

University of Melbourne Student Union
Annual Report 2025
To Students' Council
Amy Peters
Activities

This report is a long one - but veraciously, so has my time at UMSU been. I hope it provides some insights into my portfolio, the work done, and a few reflections along the way from December 2023 - November 2025.

Between 2024 and 2025, the UMSU Activities Department ran over 84 events, like weekly Tuesday programs, SoUP, O-Week activities, and UMSU Balls, engaging over 14,000 participants annually from these events alone. The focus has been on refining operations, maintaining high-quality events, and fostering student engagement, while navigating challenges such as gaps in welfare support, asset management, and inconsistent organisational policies. Key recommendations for future Office Bearers include implementing a safer events framework, establishing a Jaffy Handbook, embedding inclusive and sensory-friendly programming, reviving the Welfare Angels program, ameliorating budget and contract transparency, and introducing a rotating Department Brunch Day roster. These quantifications aim to ensure UMSU events are safe, accessible, and reflective of the diverse student community, while fortifying departmental sustainability and student wellbeing.

Actions and achievements of the Department

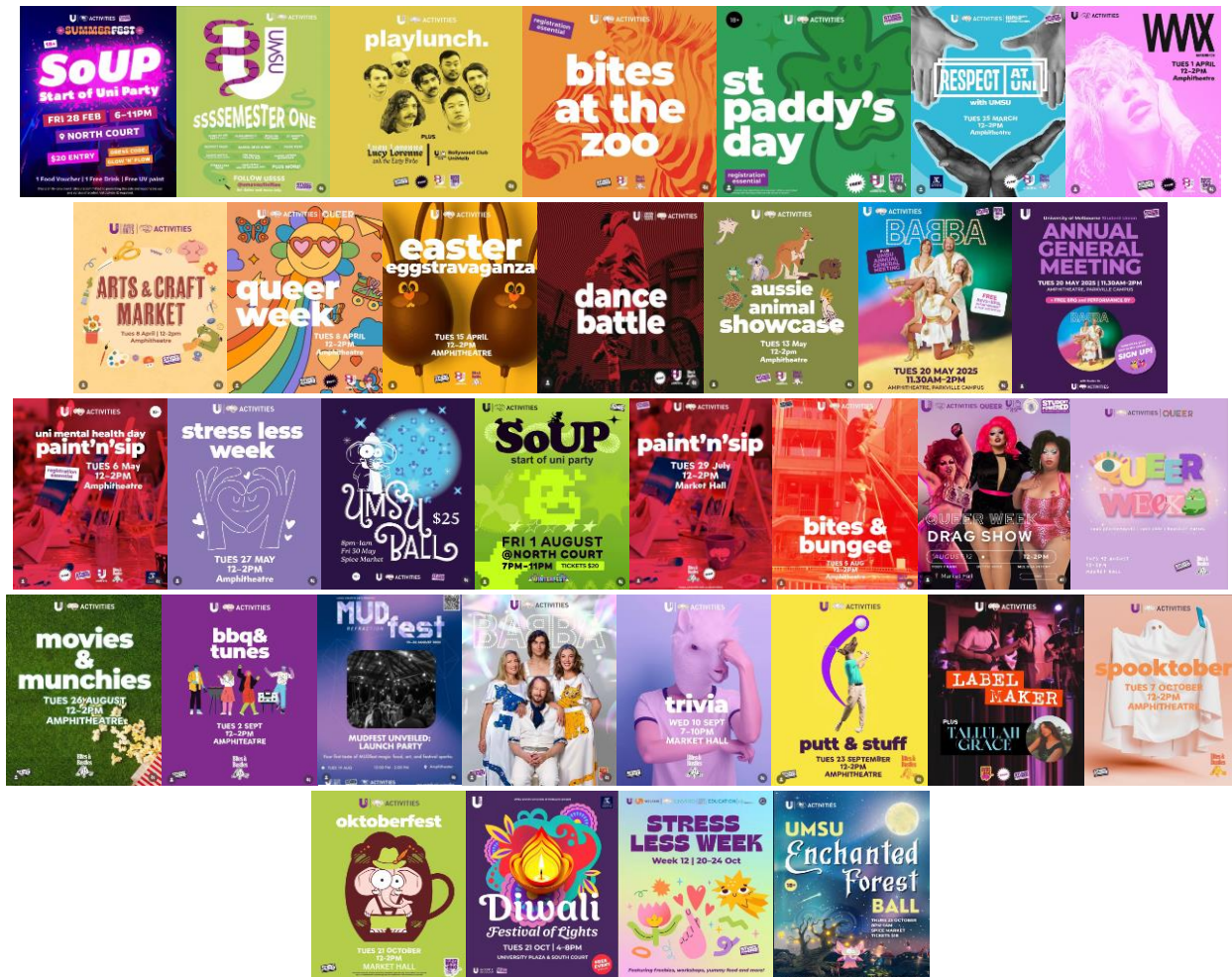
Over the past two years, the Activities Department has focused on both delivering events and refining departmental operations. In 2024, I ran close to 50 events, while in 2025 this was reduced to ~34. This reduction has positively impacted me by lowering my stress levels and allowed other departments greater independence in running their own events. This year, our weekly Tuesday events have consistently served approximately 600 students per week, reaching over 14,400 participants across the year. Combined with SoUP and UMSU Balls, we engaged an additional ~2,500 attendees. While 2025 has not been defined by launching entirely new initiatives, it has been a year of consolidation, focusing on refining what the department does best and ensuring that our events continue to deliver value, engagement, and a high standard of student experience.

