

**University of Melbourne Student Union**

**Minutes of meeting 3(16) of the Constitutional Working Group**

**10:00 AM, 7.4.2016**

**OB Space, Union House**

Attendance: James Bashford (General Secretary), Megan Pollock (Activities Officer), Adriana Mells (Wom\*n's Officer), Martin Dittman, Jo Steinle.

Items discussed:

1. Wom\*n's Department CWG

Adriana has created a departmental CWG to deal with changes relevant to Women and the Wom\*n's Dept. She has also created a document (attached) summarising changes which is being distributed through collectives for consultation.

Jo raised concerns over people misusing any expansion in eligibility for voting/candidacy for Wom\*n's but that this is not enough of a concern to outweigh the need to be tran inclusive/ Jo also noted that there is an enforcement issue with polling clerks explain who can and cant vote on other ballots like queer (it is supposed to be explained when the ballot is given to voters)

Adriana informed the CWG that the Women of Colour Collective has suggested created AA fro WOC within the department eg: one wom\*n's officer must be a WOC. This will be further discussed by WOCC as well as working with People of Colour Collective on definitions of "people of colour".

James suggested given the growing workload of changes being considered that they be prioritised and dealt with progressively.

Adriana is also concerned at the timeline and wants changes concerning elections to be ready in time for the election this year. She's wary that these changes (especially regarding trans inclusivity) have been considered for a long time but the process starts again from scratch each year, it's time for them to be implemented.

James suggested drafting changes and consulting on the draft rather than drafting after consultation. AA changes for example are easy to draft and ready to go, just need more consultation outside of areas where they've already been consulted on and are widely agreed to.

2. Improving participation and engagement in consultation

Following the SGM, concerns were raised about a perceived lack of engagement in the process of constitutional change. James noted that there had been an increased effort into informing students of the SGM with an all student email sent by the university and changes taken through Council for initial endorsement, but that there is always a need to evaluate and address concerns.

Martin raised the importance of ensuring CWG minutes are on the website. He also suggested encouraging departments to bring along departmental contingents from their collectives, networks and volunteers. Martin was sure that an UMSU wide effort would bring out far more students.

James agreed that departments need to be involved. He posted on Queer department Facebook groups on the morning of the SGM which seemed to get a couple of people along but if this had of been done earlier in a more organised way it could have been very effective (given the many changes considered relevant to the queer dept.)

Adriana said that while pages and FB groups are great, they are not necessarily very effective or engaging. Similarly, collectives can be very fluid and have a lack of continuity which can be challenging in when trying to consult.

James noted the importance of using the UMSU newsletter.

James raised the question of lowering the quorum for SGMs for discussion.

Megan said people at the SGM didn't care about it because they were there for the BBQ.

Martin briefly pondered making changes through referenda.

James noted that the quorum is high due to the need to not make changing the constitution too easy.

Megan asked if such a high bar is really necessary as a safety valve.

Martin underlined that a lack of engagement remains the key issue.

James briefly pondered whether having some sort of online SGM may be effective but it was suggested that this could be too easily manipulated and there was general concern at this.

Meeting closed at 10:48 AM.

## Wom\*n's Department – Constitutional Change Working Group

There is a constitutional working group meeting on Thursday between 10-12. This group discusses a range of potential changes to the UMSU constitution and is open to any interested people who are members of UMSU (University of Melbourne students).

A few changes have been discussed that are of interest to the Wom\*n's Department. Rather than an external group talking about proposed changes in relation to Women, I thought it would be a good idea to talk to Women's Department Collectives and create our own constitutional working group to discuss the changes and push forward any change in terms of the constitution.

Changes that were brought up in the first meeting of the constitutional working group:

- Increasing the number of women that have to be elected
- Do we need to change the way in which we vote for the women's? (In order to be more inclusive of Trans Women)

Changes proposed/suggested by women's officer (Adriana Mells)

- Getting rid of the asterisk – changing Wom\*n to Women
- Changing the definition of woman

Other changes brought up by Women's Collective:

- One women's officer should be a woman of colour
- Half of Women's committee should be women of colour
- Where there are two officers in one department, one should be a woman

These are all up for discussion and it would be great to have input and direction from members of Women's Department Collectives, as the Wom\*n's Department exists to represent you.

We should also hopefully be creating a Facebook group dedicated to the Women's Department Constitutional Working Group and set up a meeting time so we can discuss these proposed changes.

