

## Meeting 07/2019

A meeting of the **Monash Graduate Association (MGA) Executive Committee** was held from 10:30am – 12:30am on Thursday 25 July, 2019 in the Sable Café meeting room, HB25, Caulfield campus.

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### 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.*

A minute's silence was held to acknowledge the lands as they used to be.

##### 1.2 Attendance

###### Present

Pooja Bhageria, Cammi Murrup-Stewart, Robyn Oxley (Chair), Roy Rozario, Egor Skaletckii, Roby Vota, Xinxin Yan (from item 2.2)

**In attendance** Jenny Reeder, Jessica Van Gent

**Apologies** Julie Dao Georgia Dudgeon, Allison Ho, Nikhil Kathe, Jessica Lu, Caitlyn Neale, Travis Hong.

**Absent** Ash Solanki

##### 1.3 Consideration of the agenda

No further items were added. As the committee was inquorate, it was agreed that items would be discussed and motions circulated via email to all members for voting.

#### 2. Minutes and Action sheet

##### 2.1 Minutes of MGAEC meetings 05/19 and 06/19 for confirmation

It was proposed:

*That the minutes of MGAEC meetings 04/2019, 05/2019 and 06/2019 be confirmed.*

Proposed by: Robyn Oxley

##### 2.2 Action sheet

An update was provided on item 4.1.2 (01/2019). It was agreed that informal advisory groups for MGAEC office-bearers would be created in order to allow input into MGA activities from the wider postgraduate community. Roby commented on the success of the Queer advisory body he had created by inviting the unsuccessful candidates for the Queer position on MGAEC to be included in decision-making around MGA events for the queer postgraduate community. Such committees would be advisory in nature with ultimate decision-making responsibility sitting with the MGAEC office-bearers. Cammi suggested that the advisory groups were able to incorporate both students and relevant University staff and it was agreed that this would be an option open to OBs.

### 3. Reports

#### 3.1 President's report

Further to her written report, Robyn updated the committee on the status of the SSAF funding dispute between the MGA and the MSA. A letter from Prof Susan Elliott, DVC and VP (Education), directing the MGA to pay 15% of their Clayton postgraduate funding to MSA, the Clayton undergraduate student association, was circulated to the committee. The funding was to be an ongoing annual fee and effective immediately. This would increase the amount of postgraduate money going to the undergraduates in 2019 from \$60,000 to \$203,000. Apart from the obvious conclusion that this decision would not benefit Clayton postgraduates in any possible way, the committee noted that:

- negotiations with all other undergraduate student associations on Caulfield, Peninsula and Parkville had been entered into in good faith and had been successfully concluded, with \$65,000 allocated to Caulfield, \$5000 to Peninsula and joint project funding only to Parkville.
- the MSA's own statistics showed postgraduate use of their top three most popular services as being: 5% of Clayton postgraduates enrolled in Clubs and Societies; 2% of Clayton postgraduates enrolled in undergraduate-run volunteering; and 2% of Clayton postgraduates attending an MSA weekly free food event.
- the MSA had initially requested 10% of the postgraduate funding, later increasing their claim to 15%, indicating their lack of understanding of how negotiation works.
- the MGA's survey results showed that the only undergraduate-run service of significant value to Clayton postgraduates was Clubs and Societies, and the MSA's own costings showed the postgraduate component of that service to be worth approximately \$20,000.
- the amount of money received by the MSA per undergraduate is already twice that received by the MGA per postgraduate, before the transfer of any funding from MGA to MSA takes place.
- for the past 25 years the MGA has provided services to Honours students who are located at multiple off-campus hospital sites. This cohort are Clayton-enrolled undergraduates so the MGA does not receive any funding for this service. There was no discussion about funding being transferred to MGA for this service to undergraduates.

It was also noted that Professor Elliott has been working with MSA to create a federated student association. The MGA has announced that they will not participate in these discussions as mergers with undergraduate student associations have never proved beneficial for postgraduates; postgraduate interests are always marginalised and the cultures of the student associations are very different. Postgraduates continue to express concerns about the highly politicised nature of MSA and its links to federal party politics, which results in actions by their committee such as block voting and supporting causes outside student interests. Postgraduates on the MGA are free from external politics and represent a wide variety of cultures and nationalities. They are not aligned with or directed by any specific political party and are therefore free to act in the interests of the postgraduate community.

There has been no interest from the other undergraduate student associations in a merger. The committee expressed a concern that the decision by Professor Elliott may be being used as a back door to further the federation of the student associations.

The committee discussed the matter in detail. It was agreed to meet and determine an action plan at the planning retreat in August. The committee reconfirmed their commitment to carry out the directive received from the postgraduate community to reduce the amount of postgraduate funding going to the undergraduates.