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Evaluation of the success (or otherwise) of events, projects, and campaigns undertaken

Evaluation of success has been based on attendance figures, operational learnings, and collaboration outcomes. Here's a snapshot of all Activities Department events from this year:



Start of Uni Party (SoUP)

In 2024 and 2025, SoUP had around 1,100 attendees for both Semester 1 and 2 intakes, with the exception being Semester 2 this year with only a few hundred guests. This was likely due to an outdoor venue (North Court) during winter. Semester 1 2024 was at Concrete Lawn (1,100 tickets sold), Semester 2 2024 at Howler (1,000 tickets sold + 100 door entry), and Semester 1 2025 at North Court (1,100 tickets sold).

Orientation week (O-week)

At Summerfest, we ran Tobias' Tropical Tread with Bike 'n' Blend, operating for three days at Parkville, one day at Southbank, and one day at Burnley. At Winterfest, we hosted a stall in Porters Lane, handing out merchandise and creating an opportunity for students to meet our mascot, Tobias Trunke.

Weekly Tuesday Events

2025 Semester 1 Highlights:

- PlayLunch, BBQ, and Live Music - Featuring Winnie Lane, Lucy Loreenne & Early Birds
- Bites at the Zoo (Werribee Zoo excursion) - High-effort, high-engagement event; participants enjoyed socialising during the bus trip despite hot weather. Oh, and I had to be at UniMelb at 6am to collect the Coles order.
- St Patrick's Day - Food stalls with meat pies, sausages, bread, alcohol, and live band performances
- Respect Week - Department-led initiatives promoting awareness and inclusivity
- Easter Eggstravaganza - Bunny costumes, interactive Easter crafts, and themed food (scrolls and hot cross buns)
- Queer Week - Drag queen performances (Melissa Intent, Zero, Max, Bettie Rose), bracelet making, and roller skating
- Dance Battle with UHT - Collaboration with Cypher Culture
- Uni Mental Health Day - Collaboration with UniMelb; bungee trampolines and interactive wellbeing activities
- Aussie Animal Showcase (Wild Action Zoo) - Engaging learning opportunity about animal care and environmental awareness
- Mindfulness Week - Paint & Sip, Laughing Yoga, and department stalls

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- AGM and BABBA - Major organisational events
- Stress Less Week - Focused on student wellbeing

2025 Semester 2 Highlights:

- Paint & Sip
- Bites and Bungee
- Drag Show - Featuring Toby Frank, Melissa Intent, and Bettie Rose, and Sexpression stall
- Mudfest
- Movie & Munchies - Screening of Minions with pizza and bananas provided
- BBQ + Tunes (Election Week)
- Bands, Bevs, and BBQ (Babba!)
- Sustainability Week - Asanti dance group, Give a Fork catering.
- Putt and stuff - Mini Golf
- Spooktober - snuff puppets, Halloween cupcakes, decor, orchestra, lollies.
- Bands, Bevs, and BBQ - Featuring Label Maker and Tallulah Grace
- Oktoberfest - spent 2 hours setting up decor, yay. Oompah band and bevs with Activities-branded steins were well received.

