

Meeting 7/2026

A meeting of the **Monash Graduate Association (MGA) Executive Committee** was held from 4:00 - 6:00 pm on Tuesday, 18 August 2026 in the MGA Meeting Room, Caulfield Campus and by Zoom.

MINUTES

The meeting commenced at 4.05pm

1. Formal matters

1.1 Acknowledgement of Country

The Chair acknowledged and paid respect to the people of the Kulin nations as the original and ongoing owners and custodians of this unceded land.

1.2 Attendance & Apologies

Present: Akshita Sinha (Chair), Ananya Verma, Jay Rohit Sharma, Milanshu, Shuqian Liu, Parv Haria, Xinyu Chen, Viktoriia Ignateva, Kalani Perera, Rebekah McEwan, Naser Aldin Lashgari, James Damches, Sneha Sivakumar, Tanya Maithani and Troy Lau (joined at 4:44pm).

Apologies: Yannee Liu

In attendance: **MGA Staff** - Janice Boey - Executive Officer, Charlie Li - HR & Finance Manager, Ryan Edwards - Research Manager, Jes Wawrzynski, Events Manager. Jack Kennedy, Campaigns Officer.

1.3 Consideration of the agenda

The Chair called for any additional items to be added to the agenda. No further items were raised.

2. Minutes and Action sheet

2.1 Minutes of the July 2026 meeting for confirmation

It was moved:

That the minutes of the July MGAEC 2026 be confirmed.

Moved: Rebekah McEwan

Seconded: Kalani Perera

(In favour: 9, Abstain: 6, Against: 0)

The motion is carried.

2.2 Action list register

The action list was noted.

3. Reports

3.1 President's report

The President's report was noted.

3.2 Members' reports

Members raised a range of issues and feedback received from students, including:

- Concerns about students who are ineligible for paid placements even as the Federal Government has expanded paid placement support for new courses.
- requests for more campus activities, free food, quiet study spaces and information about MGA/Monash services;
- Disability Officer representation on the MGAEC (EO to investigate)
- interest in more cultural events, including Mid-Autumn Festival;
- concerns regarding shuttle bus driver safety (EO to raise with BPD);
- support for students with disability;
- financial pressures for HDR students with families, specifically related to cost of medical insurance for international students;
- Concerns regarding alleged harassment within a core academic unit.
- the relevance of some industry placements, or the lack of the industry placements for some faculties; and
- access to lecture recordings.

The EO advised members that they could meet with the EO in the first instance to discuss any issues requiring further consideration, and that matters requiring MGAEC discussion or action should then be tabled as a separate agenda item at a future meeting to allow sufficient time for consideration.

3.3 Staff Activity report

The staff activity report was noted.

3.4 July 2026 Profit and Loss report

The HR and Finance Manager provided the Committee with a brief overview of the new financial reporting format, which aims to provide the MGAEC with a more comprehensive view of the organisation's financial position.

The July 2026 financial report was noted by the Committee.

3.5 July 2026 MGA Newsletters & Social Media Report

The MGA Newsletter and Social Media Report was noted.

3.6 July 2026 Advocacy Report

The Advocacy Report was noted.

3.7 MGAEC meeting attendance records

The MGAEC meeting attendance records were noted.

4. Business

4.1.1 MGA Campaigns update

The Campaign Officer provided the MGAEC an update on the following campaigns:

PTV Campaign

The petition closed on 3 August with more than 5,200 signatures and has been presented to the Premier and Minister for Transport. Aiv Puglielli MP has also submitted the petition to Parliament, with a response from the Minister for Transport due by 10 September.

It was noted that recent changes to the Premier and Minister for Transport may provide new advocacy opportunities. A recent meeting with Study Melbourne was also discussed, including the challenging political environment for international student issues.

485 Visa Campaign

The Committee was advised that responses had been received from the Department of Home Affairs and Minister for International Education regarding the increase to 485 visa application fees, with no indication that the Government intends to reconsider the changes.

