

## Meeting 02/2023

A meeting of the **Monash Graduate Association (MGA) Executive Committee** was held from 1.00pm – 3.00pm, Friday 24 March 2023, in Building H, Room 801 (Boardroom), Caulfield campus and by zoom.

## MINUTES

### 1. Formal matters

#### 1.1 Acknowledgement of country

Radhik noted Sarah's suggestion that at each meeting the acknowledgement of country be given by a different committee member, and invited participants to take up that offer. 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

Present: Radhik Rammohan (Chair), Saham Hettiarachchi, Anumanth Senthilkumar, Sarah May, Phil Kairns, Maria Lammerding, Rose Huang, Serra D'mello, Lily Wen.

Apologies: Maggie Gendy, Ken Chiu, Michael Lin

In attendance: Jenny Reeder, Executive Officer  
Jessica Fimmel, HR and Finance Manager,  
Janice Boey, Student Engagement Manager  
Zuzana Quinn, Senior Advocate  
James Breheny, Advocate  
Ummatul Siddique, graduate student observer  
Haider Shah, graduate student observer

#### 1.3 Consideration of the agenda

Maria requested that the letter of solidarity to the LGBTIQ+ community be added at item 4.2.8.

### 2. Minutes and Action sheet

#### 2.1 Minutes of meetings 01/2023 for confirmation

It was moved:

*That the minutes of MGAEC meeting February 01/2023 be confirmed.*

Moved: Anumanth Senthilkumar

Seconded: Saham Hettiarachichi

Carried.

#### 2.2 Action sheet

Noted.



### **3. Reports**

#### **3.1 President's report**

Noted.

#### **3.2 Members' reports**

Noted.

#### **3.3 Staff report**

Noted.

#### **3.4 January and February 2023 profit and loss report**

Noted.

#### **3.5 MGAEC meeting attendance records**

Noted.

#### **3.6 Sustainability report**

It was noted that this year the MGA's annual Sustainability Week would take place during week 10 in semester one (May 8-12). During this week the MGA would activate a range of sustainability activities across the main campuses, and members were encouraged to volunteer their time to assist in promoting and running the various events.

### **4. Business**

#### **4.1 Business arising**

##### **4.1.1 Bank Australia accounts**

Committee members who had not yet verified their identity and notified the Finance team were asked to do so as soon as possible.

##### **4.1.2 Clayton to Caulfield shuttle bus**

Further to BPD's review of the Clayton to Caulfield shuttle bus, the run had been reduced from every 20 minutes to every 30 minutes. There had been some feedback on social media from students, reporting that this had created overcrowding and there had been instances where students had been unable to fit onto a bus and had had to wait an additional 30 minutes for the next bus. The MGA had posted to social media asking for feedback from graduate students.

BPD had subsequently met with the MGA and informed them of the following:

- The university was aware that some shuttle bus runs between Clayton and Caulfield had been so crowded that students had missed out on a seat;
- The data showed that this was occurring only over a narrow window during the day;
- It had been decided to cap each bus at 70 passengers (slightly under maximum capacity) to ensure the buses didn't get too crowded;
- Any students waiting for a bus but unable to board because of lack of seats, could approach a university marshall onsite to request a free myki card. The card would have enough credit to pay for a fare between Caulfield and Clayton using the public transport system;
- The compensation program would run until 31 March when it would be reviewed and if there were still overcrowding problems, would be extended.

The committee raised the following concerns about the university's response:

- the 900 bus took twice as long as the shuttle bus to travel between Caulfield and Clayton;
- the lack of safety of students using public transport;
- the frequency of shuttle bus runs was insufficient during exams;
- there was a danger that the university would stop the compensation program when student demand dropped.

It was agreed that BPD should also be encouraged to move forward with their plan to replace buses with electric buses as soon as possible. Anumanth requested that these concerns be conveyed to the university, and announced that in his role as MIISON President, he would be objecting to the university's proposals.

#### **4.1.3 Digital ID cards**

It was reported that the plan to issue only digital ID cards to newly enrolling students had been scrapped due to a number of problems arising with the implementation of the digital card system. Newly enrolling students now had been given the choice of a physical or digital card. It was anticipated that the digital card system would be introduced once the university had worked through the current problems and properly scoped out the project.

#### **4.1.4 Semester 1 orientation report**

A summary of MGA's activities over the recent orientation period was reviewed. Radhik thanked staff and committee members for their efforts during orientation, and noted that the organisation should aim to continue to increase their reach each orientation.

### **4.2 General business**

#### **4.2.1 AGM regulations and constitutional changes**

The committee noted that the AGM regulations had been updated, with administrative changes such as converting "MPA" to "MGA" and correcting clause number references. There were no substantive changes to the regulations.

It was moved:

*That the AGM regulations as amended be accepted.*

Mover: Maria Lammerding

Seconder: Saham Hettiarachchi

Carried.

The committee were reminded that any constitutional changes they wished to make should be considered over the next 6 weeks as they would need to be put to the AGM as formal motions. Motions for the AGM needed to be submitted to the MGA by 26 April, so they could be advertised to the graduate student community for the requisite period prior to the AGM, scheduled to be held by zoom on 18 May 2023.

#### **4.2.2 MGA report on HDR satisfaction**

The recently completed MGA report *Identifying HDR student satisfaction, Monash University 2022* had been circulated to the Graduate Research Committee and Standing Committee on Mental Health. The report investigated HDR students'

satisfaction levels across a wide range of areas including: reasons for enrolment; choice of Monash; supervision; milestones; PhD coursework; progress delays; reasons for considering leaving; support services; and health.