UMSU Ball

I have run three UMSU Balls at Spice Market: the UMSU Masquerade Ball (2024 S2), UMSU Winter Wonderland Ball (2025 S1), and UMSU Enchanted Forest Ball (2025 S2). All three events had comparable attendance of around 500 students, even though the ticket price was reduced from the usual \$30, to \$25, to \$18 for the Enchanted Forest Ball. This suggests that ticket cost did not significantly influence demand for these events.

Providing one drink card on arrival proved more effective than providing two; a higher proportion of drinks were redeemed at the bar, meaning the deposit paid to the venue was actually utilised rather than lost. Spice Market has consistently proven to be a safe, reliable, and highly cooperative venue to work with. Security staff were proactive and firm in stopping intoxicated individuals from entering, giving students space to sober up and arranging transport home. The venue also accommodated custom décor, externally provided photobooths, and last-minute requests with quick turnaround times. Overall, Spice Market remains a strongly recommended venue for large-scale student events.

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Activities Corner

In 2024, the department purchased a large selection of board games and activities (colouring, origami, etc.) for student use outside the Activities Office in the UMSU Building. This initiative continued into 2025; however, despite clear signage, the space was consistently left in disarray. Many items were stolen, broken, or vandalised, and maintaining the area became unsustainable. Regarding theft, the department has also had two trolleys and drawers stolen a couple months ago - despite efforts contacting and emailing security, there has been no resolution.

As a result of continual theft, I transferred the remaining small intact games to IDA Bar at the end of Semester 1 2025, where they could continue to be accessed in a monitored environment.

The Department still has a giant chess, Jenga, connect four, and quoits on level 3 for student use and Tuesday events.

Collaborations

The Activities Department has also supported a range of cross-departmental and University-led initiatives, like Diwali, the Grand Iftar, the Mid-Autumn Festival, and several other collaborative events. We had many Clubs, Societies and other entities present stalls at our events, including but not limited to (for 2024-25):

- Soil and Plant Society,
- Earth Students Society,
- Swifities Society,
- Sexpression,
- Days for Girls,
- World's Greatest Shave,
- Womyns Department,
- University of Melbourne Islamic Society,
- Queer Department,
- Welfare Department,
- Disabilities Department,
- Sexual Harm and Response Team,
- Melbourne Uni Sport,
- UniMelb Global Learning initiative team,
- Cypher Culture,
- Creative Arts Department,
- Uni Health Services,
- Bollywood Club,
- Prosh,
- Share the Dignity,
- Medical Student Societies, and
- Rowden White Library.

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Social media

At the start of my term, the @umsuactivities Instagram account had approximately <300 followers and 20 posts, with minimal engagement. Since then, it has grown significantly, now boasting ~2,700 followers and 314 posts. Over the past 90 days alone, the account has accumulated 202.6k views, with average minimum views per post ranging from 5,000 to 15,000, and peak views at 20,000 to 45,000, depending on content. Special thanks to my youngest triplet brother Eric Peters, who photographed our two UMSU Balls and SoUP this year - the posts featuring these events reached 36,000 to 45,000 views per post.

In the early stages of growth, Reels were effective for attracting new followers, while static posts generated more interaction and helped maintain follower engagement. Strategies such as highlighting Tobias Trunke in posts, creating trending Reels, and posting daily on Stories have all contributed to sustaining engagement and increasing the department's visibility. While there is still room for growth, maintaining a consistent and strategic social media presence is essential for accessibility, promotion, and ensuring students are informed about departmental events.

Recommended Department actions to be considered for implementation by future Officers

I've learned an enormous amount over the past couple of years, and I think I finally understand how UMSU works, how it *doesn't* work, and what it could become. As I (fingers crossed) graduate soon, I won't be able to stay involved, but I want to leave behind the long list of things I recommend and the things I wish I'd had the capacity and time to do during my terms as Activities Office Bearer.

General suggestions

One of my biggest (yet simplest) recommendations is to make all events genuinely inclusive. And I mean all your events, for all types of students. Ensure there are all-gender/unisex bathroom options, always offer both vegan and meat food options, and remember that no event will appeal to everyone. The goal is to diversify programming so students with different interests, backgrounds, and comfort levels can find something that helps them connect and feel welcomed.

