

University of Melbourne Student Union
Meeting of the Clubs & Societies Committee



Tiered Affiliation Working Group Meeting Minutes

12 pm Thursday October 23rd, 2025

Location:

Room 202, Building 168

Meeting opened at 12:09pm

1. Procedural Matters

Election of Chair

Motion 1: To elect Ewan Bezzobs as chair.

Mover: Esther Luk

Seconder: Ewan Bezzobs

CWD

1.1. Acknowledgement of Indigenous Owners

Acknowledged.

1.2. Attendance

OBs: Ewan Bezzobs, Esther Luk.

Staff: Melanie Gunton, Fiona Sanders

C&S Committee: Alex Gwynn, Joshua Solomon, Oliver Nassau, Tarrish Kadam.

Clubs: Alexander Shierlaw (Urban Collective), Bowan Hafey (STAMPS), Isabelle Orford (History Society), Nathan Ben-David (Jewish Students Society), Beichen Fang (Eurovision, Hispanic Culture and Language), Daniel Bian (Biomedicine Students Orchestra, Ronglin Houo (POKEN), Aurick Chatterjee (German Club), Anson Cheng (VKSK), Hanin Alruhili (Saudi Students Association), Yan Xu (Chariot Journal), Mathilda Stewart (Media OB), Oscar O'Donoghue (Queer Commerce Club), Vincent Chen (CLAWS), Viduwantha Suraweera (Eurovision), Sanuli Muthuthathreege (VSKS), Seamus Donnellan (Beer & Cider Society).

2. Agenda

Ewan summarises the purpose of the meeting. We are here to discuss the possibilities of tiered affiliation models and there will be different models raised with different benefits and negatives.

Ewan poses the question to clubs: ***What works and what doesn't currently? Where do the clubs struggle and what is frustrating for them?***

Oliver says there is not enough collective budget money to go around and that is a problem.

Tarish says the key concern is how proportionate tiered funding is to membership size. Currently there is no correlation between membership size and how much money is used. Activities should be the measure of how much funding is available. Every club needs assets (a banner at least).

Oscar O'Donoghue says a lot of clubs are very specific. One issue could be that people dilute the idea of the club just to get more members and a new model would force them to phase away from the core root.

Someone mentions there are clubs that do not centre around social events which would impact measuring funding on events.

Ewan says that a struggle for clubs would be taking attendance properly at every event.

Esther Luk arrives at 12:17pm.

Hanin suggests special grants for certain categories of activities on a small scale. There can be a structure for smaller clubs/activities.

Joshua says having some system is important, but this is tricky due to the variety of clubs that exist.

Someone says that in response to the proposal at Clubs Council, there have been disagreements. Him and a few clubs have created a suggestion sheet.

Ewan asks: *How much of 'small club' spending is due to extra additional money being available, and how much of small club spending is regular necessary expenditure for events?*

Chariot journal mentions that when they do standard events, they purchase pizza and drinks and there is no waste of food and yet they still use all their grants cap. Other spending includes printing magazines which is part of their purpose and holding a ball. UMSU grants allow them to try and lower cost of everything, including ticket price.

Oscar says they are also a small club (around 100 members) – Most of their events are primarily necessary expenditure that the members are asking for and want.

Isabelle makes a general point that she thinks a 'tiered affiliation' model would be unfair to smaller clubs and it would be harder to run small events and expand. It would be hard to run a big joint event like a ball.

Ronglin says that in their club that spending money is not something the club mainly does, which is a contrast from chariot journal which is a similar sized membership but spends far more. There should be some way to categorise this. Additionally, Ronglin mentions that membership-based tiers without additional safeguards could be taken advantage of.

Ewan says the membership method would be categorised at the end of the year ideally to account for that.

Tarish notes that when the Language Exchange Club implemented a membership fee, the number of members dropped drastically. Membership fees are beneficial for regulating membership joining and gaining additional funds from the such.

Oli gives his perspective from a big club (arts) and says they make their money on a ball but make losses on other events such as camps. They make profits to balance those losses.

Ewan says big clubs can't and don't rely on the current grants systems. If smaller clubs can work together and collaborate it can make more of an impact to fund some part of big events.

Clubs agree that SHRC is important for all clubs as they misunderstood the original proposal.

- ***How useful would an increase of the grant cap be to larger clubs?***

Ewan was from science and thinks that while an increase would help big clubs to do more for their members. The size of the grant cap wouldn't significantly impact they operate but would still be useful.

Oli had a similar experience and mostly agrees. His thoughts have always been, big clubs wouldn't run events differently as what they are doing now works well. But the clubs would be able to make event tickets cheaper for students, and more funding would help with this.

Alex says that larger clubs cater to more students which makes more sense from a Student Services and Amenities Fee perspective, as SSAF is for the students. However, additionally she recognises the struggles of smaller clubs as they sometimes do need more support due to less avenues to make money.

Oli says it's important to think of the benefit for the members and not just the club execs when considering the distribution of funding.

Ewan says that all clubs should aim to be self-sustaining and anything UMSU provides in grants should be additional to that.

