

University of Melbourne Student Union
Advocacy & Legal Student Advisory Group
Minutes of Meeting 1 of Semester 2 2013 – August 14, 2013

1. Welcome and Procedural Matters

The Chair welcomed members to the meeting, with a special welcome to Mr Joel Barolsky.

1.1. Apologies

Justin Baré.

1.2. Members Present

Phoebe Churches (Chair), Donna Markwell, Greta Haywood, Kara Hadgraft, Steven Smith, Tom Hayes, Thomas Kuang, Charlotte Zhan, Nadia di Battista (minutes).

1.3. In attendance

Joel Barolsky.

1.4. Confirmation of minutes from last meeting

Last meeting minutes were confirmed without amendment.

2. Presentation and Q & A regarding the UMSU Advisory Service Contract Review – Mr Joel Barolsky, Consultant

Joel informed the meeting that he was asked by Neil Robertson, the Academic Registrar, to conduct a review on how the Advocacy Service was tracking after its first year of operation under contract with the University. He outlined how he had conducted the review, examining service reports and documents from the Advocacy Service, interviewing other University stakeholders, as well as two staff members from the GSA. He received positive feedback from everyone, and overall he is satisfied that everything is operating well.

He identified four areas for further development if additional funds were to be made available:

- Additional research
- Upgrade website
- Outreach
- Advocate for Advocacy issues (lobby for policies, etc.).

He identified three specific recommendations:

- Continue as you are - everything is going well;
- Since there are two Advocacy services, at the very least data and stats could be merged, as data should be reported consistently, and as a whole;
- Long-term recommendation is to move to a single service model.

Phoebe clarified that the statement in the report that the GSA is more independent than UMSU is actually not factually correct. Joel conceded that this was the GSA's view rather than the objective view of the review.

Joel set out the benefits of a single service services versus the benefits of two services. He said that overall, a single service makes more sense. He noted that the GSA as an independent organisation does not need to agree to the recommendation; however it was the position of the review that it would be in the students' and the University's best interests to have a single body representing students. Joel also made mention that he is presenting his finding to the GSA Council on Thursday 15 August. Once that has taken place, he is unsure at this stage if there will be any further recommendations, or a further report.

Joel congratulated us once again on our service, as all the responses he received regarding us were extremely and uniformly positive.

Phoebe clarified the difference between the advisory group and the reference group. She also made mention that when she spoke to Joel, she advised him that we were not at capacity yet and could absorb more casework, and did not necessarily require more staff should a "merge" of the two take place. It would be of more direct benefit to students to use any funds freed up by the efficiencies of a single service toward enhancing current and proposed projects and research. Joel acknowledged this and indicated it was reflected in his recommendations.

3. A & L Service Reports

3.1. Advocacy case work

Phoebe tabled the last Quarterly service Report.

Donna mentioned there has been an increase in assessment disputes for graduate students on placement. She currently has two files open on this.

MUOSS - Asked about CUPC and students concerns around this, specifically one student who approached our service for assistance.

Phoebe said that that student is welcome to come back and see us for further advice.

3.2. Legal case work

Greta gave a run down on the Legal Service. Made mention of the current stats for her follow up are not correct, as she has not had the chance to enter them all in yet. She also noted that some files involve complex follow up such as a migration case she is currently working on.

Other projects she is currently working on include:

- Legal Service Standard Operating Procedures
- The UMSU Constitution (*GH* said that *SS* should have it back by the end of the month, *SS* also made mention that the AGM will be held on Tuesday 1 October)
- Working on documents for Summer School and Theatre
- Investigating the current issue of migration agents and solicitors coming on campus and approaching students – need to get the message out that these firms can be a bit of a scam, telling students they offer a “free” service but then charging them full rates after a very short consultation. It is important that Greta is consulted before office bearers and clubs and societies accept offers for these firms to come on campus.
- Legal Service plans to have a greater social media presence
- Hopefully have an article in Farrago advertising her service (*SS* will also follow this up)
- Running an employment campaign
- Working on a ‘scam’ campaign
- Hoping to do a musical on refugees, currently working with theatre on this
- Also hoping to do a theatre piece regarding the Catholic Church.

3.3. *Projects and initiatives*

3.3.1. *Exam Support Stall*

Recruiting Volunteers, -51 Applicants, -Regular casual coordinators (have recruited 1), -will run in the usual place,- change in the amount of bottles of water (difficult to have sustainable options, and difficult to deliver supplies to the exam venue,- water has been ordered

3.4. *Reports from Student Office Bearers*

Office Bearers present had nothing to report back.

4. Other Business

There was no other business.

5. Next Meeting

The next SAG will be convened in mid-October 2013. Notice will be sent out two weeks prior.

6. Close

The meeting closed at 12:00pm.