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To ensure UMSU events are welcoming, accessible, and reflective of the diversity of the student community, a more deliberate approach to inclusion is needed. My recommendations:

- Prioritise loneliness and belonging by implementing a standard Connection & Loneliness Survey to better understand student needs.
- Establish Women in STEM lounges/spaces to strengthen belonging and provide safer study environments.
 - Expand student handbooks to include International focused needs, like: housing/ student accommodation navigation, cost-of-living support, and culturally safe academic guidance.
 - Additionally, increase vigilance and coordination around emergency housing, financial aid, and hardship processes.
- Provide peer-led visibility initiatives, campus tours, and guidance for queer students on affirming healthcare and supports.
 - Ensure all-gender bathrooms are available, accessible, and clearly signposted at every event.
 - Expand the gender-affirming wardrobe to increase access to affirming clothing and resources.
- Standardise presentation, council, and promotional materials with predictable, accessible formatting (high contrast, alt-text, captions, transcripts).
 - Ensure all meetings, trainings, and conferences use multimodal communication tools (eg. subtitles, coloured paper options, and accessible document formats, alt-text posts).
 - Build sensory-friendly programming across all campaigns, events, and initiatives.

My other general suggestions are communication and transparency. Be clear, be upfront, and be honest with other departments, staff, and students. It will save you time, stress, and unnecessary political banter.

Activities Department

There is so much potential for the Activities department, and so many projects I'd still love to see future teams bring to life.

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- An Activities Handbook
 - To give future OBs and volunteers a strong foundation and would help preserve the institutional memory the department often loses year to year.
 - It could include recommended catering , venues, engaged businesses, etc.
- Implementing a Loneliness & Connection Survey for understanding student needs and measuring the impact of our work.
- Activities Collective
 - Perhaps something casual after Tuesday events at the Ida Bar where volunteers, student leaders, and students who want to get more involved have space to meet each other and build community networks.
- Musical programming is part of Activities' roots: Bands, Bevs, and BBQs.
- Reduced funding over the years has limited this, but downsizing to the trailer stage offers a creative way to bring the music culture back without blowing the budget.
- A Jaffy handbook in collaboration with other departments, to create a more informal and accessible way to convey important information to first year students (more info further down).
- A recurring challenge has been Activities being treated as an unlimited resource pool.
 - Because the department receives a comparatively large allocation, there's a long history of other departments relying on Activities to fill gaps.
 - This year, I shifted support toward resourcing rather than funding, but even then, it often felt like materials eg. stationery, board games, costumes, equipment, were borrowed and not returned, or returned damaged.
 - Strengthening expectations or a check-in/check-out system would help protect department assets.
- Finally, I strongly encourage future leaders to re-establish Welfare support for Tuesday events.
 - Historically (before 2023), Welfare ran these alongside Activities, covering food costs and providing volunteers. That partnership has weakened in the last couple of years for reasons that will remain between the two departments, but reviving it would significantly reduce strain on Activities and restore a model that previously worked very well.

Welfare Angels program

The Welfare Angels program, originally intended to support student wellbeing and safety at large-scale events, has remained inactive despite being identified as a critical gap since the beginning of 2024. Its absence has left high-risk events - Balls, boat cruises, O-Week SoUP, and similar gatherings- without trained welfare personnel who can de-escalate situations, assist distressed attendees, and coordinate with event staff.

Reviving the program would require establishing a recruitment and training model, developing clear duty protocols, and integrating Angels into event risk planning. A small but consistent team of trained welfare volunteers would provide significant safety benefits and relieve pressure on both Activities and Welfare during major events. Reinstating this program should be a priority for any student union committed to safer and more supportive events. I have attached the 2019 Framework at the end of this document.

Honorariums & Accountability

UMSU's current honorarium structure lacks meaningful accountability mechanisms. Student funds are allocated to elected representatives with minimal transparency around workload, deliverables, or performance. When concerns about honorariums are raised at Council, there is often hesitation from representatives to engage, partly due to fear that questioning the system might jeopardise their own payments. This creates a culture where financial scrutiny becomes politically uncomfortable rather than a normal part of governance.