Overall, the report showed that HDR students were predominantly satisfied with their academic experience at Monash, but had seen a decline in mental health.

Individual reports were being prepared for each faculty.

#### **4.2.3 Revised 2023 budget**

The committee were informed that at the end of 2023 the current three year funding agreement with the university was due to conclude and any funding held above the agreed reserve of \$600,000 would be required to be handed back to the university. It was reported that at this stage the current 2023 budget would result in a reserve well under \$600,000, so once 2023 graduate student enrolment numbers had been finalised after census date, it was anticipated that some adjustments would need to be made to the 2023 budget to reduce expenditure and ensure some funding flowed to the reserve. The reserve would be required to tide over MGA operations while the new funding agreement was under negotiation.

A draft set of budget amendments would be presented to the committee for consideration at the April meeting.

#### **4.2.4 Education Legislative Amendment**

It was noted that the MGA had made a brief submission to the government's proposal to abolish indexation and raise the minimum repayment income for education and training loans. As a result, the MGA had been invited to send a graduate student representative to participate on a graduate student panel at the senate hearing. Given the session was only one hour long and being held in Sydney, the position was offered to Jonathan Robberts, the MGA's HASS representative on the Graduate Research Committee, who was currently located in Sydney and had a good understanding of federal education legislation affecting graduates. The committee expressed their gratitude to Jonathan.

#### **4.2.5 Disability Project Group**

Interest was sought from the committee for a volunteer to become the representative on the recently re-established Disability Project Group, sitting under the DVC(Education) portfolio. Rose expressed interest and it was agreed to nominate her as the MGA representative on this group.

#### **4.2.6 PTV campaign**

Maria spoke to the work she had done to continue the MGA campaign on PTV concessions for graduate students. Maria reported that after working closely with Amy Barton on the campaign last year, there had been a short break in lobbying after the state elections had concluded.

Maria put forward the following proposals to continue with the campaign:

- lobby an MP to ask the state government to formally cost the introduction of PTV concessions for graduate students;
- re-establish contact with Rod Barton, who although having been unsuccessful in the elections, was still leader of the Transport Party so was keen to support the MGA's campaign;

- re-establish contact with Greens member Sam Hibbins, who was also supportive of the MGA's campaign;
- work with administrative staff members employed with Transport Victoria who could help advise on the content and format of any proposals' drafted by the MGA.

Maria stressed that it was important the campaign remained under student control, and suggested that given the MGA already had a campaign up and running, all Victorian universities should be brought under the umbrella of the MGA's campaign so that students were working together rather than running different campaigns.

Anumanth spoke about CAPA's obligation to represent all universities, and their efforts to progress the PTV concession issue including meeting with key political players such as the Premier of Victoria and the Victorian head of transport. CAPA had developed an online survey to find out how students used public transport and Anumanth sought the committee's approval to support CAPA's efforts. Some suggestions for improvement were made regarding CAPA's survey, and it was suggested that the committee receive advice from MGA staff on the survey to ensure the data collected was targeted and relevant.

It was agreed that the committee should work with all sides of politics in their efforts to garner support for a graduate student PTV concession, with the focus being on the issue, not the politics.

Radhik suggested that Maria and Anumanth should both continue with their work in this area, involving Monash students at a local level and using CAPA to engage students state-wide.

#### **4.2.7 MGAEC dinner**

It was agreed that the committee would meet for their annual dinner at 6pm, on Thursday, 13 April, at a restaurant close to Caulfield campus. The staff would assist in finding an appropriate venue.

#### **4.2.8 Letter of solidarity to LGBTIQ+ community**

Maria raised concerns about the behaviour against trans-gender people in the recent Melbourne demonstrations, and proposed that the MGA team up with the undergraduate student associations to write a letter of solidarity with the trans-gender community.

Phil supported the idea, commenting that a letter of support for the trans-gender community also showed that the MGA and Monash community supported inclusivity, and supported the idea that everyone was valued. The letter also tied in with trans-gender day which was scheduled for the following week. Phil noted that there were two student groups at the demonstration, and a lot of people in that group were pushed, punched and pepper-sprayed. It appeared that the police targeted student groups while the Nazi group were allowed to progress through.

Sarah noted that while trans-gender students may not have been in attendance at the event, they may still have been negatively affected by the event.

The committee unanimously agreed that the MGA should issue a letter of solidarity about the event in conjunction with the undergraduate student associations.

## **5. Membership matters**

### **5.1 Resignation**

The committee acknowledged receipt of the resignation of Sonia Daga, and called for nominations to the vacant Vice-President position from within the current membership.

Maria Lammerding nominated herself to the position. Sarah May nominated herself to the position and was seconded by Anumanth Senthilkumar. Maria agreed to withdraw her nomination in support of Sarah's nomination. There being no further nominations, an election was held, and Sarah was declared elected to the position of Vice-President, and congratulated by the committee.

### **5.2 Cooption application**

One cooption application for the Peninsula campus representative position had been received from Ummatul Siddique. Ummatul was given the opportunity to introduce herself and speak briefly about her interest in the position of Peninsula Campus Representative. Radhik seconded Ummatul's nomination. The committee discussed the nomination in confidence. An election was held and Ummatul was declared elected to the Peninsula Campus Representative position, and congratulated by the committee.

## **6. Next meeting**

It was agreed that the next meeting would be held in April at a date and time to be confirmed by the committee members.

The meeting closed at 2.55pm.