached its greatest potential yet this year and I'm beyond excited to see what it becomes in the future.

Team Growth and Development

One of the most notable achievements during this year has been the remarkable expansion of our team. We started with a dedicated group of 5 reporters, and today, I am proud to announce that we have successfully integrated 13 new reporters into the team. This has brought our total Observer team size to 26 members, each of whom has contributed uniquely to our success. These new additions within the News team include: Nuria Olive, James Weatherman, Maya Auld, Rowey Worner Butcher, Fergus Wall, Eduardo Caceres-Sandoval, Angela Paulson, Urja Parhi, Darcy Davitt, Sacha von Thomann, Ben Springhall, and Hamish Blackmore. Within this group, already 2 individuals have transferred into the Board as Secretary and Editor, displaying their extensive contributions. This was primarily completed as there are a few reporters going on exchange next year. I am very proud of how successful the interviewing has been, how the advertisements have been received and how the editorial team completed the interview process.

Enhancing our Social Culture

One of our primary goals has been to foster a collaborative and supportive environment, and I am delighted to say that we have made significant strides in this regard. Our meetings have not only increased in duration but are now characterized by a higher level of engagement, with more reporters actively collaborating together. The overwhelmingly positive feedback we have received from our team members regarding their overall experience underscores the success of these efforts. We are very grateful that we have experienced very few drop-offs as well. It is evident that our reporters are enjoying their roles and contributing wholeheartedly to the organisation. I hope that this means that more reporters are further engaged with the Board and general governance as they are hopefully finding the reporter experience enjoyable.

We recognize the importance of nurturing the personal and professional growth of our team members. To this end, we have been actively supporting our reporters in their extracurricular pursuits. Whether it's attending Law Revue or celebrating individual successes with external writing, we are committed to being more than just a news outlet. I believe that individuals who join feel like they are not only gaining crucial experience that they can put on their resume and use further in their career, but are also making friends and connection.

Content Output

Our commitment to providing quality content to our readers remains steady. Over the past year, we have consistently increased our content output. An example of this is the publication of 14 articles within just two weeks for the ANUSA elections. Despite this period certainly being stressful, it was a period that became enjoyable due to the incredible ANUSA Election team (Eduardo Caceres-Sandoval, Fergus Wall, James Weatherman, Maya Auld, Rowey Worner Butcher, Sophie Felice). It was also a demonstration of work between the Visual Team and the News team as the graphics were consistently ready for the publishing schedule which was awesome collaboration between the two teams.

This has included covering major stories such as Inward Bound, alleged bribery scandals in the elections, and regular coverage of SRCs. The editors and I have also attempted to increase the current coverage of issues such as international students, SASH and First Nations issues which we have been endeavoring to cover and will continue to do so.

We have also increased the number of articles on issues that students enjoy with a focus on vaping, transport, mental health and health care. Observer and Woroni also worked very successfully together this year (including a Badger night !) after a well run ANUSA Election Debate. I'm very happy with how our coverage of this was, despite having some minor problems it certainly was character building :)

General Governance

This year, I have attended every single Board meeting that has been hosted by Observer. We have made great adjustments and progress to the general governance of Observer, including the altering of the coefficients, improved communication and discussion of responsibilities. I

have been committed to improving the general documentation of many processes that I complete. In doing so, I have created a detailed hiring document for future editors who do hiring. I have also created a detailed training manual for new reporters as well to improve the integration of new reporters onto the team. This manual provides a detailed explanation of their role, the broader opportunities you can receive by working at Observer and general admin. I have also completed a detailed editorial process document that is followed whilst editing. Within this, I have also created the handover documents for Editors as the position is a very multi-faceted role. In doing so, I have also had meetings with the Director of Student Experience James Bran to ensure that Observer is completing its due diligence as a funded organisation.

Improved Communication

Communication with key stakeholders is vital, and we have taken significant steps to ensure that it is seamless and transparent. We have intensified our dialogue with the arbitration panel with regular contact and feedback but also placed regular advertisements to increase the team to ensure it is not just a single member on the Panel. This has not only increased transparency but has also enabled us to continually improve our practices. Board meetings have become a regular occurrence, further enhancing communication and ensuring that we are aligned with the board's goals and expectations.

