



# The UMSU 2023 Annual Report



## Acknowledgement of Country

UMSU respectfully acknowledges the Traditional Owners and Custodians of the lands on which we work – the **Wurundjeri and Boon Wurrung people of the Kulin Nation**. We pay our respects to Elders past, present and emerging. Sovereignty has never been ceded. This always was and always will be, **Aboriginal land**.

**THE UMSU INDIGENOUS DEPARTMENT**

[umsu.unimelb.edu.au/indigenous](https://umsu.unimelb.edu.au/indigenous)

**THE MURRUP BARAK INSTITUTE:**

[murrupbarak.unimelb.edu.au](https://murrupbarak.unimelb.edu.au)

## Access & Inclusion

UMSU has a long history of fostering a diverse and inclusive community of students, staff and visitors. UMSU provides support, advocacy and opportunities for creative and social pursuits for all students enrolled at the University of Melbourne.

UMSU's commitment to Access and Inclusion is demonstrated through a policy framework and the provision of resources to enable an environment that promotes inclusivity, thoughtfulness and safety.

## Disclaimer

UMSU Inc has made every effort to ensure that information in this publication is correct and current at the time of printing, but accepts no responsibility for any errors, omissions or defects, or the results of any actions taken on the basis of information in this publication.

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With thanks to our contributors: UMSU staff contributions and the Communications & Marketing Department.

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# A Message from the CEO and President

2023 was a huge year. Campus life reactivated, the cost of living soared, and Australia fractured around the Constitutional recognition of First Nations people. All of these areas renewed our belief in the importance of representation. Students were impacted by housing insecurity and the price of food amidst strident calls for accountability and the protection of human rights across the world. This has deepened recognition of the lived experience of students.

The University of Melbourne Student Union (UMSU) is an independent, not-for-profit association run by a Council of elected University of Melbourne graduate and undergraduate student representatives, with both international and domestic representation across a number of student-led departments.

For more than 150 years, University of Melbourne students have debated and advocated about significant and controversial human rights issues, including the repeal of the White Australia Policy and recognition of Native Title and land rights through to the Vietnam war moratorium and nuclear disarmament movement. UMSU understands

the important contribution of students to a progressive civil society.

The challenges in our rapidly changing world in the last few years heightens the importance of student participation in decision-making and responding genuinely to students' lived experience. In 2023, our President Hiba Adam with UMSU's People of Colour department led our antiracism campaign and produced the third edition of the Racism at Unimelb Report, with an overwhelming response from students reporting experiences of racism at the University. Our Legal Service advocated for reforms to rental tenancy legislation and was invited to speak at both Victorian and Commonwealth parliamentary housing affordability enquiries to improve the rights of student tenants.

We also understand that the practical needs of students are diverse, and interests change, so we offer a wide range of campus events, including student programs in professional theatre and gallery spaces, food relief, and volunteer opportunities, as well as offering support to hundreds of affiliated clubs and societies. Additionally,



UMSU provides a free legal and a free advocacy service for all students at the University, which amplifies the impact of our advocacy at the University and beyond. The feedback from UMSU's 2023 Student Engagement Survey highlights our growing engagement: 86% of student respondents reported they felt more connected to each other.



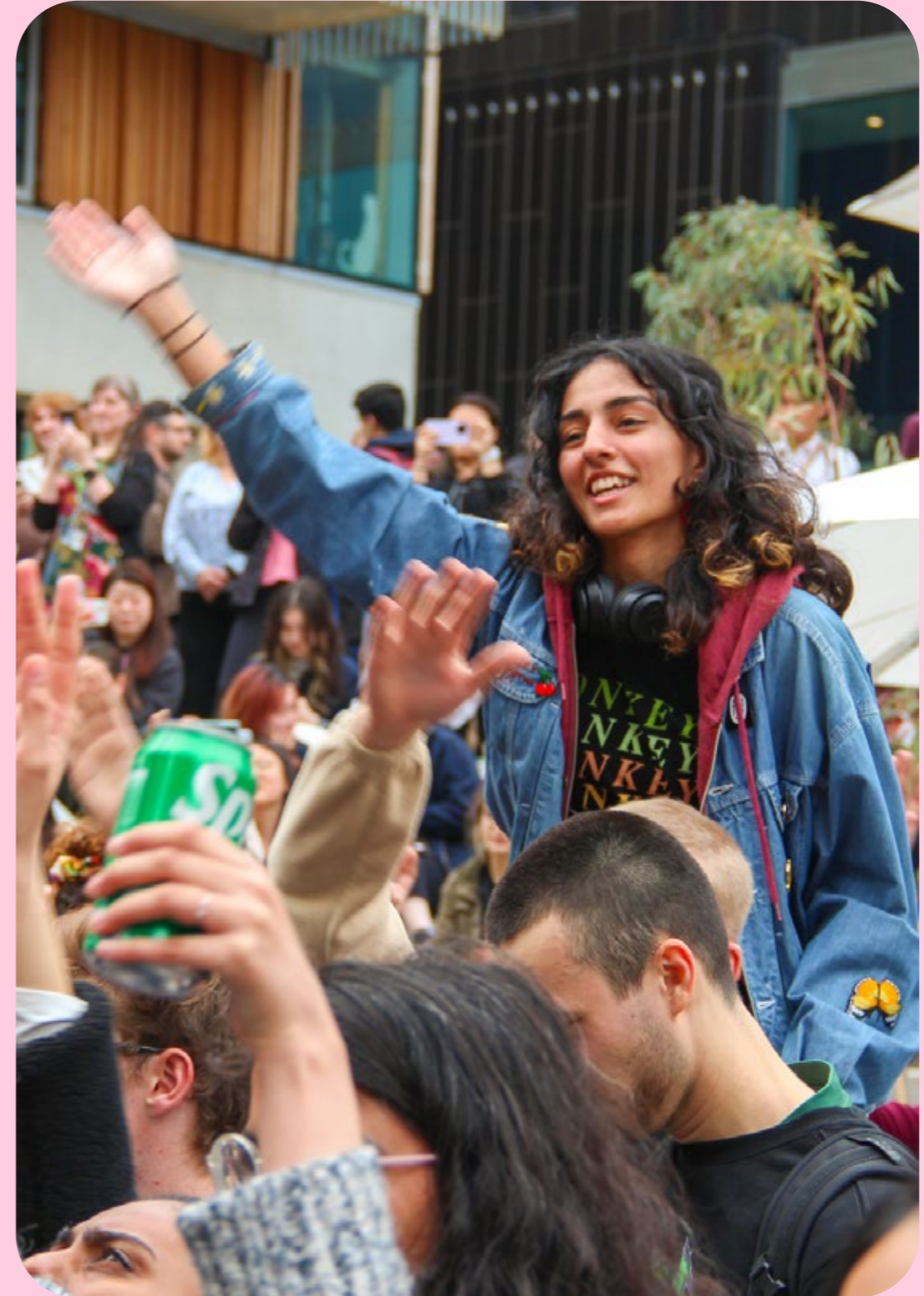
**Sara Pheasant**  
Chief Executive Officer

This Report is for the students who've laughed, learned, and grown with us, danced at our events, sung at our karaoke, kept us edgy through Farrago and student publications, made banners and advocated for fair and just policies and processes and a better world. It's for our staff and our hundreds of elected student representatives, student committee members and student volunteers who've poured their efforts into making our campus safer, more inclusive and vibrant. And it's for our collaborators and the university community who've supported us along the way.



**Hiba Adam**  
President

So, whether you've found support through our services, or simply enjoyed a quiet moment in one of our spaces, this is for you.







# UMSU — by Students for Students



Guided by our Strategic Plan 2023-2025, USMSU is an independent student-led organisation, backed by a 130-year history of dedication to student welfare and advocacy. Our primary goal is to enrich the university experience for our student members, ensuring their voices are not only heard, but valued.

This commitment shapes every aspect of our work, from advocacy and support services to the wide range of events and initiatives we offer. Our efforts are grounded in understanding the diverse needs of our student community, driving us to create an environment where students can contribute actively to make a difference for all students and shape public education in a rapidly-changing world.

## STUDENT REPRESENTATION

Throughout 2023, there were over 150 elected student representatives across a range of roles including Office Bearers, Councillors, and Committee Members. These student representatives have brought to life events, programs and publications for undergraduates and graduate students alike. Another highlight are our autonomous departments (Disabilities, People of Colour, Queer, Women's), who have tirelessly organised weekly Collectives to foster meaningful connection between students. Through a wide range of activities from weekly lunches to arts labs, these Collectives offer unique and safe spaces for community building amongst the University's academic environment.

**RACISM REPORT**

The recent publication of the “Racism at the University of Melbourne Edition 3” report marks a significant milestone in our collective journey towards understanding and addressing racism within our community. Garnering 855 responses—a staggering seventeen times the engagement of the past two years—this edition sheds a critical light on the disheartening, and at times, infuriating experiences faced by students.

The courage of those who shared their stories cannot be overstated, and we stand in solidarity with every individual affected, including those who felt unable to come forward.

It’s heartening to see our persistent efforts—spanning three years of reports, surveys, and meetings—beginning to bear fruit as we collaborate with the University on implementing the recommendations. The move towards a top-down approach to anti-racism, starting with the university executive’s public acknowledgment of the report, is a crucial step towards building trust and ensuring impactful change.

UMSU remains committed to amplifying student voices, pushing for meaningful action, and working tirelessly to ensure a safer, more inclusive university experience for all.

