

**University of Melbourne Student Union  
Advocacy & Legal Student Advisory Group  
CONFIRMED Minutes 10:30 am, 17.09.2015  
Meeting 1 of Semester 2**

Chair: Phoebe Churches, Manager, Advocacy & Legal

**1 Welcome and Procedural Matters**

Phoebe welcomed all those in attendance.

- 1.1 Apologies: Greta Haywood (**UMSU Legal Service currently closed while Greta is on leave**).
- 1.2 Attendance  
Phoebe Churches, Alanna Smith, Donna Markwell, Nadia Di Battista, Paul Hornsby, Nellie Montague, Emily De Rango, Patrick Clearwater and Conor Serong.
- 1.3 Confirmation of previous minutes  
Last meetings minutes were confirmed without amendment.

**2 A & L Service Reports**

2.1 Advocacy case work

Phoebe spoke of the current issues around special consideration – discussed the new policy and is interested to see the impact of this. Donna mentioned that issues we see with special consideration will most likely still be reflected in the next quarter.

Alanna discussed her difficulties in ascertaining who manages student hubs now, as well as other issues around location various staff across the University. Phoebe will raise this with the Advocacy Reference Group and clarify in the next quarterly report. Alanna described her difficulties in seeking accurate advice from the University regarding fee reimbursement after a CUPC decision.

Nadia and Donna are meeting with Anna Cameron, Graduate Online Melbourne, to develop a better understanding of the work we both do, particularly in how we can support students. Phoebe suggested that following the changes at the University, the Advocacy Service should re-establish connections – contact peak areas and organise meetings.

Donna noted the increase referrals from student centres, has seen several students recently that haven't required strict 'advocacy assistance' – just general information on how to apply for a Leave of Absence, they are being referred to us from their student centre.

Patrick enquired if whether or not these issues with the new Melbourne Model will resolve in time – Phoebe is unsure at this stage, but suggest that we should be focusing on what disadvantages students the most, rather than the bigger picture.

Conor mentioned that the majority of students they surveyed were happy with the assistance that their student centre provides. Phoebe noted that the Advocacy Service and student reps should work more closely together to ensure we both have a full understanding of what is happening.

## 2.2 Legal case work

Phoebe spoke on the Legal Service on behalf of Greta.

Looking at the Legal Service statistics for this quarter, there is a major leap from this year to last year – but this year's stats are more reflective of contact. Greta has been ensuring that her data entry is up to date.

The service has seen an increase in international students; this could be due to the changes at International Student Services.

Migration and Infringement Notices are the largest matters seen. Once we have an established volunteer program volunteers can assist with Infringement Notices.

File complexity stayed consistent throughout this quarter.

There has been a rise in employment matters, specifically to do with the underpayment of staff. Phoebe recently assisted a student who works at one of the outlets downstairs and who has been underpaid in his role. Paul queried if MUSUL has any responsibility to ensure their tenants pay their staff industry standards, Patrick replied that it's a requirement in their leasing agreement that tenants act lawfully, but it's not MUSUL's role to ensure that staff in tenancies are appropriately paid.

Greta prepared a statement for social media when 'Border Farce' was initially announced earlier this month. She provided information on what students could do if approached – the operation was then cancelled.

## 2.3 Projects and initiatives

### 2.3.1 Advocacy Service Surveys

Phoebe discussed the requirements of our service to distribute a annual user survey, this is per our funding arrangement. The results for our most recent survey are positive, and there were more qualitative responses than usual. Phoebe discussed the type of questions we survey students, and mentioned that after our contractual agreement finishes, we can look at revising the questions. Something that we see regularly in survey responses is the Advocacy Services authority over the University – students have different expectations of what they think the service can offer. This is also reflected in the most recent responses. As well as students, we also survey staff who are in regular contact with the service (every two years). It has been challenging this year due to the staffing changes at the University. It is difficult to get qualitative responses – but overall the responses have been positive.

### 2.3.2 Legal Service Discussion Paper

Justin circulated a discussion paper regarding the future of the Legal Service. No feedback was received – staff and students can still submit feedback now. The next step is to establish a working group once Greta returns from leave. A focus in the discussion paper was the lack of Community Legal Education – this should be a component of the service and a requirement of a Community Legal Centre. We also need to establish our missions before we can secure a volunteer program (this has been one of the main hold ups with the volunteer program) it is important the Legal Service maintains accreditation standards.

### 2.3.3 Research and other projects

- Exam Support Stall and Peer Programs – Not discussed.
- Legal Volunteer

The Legal Service has one volunteer working on our policies; unfortunately she is no longer available. We need to have the capacity to advise and support volunteers before we can establish a program. Once this is done we hope to have two or three volunteers working with us next year.

### **3 Reports from Student Office Bearers**

Nellie is doing hand over at the moment with the incoming OB's – she asked is there is anything specific information/material about the service that she can pass on. Phoebe responded that it is difficult to market our service, acknowledged that we need to improve with our online information, students should be able to find us easily online. Phoebe suggested that new OB's should come up and meet us so we can provide them with an introduction on our service.

### **4 Other business**

None.

### **5 Next Meeting**

Next meeting will be in November/December, date TBA.

### **6 Close**

Close: 11.38pm.