A club says that they can still run the same events with less funding but there would be less attendance

- ***Unfunded tier: are there any clubs that would be interested in forfeiting funding in exchange for a major reduction in responsibilities and oversight? What benefits of affiliation are most and least important?***

Someone asks what an unfunded tier would incentivise? What counts as money well spent? Is it a bad thing if small clubs are spending lots of money to run regular events? Is size the best indicator of how much funding?

Josh notes there have been clubs who have disaffiliated from us as they preferred to run on their own without funding without all the responsibilities of C&S.

Alex responds that the potential benefits of being a club without funding is promotion, memberships and potentially room bookings (up to the university).

Someone mentions types of events may determine how much impact there is on each student.

Oscar asks if it would be easier to become an unfunded club.

Ewan says we would have to consider, would that club then want access to funding later?

Josh notes that C&S is more limited by staffing than funding, so how would all this effect that?

Fiona says that a major benefit of affiliation is Public Liability Insurance. If we take away safety responsibilities such as training, SFH plans and risk assessments, what happens to the Public Liability Insurance? Additionally, C&S has limited funding, limited staffing and limited room bookings available. If the solution is more staffing, where does the additional funding come from.

There is currently unsustainable and unlimited affiliation right now. Many clubs are splinter groups of each other which is a problem for us. Is there a possibility of merging for some

groups? More clubs mean funding is going to run out earlier each year. C&S does not have a judgement on types of events as they are all valuable.

Someone suggests limiting funding from clubs who have lots of money and are able to get additional funding from elsewhere.

Someone agrees that merging is good, but it should be the choice of the club. Are they already servicing a certain demographic.

Mathilda is concerned about the suggestion to remove funding from bigger groups. Big clubs hold camps and large events that need to have strong safety focuses and money to do so. Why would they put in the effort for safety if they aren't being funded or affiliated to UMSU.

- ***Should grant caps/ tiers be fixed at the start of the year or be mobile (e.g. changing in Semester 2)?***

Josh says that a percentage-based model (top 10%, top 20%, top 50%, ect) would not cut funding if a club goes down a tier, but increase funding for a club that goes up a tier.

- ***How effective are the current per-person per-event caps?***

Josh says with the cost of living, a higher per-person cap would allow clubs to spend more money, Ewan notes that would mean the department would run out of money quicker.

Someone says that they provide weekly lunches for members and this model works well. But it is hard to estimate how many members will attend so some flexibility in the per-person reimbursement would be better.

- ***Camp and high-risk restrictions: are there any small clubs that run high risk activities? Do they need to be doing so?***

Ewan thinks yes, any sized club is welcome to hold a camp, balls in high-risk event.

Ewan states his preferences – If we switch to tiers, no matter what there will be winners and losers. Even with the current model this is the case as clubs who are bigger receive the same funding as smaller clubs with less members. We appreciate the uniqueness of clubs and value their events. There might have to be an understanding that affiliated clubs might need to find other ways to make money such as a membership fee.

Meeting closed at 1:51pm

Terms of Reference as proposed by the C&S Committee:

Currently, all clubs, big or small, receive the same share of the Clubs and Societies grant budget (presently \$2,500 per club). Whilst this system is simple and equal, it is not fair or equitable when considering the vast range of sizes of affiliated clubs. Tiered affiliation is an in-development proposal by C&S to change the way funding is distributed in a way that considers the size and needs of each club.

Given this is a significant radical change to the Clubs & Societies program, we are eager to consult with clubs of all shapes and sizes to ensure that any changes will be, to the best extent, feasible and equitable for everyone.

Targeted outcome: To find out how clubs feel about changes to the grant cap, and to inform the values and distribution as well as exact mechanics.

We are seeking to particularly answer the following questions:

- For very small clubs that spend a lot of their cap, what are they spending the money on?
- How useful would an increase of the grant cap be to larger clubs?
 - Is there a case of diminishing returns, or would extra funds result in proportionally better activities?
 - Due to the way membership is distributed, the biggest clubs would receive extremely high caps under purely proportional systems. Could they use that kind of money reasonably, or is a higher grant cap pointless for them?
 - For clubs that are very big but not the biggest, how useful would extra funding be when compared to other income sources such as sponsorships?
- **Bracket system:** Would clubs prefer to have a transparent formula for calculating grant caps or a tiered system?
 - By this, we mean the difference between having the grant cap calculated directly from the size of the membership, or using membership numbers to place clubs into brackets that each have their own grant caps.
- Should grant caps/ tiers be fixed at the start of the year or be mobile (e.g. changing in Semester 2)?
- How effective are the current per-person per-event caps?
- **Activity reporting:** Would clubs be interested in using activity reporting metrics to determine funding along with or instead of membership? Would they support higher activity reporting requirements in exchange for higher funding?
- **Camp and high-risk restrictions:** are there any small clubs that run high risk activities? Do they need to be doing so?
 - We are asking as we are also considering the possibility of placing restrictions on grant categories based on club size.
- **Admin for small clubs:** could lowering funding also reduce some of the admin burden? If so, what admin burden would be reduced?