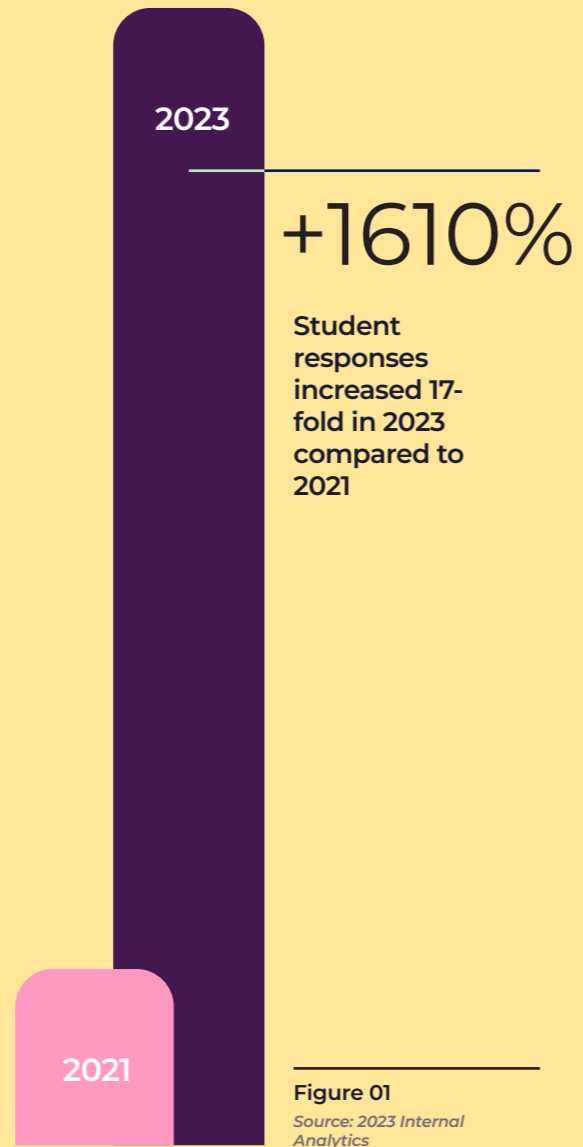
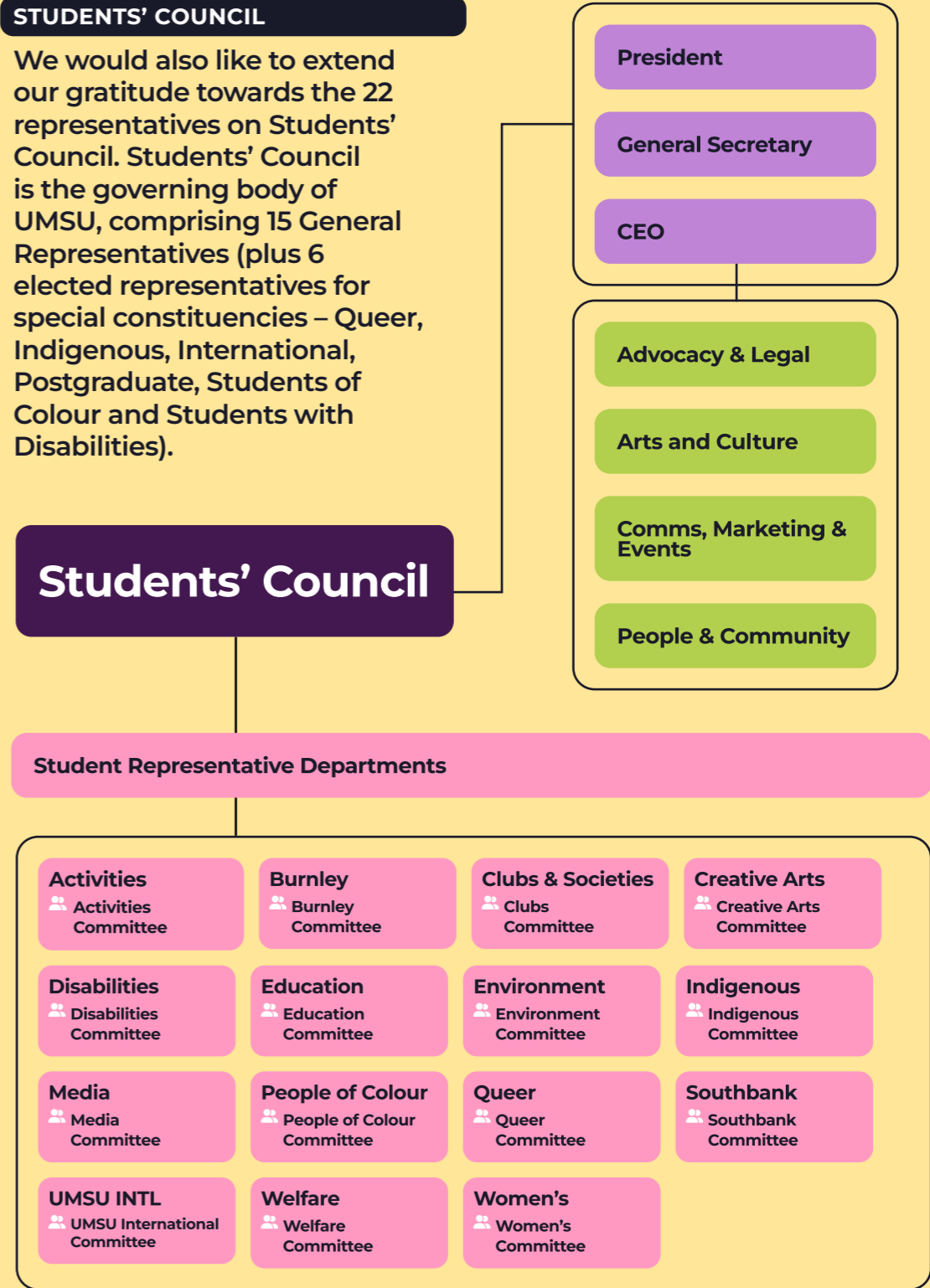


Figure 01  
Source: 2023 Internal Analytics

**STUDENTS' COUNCIL**

We would also like to extend our gratitude towards the 22 representatives on Students' Council. Students' Council is the governing body of UMSU, comprising 15 General Representatives (plus 6 elected representatives for special constituencies – Queer, Indigenous, International, Postgraduate, Students of Colour and Students with Disabilities).



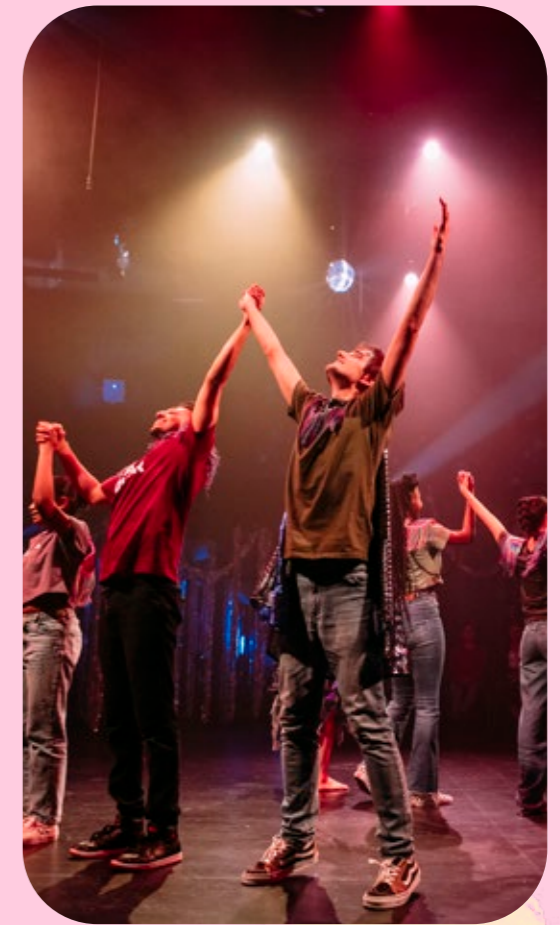
# Student Experience

Throughout the year, the Union significantly enriched the student experience beyond academics. Programs such as wellness weeks and workshops, cultural festivals, and career networking events empowered students to explore their interests, celebrate diversity, and prepare for future opportunities.

## Union House Theatre (UHT) is the hub for extracurricular student theatre

UHT programs a range of theatrical activities like productions, workshops, professional pathways, mentorships, residencies and more. UHT also supports over 20 autonomous student theatre groups as they produce their productions in the Guild and Union Theatres.

UHT fosters creativity, builds community, and nurtures confidence in our students who bravely create ambitious works on and off stage. Our students come from a variety of backgrounds, study (almost) everything available at the University of Melbourne and have various levels of experience. Our doors are open to anyone looking to get involved, and we ensure that everyone has fun, makes friends, and grows to their full creative potential.





# Union House Theatre at a glance

Student Theatre Productions

33

New Works

13

Student Theatre Groups

23

Audience Members

12,192

Cast, Crew & Creatives

1,643



No. of dolls made for UHT's 'Summer of the Seventeenth Doll'

130

No. of students in our inaugural design collective

19

No. of articles published in 'The Dialog'

29



Staff & Mentors

19

Workshops

21

Mirror balls used in student theatre shows

15

Pizzas eaten during student theatre get-togethers

58



## Summer of the Seventeenth Doll

In Semester 2, UHT presented Summer of the Seventeenth Doll by Ray Lawler in the new Union Theatre.

