



**University of Melbourne Student Union  
Meeting of the Disabilities Committee  
Agenda  
(Tuesday, 1st of October 2024 @ 3pm AEDT)  
Meeting 6(24)  
Location: Zoom / Disabilities Office (Room 304, Building 168)**

<https://unimelb.zoom.us/j/88484054099?pwd=s2GBfDiAthtg2F1mH6lCMs2Uvl4KHR.1>

**Password: OWLFIE**

## **1. Procedural Matters**

### 1.1. Election of Chair

Motion 1: That Mary be elected as chair.

### 1.2. Acknowledgement of Indigenous Custodians

### 1.3. Attendance

### 1.4. Apologies

### 1.5. Proxies

### 1.6. Membership

### 1.7. Adoption of Agenda

Motion 2: That the agenda be adopted as presented.

## **2. Confirmation of Previous Minutes**

### **2.1. Minutes 4(24) & 5(24) (*emergency meeting*)**

Motion 3: That the previous minutes be confirmed as true and accurate records of Meetings 4(24) and 5(24)

## **3. Conflicts of Interest Declaration**

#### 4. Matters Arising from the Minutes

##### 4.1. Improving the Disabilities Lounge – restock and cleaning services (revisited)

- 4.1.1. An order was placed with Coles to restock on depleted supplies in the Disabilities Lounge, and make further progress on the existing but postponed plans from earlier in the year to improve the space.

Given the disruptions to the departments plans for the year, more of our budget than originally planned may be able to go into improving and restocking the lounge, as well as pivoting on the ways we can most practically support the community with their current needs to make the most impact in the given circumstances.

Feedback from, and experience in the community suggested that as an interim measure while we worked to get collectives back up and running, we focus first on practically addressing the struggles many face for various reasons on ensuring adequate nutrition and hydration - especially during study sessions in the lead up to exams. This especially affects our community, impacting energy, cognition and overall wellbeing.

With this in mind we have stocked the lounge with hydration salts, breakfast cereals, study snacks and some other essentials to help meet those needs.

Proposal to continue topping up these supplies through the end of term, and add to the facilities (eg: coffee making supplies)

- 4.1.2. As a memo from previous Committee Meeting minutes:

*“We are able to have the lounge thoroughly and professionally cleaned but will have to pay for the service. We will only be provided with a quotation once a ticket request has been submitted.*

*Laundry services are available at no cost via Info Desk, but we will be responsible for the labour of laundering the blankets, etc.”*

***\*We have previously approved the allocation of \$500 in the “General” “Repairs and Maintenance” under account number 03-60-675-3801 for the cleaning and rearranging of the Lounge [Meeting 4(24)]***

**Morgan has begun making enquiries into actioning this and obtaining more details for quotes.**

- 4.1.3. A backup lounge cover seems like it would be a good idea so that the lounge isn't unprotected between laundering services if soiled. Some other suggestions from the community have included a replacement for the microwave. The broken toaster needs to be replaced.

Other thoughts have been to:

- Replace the missing Bluetooth Speaker
- Ensure the portable facilities are secure/lockable
- Purchase some electric hot water bottles for use both as sensory aids and pain relief, be kept in the lounge for students that need them; especially those who may struggle have difficulty filling standard hot water bottles safely with boiling water from the common tap or carrying the additional weight with them to and from campus
- Purchase organisers etc assist in keeping the lounge tidy and free from clutter
- Purchase a small photo printer or polaroid-style camera and photo paper so that people can add photos of themselves/each other to the pin-board wall, given that the communal white board has been such a success as a community building tool
- The previous idea of a sensory pod is requested fairly often, and it would be a nice idea if we can find one appropriate to the space in the timeframe we have remaining for the year
- If budget allows, it might be beneficial to keep a small backup fridge in the Disabilities Office for items that need refrigerating for Collectives, aiding students with strict dietary requirements (with mind to some unfortunate theft from the Lounge over the break) or for storage as needed, given the condition and size of the fridge in the Lounge.

## 4.2. Other Programs

4.2.1. Morgan has reached out to Livingworks again regarding the previous discussions around MHFA training and ASIST training. This is pending a response.

*We are mindful that at this time of year it may not be something everyone on committee has time or capacity for, but if possible it would be good to still pursue OB training as we head through the exam period as it can be an especially difficult and stressful time for disabled students, and it would be beneficial to have some training in navigating this, if time permits.* Seeking any additional expression of interest from committee members to adjust enquiries as needed.

4.2.2. Given the raised profile presently around the discussion of harassment and misconduct, Morgan has also made some brief initial enquiries with local non-profit support organisations that operate in the Sexual Harm Response field and

run Trauma-Informed Yoga programs. These queries are pending response, but are looking to see if it is possible to run a short program for those who may be feeling the impact of this.