MGA will continue to advocate on the issue and explore opportunities to work with other organisations across the higher education sector.

4.1.2 MGA Enterprise Agreement update

The MGAEC received an update on the commencement of negotiations for a new MGA Enterprise Agreement, with the current Agreement due to nominally expire on 30 September 2026.

The Committee was advised that the NTEU is required to be invited to participate in the bargaining process. The NTEU has advised that it does not currently have capacity to participate in the full negotiations. The EO advised that legal advice will be sought on how to proceed with the bargaining process.

4.1.3 Budget adjustment

The EO provided the Committee with an update on matters that have required external legal advice during 2026, including an employment matter relating to a return-to-work process and a governance matter relating to the Enterprise Agreement and bargaining process. It was noted that, as a result of these matters, legal expenses have been higher than anticipated, with further legal costs expected for the remainder of the year.

The MGAEC approved an increase to the Legal Fees budget from \$15,000 to \$35,000 to accommodate these additional costs.

It was moved:

That the MGA Executive Committee approved an increase to the Legal Fess from \$15,000 to \$35,000 for 2026.

Moved: Parv Haria

Seconded: Ananya Verma

(In favour: 14 , Abstain: 1 , Against: 0)

The motion is carried.

4.1.4 HELP Debt limits and payment options for graduate students

MGAEC member James Damches spoke to this item, raising concerns about the impact of the Commonwealth HELP loan limit on postgraduate students undertaking high-cost professional degrees, particularly Juris Doctor and Medicine students. Some students may reach the HELP loan cap before completing their degree, requiring them to pay remaining tuition fees upfront.

James sought the MGAEC's endorsement to pursue this matter with the University in his capacity as an MGA student representative, including advocating for more flexible payment options for affected students. This could include allowing eligible students to pay outstanding fees progressively over a

longer period through an agreed payment plan, rather than requiring payment in one or two large installments.

Outcome: The Committee supported James in pursuing this matter. The EO agreed to assist James in identifying and connecting with the appropriate University contacts to progress the advocacy.

4.2.1 Closure of Climate Active Program

The Chair invited the HR and Finance Manager to speak to this item. Charlie provided the MGAEC with an update on MGA's Climate Active certification. It was noted that the Australian Government will end the Climate Active certification program in June 2027, with organisations able to withdraw earlier. The MGAEC discussed the benefits, costs and administrative requirements of continuing certification, including the ongoing annual cost and reporting requirements.

It was recommended that MGA continue its participation until 31 December 2026 and complete the CY2026 reporting cycle. Following the end of the program, MGA will continue its commitment to sustainability through participation in relevant Monash initiatives and the development of an MGA sustainability framework with longer-term objectives and priorities.

Outcome: The MGAEC supported the recommendation to conclude MGA's participation in the Climate Active program at the end of December 2026 and a review of the MGA Sustainability plan for the organisation.

4.2.2 Orientation Report Sem 2, 2026

The Semester 2, 2026 Orientation Report was noted.

4.2.3 The Victorian Government's report on the Inquiry into University Governance

The Chair advised that the recommendations arising from the Victorian Government's Inquiry into University Governance were raised at the recent VCSPAF meeting.

The Vice-Chancellor advised that the University would await the Victorian Government's response and determine which recommendations are adopted before considering any implications for Monash. It was also noted that any decisions in relation to University governance would ultimately be a matter for the University Council.

4.2.4 VCSPAF Report

The Chair briefed the Committee on the recent VCSPAF meeting between the Vice-Chancellor and the MSOs. She noted that the Vice-Chancellor acknowledged MGA's delivery of 305 events in 2026 and expressed support for MGA's concerns regarding the increase to the 485 visa application fee, noting that the University had also raised its concerns through relevant channels.

She also advised that the University is reviewing the HDR stipend rate, with a further update potentially available by the next meeting.

6. Next meeting

The next meeting would be held in September 2026 at a time and place to be confirmed by members' availability.

The meeting closed at 6:05pm