The old Union Theatre was built in the 1930s and from those early days, housed a vibrant community of student artists. In 1953, the Union Theatre Repertory Company (URTC) became resident in the Union Theatre and worked beside students using the venues in the non-Semester time to present impressive seasons of work, including the inaugural performance of Summer of the Seventeenth Doll. Throughout the proceeding decades many companies - students and community alike - used this space to make new works, produce existing plays and share with audiences the love of the performing arts. The venue is synonymous with burgeoning creativity and has a mile long rollcall of artists, designers, makers, managers and writers to match.

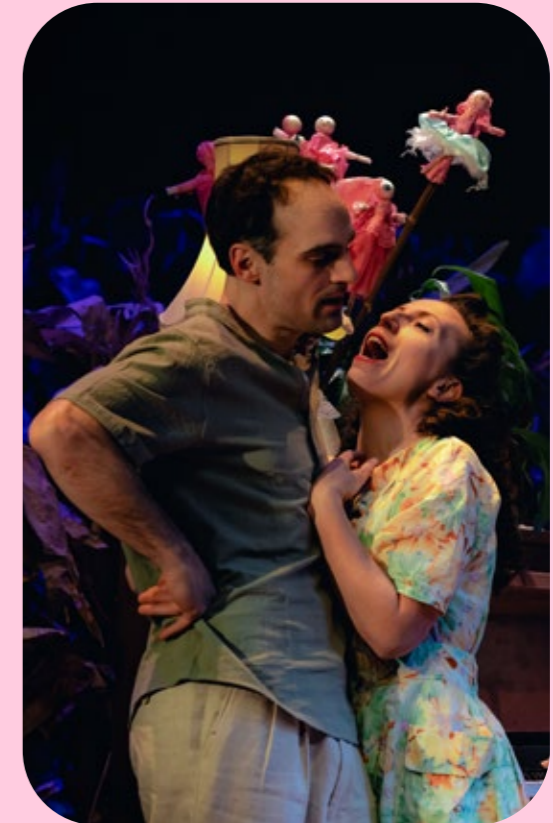
The Union Theatre in the Arts & Cultural Building is a new venue with an old history and with this production we marked a special occasion – UHT’s first presentation in this version of the theatre. It was important to offer a nod to the venue’s significance, a chance to present a play that started life in the old Union Theatre, and pull together a team that reflect UHT’s recent history in student theatre. The show was directed by alumni Petra Kalive as guest director and movement direction and producing by UHT’s Artistic Director Xanthe Beesley.

Alumni designers and actors (some of whom got their first taste of theatre here on campus) shared the stage with students, and a team of UHT technicians worked alongside the student crew in a way that fostered learning, an intergenerational practice exchange and a chance for our students to make once-in-a-lifetime connections with industry.



“Being able to work on ‘Summer of the Seventeenth Doll’ with exceptional working professionals across both cast and crew is an experience you can’t find anywhere else in the world, not even at the best drama schools ... This opportunity truly has been world class. I can’t express how important it is to have such positive influences and how much that has greatly impacted on my self development, confidence and skills. I am very grateful for the opportunities provided by UHT and of course the funding it takes to provide these life changing experiences.”

● Leah Bourne — *cast member and current student.*



## UHT Student Quotes

“Being a part of Union House Theatre (UHT) has been the highlight of my University experience. My only regret is that I joined in my final semester, I wish I’d done it earlier. I got more out of being in Do Everything Now Before the World Ends (DEN) than any of my course subjects. The professionalism and work the UHT team put in to provide such an enriching experience is amazing and I was truly blown away. I finally felt like I had a community at university and the friendships I formed in DEN are so special. I am also blown away by the fact that UHT is free for students. I have done short acting classes before that cost a fortune and I got more out of DEN than I did from any of those classes. The directors made me feel so supported and created such a safe space to express myself and explore with my peers. I had so much fun and will be forever grateful for this invaluable resource UMSU provides.’

● Pippa Arton-Powell —  
*Ensemble*

“The UHT and associated theatre groups are a great way to get involved in theatre at any level within the university. From new crew member to seasoned theatre veteran, UHT is a supportive and welcoming space to all those with an interest in theatre.”

● Student Theatre Group —  
*2023 students*

“This year, I have really connected with the value of student theatre. From the two-hander of Eleven Eleven Theatre’s debut show to the twenty-strong ensemble of ‘The Drowsy Chaperone’, the common goal has been sharing the love of theatre within the team and to the audience. The beauty of student theatre is having a space to learn, explore, mentor and connect with incredibly creative and passionate people. My highlight was directing The Drowsy Chaperone, the most rewarding opportunity to witness the growth and talent of performers and creatives. There is no more special feeling than seeing people light up when their work hits the stage, sometimes for the first time ever.”

● Emma Parfitt — *QCMADS and Eleven Eleven Theatre*

“This was my first semester and my first time living in a different country. As an international student, it felt exciting and scary as well. I tried to participate in many activities, hoping for exciting experiences and new connections. Among many things that I tried, I felt most welcomed and belonged to UHT. I learned knowledge and skills of different aspects of producing and met people who share a similar enthusiasm for theatre with me in workshops organized by UHT... I feel more confident than ever. UHT helped me to land smoothly to a new chapter of my life. I am genuinely happy and grateful to meet all the amazing people in the UHT and be a part of it.”

● Weiyang Lu — *current student*

“The fortnightly production meetings and workshopping processes with the UHT staff were invaluable, and our entire production team felt very well equipped to tackle what could have been quite a complicated show”

“The support and mentorship from UHT staff is something you wouldn’t get anywhere else and is invaluable to putting on a student theatre show.”

“So friendly, professional and accessible”

“UHT staff always go out of their way to ensure that each show is well supported”

“Organised, supportive, enthusiastic, professional and patient!”

“UHT staff are so supportive, generous, friendly and ready to support students with any level of production experience”





## Arts Programs

UMSU Arts Programs is a powerful engine room of student creativity at the University of Melbourne. Arts Programs facilitates creative activities and events across two main sites: the George Paton Gallery and the Arts Lab. Working in parallel, these spaces create a rich context of art making and a proud tradition of public exhibition making.

Our 2023 exhibition, mentorship and workshop programs represent, and tap into, the vibrant cross-section of student creativity. We enjoyed robust engagement across the board, supporting 21 student exhibition projects which included the work of over 210 artists and curators. We delivered 43 workshops in collaboration with 30 artist-tutors that involved over 800 students in hands-on making, professional development, and skill exchange. We supplemented this activity by developing festival programs for UMSU events including WinterFest, Southbank Carnival and MUDfest.

Together, our intertwined programming strands enticed students to get creative for the first time, learn new skills, build on an existing artistic passion, or take important steps in their artistic careers.

“The George Paton Gallery allows students and alumni to experiment freely, learning simultaneously while delivering high-quality work.”

● Christina Darras — 2023 program artist

## George Paton Gallery

For the last 50 years, the George Paton Gallery has been presenting exhibitions that have defined Australian art and, today, is an important venue for championing and celebrating student art. Through our annual exhibition program of student artwork, Arts Programs actively encourages experimental, collaborative, and education-focused approaches to contemporary art.

## Arts Lab

Within UMSU’s open-access art studio, the Arts Lab, Arts Programs delivers a vibrant series of accessible, dynamic and diverse creative workshops, public programs, social events and professional development sessions. This Creative Workshops Program encourages students to develop new skills, take creative risks, create unique artworks, and make new friends.

The George Paton Gallery exhibition program works companion with the Creative Workshops Program to provide a supportive convergence point for student artists, writers and curators, elevating their voices and providing them with an unforgettable university experience.





## Rowden White Library

The Rowden White Library turned 85 years old in 2023. It was our first full year open and operating since our relocation. We hosted some exciting events throughout the year, in particular the library birthday celebration in August.

Events and workshops throughout the year include:

- ✓ Annual library book sale
- ✓ WinterFest 2023 collage workshop in collaboration with Arts Programs and a mindfulness activity in collaboration with the Disabilities department
- ✓ RWL 85th Birthday Party
- ✓ National Reconciliation Week Movie Screening



### 2023 Stats

Total accounts registered

**1,936**

Holds placed

**905**

Total computer uses

**4,570**

PS5 uses

**2,096**

Total loans

**18,954**

Total recorded interactions for the year

**37,349**





# MUDfest

MUDfest is a biennial student-led arts festival that has established itself as a cultural icon on the emerging art scene in Melbourne. It is presented by UMSU's Creative Arts department supported by and in collaboration with UMSU Arts & Culture.

Reminiscent of Melbourne Fringe, MUDfest is a unique opportunity for students to gain real-world experience on campus. Any student can get involved in creativity on campus, in art practice or festival production. The festival model is designed as an opportunity for students to build confidence, bring new artworks to life, develop networks, experience professional mentorship, and build lasting friendships.

Artistic expression and cross pollination of artforms is at the heart of the festival. MUDfest provides a safe environment to experiment, be challenged and gain valuable work experience in every aspect of festival production and creative practice.

**FESTIVAL DATES:  
AUGUST 22-26, 2023**

A total of 51 events took place, and over 70 works of student art were presented across 4 venues and 5 days in 2023, from August 22-26.

