

Meeting 08/2023

A meeting of the **Monash Graduate Association (MGA) Executive Committee** was held from 2.30pm – 4.30pm, Friday 1 September 2023 (August meeting), in Room H8.01, Building H, Caulfield campus and by zoom.

MINUTES

1. Formal matters

1.1 Acknowledgement of country

The MGAEC 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: Saham Hettiarachchi, Maria Lammerding, Ummatul Siddique, Calvin Chow, Arathy Kurup, Ying-Xian Lai, Harshita Rathi, Jonathan Robberts, Rachel Lee, Mahima Choudhary, Phil Cairns, Grace Bennetts, Saral Gupta, Prashansa Chadha

In attendance: Jenny Reeder, Executive Officer
Janice Boey, Student Engagement Manager
James Breheny, Advocate
Leilani Duong, Student Engagement Officer

By invitation: Annie Roys President PPA
Bryce Barber Treasurer PPA

Zuzana Quinn, Senior Advocate gave a ten minute presentation on Conflicts of Interest.

1.3 Consideration of the agenda

No items were added. However, The Voice forthcoming referendum was suggested as a topic for a future meeting discussion.

2. Minutes and Action sheet

2.1 Minutes of meeting 07/2023 for confirmation

It was moved:

That the minutes of MGAEC meeting July 07/2023 be confirmed.

Moved: Calvin Chow

Seconded: Jonathan Robberts

Carried.

2.2 Action sheet

Noted.

3. Reports

3.1 President's report

Noted.

3.2 Members' reports

Noted.

Jonathan updated the committee as to his forthcoming meeting with the Minister.

Rachel informed the committee she was pursuing a hygiene issue which had been reported to her regarding the Graduate Hub. It was noted that this space was managed by MGRO, and was not an MGA space. Rachel agreed to confer with MGA staff prior to contacting MGRO or BPD.

3.3 Staff report

Noted.

3.4 July 2023 profit and loss report

Noted with discussion. Calvin asked for clarification regarding the office-bearer budget allocation, noting that the profit and loss report showed that 80% of the International Students' Officer budget for the year had been spent by the previous office bearer. It was explained that because the OB term of office ran for the financial year (from July to June), and the budget was written for the calendar year (from January to December), there were often some anomalies in the OB budget expenditure handed from one committee to the next. The committee were informed that despite any expenditure of previous OB holders, every incoming committee member was issued with the full allocation at the start of their term.

3.5 MGAEC meeting attendance records

Noted.

4. Business

4.1 Business arising

4.1.1 Election breach allegations

The election breach allegations were discussed in camera. While the discussions with the University over the election breach allegations against the MGA were almost concluded and would confirm that the complaint was vexatious, the University had used the occasion to make further demands on the MGA, seeking the right to investigate the MGA at any time, over any matter, in perpetuity, and requesting the withdrawal of a factual statement.

The MGAEC understood why the University might want to have the right to investigate an Monash Student Organisation (MSO) when there appeared to be inappropriate conduct, given the University's provision of funding to the MSOs and taking into account the University's concern about reputational damage. However, it was agreed that any permission granted would need to be very specific.

The committee also noted that it was impossible to comply with the University's request for the MGA to retract a statement ("*The University does not have the authority to investigate the MGA without the MGAEC's consent.*") that was legally correct and factual.

It was agreed to form a working group to consider the MGA’s response to the University’s various requests. Saham, Seral, Maria, Rachel, Jonathan, Calvin, and Umma expressed interest.

4.1.2 Budget Amendments

It was noted that the Annual Information Statement had been lodged on behalf of the MGA. Clarification was sought and provided on the role of Workcover for staff. It was explained that Workcover insurance was mandatory pursuant to legislation, and had recently increased by 100%. There was no choice regarding the insurance provider, who was nominated by the government.

It was moved:

That the budget amendments presented to the MGAEC be confirmed.

Moved: Jonathan Robberts
 Seconded: Mahima Choudhary
 Carried.

4.1.3 Bank Motions

In his role as Vice President, Jonathan Robberts needed to be added as signatory to MGA Bank accounts.