#### 4.3. Reallocation of Project Expenses due to external factors, and budget update

4.3.1. Just to open the door on the conversation, given the delays we experienced this year and the late point in Semester 2 we were able to get back into the swing of things, it's with great sadness that we are not able to proceed with the previous plans to produce The Ability Issue Vol. 2

This was such a wonderful initiative last year, to really amplify the voices and experiences of those in our community as well as making such important strides in pursuing the need for accessibility in publication. I (Morgan) want to take a moment before we officially hit pause on the project, to once again to really thank everyone who worked so hard to contribute to its success. Eleanore, Madeleine, Matt and Della put a lot of effort into trying to get things off the ground this year despite extenuating circumstances and I really want to acknowledge how much effort went into that even though we haven't been able to see it through.

Moving forward, this leaves \$10,000 in the [3713] budget line (Printing - External) that we set aside for the publication production, to reallocate to another project.

4.3.2. The department's overall year-to-date position from the August P&L statement is \$12,884 favourable (F) to budget. Additional time is needed to fully re-budget and bring a revised plan for the remainder of the year to the Committee and we are hopeful to be able to discuss this in the next Committee Meeting. In the interim, reallocating the funds from the [3713] (Printing - External) and budget.

We are also ahead in the Events [3840] budget line with our YTD position being +3,851.27. Hope to come back to Committee at the next meeting once we have ascertained if any of the planned events can proceed, and in what capacity.

#### 4.4. Collectives

Based on 4(24) minutes – motion 7.1, there was \$418 unspent from the \$2,000 approved for general collectives during the last committee meeting in which we passed enough funds to cover Semester 1. Owing to the 1 x cancelled Collective in week 11 Semester 1 and the paired back Collective of week 12 - we had surplus remaining from that budget. This \$418 has been spent this week on the return to Collectives. The annual budget remaining (unspent) for the Programs [3839] budget line - out of which we fund Collectives - is (\$3,669 as per the August P&L - \$418

September expenses) leaves us with an estimated \$3215 remaining. This amount is favourable to budget, given we were unable to run Collectives for the start of Semester.

It might make sense to reallocate some of the surplus to another budget line. Proposal would be to approve \$2000 from the Programs [3839] budget to fund Collectives and additional community social events / gatherings as appropriate in lieu of Arts Collectives through to the end of the term.

This would leave \$1215 remaining from the current surplus to be reallocated.

#### 4.5. Potential New Program

Our initial brainstorming around timely and appropriate ways to focus our energy and budget on meeting the current needs of our constituents has landed with a focus on meeting practical needs where we know AAPs and accessibility measures can fall short of truly supporting students through exams and assessments.

We have been building on the idea of 'Exam Survival Kits' for students, aimed at helping to bridge those gaps in providing students the tools they need to self-accomodate, and address some of the inequality that arises in accessibility.

Discussions over the years of supporting and advising students in our community has repeatedly come back to community recommendations of certain products and/or software that poses significant affordability hurdles to those that need them most. Things like the appropriate use of noise-cancelling headphones, earplugs (such as Loops - given that earplugs are an allowable AEA option for some students, but are not provided), task management and note-taking programs/apps etc, and pain relief tools such as wearable electric hot water bottles to name a few. We have incredible resources in our extended community for further suggestions.

Proposal: It would be beneficial to allocate some of the unused funding to kickstarting the initial sourcing of resources for kits that are both appropriate to and meet the different needs of those in the community. We will also look into the best ways of seeing that the different resources are distributed on a needs-basis, so that everyone benefits and the assistance goes where it is most needed.

Morgan has reached out to a business contact that may be able to facilitate a discounted price on a bulk order of any tech items through a major retailer. Confident this does not constitute a conflict of interest, as neither acquainted party will benefit, and UMSU protocol will be followed in obtaining multiple quotes for comparison.

Morgan is looking into how viable a survey would be, around any privacy concerns. This is their field of study, so execution of an appropriate user needs survey would

be able to be managed in-house and without expense.

It may also be very valuable to understand the needs of the constituency better, so that we can continue to focus our support efforts, identify key areas for future advocacy, and open the door to obtaining measurable feedback on the impact of different tools for inclusion in our Accessibility Masterdoc (which we still would love to finish!). Balancing the benefits of this with the sensitive nature of people's information will be important. Initial thoughts are that an anonymised survey would help accomplish that goal, but not help identify each student's needs. Further discussion and ideating required.