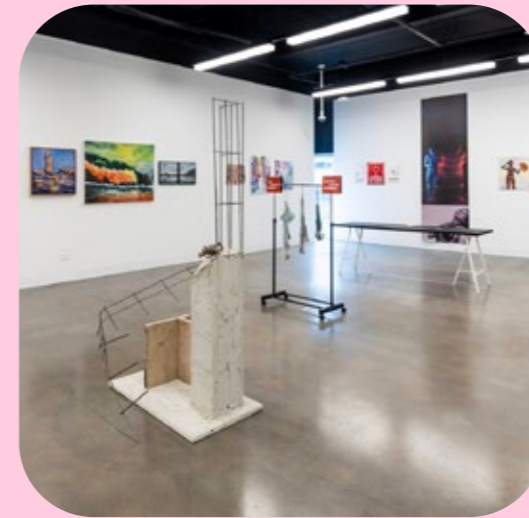
Over 2000 students attended MUDfest and the associated events.

The festival program took full advantage of the new spaces in the Student Precinct including the Guild Theatre, George Paton Gallery and Rowden White Library.

- ✔ Performing arts stream MUDfest presented 18 shows across Arts & Cultural, Student Pavilion and Market Hall doubling as the Festival Hub.
- ✔ Visual Arts - 25 student artists exhibited in the George Paton Gallery with an opening celebration. Additionally a commissioned site specific and interactive artwork titled Drawing on Complexity was made in Building 168 (UMSU's home).

- ✔ The festival presented 6 student made films showcased in the Rowden White Library Presentation Room on repeat daily across the five days.

- ✔ 11 music performances (not including the music acts for the opening and closing nights) took place in Market Hall. Digital artwork was presented across the screens in Arts & Cultural for the duration of the festival.





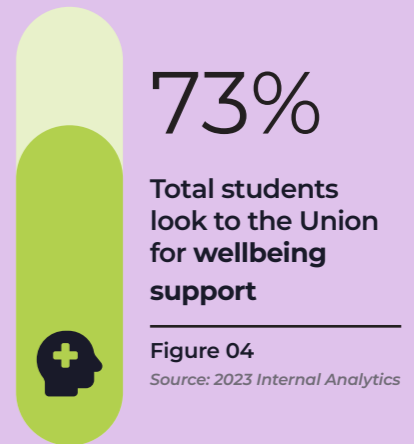
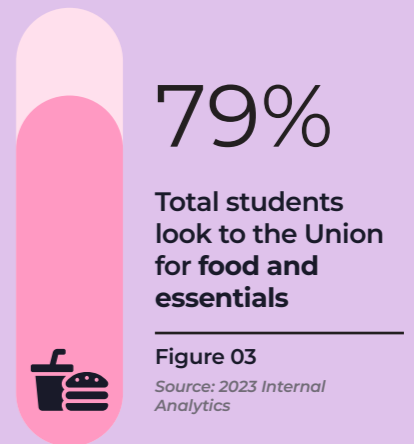
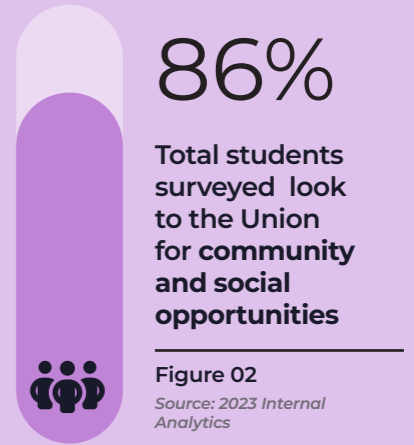
# Engagement & Impact

This year has seen an unprecedented level of student engagement, with our advocacy and support services reaching new heights. Our 2023 Student Engagement Survey revealed that 80% of students look to the Union for community and social opportunities, 79% for food and essentials, and 73% for wellbeing support.

Our efforts in these areas have not gone unnoticed, with significant participation in the Union Mart program, where over half of the international students surveyed utilised the services, and overall satisfaction with these wellbeing options was remarkably high.

The feedback demonstrates the importance of our role in not only meeting basic needs but also in fostering a sense of community and belonging among students.

Our engagement strategies have successfully reached a broad audience, including a notable increase in participation among first year and international students.