It was moved:

That the only four signatories of the following MGA bank accounts:

BSB: 033 289, Acc: 285 369

BSB:033 181, Acc: 345 569

BSB: 033 289, Acc: 275 435

BSB: 033 090, Acc: 617127

shall be:

Position	Current Incumbent	Type
MGAEC President	Sahampath Hettiarachchi	Student
MGAEC Vice-President	Jonathan Robberts	Student
Executive Officer	Jenny Reeder	Staff
Student Engagement Manager	Janice Boey	Staff

These signatory changes come into effect on 27 July 2023 and supercede any signatory delegations on file with the bank.

Moved: Evelyn Ying-Xian Lai
Seconded: Mahima Choudhary
Carried.

In her role as Events Officer, Valentinna Mehdizadeh required access to an MGA debit card to purchase catering to run events at Peninsula and Parkville campuses.

It was moved:

That an additional MGA staff position be a holder of an MGA Debit card linked to MGA bank account as follows:

Position	Current Incumbent	Type
Events Officer	Valentinna Mehdizadeh	Staff

Moved: Saral Gupta
Seconded: Ummatul Siddique
Carried.

4.1.4 MGA x MSA food market report

This series of free food markets was very successful and was funded by a grant from the Victorian State Government. Discussion took place about extending this program to the Peninsula campus. It was explained that Valentinna was a new staff member employed specifically to run programs on Peninsula and Parkville campuses. The MGA now had the capacity to run this program in a similar form at both Parkville and Peninsula campuses.

4.1.5 PTV campaign

Maria spoke to this item and reported that there was a meeting scheduled with a Greens Party MP in the following week. The MP had asked the State Government why graduate students were excluded from the public transport concession in Victoria. Last week there was a media release that a discount of 50% was available for regional travel for international students, but graduate students were excluded from eligibility. Maria noted that Melbourne prides itself on welcoming international students so this decision and the lack of access to the travel concessions for graduate students in general, sent out a contrary message.

Maria said that any slogans which could be used in a planned campaign would be most welcome.

4.1.6 Anti-racism committee

The DVC (Education) and the Equity and Diversity unit of Monash University had started a new discussion forum on how best to address racism and exclusionary practices. This committee was chaired by the PVC (Indigenous Affairs) and had requested a member be nominated to the committee by the MGAEC.

Saral, Mahima and Harshita indicated their interest so Saham asked them to decide among themselves who would join this committee on behalf of the MGA.

4.2 General Business

4.2.1 Financial Regulations

The MGA Financial regulations had been updated to reflect new financial procedures to be put in place for MGA operations.

It was moved:

That the amended Financial Regulations of the MGA be approved and adopted.

Moved: Jonathan Robberts

Seconded: Calvin Chow

Carried.

4.2.2 Supervisor of the Year

HDR members of the MGAEC were invited to be part of the judging panel for the 2023 Supervisor of the Year competition. Interested members were Umma, Calvin and Phil. It was also noted that a request had been received from a graduate student, who had suggested that given the high number of applications received annually for the competition, more than one award should be considered. It was agreed that the judging panel would also consider this request.

4.2.3 Parkville Postgraduate Association (PPA) Budget Review

Annie Roys, PPA President, and Bryce Barber, PPA treasurer, had been invited to speak to this item on behalf of the PPA. PPA had formally requested a review of and increase to its budget allocation from the MGA.

Annie requested additional funding to allow the PPA to hold scheduled events until the end of 2023, for which there was currently insufficient PPA funding. It was noted that the MGA currently over-funded Parkville by 100%, compared to the amount of SSAF received from that campus.

The MGAEC decided that this issue needed further in-depth discussion given the complexities of the matter. A working group was formed to look into the PPA proposal and MGA response attached to the agenda for this meeting. Annie requested that the working group's first meeting be held within the next two weeks. The group would comprise Mahima, Saham, Jonathan, Seral, Maria as well as Annie from the PPA.

5. Membership Matters

There was no business.

6. Next meeting

The next meeting would be held in September at a date and time to be confirmed by the MGAEC.

The meeting closed at 4.38pm.