Gratitude for the editorial team

I'd like to thank the Editorial team of Ryan Bourke and Nuria Olive. Running a university newspaper between the 3 of us is no small feat and this team in particular has gone above and beyond, (including beyond the amount of expected working hours each week). The long nights of calling, constant slack messages, hundreds of hours of meetings and frantic moments have made being Editor-in-Chief truly worth it. I think the hard work that both of the editors have put in has been such a great motivator and they have made the experience so enjoyable. I have been beyond lucky to not only work with such talented and hardworking people, but also people who can make the stressful moments humorous. They will both go far in whatever industry they pursue and I sincerely look forward to seeing what they both get up to in the rest of their careers.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the past year has been one of tremendous growth and achievement for ANU Observer. We are well-positioned to continue our mission of delivering high-quality news and information to our readers.

I want to extend my heartfelt gratitude to the entire team for their hard work and dedication, especially the Board. Without everyone's commitment, these achievements would not have been possible. As we look ahead, I am confident that the future holds even more promise for ANU Observer, and I am excited to watch its journey of growth and success.

Thank you everyone, it's genuinely been a great honour being Editor-in-Chief and Chair of the Board of ANU Observer 2022-2023.

Appendix C: Visual Content Executive Report

2023 for the Visual Team has been booming in some areas and more subdued in others. By far the most notable endeavor of the year has been the 'Our Experts Have Observed' podcast, a project that has been worked on since early December and has been released exactly on time, almost every week of the year. We've continued to see regular three-figure amounts of streams for all 21 of our episodes, nearly 300 scans of the QR codes on the posters around the ANU campus, some great engagement with the promotional Facebook posts and an overall extremely encouraging amount of public and internal enthusiasm for the project. It's culminating in a final, Jeopardy-styled game show that we're really excited about and should be releasing in the next few days of Week 12. I'm really looking forward to seeing how the podcast develops going forward - it's something that everyone who's worked on it is very proud of.

Observer's graphics and social media has seen a massive growth this semester - with the hiring of a second graphic designer and a more refined production pipeline, we're able to handle far more designs than previously possible and not worry about stifling the article pipeline. Observer's graphic designers are now producing double what they were before, now creating a separate version of each design for our website, Facebook, Instagram and stories. This has worked in harmony with an increased social media presence thanks to Alex, our social media manager, where these graphics are now swiftly posted to our social platforms with relevant links and info attached. Everyone involved has done a spectacular job.

Aside from Observer's usual event photography, our photographers have also been scouring the campus this semester for extensive photos of all ANU buildings, in order to create a vast repository of images for both external, and internal use by our graphics designers. Soon, by not having to rely on the limited photos of ANU online, Observer's graphics will be better than ever. When coupled with the development of a brand book for the organisation, our design has never looked stronger.

I'd once again like to thank both the members of the Board, the wider Observer team and the overall student body for their continued enthusiasm in the projects of the Visual Team, and am really looking forward to what we can produce going forward!

Appendix D: Web Executive Report - Anneysha Sarkar

[INCOMPLETE] I joined the Observer team as Web Executive on September 15, 2023. Prior to that, Will was the acting Web Executive. I would like to thank him for everything he has done in this role, preparing an extensive handover documents for future web executives to have a smooth handover.

So far, I have been onboarding our newer team members onto Wordpress, and our digital systems, as well as ensuring that our member lists both on Wordpress and internal systems

are updated. This is important to ensure that our present members have continued access, and inactive accounts are removed to avoid any potential security threats.

We have also updated our logo in our internal systems, which I think I quite exciting!

Going forward in 2024, I will be working on the website to improve

As a newer member to the Observer Board, I have benefitted

Appendix E: Community Executive Report - Mackenzie Watkins

As Community Executive, my role is primarily focused on managing the office (cleaning, supplies stock etc.), maintaining positive relationships within the Observer team, providing food and beverages at weekly news meetings and organising social events (the most recent was a Badger dinner with 14 members in attendance).

The most crucial part of my role this semester was organising the ANUSA Bush Week Market Day. Weeks of planning went into the event (packaging 150 lolly bags, creating signs, newspapers, brochures etc.). On the day, members from the executive team and some reporters were crucial in the running of the stall, with preparation starting at 7am and the closing down of the stall at 4pm.

The office space was rearranged by Will and I in an attempt to create more usable space for our team. A somewhat 'living room' style was created in the front room to allow for better social interactions and to free up space in the downstairs meeting area. Going forward I would love to be able to decorate the office to create a more homey environment instead of the more sterile environment at present. It would also be ideal to sell the 4 desks we currently have in storage to make a few extra hundred dollars to extend the decorating budget.