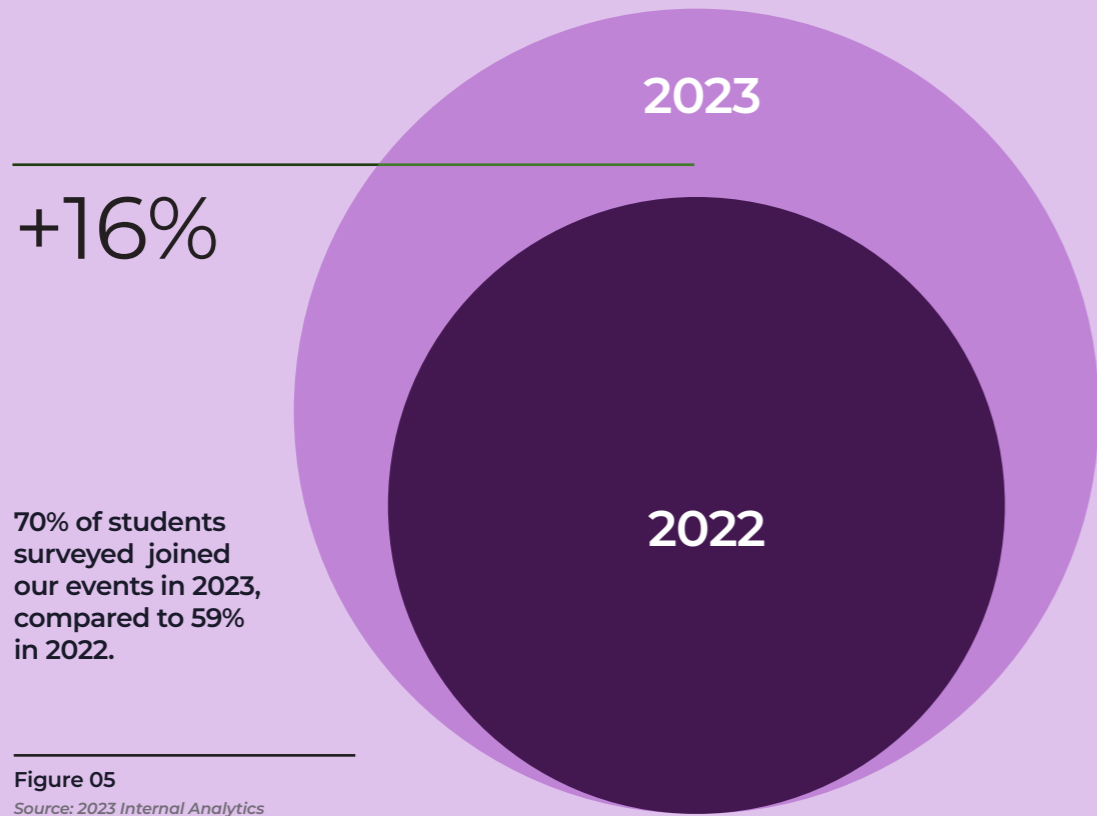


Figure 05  
Source: 2023 Internal Analytics



### Membership Data Growth

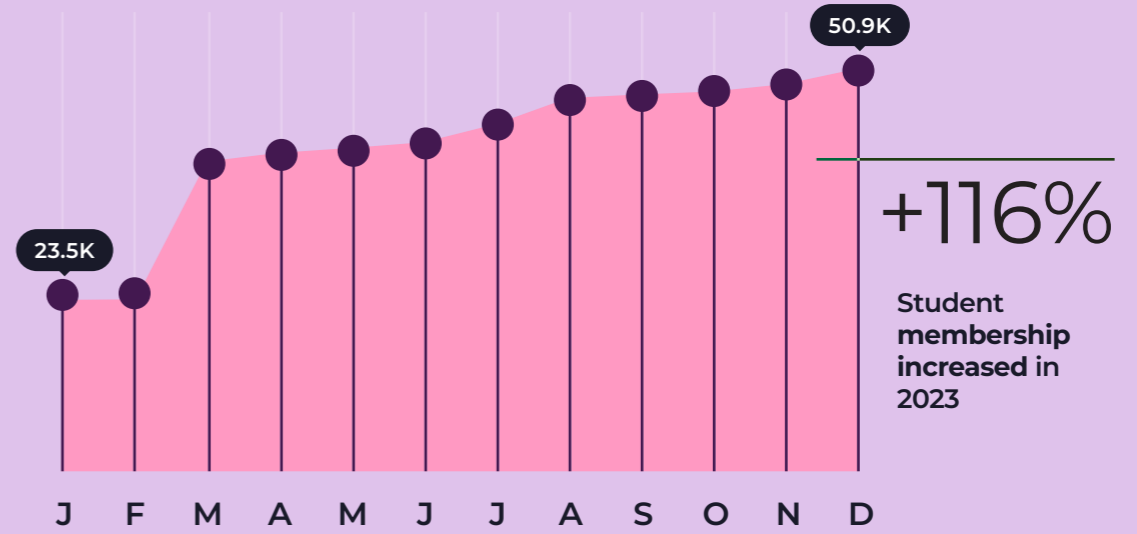


Figure 06  
Source: 2023 Internal Analytics

### CME Organisational support services

Tickets  
**545**

Projects  
**304**

Help Desk visits  
**10,165**

### UMSU Website

Page views

2,778,466

Average engagement

1:39 min

Top Countries

Australia

UK

India

Source: 2023 Google Analytics

### UMSU Website Registration Demographics

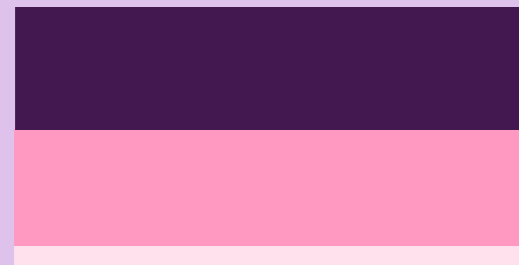


Figure 07  
Source: Google Analytics

### Courses with Highest Engagement on Umsu Website

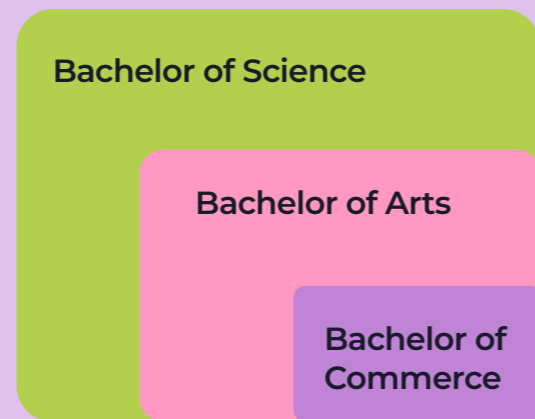


Figure 08  
Source: 2023 Internal Analytics

### Highest engagement by course completion on Umsu website

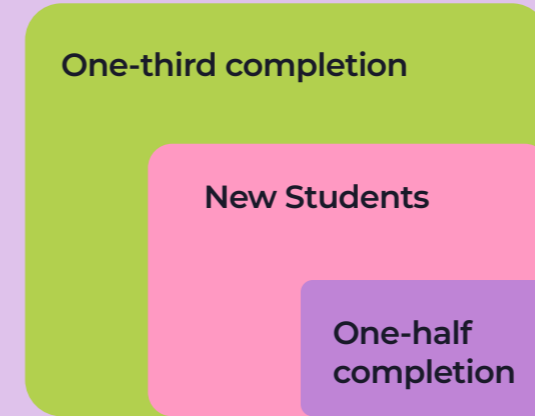


Figure 09  
Source: 2023 Internal Analytics

### Degree types who logged into the Umsu website

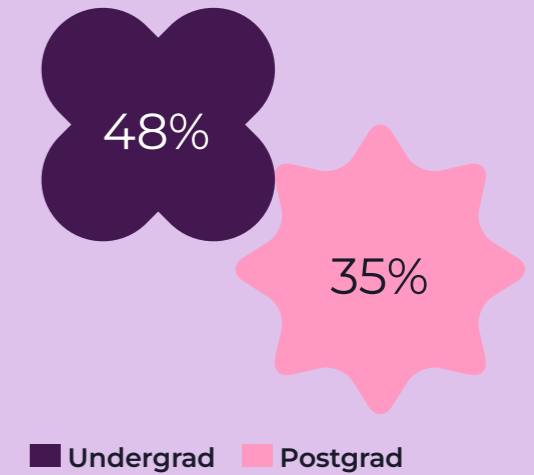


Figure 10  
Source: 2023 Internal Analytics

### Account Access

85%

Total Umsu website users have accessed their accounts in 2023.

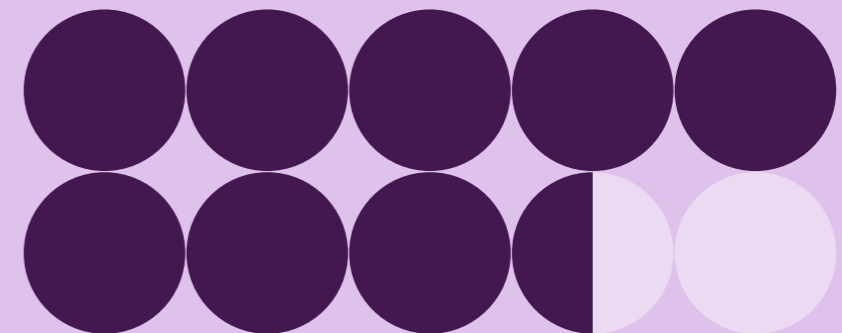


Figure 11  
Source: 2023 Internal Analytics



### UMSU Website Emails

eNews Average Audience

45,772

UMSU eNews open rate



72%

eNewsletters were transitioned from Mailchimp to the Umsu website system for data and privacy management.

Source: Sep-Dec 2023 Internal Analytics

### Mailchimp

UMSU audience

77,128

UMSU eNews open rate

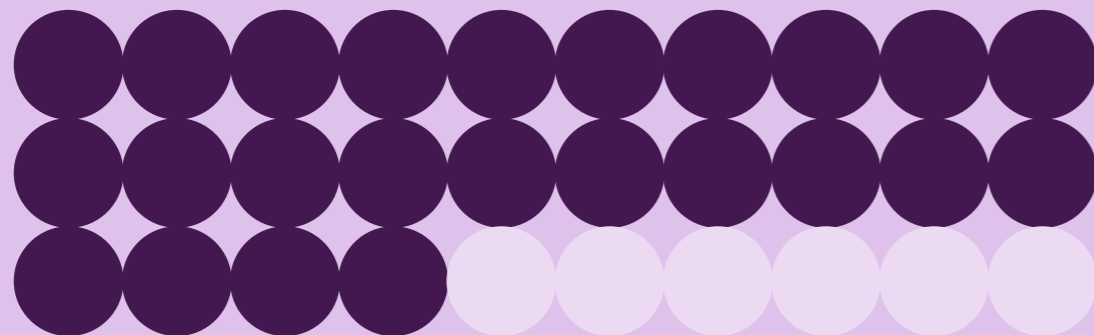


70%

Source: Jan-Aug 2023 Internal Analytics

Emails sent by Clubs and Departments

2,411



## Social media growth and engagement

### Facebook

Followers

33.2K

Reach

80.2K  
+9.9% previous year

Link clicks

3.9K

Posts

428

Best post



1.6K reach

1.6K plays

20 interactions

# Social media growth and engagement

## Instagram

Followers

**16.8K**

Reach

**11K**

+100% previous year

Link clicks

**1.2K**

Posts

**430**

Stories

**500**

Best post



17.5K reach

22.9K plays

1.5K interactions

## LinkedIn

Followers

**2,521**

+444 previous year

Reactions

**353**

Comments

**11**

Posts

**18**

Reposts

**27**





# The Advocacy & Legal Division

The Advocacy & Legal Division encompasses a co-located Community Legal Centre, an Advocacy Service, and two Sexual Harm Response Coordinators who are available to provide support and assistance to all students at the University of Melbourne.

## Sexual Harm Response Coordinator (SHRC) Team

### THE SEXUAL HARM RESPONSE TEAM IS RESPONSIBLE FOR:

- ✓ Performing an internal advisory role within UMSU, assisting the organisation to develop and implement best practice approaches to responding to and preventing sexual violence.
- ✓ Planning and implementing primary prevention initiatives within the broader University community.
- ✓ Providing independent support and advice to students affected by sexual violence.

## 2023 Highlights

Report on the victim/survivors' experiences of complaints processes:

1. At the beginning of 2023, in collaboration with the UMSU Women's Department, we tabled and submitted a report to the University of Melbourne Respect Reference Group on student experiences of university complaints and grievances processes. This report focused on how processes could be more victim-centred and key issues that our service had observed with victim-survivors navigating complaints processes at the University of Melbourne. The report put forward the following recommendations: Staff with student facing teaching positions, should receive training which focuses on how to respond to disclosures or concerns from students. This training should focus on dispelling myths around university reporting and the need for staff to escalate to the Safer Communities Program as soon as possible.

2. Use the current investigation and determination complaints and grievances process for staff as a model for student-to-student sexual misconduct matters.
3. The University should review the make-up of its sexual misconduct Student Disciplinary Committees to identify how to incorporate staff who have experience in working with victim-survivors of sexual violence.

Significantly, all of the report’s recommendations were accepted by the University and have had rolling impacts which can be seen in the current review of the University of Melbourne Sexual Misconduct Prevention Policy and operations within the Office of the Academic Registrar.



## Clubs and Societies Workshops

In May of 2023, the SHRC team received a University of Melbourne Health Promotion Grant to expand our primary prevention program for UMSU Clubs and Societies. This primary prevention program delivers workshops on Bystander Intervention and Responding to Disclosures of Sexual Violence. We were awarded \$9,514 in grant money, predominantly to fund casual wages for peer-facilitators, printing for student resources, and snacks for students during the workshops.

Through this grant application, and significant collaboration with staff and student representatives from the UMSU Clubs and Societies department, we were able to deliver workshops to 396 students in Semester 2, 2023. This number was in addition to training around 150 UMSU student leaders in semester 1. Workshops ran for two hours each, with between 15–30 students in attendance. We held 25 workshops over a two-month period. For 2024, we have secured funding for the program through the UMSU Advocacy and Legal division budget.

## Respect Modules: Focus Groups and Student Engagement

Between August and September 2023, the Sexual Harm and Response Coordination team worked directly with Respect Initiatives at the University to support the development and implementation of the new University of Melbourne *Respect* modules. These training modules will act as a replacement for the current Consent Matters modules, which every University of Melbourne student is required to complete during their course.

The Respect Initiatives team requested us to facilitate five, two-hour focus groups, that provided an opportunity for UniMelb students to engage in direct collaboration around the incoming modules. Approximately 18 students were invited to participate in the focus group sessions, of whom 12 engaged in the process. These groups allowed the Respect Module design team to gain critical student insights and perspectives around proposed module content, case studies, formatting of theory and ideas, and accessibility, to capture the student voice and experience around the relevance of the modules to contemporary university life.



These focus groups were collaborative, open, and discussion-based, to best support an environment where students felt safe to share their thoughts and ideas. Each session was centred on a different theme, including primary module themes, multimedia content, as well as wording, phrasing and tone.



