



THE ANU OBSERVER

Agenda for Meeting of The ANU Observer Board Meeting

Date: 05/03/25

Opening of meeting: 6:25pm

Item 1 - Attendance

Saffron

Sophie

Anneysha

Maddy

She

Rowey

Darcy

Mackenzie (via zoom)

Item 2 - Acknowledgement of Country

By Saffron Geyle

I wish to acknowledge the Ngunnawal peoples as traditional custodians of the land we are meeting on and recognise any other people or families with connection to the lands of the ACT and region. We also acknowledge and respect their continuing culture and the contribution they make to the life of this city and this region, and pay our respects to elders past, present and emerging.

Item 3 - Items for Decision

3.1 - N/A

Item 4: Things to discuss

4.1 - Web Stuff

Anneysha: Thank you for filling out the excel sheet. A message for editors to tell team members; I will need to start deleting accounts as we have limited storage for these accounts. Team members should not be using these accounts for anything once they

have left the Observer. Maddy please let me know when you get audit details. Visuals inductions and web inductions are complete. ANU Observer domain did not get renewed. My details are now on the account, admin-wise this will last 5 years.

Maddy: I will put this on the finance handover for next year.

Anneysha: Hopefully all 2021 tech people linked are now gone. This could also be why you may have missed a few emails. Thanks Rowey and Darcy for helping with that. Moving forward, if this issue is apparent again just let me know and I can work on fixing it.

Darcy: Should we potentially sort out a newsletter?

Sophie: If we were to move forward with that, we will need to discuss further and with a concentrated group effort to sort out logistics, etc.

Rowey: We'll definitely have to discuss with reporters to find out who is willing.

Anneysha: I think monthly or bi-weekly is a good strategy. What I was thinking of as a strategy to collect emails is to put out a google form and ask how often people would want a newsletter.

Sophie: Would we need to pay for this?

Maddy: We currently have seven thousand dollars more than we did last year.

She: Does this mean we can finally have a physical copy of the ANU Observer?

Maddy: That is a very large expense and quite a large operational hassle. Now I know what things are going to cost because last year I didn't really have much to go off and i didnt know how much we were going to spend.

Anneysha: What happens if you don't spend the reserve by the end of this year?

Maddy: That'll just roll over. However, if we don't spend it they may give us less next year.

Mackenzie: I need to sort out a quote for the dishwasher. How does one go about talking to a dishwasher guy?

Maddy: We had \$29k left over last year.

Anneysha: Maddy, would it be fine if I upgrade some of our systems?

Maddy: I can just move more money into admin, last year there were just problems with the differentiation between categories. But yes, we can do that this year.

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Anneysha: Yeah, just so the website doesn't crash. The website crashed because of infrastruct

4.2 - Application for new arbitration member

Rowey: I got an email from one of our arbitration members, Oscar, who will be graduating in June. So, he essentially asked when our OGM will be so we can get the word out a bit.

She: How does that work?

Rowey: They just got voted in, the last guy didn't attend and got voted in anyway. So, I think we should set a time for the OGM just to work on getting someone in. Should we try and do it on a Wednesday? Or a Monday when all reporters will be free? Okay let's lock in 5th of May at around 7pm?

All agreed.

Rowey: Saffron your job will be making a Facebook event/spreading word.

4.3 - Expectations of board roles

Rowey: I think it's important that as the board, we re-clarify what our positions should be and what we should be doing. Due to our previous defunding situation, we're a bit more under scrutiny and so I think we need to re-evaluate and make sure that we know what we're doing here and why it's important.

Sophie: Mack just to make sure you're away for the whole of April?

Mackenzie: Yes, but this will mean that I only miss 2 weeks when considering teaching break etc.

Rowey: EIC and chairperson, I mostly communicate with the university – which is mostly done in tandem with Maddy. As EIC, my role is obviously to be an editor and help in a very practical sense in helping articles get out. Additionally, just trying to keep everything and everyone together and the Observer afloat, and importantly to ensure cohesion within the team and ensuring a stable and welcoming environment for reporters.

Sophie: Editor encompasses being a board member and a people manager. Very aware of what takes most of my time and just being aware of being there for reporters and making sure their work is valued and ensuring that deadlines are met. Creating a really nice culture, having a very trusting community. I think having your work edited is a very vulnerable thing. Taking onboard issues very seriously and offering support and being there at meetings and advocating for the Observer is something major that I take very seriously. Ultimately, I don't want to be a journalist and I want this business to run effectively.

Saffron: As secretary, mostly giving structure to the meetings and making sure that once I get through this constitution we're all working within the boundaries that we need to be. Obviously I'm a reporter as well so fulfilling my reporter duties as well as my secretary duties is something I want to do this year. Keeping minutes, keeping everything in check, keeping my articles coming is essentially what I want to do.

She: As Visual content exec I believe my job is to create and edit the content that goes out. Basically I make things look good and pretty. I ensure that our articles are delivered and that the visual components of our articles are being fulfilled.