Another focus of mine going forward is to host more socials that involve both the news team, podcast team and the visual team as these teams don't tend to interact as a whole very often. Plans are in the works, such as a cupcake decorating contest, Halloween dress up competition and a murder mystery party. This would be a good opportunity for the teams to get to know each other and socialise which will create a connected and collaborative culture.

Appendix F: Secretary's Report - James Weatherman

This semester has been very successful with regards to planning ahead for the new year. There is expected to be a shift in the leadership team with finance exec, visual content exec and editor in chief stepping down. As a result, we have consolidated the organisation's institutional memory by writing up comprehensive handover documents and filing them in a manner that is accessible to new board members.

In anticipation of many of our reporters going on exchange next semester, we have also greatly expanded the news team. The result of this has been more future candidates for roles on the board, but it has also led to an increased workload for our editors. To solve this, we are proposing to expand the number of editors to four next year. This is already an actionable subsection within the constitution, so it will not need to be amended in.

As for administrative tasks as secretary, I have offered to hold board meetings every second week, accurately recorded minutes, shared agendas in advance, followed up on the responsibilities of board members, and worked alongside the finance executive on matters relating to SSAF.

As the organisation expands, the board and I have been working together to determine how we can expand the position of 'senior reporter' by assigning specific roles and responsibilities. The purpose of this is to create an incentive for reporters who do not want to join the board team but still want to expand their responsibilities. This task requires amending the constitution and, due to its long term strategic nature, still needs further planning.

Finally, I believe it is important to express my recognition and appreciation of all other members of the board who consistently go above and beyond to maintain the integrity of this organisation.

Appendix G: Report of the Finance Executive

The ANU Observer aims to provide accurate, detailed, and timely coverage of campus events. The funding is used to support our office rental payments, allowances and honoraria, purchasing of equipment, and covering other general expenses of running this news organization.

The ANU Observer Inc receives 2% SSAF of the pool funded by us – the students. It is pivotal that we receive SSAF for the operation of this organization, as our daily operation requires the funding provided by SSAF. Throughout the period, the Finance Executive is the key communicator for all financials. This includes, and is not limited to, the payment of rent for our Observer Office, calculation of Allowances, payment of Allowances & Honoraria, obtaining the bid the SSAF – along with the pertaining Reserve Fund allocations, compiling the documents and engaging in the audit and creating the master budget.

Student Services Council Engagement:

The Finance Executive engages in 5 periodic meetings annually with the Student Services

Council. The purpose is to engage indirectly with SSAF funded organizations, such as ANUSA, Woroni and ANU Sport to provide moderate transparency and engagement between the ANU and the SSAF funded organizations. My job is to talk about ANU Observer's achievements for the Period, along with me presenting the Periodic report about our spendings for the Period. Normally this involves me attending the meeting and attending a preliminary meeting with the organizations in preparation of the meeting.

Auditing:

The ANU Observer must undergo an audit annually. This is perhaps the most significant service for this position, requiring a level of understanding of the operational and administrative side of the ANU Observer. Due to the Finance Executive roles being switched and passed down rather frequently, it is often the case where the current Finance Executive is dealing with materials that had and should have been dealt with the previous 2 or so Finance Executive when they had the position.

This requires a level of compilation of the documents along with a level of scrutiny and judgement level when providing information and whatnot to our engaging auditors. Of course, this is rather difficult when the documents you are dealing with are almost 2 years old. The engagement was rather enlightening for me personally, but I hope to prepare my succeeding Finance Executive with the engagement.

Acquittal:

It seems like the acquittal method has changed. From my handover documents, it states that I must acquit annually with the ANU and acquit all unspent funds during the year. The method of acquittal that had been stated in my handover document was unfortunately outdated; certain complications had been faced but the confusion had been cleared and I hope to update my succeeding Finance Executive with the updated methodology.

Invoice:

The Finance Executive needs to invoice ANU biannually to claim our fundings. Normally this isn't a requiring task, but at times I find it that certain requests do not go as according as possible and need to be repeated.

Allowance & Honoraria:

The Allowance calculations are completed by the Finance Executive. Once again, this normally isn't a requiring task unless there are some roles transitions throughout the period. For me personally, this was a rather complicating process as I didn't get a thorough walk-through of what had to be completed, along with the fact that I didn't know how many days were in 1 period for starters (all 5 periods have different days).

Personally, I think the pivotal thing with this role is the level of accountability the Finance Executive is faced with. If certain things do not go as planned, I am faced with levels of collisions that I may not exactly be liable for. I believe that this role requires professional judgment and initiative to carry out the best values for this organization.