Engagement with this process has supported the opportunity for collaboration on a university-wide level for our team, as well as gain key insight into the specific themes that all students will be engaging with as they enter the University. This offers three benefits for the SHRC team. Firstly, this allows us to ensure our workshop content facilitates and builds on student learning from the Respect Modules.

Secondly, this provides an opportunity for the SHRC to work and collaborate with university specific teams, and form connections that are key to integrated primary prevention approaches in the future. Thirdly, this allows us to be a part of a shift towards a university wide approach to primary prevention, whereby various services are adequately integrated in both stance and messaging to demonstrate the importance of prophylactic work towards the reduction of sexual assault and harassment at university.

## 2023 Stats

For our UMSU Clubs and Societies Primary Prevention program we collected pre and post workshop data which focused on key learning outcomes.

Our goal was to capture student knowledge prior to and following the completion of our workshop, considering student confidence in witnessing, addressing, and responding to instances of gender-based violence, which is likely to drive future responses within their contexts.



## Survey Questions

	Pre workshop response mean (1-10 scale)	Post workshop response mean (1-10 scale)
How well do you understand the concept of non-physical gender-based violence?	6.3	9.2
How likely are you to question or 'call out' inappropriate or derogatory comments from your friends?	7.2	8.8
How confident do you feel to intervene in an incident of sexual harassment?	6.5	8.8
How well do you think you could recognize the signs that someone might be taking advantage of someone else for sexual assault?	6.6	8.8
How confident do you feel to intervene in a situation where you think someone is targeting someone else for sexual assault?	6.5	8.7
How confident do you feel to respond appropriately to a disclosure of sexual violence?	6.4	9.1
How sure are you of where to go to access information about support services?	5.4	9.1

## UMSU Legal Service

The Umsu Legal Service is an accredited community legal centre providing free and confidential legal and financial counselling help to current University of Melbourne students. Its activities include direct advice and casework, law reform and advocacy work, community legal education, and collaboration with the broader legal sector in relation to student legal issues.

In 2023, the Umsu Legal Service engaged in a wide range of advocacy and collaborative activities which significantly raised the profile of the service, building important professional connections and promoting students' legal rights.

### 2023 Highlights

#### FINANCIAL COUNSELLING

Our Financial Counsellor Vanessa Stanton continued to help students in difficult financial circumstances with a range of issues including debts, fines and access to relief programs. Students expressed their gratitude for her work:

"I want to thank you immensely for your help throughout this incredibly long and stressful process. I couldn't really imagine much of a better outcome. Thank you."

"Thank you so much for your help with all of this. It's been a really stressful time and having the extra funds there will take so much pressure off, I've shed a few tears of joy at the relief!"

"Thank you for all your hard work over the past two years. It really made a difference to me, and my life."

#### LEGAL SECTOR COLLABORATION

##### National Student Legal Services Network

Senior Lawyer Isabelle Butler collaborated with the ANU Students' Association Legal Service and Youth Law Australia to set up the National Student Legal Services Network (NSLSN), a group of services which provide legal advice and assistance to university students in Australia. The purpose of the NSLSN is to promote and improve the legal rights of university students, through sharing expertise and resources, encouraging networking, and collaborating on advocacy initiatives.

The NSLSN held its inaugural meeting in August 2023, and feedback was very positive, with several organisations reporting that they sometimes felt isolated in their roles and lacked a community of practice before the NSLSN. The NSLSN continues to hold quarterly meetings, co-chaired by the Umsu Legal Service.

##### Pro bono partnerships

Senior Lawyer Isabelle Butler developed several partnerships with law firms undertaking pro bono work. Pro bono work is a vital part of the legal assistance sector, supporting under-resourced community legal centres by providing access to private firms' expertise and resources.

The development of these partnerships has enabled the Umsu Legal Service to receive specialised advice on different areas of law; to make casework referrals for complex matters; and to increase capacity through hosting a secondment. The Umsu Legal Service continues to expand these partnerships.

##### Student Experience Network Conference presentations

In November 2023, Senior Lawyer Isabelle Butler co-presented two sessions at the Student Experience Network Conference (SENCON) in Wollongong, in collaboration with the other co-chairs of the NSLSN.



Feedback on the sessions was very positive, with several attendees reporting that the sessions increased their understanding of the role and importance of student legal services.

One organisation which attended also contacted the UMSU Legal Service to seek guidance on creating a new student legal service, a promising development in circumstances where only approximately 35% of universities in Australia are covered by a form of dedicated student legal service.



**LAW REFORM AND ADVOCACY WORK**

**Rental inquiries submissions, hearings and reports**

In July and September 2023, the UMSU Legal Service made submissions to the Victorian and federal rental crisis inquiries.

The submissions were received with interest, and the UMSU Legal Service was invited to attend and give evidence at the parliamentary hearings for both inquiries. Senior Lawyer Isabelle Butler attended both hearings in August and September 2023 and spoke about the widespread and systemic nature of rental issues experienced by students, making recommendations for law reform to address these issues. In November and December 2023, the committees released their reports from the inquiries, which quoted extensively both the UMSU Legal Service submissions and oral evidence.

Attendance at the hearings and inclusion in the reports were significant outcomes, establishing the UMSU Legal Service as an expert voice representing student rental issues at a state and national level.

**National Legal Assistance Partnership review submission**

In October 2023, the UMSU Legal Service made a submission to the review of the National Legal Assistance Partnership (NLAP). The submission outlined vulnerability factors for students and the difficulties they experience in accessing legal help and recommended that student legal services be included in future NLAP funding.

The UMSU Legal Service is also continuing advocacy efforts in relation to increasing NLAP funding, which are occurring across the community legal sector in the lead up to the 2024 federal budget.

**2023 Stats**

The UMSU Legal Service provided direct advice, casework and legal information and referrals to approximately 490 people contacting the service in 2023. Approximately 60% of advices given were to graduate students, and around two-thirds were to international students.

**Top areas for law advice**

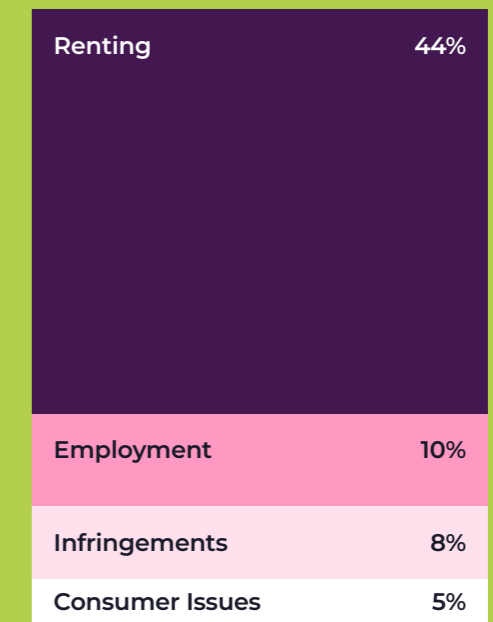


Figure 12  
Source: Google Analytics

# Advocacy Service

We help address the inherent power imbalance between students and the University by providing expert, independent advice to students on their rights and obligations on a range of academic and administrative issues. We also use this casework to inform and support the work of elected student representatives in identifying and addressing systemic problems to manifest meaningful change.

We also made significant progress in implementing many of the key recommendations from a 2022 external review of our service delivery model, including increased creation and deployment of self-help resources, a new integrated database system offering both efficient assessment and triage and more comprehensive case management.

In addition to the extensive casework service provided to students at the University (see statistics below), the service continued to produce research, Discussion and Position Papers in relation to some important University proposals/initiatives, including the proposed changes to Student Academic Integrity processes, the rise of AI-related academic integrity cases, and the Melbourne Student Forum.

## 2023 Highlights

In 2023 the Advocacy Service undertook significant developments to review our service delivery model and restructure and expand resources to increase our capacity to meet demand. Specifically, the service:

- ✔ Created a new role of Assessment & Triage Coordinator
- ✔ Made the temporary position of Team Leader ongoing
- ✔ Added another Senior Advocate position to the team

**Some of our Service Users said:** “The whole appeal process took me 8 months in total till the final desired outcome was achieved, I am whole-heartedly grateful to Alanna for her help. Dozens of emails, tens of thousand words in 3 separate appeal/grievance letters, Alanna was always patient with handling my case.

“As a capable and intelligent graduate student, I never thought I would need help, but the Umsu Advocacy Service staff were both empathetic and assertive. I felt that compassion was evident in responses as well as clear direction. It really helped ease my mind and heart especially during a time when I felt great shame and self-blame, which clouded my thought process.”

“Nadia was extremely empathetic towards my situation. She made me feel like my concerns were valid and genuinely mattered when most other university staff members were just brushing me aside and hoping I would give up on trying to resolve my issue. I believe she is one of the rare people I’ve encountered who genuinely cares about helping students. She is patient, kind and very knowledgeable about the university’s system. I’m extremely grateful to her for putting so much effort into helping me.”

“I was at my wits end trying to get someone within the university (Stop 1, Continuing Students Support) to help sort out a problem which should not have happened in the first place. It was such a relief when I contacted Umsu and someone actually responded and offered advice, including the contact information of specific staff in the university responsible for the error. I was then able to get the problem addressed successfully very quickly. Thank you!”

**UMSU Advocacy VISION** 

We envision a university community **where students are empowered** to negotiate academic and administrative issues, **supported by independent and expert advice.**

We aim to empower students with the **knowledge, skills, and confidence** to navigate the university's policies and procedures.