My recommendations centre on updating the roles and responsibility statements for every department- documents that have not been revised since 2022. These updates should establish a clear set of baseline deliverables for all paid office bearers, ensuring that expectations are consistent and measurable. Transparency should also be strengthened through the publication of attendance records, major activities, and demonstrated contributions throughout the year. To support accountability without factional bias, a designated independent reviewer should be available to assess compliance when requested by Students' Council. Together, these measures would help ensure student money is used responsibly and restore confidence in representative roles.

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Policy selectivity and governance

A recurring organisational issue has been the selective interpretation of policies, where procedures are followed when convenient but disregarded when they impose limits or additional work. This inconsistency creates confusion for departments, undermines fairness, and contributes to conflict and inefficiency. Establishing a clear policy adherence standard supported by interpretation guidance, a fully maintained policy library, and consequences for non-compliance would promote more predictable and equitable governance. Regular policy reviews would also help close loopholes, ensuring policies serve student needs rather than political convenience.

Safer events and organisational framework

UMSU organises a wide range of student events, among the most logistically complex and high-risk being Boat Cruises and UMSU Camps. Boat Cruises involve large numbers of students on commercial vessels, often with alcohol present, while Camps are multi-day, off-campus events involving travel, physical activities, and overnight accommodation. Both event types carry significant safety risks (including accidents, medical incidents, and behavioural issues) which necessitate clear, consistently applied risk management protocols. I was told that it would be a hard no for my UMSU department to run Camps or Boat Cruises without any reference to the constitution or policy, despite Clubs and Societies being able to with their own frameworks.

Early 2025, UMSU committed to providing a briefing paper outlining these protocols by May 2025. Despite repeated reminders, no progress has been made. This delay reflects a broader organisational concern: policies are often enforced selectively depending on internal preferences rather than consistently prioritising student safety. Given this context, I recommend that all Boat Cruises and Camps run by Clubs & Societies be temporarily suspended until departments themselves are “allowed” to have these events. Departments have more institutional support, administrative continuity, and staffing capacity; if departments cannot meet safety requirements, it is unreasonable to expect clubs to do so.

Conversely, if Clubs & Societies are permitted to continue running Boat Cruises and Camps next year, there is no defensible rationale for restricting UMSU departments from doing the same.

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A central factor contributing to these inconsistencies is the absence of a unified risk assessment framework. This gap creates both operational confusion and safety vulnerabilities. Implementing an organisation-wide risk management system would significantly strengthen student welfare, ensure legal compliance, and support more reliable event delivery across departments and clubs.

Compounding these issues is ongoing confusion around contractual processes. OBs have repeatedly been told that “invoices aren’t contracts,” yet no alternative guidance, templates, or workflows have been provided. This lack of clarity leaves event organisers uncertain about vendor agreements, approval requirements, and expected timelines. A simplified contracts guide, detailing when contracts are needed, providing pre-approved templates, and outlining a clear approval process, would materially reduce administrative delays.

Finally, delays and miscommunication regarding revenue and non-SSAF income have significantly affected departmental operations. In my case, uncertainty around revenue rights and timing created unnecessary stress and prevented us from confidently utilising our budget.

My recommendations:

- Implement an organisation-wide safer events framework for Balls, Boat Cruises, Camps, parties, and all large-scale events.
- Standardise risk assessment processes, documentation, and approval requirements across all areas.
- Maintain a central archive of risk documents so new teams are not required to rebuild systems each year.
- Require all high-risk events to include clearly assigned welfare roles staffed by trained volunteers.
- Develop a shared accessible-events checklist (lighting, sound, signage, seating, sensory-friendly spaces, etc.).
- Improve communication regarding departmental non-SSAF income, revenue rights, and how Council approvals should be interpreted.
- Streamline internal workflows so approvals, contracts, and budget clarifications do not stall for months.

Jaffy handbook

I recommend that UMSU implement a First-Year Survival Guide/ Jaffy Handbook for 2026 to support new students in navigating campus life. This guide should cover key areas including where to eat, how to manage finances, accommodation options, safe spaces, free food, and classroom expectations (and not focus solely on the departments).

It could highlight accessible dining options, budgeting tips, on- and off-campus housing advice, and emergency support services. Safe spaces such as Queer Space, the Women's Lounge, and sensory-friendly areas should be clearly signposted, alongside contacts for the Sexual Harm and Response Team and other reporting and advocacy mechanisms.

