

University of Melbourne Student Union
Advocacy & Legal Student Advisory Group

Confirmed Minutes

2:00 pm, 14.08.2017

Meeting 1 of Semester 2

Training Room 1, 3rd Floor
Union House

Chair: Phoebe Churches, Manager, Advocacy & Legal

1 Welcome and Procedural Matters

1.1 Apologies

Nadia Di Battista, Eva Birch, Brad Night, Lida Rashidi

1.2 Attendance

Phoebe Churches, Michelle Almiron, Reeanna Maloney, Josh Tseng, Daniel Paradis, Roger Samuel, Yasmin Luu, Georgia Daley, Isabelle Butler, Alanna Smith, Emily De Rango, Yasmin Luu, Alston Chu, Paul Hornsby, Donna Markwell, Royston Chua

1.3 Confirmation of previous minutes: Donna Markwell

2 A & L Service Reports

2.1 Advocacy case work

Phoebe advised that the Quarterly Service Report appeared to have grown beyond its intended audience. She noted that, while the extended interest at the University was welcomed, it also required some more introductory material in the reports, to provide appropriate context to the growing audience, for which it was not originally intended. Originally, the Quarterly Service Report (now in its fifth year and archived on website), was produced in response to obligations specified under the University contract to supply advocacy services to the University. Accordingly, the report has been produced fundamentally as an accountability mechanism under the contract, and to provide feedback via the Advocacy Service Reference group to the University on trends and issues identified in Advocacy casework. Over time, more and more people have obtained copies of the report (which is freely available on the website and by request), most recently the Quarterly Service Report was circulated to the membership of the University's Special Consideration Practice Leaders Advisory Group (SCPLAG) by its Chair. Unfortunately, as it was circulated without explanation or context, it appeared to raise concern among academic and professional University staff regarding its purpose and intent. This will be addressed in the next edition which will contain an introduction and context.

2.2 Legal case work

Reanna reported that the Legal Service is running smoothly and is currently very busy. One of the main issues at the moment is tenancy and especially those matters requiring representation at VCAT.

Emily enquired whether Intellectual Property (IP) issues could be referred to the legal service.

Reeanna reported that Isabelle recently held a forum attended by over 20 people to discuss IP issues at the University. She noted that one of the complexities is that each individual's IP issue is potentially very different, so it can be difficult to provide generalist advice.

Isabelle reported that the students who attended the forum were very keen to see further development on advice in this area. Accordingly, the Legal Service is committed to becoming more conversant with these issues in the University context, and will be working with the Advocacy Service to provide coherent support to students with IP matters.

Emily noted that there is an opportunity for the Legal Service to attend various University working groups (particularly a subcommittee of the Academic Board) about these issues. Reeanna enquired about the groups oversight. Emily stated that faculties have direct oversight of this committee and encouraged the Legal Service to become involved in them.

Phoebe stated that one of the benefits of the restructure of the Legal Service and of providing advice over the phone in focussed ways has allowed for VCAT representational work which the Service could not do before. These include assisting with intervention orders as well as tenancy and other VCAT matters.

2.3 Projects and initiatives

2.3.1 UMSU Advocacy Service

Phoebe reported that Division's current 'project' was moving to the fourth floor by the end of the month where the Division will be occupying the east end. This will give Advocacy and Legal considerably more space, and allow for the respective service delivery models to develop to provide more effectively.

Reeanna reported that the Legal Service will soon be recruiting volunteers, however there are potential conflict of interest issues for Melbourne University students assisting other Melbourne University students. As such, the Legal Service will investigate ways to provide volunteers opportunities to assist with unmet legal need in the general public. For example, many victim/survivors of domestic violence cannot get free legal advice because their partners have used all the free legal services throughout the community, thereby creating a conflict of interest. The Legal Service receives regular calls from women in this situation desperate for assistance.

Phoebe suggested that we will need to look at various grants to fund this, and/or the ways in which it can be funded as an allowed activity under SSAF.

3 Reports from Student Office Bearers

3.1 Items of interests related to Advocacy or Legal Services

Emily mentioned the recent changes to the duration of research higher degrees. She thanked Michelle for meeting with her in relation to the Advocacy Service's work in the area. The GSA was currently coordinating a group complaint with 800 signatures. Emily noted that many academics were against the retrospective changes as well.

In that context, Phoebe asked how the changes got through the Academic Board. Emily responded that only a small number of Academic Board members attended the meeting when the vote occurred.

- 4 Other Business
 - 5 Next Meeting
 - 6 Close – 2.56 pm
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Membership:

Executive Officer & Chair: Phoebe Churches, Manager, Advocacy & Legal

2 representatives elected by and from the Education Committee;

2 representatives elected by and from the Welfare Committee;

2 representatives elected by and from the UMSU International Committee;

2 representatives from GSA;

Education (Academic Affairs) Officer(s);

Indigenous Officer(s);

Welfare Officer(s);

President, UMSU;

Secretary, UMSU;

President, UMSU International;

Vice-President (Education and Welfare), UMSU International; and

Members of the Student Representative Network.