Morgan intends to explore the potential for positive collaboration with SEDS - particularly around exploring any capacity to extend a trial of existing licenses (eg: Glean via Notetaking) to help students connect to and familiarising themselves with the resources already available. One of the most common concerns we hear is that students who are eligible for an AAP don't know what their options are when asked 'What would help you?', and subsequently end up with plans that don't provide the support they need. Making those initial connections with resources would be a big positive if possible at this point in the year, and could additionally serve to provide SEDs with valuable feedback on the benefits of those tools. It could be wishful thinking on this timeframe, but it would be great to try.

## **5. Correspondence**

The backlog of correspondence is quite extensive, so apologies for not being able to report back on everything.

### **5.1. Good news and bad news:**

Bad News first:

Upon gaining access to the emails and accounts Morgan found some unpaid accounts for the purchase of gift cards from Readings at the end of last year's OB term.

Good News:

We have chased this up and organised for it to be sorted out in the next pay cycle, apologised profusely, and have 10 x \$30 gift cards to our name!

### **5.2. Speaking From Experience Project**

Another unfortunate email to miss in the downtime for our Office. A representative from the Sex Discrimination Team at the Australian Human Rights Commission had reached out hoping to hear thoughts and advice from those in demographics that are overrepresented in workplace harassment statistics for the "Speaking From Experience" project - a current undertaking "to centre the lived expertise of those

who have been sexually harassed at work in workplace reform efforts, including the positive duty. This project came out of recommendation 27 of the Commission's National Inquiry into Sexual Harassment in Australian Workplaces."

This included the opportunity for Victim-Survivors to attend listening sessions when they were in Melbourne. Unfortunately this occurred in June. Morgan has nonetheless reached out to touch base and see if the project is still taking online submissions and query any avenue for contribution.

### **5.3. Electoral impact on disabled students**

GSA had reached out prior to the Student Elections hoping to collaborate on measures to help protect and assist Disabled Students during the election period. It's a shame we didn't get to see the message in time, but we could offer valuable advice for future reference and Morgan has initiated discussions around the benefits of a Trauma-Informed approach to campaigning, and the benefits this would have on helping students feel safe on campus.

### **5.4. There was unfortunately an incidence of theft from the Lounge over the break. This has been reported and we are making every effort to follow up, but it's perhaps a timely reminder that unfortunately we can't guarantee the safety of unattended personal items in the Lounge, and strongly recommend people don't leave their valuables unattended.**

## **6. Office Bearer Reports**

Just a quick one for the both of us! It's been a very big first week, and we are still catching up on a lot of things. It's exciting to get Collectives back up and running, and start moving towards new ways to help out the community given the difficulties faced in providing the more practical supports we had intended throughout the year.

Thank you everyone for supporting us and for what turned out to be a really incredible discussion during the meeting to elect us as the Disabilities Officers until the end of November. Everyone spoke so brilliantly and it's inspiring as always to be surrounded by such dedicated and amazing humans.

(P.S: Whoever left the little "Thank You" note on the cupboard next to the Study Snacks Housekeeping note, it made my day! Thank you. - Morgan)

## **7. Motions on Notice**

### **7.1. Food for weekly collectives**

Motion 4: To approve spending \$2000 within tag “Collectives” under account 03-60-675-3839 “Programs”, this is for catering upcoming collectives at the Disability Lounge.

### **7.2. Stocking the Disabilities Lounge**

Motion 6: To approve a further spending of \$3000 within tag “General” under account number 03-60-675-3352 “Consumables & Supplies”, this is for restocking the Disabilities Lounge and office with essential supplies, furniture, and tech e.g: polaroid camera/printer, storage solutions, misc stationery, colouring and activity books, bean bag filler, sensory tent, bluetooth speaker, secure plugs/locks for tech, charging solutions, electric hot water bottles, spare lounge cover, coffee-making supplies and restocking the study snacks throughout the remainder of the semester.

### **7.3. Reallocation of Funds**

Motion 7: To approve moving \$10,000 from the [3713] (Printing - External) budget to the [3839] “Programs” budget line, under account 03-60-675-3839, within tag “General”: for purchases to create ‘Exam Survival Kits’ or similar, with the aim of improving accessibility and equity in academic participation and examination (including the self-management of conditions that impact participation), and assisting in the development of skills and accumulation of resources to support students with disabilities. These might include noise-cancelling headphones, earplugs, pain-management tools, app licenses, study-aids, fidget toys, identity pins and lanyards, book vouchers, water bottles etc

## **8. Other Business (Motions without Notice)**

## **9. Next Meeting**

TBC: Scheduled for 15th, October 2024 @ 3pm.

## **10. Close**