## Relevant sections of the UMSU Constitution:

### UMSU STATEMENT OF PURPOSE:

The purpose for which UMSU Incorporated is incorporated are:

1. To advance the welfare and interests of students;
2. To represent Students of the University within the University and to the community;
3. To provide amenities and services, principally for Students and other members of the University community, and incidentally to the public, but in all cases not inconsistent with agreements made with MU Student Union Limited or the University, as the case may be, from time to time;
4. To provide an independent framework for student social and political activity;
5. To develop, maintain and support student clubs, societies and associational life generally;
6. To promote and defend the rights of Students to education on the basis of equality, without regard to race, colour, sex, sexuality, gender identity, age, physical disability, mental illness, economic circumstances, political, religious or ideological conviction, or national or social origin;
7. To oppose violence and/or hatred through militarism, nationalism, or discrimination on the basis of race, colour, sex, sexuality, gender identity, age, physical disability, mental illness, economic circumstances, religion or national or social origin
8. To provide a democratic and transparent forum in which Students' affair and interests can be governed in an affective and accountable manner; and
9. To promote free and accessible government-funded education

### INTERPRETATION/DEFINITIONS IN UMSU CONSTITUTION:

**Collective:** means a body corresponding to an area of activity by a committee and the Media Officers which is open to all students (with the exception of the Disabilities Collective, Queer Collective, Wom\*n's Collective and Indigenous Collective which are subject to the restrictions applicable to those committees) to participate in events and discussions relating to that area of activity as established in accordance with rule 92

**Woman:** means a person who identifies as a woman as evidenced in the enrolment records of the university

**Wom\*n's Committee:** means the committee of that name established in accordance with rule 67

## MEMBERSHIP OF STUDENTS COUNCIL:

Section 49 – outlines the different voting representatives (Page 15)

49.1 (a) (ii) Fifteen general representatives elected by all students, of whom at least seven must be Women. If at least seven candidates for election are not Women, those places not filled by Women may be filled by any other member

## MEMBERSHIP OF COMMITTEES

Section 68 (page 20)

- (a) Seven voting representatives, of whom at least three must be women. If at least three candidates for each committee are not Women, those places not filled by Women may be filled by other candidates

## BY WHOM ELECTED

Section 71 (page 21)

71.3 The voting of Representatives of the Wom\*n's Committee are elected by enrolled Students who are Women

## ELIGIBILITY TO HOLD OFFICE

Section 21 (page 22)

72.3 The voting Representatives of the Wom\*n's Committee are elected from Members of UMSU who are Women

## WOM\*N'S DEPARTMENT

Section 89 (page 26)

The aims and objectives of the Wom\*n's Department are:

- (a) To oversee activities, policy and direction of UMSU in areas related to promoting the advancement and welfare of Women Students including, but not limited to, education, student rights, student representation, equal opportunity, publications and media;
- (b) To promote and assist in the development and maintenance of high quality services within the University that are responsive to the needs of Women Students;
- (c) To advocate for Women within UMSU and the University
- (d) To organise political, educational and social events which promote feminist debate and action

- (e) To provide and protect safe autonomous Women's space on UMSU premises, and maintain materials, facilities and literature therein;
- (f) To provide Women students with awareness of safe sex practices and the prevention of sexually transmitted diseases and distributing information of sexual health issues;
- (g) To facilitate a collective to produce the Women's publication, Judy's Punch, at least once per year;
- (h) To ensure the participation of all Women in the activities of the Department, and UMSU generally; and
- (i) To act as a contact for Women Students, providing support, advocacy, information and referral as required

## COLLECTIVES

Section 92 (page 28)

92.2 Participation in the Collectives established by the Wom\*n's Committee, Queer Committee, Indigenous Committee and Disabilities Committee is restricted to Students who qualify to vote in elections for the relevant Committee

## RESTRICTIONS ON STANDING FOR ELECTION

Section 129 (page 35)

- (a) The Wom\*n's Officer and each Representative of the Wom\*n's Committee must be a Woman

## RESTRICTIONS ON VOTING IN ELECTIONS

Section 130 (page 35)

130.1 The Wom\*n's Officer and each Representative of the Wom\*n's Committee are elected by Students who are Women

## ALTERATION OF THIS CONSTITUTION

Section 188 (page 52)

188.1 In accordance with the Act, the Constitution may only be amended by Special Resolution at a General Meeting of UMSU