It was moved:

*That a maximum payment of \$60,000 be approved for transfer to the MSA for 2019.*

Proposed by: Roy.

Seconded by: Roby.

### **3.2 Office-bearer reports**

*Pooja Bhageria, Caulfield Campus Rep*

Pooja spoke to her report and updated the committee on her attendance at the CISA conference. She noted that MGA were well represented and made good connections with a number of other graduate student associations. One proposal put to the CISA committee at the AGM was to create an advisory committee to oversee their plan to implement a new fee structure, for which Pooja volunteered herself. Additionally, CISA agreed to an SGM to allow for mid-term amendments to the way CISA operated.

### **3.3 Staff report**

Noted.

### **3.4 Profit and loss report June 2019**

Noted.

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

Noted.

## **4. Business**

### **4.1 Business arising**

#### **4.1.1 SSAF capital projects funding**

The 27 MGA proposals for the 2020 SSAF Capital Development funding were noted by the committee. The proposals are to be considered by campus advisory committees, on which the MGA has membership, over the next few months.

#### **4.1.2 Program for recognition of university staff**

Roy spoke to his University staff recognition program. On approval from the committee, MGA staff would develop the proposal and create a trial program. It was moved:

*That the MGAEC approve the establishment of a program that recognises outstanding contributions to MGA from university staff.*

Proposed by: Robyn.

#### **4.1.3 MGA policy on events and refunds**

The updated policy was noted.

It was moved:

*That the draft MGA policy on events and refunds be approved.*

Proposed by: Roy.

Seconded by: Xinxin.

#### **4.1.4 Term deposit**

It was noted that the MGA term deposit, principle and interest, was reinvested for 12 months at 2.22%.

#### **4.1.5 Semester 2 MGAEC meeting dates**

Availability sheets were requested from all committee members by the end of the week in order to set the dates for the semester two MGAEC meetings.

#### **4.1.6 Email motions (CAPA sponsorship & IEAA conference)**

Two motions were considered by the MGAEC via email prior to the July meeting. It was noted that all members participated in the voting and both motions were declared carried on 27 June 2019.

*1. That the MGAEC approve sponsorship of \$10,000 for the CAPA 40th anniversary ACM to be held in December 2019, on the understanding that there will be no fee for the Monash University contingent to attend the 2019 ACM.*

For: 10

Against: 0

Abstentions: 5

Carried.

*2. That the MGAEC approve funding for two MGAEC members to attend the IEAA one-day conference on Tackling mental health for international students to be held at University of Melbourne.*

For: 15

Against: 0

Abstentions: 0

Carried.

### **4.2 General Business**

#### **4.2.1 Contract cheating submission to TEQSA**

The MGA submission was noted.

#### **4.2.2 MGA semester 2 program of events**

The proposed event schedule was noted. Pooja requested that the games night be opened to more students due to its popularity. As it was a new initiative, it was agreed that the inaugural event would be used to gauge interest, and future events could be expanded should the event prove popular.

#### **4.2.3 Fares Fair Cross-campus steering committee**

It was noted that Devendra Singh would continue his work as an MGA representative on the Fares Fair committee.

#### **4.2.4 MGA annual ball**

It was noted that the ball was only a few weeks away and committee members were encouraged to attend and invite their fellow graduate students.

#### **4.2.5 Financial assistant position**

The creation of a new staff position, Finance Assistant, was proposed to assist with the increased workload of the MGA HR & Finance Officer.

It was moved:

*That the position of Financial Assistant be created as a part-time, 0.6 fraction, two year contract at the level of SUE 3.*

Proposed by: Robyn.

#### **4.2.6 Emergency Support regulations**

The new regulations were noted by the committee, and it was proposed:

*That the draft MGA Emergency Support Scheme regulations be approved.*

Moved by: Roy

Seconded: Roby

#### **4.2.7 MGA conference attendance**

The MGA's yearly budgeted conference attendance for committee and graduates was noted.

#### **4.2.8 Disability Officer and accessibility guidelines**

Cammi highlighted the need for a Disability office-bearer role to ensure that MGA is an accessible organisation for all students. It was noted that the MGA's previous role that covered this cohort, the Access and Equity Officer had been removed as it was agreed that equity and access should sit across everything the organisation does. Cammi suggested that in the creation of this more specific role, MGA could partner with the University's Disability Support Services unit, and at the same time create formal guidelines for the executive committee and MGA student events to ensure they are inclusive. It was agreed that the proposal and its logistics would be discussed further during the MGAEC planning retreat.

### **5. Membership**

Elections for International Students' Officer were held over to the August MGAEC meeting.

### **6. Next meeting**

It was noted that the next meeting would be held at the MGAEC planning retreat on either August 10<sup>th</sup> or 11<sup>th</sup>.