Department Brunch Day

I understand that Thursdays currently have a spare slot in the calendar for brunch, and there has been discussion about running a second brunch on this day. However, it would be unfair, inequitable, and inappropriate to place this responsibility solely on one department.

I recommend instead creating a rotating roster across all UMSU departments, with each department responsible for organising a brunch on their assigned day. The President and General Secretary could oversee this initiative and coordinate the roster if they wish to establish Thursdays as a dedicated day for free food and activities.

I strongly advise against assigning this burden solely to Activities, as it is unreasonable to expect the office bearers in one department to manage this consistently on their own. A shared approach would ensure fairness, sustainability, and broader engagement across UMSU.

EdCon

A bit of a repeat from my OB report from this year about EdCon (National Union of Students Education Conference in Canberra), but I highly recommend all student reps go if they can.

At UMSU, there's a persistent view that EdCon (or other NUS events) is only for those chasing influence, and yes, that may be true for some. But it certainly isn't true for all of us and it shouldn't be a reason to disengage, especially if you care about making meaningful change within this or other Unions. It's easy to criticise student conferences like EdCon, but harder

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to acknowledge how foundational they've been in shaping the political systems many still engage with and benefit from today.

If you've ever run on a ticket, you've participated in a system built on strategy, collaboration, and knowledge-sharing which are the very principles these conferences aim to foster. So, before you dismiss them, consider the role they've played in the structures you now rely on. All I ask is that you approach this space with a bit of generosity and humility.

Still reading?

As I reach the conclusion of my time in UMSU, I would like to share some final reflections. When I first began in December 2023, I genuinely had no idea that UMSU was political, or what *stupol* even meant. In hindsight, my first year was extremely challenging. I had to request the resignation of my Co-OB for legitimate reasons, which left me managing the department independently. This created tension within my ticket and required me to juggle responsibilities without meaningful support. Early attempts to speak at Council were met with repeated obstacles due to my unfamiliarity with pre-Council procedures, a consequence of my lack of political connections. This isolation set the tone for much of the year.

Over the course of serving two terms as an OB, I have gained substantial insight, particularly regarding systemic inefficiencies. At times, my contributions were dismissed by my ticket, staff, and other student representatives, often for proposing ideas that were innovative or risky. Through this experience, I became aware that many of our governing documents are either outdated or inconsistently applied. These structural gaps hinder the effective operation of any department.

I began this department without any handover, as the previous Office Bearers were not engaged and had not run any events in 2023. I launched Bites and Bustles, an initiative designed to provide a "Bites" (free food) and a "Bustle" (free activity) at each Tuesday event. Previously, Tuesday events were only Bands, Bevs, and BBQs, but reduced funding made that model unsustainable.

Bites and Bustles has allowed students to engage in a variety of activities alongside free food, encouraging participation in events they might not normally attend and helping them build friendships. Overall, I hope Activities has become a welcoming space where students can

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connect, have fun, and enjoy shared experiences.

My final advice/ key takeaways to future student representatives:

- Protect your time, budget, and team from undue influence by other departments, staff, clubs, or individuals.
- Be proactive, consistent, and maintain clear, respectful communication with staff - they are a resource, not adversaries.
- Stand your ground when necessary, but recognise the value of collaboration.
- Your engagement determines your experience.
- Running more events develops your skills;
 - building connections enhances your experience;
 - attending Council ensures compliance and continuity.
- UMSU is demanding and sometimes frustrating, but the rewards, experience, growth, and impact are proportional to the effort invested.

I wish to take this opportunity to extend my deepest appreciation to UMSU staff. While I may disagree with certain allocations of SSAF funding, the reality is that none of our events - large or small - would have been possible without their dedication. I recognise and appreciate the hard work and commitment of staff to supporting students.

I leave UMSU with gratitude for a journey that has been messy, exhausting, yet transformative. It has shaped my personal and professional growth in profound ways.

Finally, to the colleague and mascot I will miss most: Tobias Trunke (pronounced Trun-kay). Your presence and contributions have left a lasting impact, and you will be remembered fondly.



Yours sincerely,

Amy Peters

Master of Biotechnology Student & UMSU Activities Officer Bearer 2024-25

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Appendix 1 – 2019 Welfare Angels Program

UMSU ANGELS VOLUNTEERING PROGRAM OPERATING FRAMEWORK

SCOPE

This document outlines the general processes and responsibilities related to the operation of the Volunteering Program.