STUDY POWERED  **ADVOCACY**



“Thank you, Michelle, for all your support and for giving me the ability to express myself unconvuletedly and honestly in the face of such challenging circumstances. I really appreciate how genuine and upfront you have been throughout this process and am grateful for the work that you have done for me and I’m sure many other students. You are a legend!!”

“Thank you so much Alanna for helping navigate this situation I am completely foreign to. I deeply appreciate it and wish you all the best!”

“I’ve just spoken to Alanna, who has been my contact at the Umsu advocacy services and has been absolutely brilliant in supporting me throughout this process.”

“Thank you very very very much for all the support and help you’ve given me throughout this whole process Alanna. Couldn’t have done it without you. Thank you.”

### 2023 Stats

The Advocacy Service assisted in 2047 individual student matters in 2023, involving 4125 separate contacts with students. Almost a quarter of all casework involved assisting students with concerns or disputes about special consideration processes at the University. Academic and general misconduct allegations, applications for fee remissions and assistance with a range of grievances were also highly represented in our casework in 2023.

Around 40% of our service users were graduates, 5% were higher degree by research students, and more than half were international students.

### Advocacy Services users

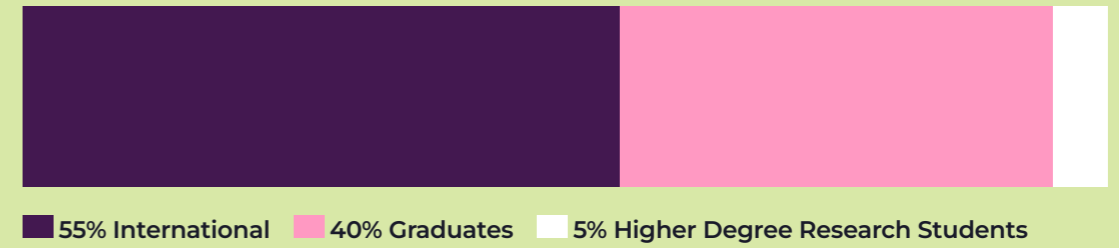


Figure 13  
Source: Internal Analytics

### Individual Student matters assisted

2,047

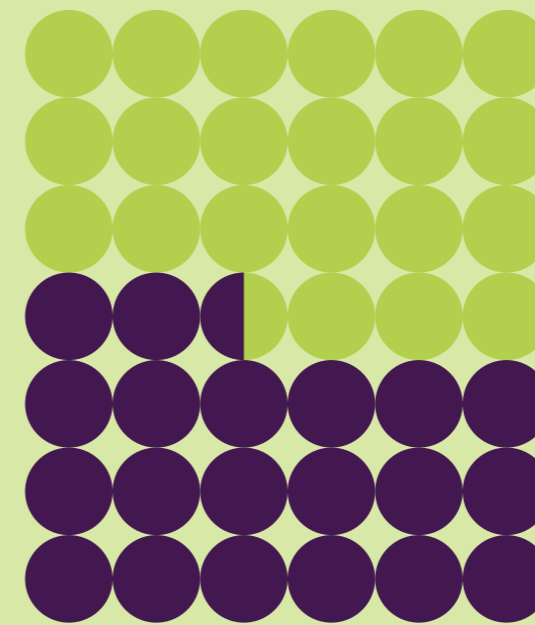


Figure 14  
Source: Internal Analytics

### Seperate contacts with students

4,125

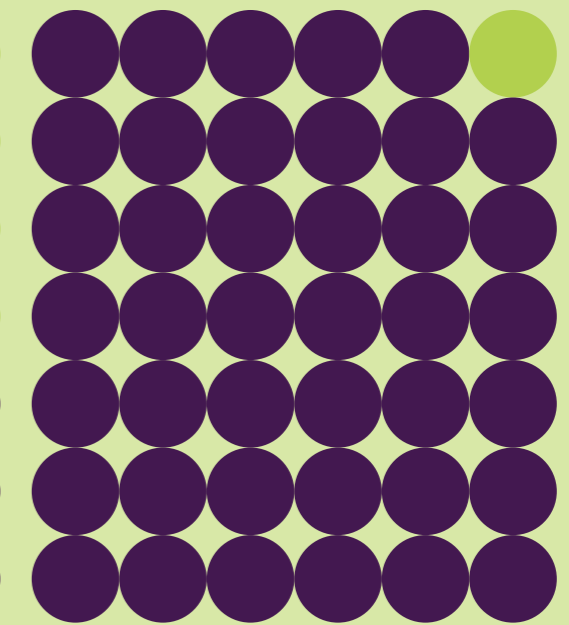


Figure 15  
Source: Internal Analytics

# UMSU International

UMSU International (UMSUi) is the peak representative body for international students at the University of Melbourne. We focus on initiatives that seek to uplift international student life and highlight the importance of supporting the international student community at the University.

Our programs are designed to address a wide range of student needs — from weekly food distribution via our International Brekkie; helping students navigate financial, residency, and visa issues at our regular workshops; and bringing together the student community on campus for a night of cultural connection and festivities at our annual magnum opus, the UMSU International Night Market.

In 2023, we continually assessed and measured our impact on international students' university experiences as we seek to further grow our events in anticipation of an increase in student engagement and participation for the coming year. We also use these metrics as a benchmark to assess our own performance and to hold ourselves accountable as a committee to our constituents.

2023 saw UMSUi's programs led by the 2022/2023 Central Committee for the first half of the year before handing over to the incumbent 2023/2024 Central Committee from August. The highlighted events and programs below represent key successes from throughout the calendar year delivered by both cohorts of elected student representatives.





## Representation

### INTERNATIONAL STUDENT SURVEY

- ▶ The International Student Survey (ISS) serves as UMSU's primary resource to identify and emphasise the needs of international students to key policymakers at the University, and to collect sentiment from our constituents to ensure our programs are being targeted most efficiently.
- ▶ The 2023 ISS ran throughout Semester 1 under the direction of the 2022/2023 UMSUi Education Committee, and received over 1600 responses with 1317 usable data points. Respondents highlighted the increasing cost-of-living (specifically food and essentials), discrimination on campus, and inaccessible and expensive accommodation as key issues negatively impacting their university experience



- ▶ The 2023 ISS Report was circulated to the University through UMSUi representatives on various committees including TALQAC (Teaching and Learning Quality Assurance Committee), and has led to direct commitments from the University to address the key issues identified by the survey, including improvements to existing mental health services and new initiatives to reduce student isolation.

### CAMPAIGNS

- ▶ UMSU International has also worked with the University of Melbourne to advocate and improve international student outcomes. Significant improvements have been made to the accessibility of student services for international students, including to the booking system of the University Health Service. UMSUi representatives on University committees have also advocated for improvements to University policies surrounding generative AI and academic misconduct, in recognition of the disproportionate effects they have on international students.
- ▶ UMSU International was also involved in the Health Promotion Program's Safer Sex Campaign, promoting and circulating the campaign's resourced to the international student community.

- ▶ UMSU International representatives have also been consulted on the University's Scam Awareness campaigns, promoting and normalising discussion of scams and other issues often considered taboo amongst the international student community.

### COMMUNICATION AND MARKETING

- ▶ Throughout the term of the 2022/2023 committee, the UMSU International Instagram account grew by 86%, reaching over 8400 followers by the end of the year, signalling a highly engaged audience and the success of our social media initiatives. Flow-on effects experienced were a higher turnout on events and increased brand recognition of UMSU International's distinct identity and offerings for international students.

## Events and Programs

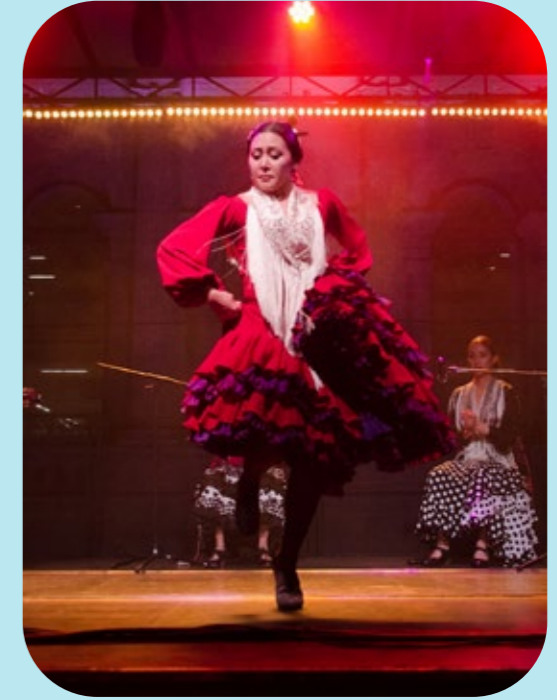
### NIGHT MARKET

- ▶ The Umsu International Night Market is the largest event organised by Umsui, and one of the largest on-campus events held at the University of Melbourne each year.
- ▶ The 2023 Night Market was attended by over 8,000 students, reflecting nearly 15% of the University's total student population/ attendees, with stalls and performances from more than 20 different clubs and student organisations.
- ▶ This far exceeded the attendance of the 2022 Night Market due to a substantial increase in participation from onshore and domestic students, showcasing the prime position that Umsui's Night Market holds in the University's event calendar and the cultural value that the event provides to the entire University community.

### INTERNATIONAL BREKKIE

- ▶ Umsu International's International Breakfast event was launched in Semester 1, 2023 to provide food relief and nutritious breakfast options to students amidst the rising cost of living. The event ran each Monday, Wednesday and Friday during Semesters 1 and 2 of 2023, and provided up to 200 serves per day of food and drink for students.
- ▶ The International Brekkie has continued as a core component of Umsui's event offering and Umsu's overall food relief strategy into Semester 1, 2024, and led to Umsui representatives being invited to participate in the University's Food Security Working Group.