Anneysha: As web exec, I think my role has evolved from what I was initially handed over back in 2023. Back in 2023 I pretty much just had to ensure that things didn't break. That was what I was literally told in my handover. Traditionally, it has been managed by one person, which means that when that one person leaves responsibility shifts to one person with basically little to no documentation. In 2024 and 2025 I've been taking steps to sort of upgrade our infrastructure. Currently it's quite old dating back to 2017. Evidently there are problems such as the software's speed. eg, if you switch off one switch the entire building is going to turn off. I've been changing little by little to ensure that any Observer services do not shut off overnight. I've been working with a new website. I think it's important that not only one person is responsible for technology. Currently I am the only person with access to our systems and I'm looking to build a team of people who are able to look after this as well. Also I'm responsible for data security and ensuring there are no data breaches. Currently, I have the liberty to sort of

play around with our systems and work on the best solutions. I am glad I get to use the thing that I learn in my degree and bring into the anu observer. I'd love to have a podcast thing where people can listen to podcasts.

Maddy: Essentially my role can be split into two different streams. There's internal which makes sure that we don't run out of money, and our bills aren't crazy etc. external is where we make sure that we are aware of the responsibilities that come with SSAF and dealing with the university, many governance issues that come up and reporting to the SSAF council. What I'm working on in the next few months before I leave is ensuring that we have more safeguards in place. I believe there are things that I could do to ensure that we have a proper process. Also, the audit obviously is a whole other sector. It's been really good, this role has gained my interest in governance issues and things I wouldn't have thought of.

Darcy: As a new editor, I want to learn the ropes, learn replying quickly to enquiries, and hopefully bringing new and different ideas about where we can go. Overall, also, just listening to what our reporters and the general public want and need from us.

Mackenzie: As social executive, I feel like I have more of a HR position. Where I am super in touch with the actual reports, and I hope to be more in touch with the digital team. I deal with interpersonal relationships etc within the observer, I keep the place clean for us, am on top of socials, etc. Now we're back I'm able to look at holding more socials for this year. I am also the podcast team head, while it is not currently on, but this is fairly important as while it's a small team it does need a lot of leadership.

4.4 - 2025 succession etc. planning

Rowey: I was reflecting on my own experience coming into EIC. I did at the time admit that this wasn't my original plan, as both editors were leaving previously. I think it would be very helpful to plot out where we want to be, where we're going, etc. I also think it's really important to get new people circulating through pretty often. I think it'd be good to have roles circulating within the organisation to make people feel like they have opportunities to grow within the organisation. I personally will be graduating at the end of this year, so that will be my cut-off date essentially.

Sophie: I will also be leaving at the end of this year, so that'll be two editors out.

Darcy: Three editors as I am considering an exchange next year.

Anneysha: Regarding a new chair, what about the senior reporter role?

Rowey: I think currently the people we've got as our senior reporters are not on the board, but have been here the longest.

Sophie: I don't think we can make a healthy team of people who are essentially doing an editor's role without being paid or recognised as such.

Rowey: Another solution would be to remove one of our editors and get a new one in? However, I think this could jeopardise the momentum of the team and the year. This isn't something that we have to solve now, as it is only March but just something to keep in mind. There are so many people on our team who are ready for editor, but then we need to consider the extra step up of EIC.

She: I think anyone could do it, as long as they had someone gradually guiding them through the process.

Maddy: I'm going on exchange semester 2 of this year. So far I'm organising a replacement. I was thinking of emailing convenors of an accounting class, for example, and enquiring about potential students for the role. It'll have to be before the OGM, which means I'll still be in Canberra for a month where they can regularly contact me and we can do an in-depth handover.

Rowey: Maybe even if you did the handover with one of us and we could then help?

Maddy: Well, I'll also make sure it's all written down. When I came into the role, I didn't really have the SSAF agreement or anything like that handy.

Rowey: Saffron and Mackenzie, where are your futures with the role?

Saffron: I am also leaving at the end of this year.

Mackenzie: I will be commencing exchange in the first half of next year. I think I need to make my decision towards the middle/end of this year.

Rowey: What would your thoughts be on having someone elected for semester 2 of this year? So there's less movement within the board.

Mackenzie: So I give up my role and then someone comes in semester 2 to make it easier transition-wise for everyone?

Rowey: Yes basically, but this is up to debate.

Mackenzie: I love my role, but am happy to give this up if it is for the better of the Observer.

Sophie: With the podcast, there is no current team, it's just you. I think that if you were able to focus on the podcast, this could be really good. So, if you focus your energy more on the podcast and less on the community, this could take the podcast where it needs to go.

Mackenzie: I think yes, the first step is to see if anyone is happy and confident enough to get started on the podcast. Next is to see if someone is willing and confident to step up to editing and creating etc.

Rowey: I think what Sophie was saying is that by giving up community exec, you would be able to focus heavily on the podcast.

Mackenzie: Yeah, that makes sense. Also! Just a roundabout topic – I remember Will Novak and Darelene Rowalnd were advocating very hard for the podcast team to become a board member. So that the podcast is ingrained in the ANU Observer and not just a side show.