The intention of this document is to

- define the nature, purpose and values of the Program
- define the roles and responsibilities of Program Directors and stakeholders and is to be read in conjunction with the relevant Program Director position description

This Operating framework will be reviewed prior to the appointment of new Program Directors, and in conjunction with the *UMSU Volunteering Policy* and associated policies and procedures.

NATURE, PURPOSE AND VALUES OF THE PROGRAM

UMSU Safety Angels are a team of volunteers designed to help make UMSU Event experiences as safe and comfortable as possible.

UMSU Safety Angels are an approachable and friendly team who are there to refer student peers to services (both within UMSU the Uni and outwards), dispense water and snacks, sunscreen and other and be the go-to people if students are feeling uncomfortable, unsafe, threatened, inebriated or are experiencing any type of harassment.

Angels will be very identifiable? at events, and will receive training in First Aid, Mental Health First Aid and Event safety as well as be given information to give out on relevant services to students.

The Program is operated in a manner consistent with the aims and objectives of UMSU and consistent with the UMSU Volunteering Policy and associated procedures.

Volunteers

It is expected that the program will provide participating volunteers with meaningful volunteering experiences which are safe, significant, fulfilling and appreciated and which contribute to the common good.

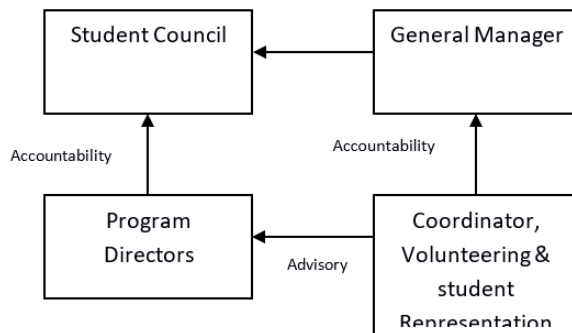
The Program aims to provide an opportunity for Volunteers to develop and diversify their networks and friendships within the university community across year levels and faculties, as well as assist peers to party safely throughout their Uni year.

End users

The program aims to encourage all students to feel comfortable and safe at UMSU events, and to utilise the services and supports that exist within the University Community, with a particular focus on first year students at Orientation events.

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Authority and accountability



It is expected that Volunteer Directors will operate the Program to the best of their abilities and in a professional manner, seeking support and advice from staff and other Directors as appropriate. The Program is an UMSU Volunteer Program and as such is required to be consistent with the UMSU values and the UMSU Volunteering Policy and related procedures.

The Directors are expected to consider the needs of the program Volunteers, end users and stakeholders as their first priority and to maximise, where possible, the value gained by all involved.

Scope

In collaboration with the Coordinator, Volunteering Directors are expected to decide on the scope of the Program prior to commencement and make every possible effort to offer the program to as wide an audience as possible, whilst maintaining value for all involved.

Volunteers

Directors are expected to make an informed decision on the required quantity and qualities of Volunteers recruited for the program based on hand-over materials, historical information and advice from suitably qualified or experienced staff or ex Directors.

Directors are expected to ensure that Volunteer responsibilities are consistent with their capabilities and status as volunteers.

Service delivery

Refer *Volunteering Service Delivery procedure*.

Record keeping

Refer to *Management of Volunteer Involvement procedure*.

Reporting

Directors are expected to:

- provide regular reports to Student Council over the course of the program and on completion of the program
- complete any necessary administrative documentation, as required by UMSU, prior to finalisation of the Program
- provide other reports or information as requested

Risk Management

Directors are expected to make every reasonable effort to reduce, remove or minimise risks associated with the operation of the Program, in collaboration with the Coordinator, Volunteering.

Interruption to a Volunteer Program

In the event of a major interruption to, or failure of, any part of the Program, it is expected that Directors will make every reasonable effort to rectify the problem and will bring the problem to the attention of the Coordinator, Volunteering at the earliest possible opportunity. A major interruption or failure is considered to be anything which adversely affects the value gained by Volunteers, end users or stakeholders.

Disputes

Disputes in relation to this framework shall be resolved in accordance with the *Procedures Student Representatives, Interaction Protocols for Staff and Student Representatives* and the *MU Student Union Ltd Collective Agreement*.