2023 was a fruitful year for Umsu International, with most facets of our work improving, although we expect to further increase our efforts and scale our operations throughout 2024.





# Financial Overview

The 2023 Calendar Year has seen UMSU invest in the student experience through our vast array of services with the release of just over \$1m of our reserves that had accumulated during the 2020 and 2021 years.

UMSU understands that this level of deficit is not sustainable in the long term, we felt that it

was important to regenerate the union in the short term in its new home at Building 168.

Looking forward into the coming years, we will see a responsible annual surplus/deficit returned as we invest our reserves into exciting new projects such as the re-opening of the bar in 2024 – watch this space!

## Financial Position 2019–2023 (000's)

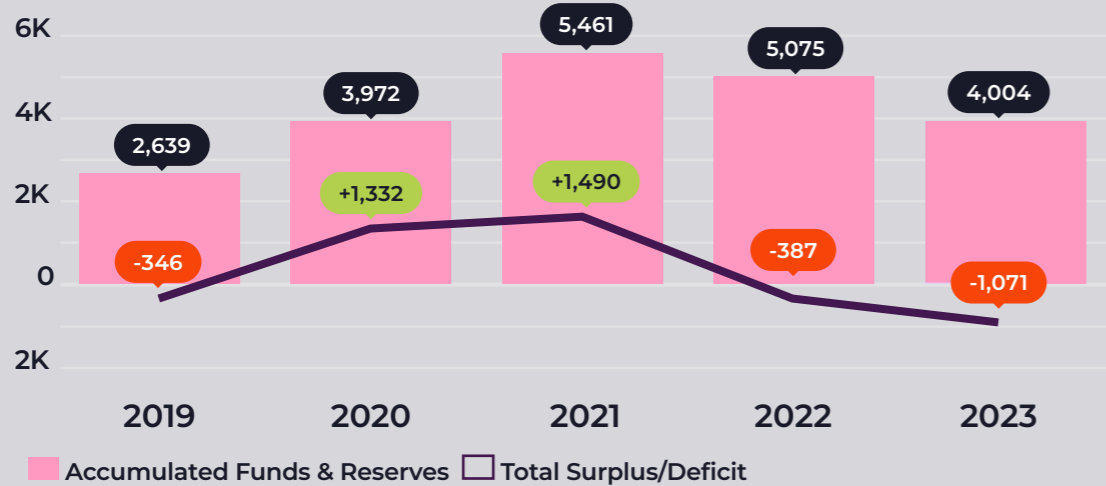


Figure 16  
Source: Internal Analytics

## SSAF Income and uses CY23 (000's)

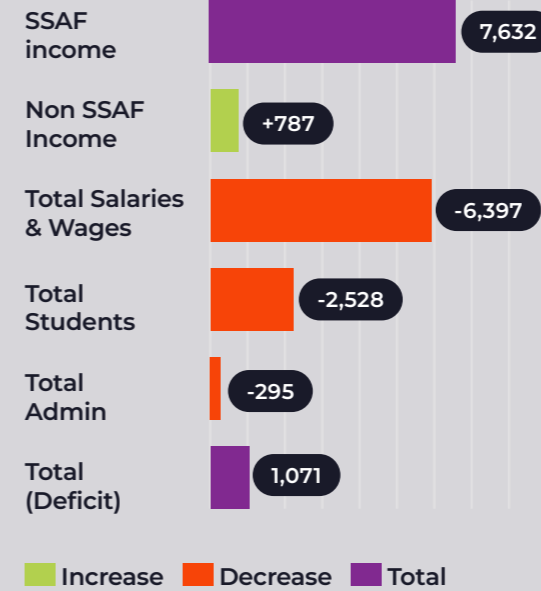


Figure 17  
Source: Internal Analytics

In a little more detail, UMSU received just a tick over \$7.3m in SSAF funding which along with our \$1m investment was allocated to salaries and wages of the fantastic team at UMSU (\$6.4m), memorable student activities (\$2.5m), and not so much on the general running of the business (\$295k).

Another super piece of information of on how we use SSAF is explained and lifted from UMSU's Student Guide!

## How we use SSAF



# Spotlight on success

## Acknowledgments and Appreciation

We extend our gratitude to the University community for their support of the Union's initiatives. Special thanks to our dedicated staff, volunteers, and student representatives, whose contributions were instrumental in our success.

Our appreciation also goes out to the students, whose active participation and feedback inspire us to continuously improve and innovate.

This year, UMSU's commitment to enriching student life manifested in a variety of success stories that highlight the organisation's broad impact across the student body.

## Clubs and Societies

The Clubs Expo and various societies played a major role in fostering a sense of community and belonging among students. With a participation rate of 63%, these clubs were instrumental in connecting students with shared interests, leading to lifelong friendships and a vibrant campus culture.

## Orientation Festivals

SummerFest and WinterFest were standout events for UMSU, with participation rates of 38% and 35% respectively. These festivals not only welcomed new students into the university community but also provided a fun and engaging way for all students to connect, unwind, and explore the diverse opportunities UMSU offers.

## International Student Engagement

The International Brekkies and Night Market events, with 23% and 19% attendance rates, showcased UMSU's dedication to supporting and celebrating the diverse backgrounds of its student body. Night Market provided international students with a platform to share their cultures and traditions, fostering a greater understanding and appreciation among the wider student community.



## Wellbeing and Welfare Support

Initiatives like Stress Less Week and Welfare Brunches addressed the mental health and wellbeing of students, offering free food, resources and activities designed to alleviate stress and promote a healthy balance between academic and personal life. Feedback on these programs was overwhelmingly positive, with students appreciating the supportive atmosphere.

## Rowden White Library

Serving as a unique space for relaxation and creativity, the Rowdy offered craft activities and social events that were highly valued by students. Its role in providing a stress-free zone for students to relax and engage in creative pursuits was especially noted as a highlight of the UMSU experience.

## Union Mart

This year, the Union notably enhanced student welfare through the Union Mart program, offering crucial food relief and household items. Particularly impactful for international students, with over half utilising these services, the program demonstrates the Union’s commitment to supporting all aspects of student wellbeing. Satisfaction levels were remarkably high, with 90% of users expressing gratitude for the availability of these essential services, reflecting the Union’s role in alleviating financial stress and fostering a supportive community environment.



## Employment opportunities

### Elizabeth – CME Casual

In between pushing the flyer distribution trolley and talking with [UMSU staff] in my UMSU Communications induction, I took in the view of campus and the people bustling by. Even as a nervous first-year, I knew then that my time at the University of Melbourne would be more than alright. UMSU is more than a job; it’s a community.



### Crystal – CME Social Media Intern

Working at UMSU has been one of the biggest highlights of my uni life. I entered the role with a passion for storytelling and amplifying student voices and walked away armed with a diverse set of skills in communications, project management and digital content strategy!

Whether it’s promoting key initiatives like Union Mart or getting the word out about our orientation festivals that introduce students to UMSU as their pocket companion at uni, there’s never a dull day working at UMSU.






# Appendices

## Signed Financial Statements


Click to view the signed Financial Statements for the year ended 31 December 2023

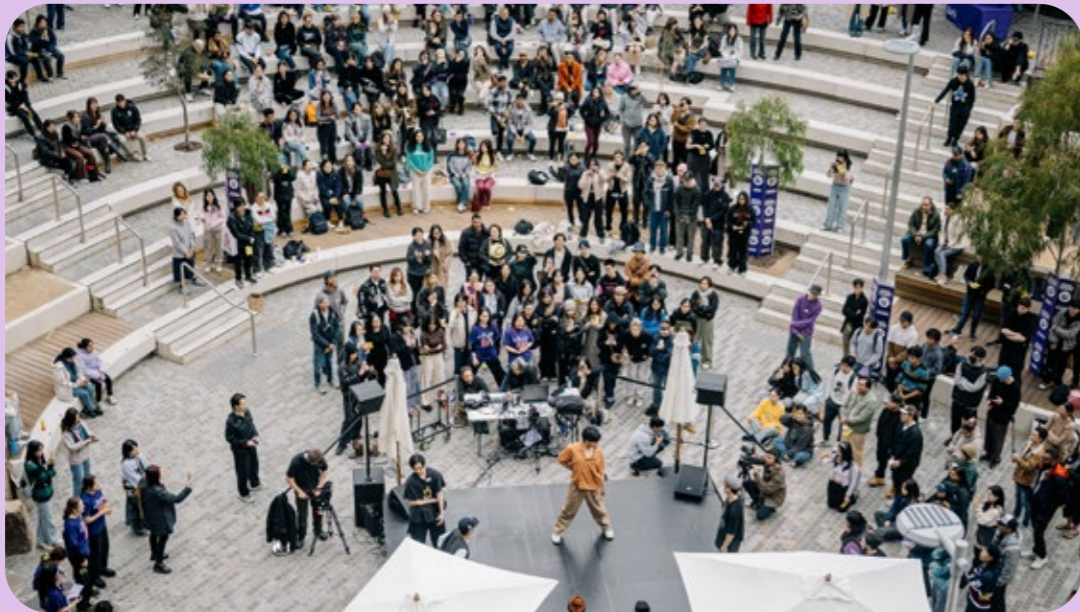


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**[umsu.unimelb.edu.au](http://umsu.unimelb.edu.au)**



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