Rowey: Definitely something to consider, just something to give a lot of consideration to. This could also lessen availability of funds for board members etc.

She: We need to consider if we can still facilitate the podcast, or whether we should leave it as is currently, with the episodes that we've had.

Rowey: Yeah, I think that in the meantime making the podcast essential as a member of the board is not a priority right now. Moving forward with this, Mackenzie, if you could just conduct interview times for the new applicants etc.

4.5 - SSAF long-term applications

Rowey: SSAF long-term applications, just securing a three-year term approval instead of one. I know this might be difficult to prioritise – but just to think about setting this meeting up to secure the new funding term.

Maddy: Last year when we had the meeting it was a little too late and should've been done a year prior. I think that it'll be good to set this up early.

4.6 - Combined visual and news meeting return in 2025

Sophie: Last year, we had a few combined visual and news meetings and it was really lovely engaging with both teams. I feel like a great part about the Observer is the community and this would foster that sense of community.

She: Should we do it Monday or Tuesday?

Sophie: Logistically, Monday would probably work better due to the difference in team sizes.

Rowey: I did want to plan a reporters' training night. We would have at least one journalist who is working as a journalist in the field now just to talk and give us insight into the industry. In my mind, I put down 24th March so maybe not the 24th for the combined meeting.

She: 14th of April? The week back.

All agreed.

4.7 - New team photos

She: We need new team photos. I was thinking potentially the Monday of 2 weeks from now, just to give people enough time to prepare. So, the 17th will be week 5.

Sophie: It'll be great to print new photos and update the old articles that are hanging up. Maybe just take old photos down and put new photos up etc.

4.8 - Lanyards for media

Rowey: Just the fact that we want them and merch would be great.

Darcy: I'll look into that.

Mackenzie: Do we still want Observer fleece hoodies?

Sophie: I think lanyards would be good because it's just something that we can carry easily and use whenever.

Rowey: Mack, if you could get a quote for the fleeces then we could potentially discuss that in the new meeting?

Sophie: Lanyards definitely priority so that we have extra to keep in the office in case a reporter is on campus and needs one immediately.

4.9 - Potentially new auditor (ask maddy)

Maddy: Definitely something I need to look into. Last year, it wasn't exactly feasible. I'm going to need to speak to someone with experience and/or reach out to a few Canberra-based companies. So far, we're not getting not-for-profit discounts, so potentially we can look into this? Last year, we were dealing with not dated audits etc. So these are the things I'm looking to resolve. So yeah, if I don't get a response by Monday then we'll look into that.

Anneysha: Are you still going to look into a different auditor regardless of what our current auditor's response is?

Maddy: Yes, especially because I don't expect the person who I'm handing my role over to to know how much an audit costs and this current auditor in my experience was not helpful with such things.

Sophie: Maybe it'd be worth going to a bigger organisation?

Anneysha: Something else I noticed is that there's very little to no paper trail and I can't find everything.

Rowey: Yes, I also think it'd be worth having an EIC email.

Anneysha: I propose that EIC, finance exec, web, and visual – that these roles have separate accounts rather than mailing lists. We have all of our emails on the website, personally I don't find it very useful to have everyone's email up there.

Sophie: I have a thought. With the function of letting the Observer know something you've heard, I don't know if it's appropriate for the entire team to be viewing these tips. Maybe it's worth that email just coming to the content execs.

4.10 - Website subscription based weekly wrap up

Anneysha: If you want, we can create a form and I can work on creating a mailing list.

Darcy: Do you think it would be a list of the articles we put out or more of a synopsis/wrap-up of what we've written?

Rowey: I think more of a wrap-up would be easy to digest, less super serious and more fun and visually creative. Visual would be able to work on this.

Darcy: Could I write a cryptic crossword for the newsletter?

Sophie: I think it's a great idea and could turn into something fun. Would this be monthly?

Rowey: Yes, I think monthly would be good. Potentially we could try to make a template of this for the next news meeting.

Sophie: Maybe we could have a quick meeting looking at what we want this to look like, how long it would take etc. So that we can have it fully developed before we show it to the team.

She: I think the easiest way to do this would be to have a folder, for example someone uploads the crossword, someone uploads the writing, and then James can do his thing.

Darcy: Before a meeting, I'd be happy to draft something up for this.

Sophie: Maybe on the 17th we could stay back, but TBD.

4.11 - Reporter training mid-march

Rowey: I think it would be really good. I came up with this because our SSAF funding is somewhat hinged on the basis that we are training people. The work that was coming towards me was sort of in congress and didn't have a theme, etc. I think it'd be helpful to learn more about generalised journalistic style and article writing according to outlets etc.

Sophie: I think it's amazing going into a room with people who have individual strong opinions, and I think this could be super helpful to channel that towards unbiased writing.

Item 5-Other Business

Meeting closed: 8:05pm

Next board meeting: Wednesday March 19th