

**University of Melbourne Student Union  
Advocacy & Legal Student Advisory Group**

**MINUTES**

**2:00 pm, 02.03.2017**

**Meeting 1 of Semester 1**

**Training Room 1, 3rd Floor  
Union House**

Chair: Phoebe Churches, Manager, Advocacy & Legal

**1 Welcome and Procedural Matters**

1.1 Apologies

Eva Burch

1.2 Attendance

Michelle Almiron, Nadia Di Battista, Donna Markwell, Reeanna Maloney, Emily De Rango, Yasmin Luu, Phoebe Churches, Lida Rashidi, Aviya Bavati, Paul Hornsby

1.3 Confirmation of previous minutes: Donna Markwell

**2 A & L Service Reports**

2.1 Advocacy case work

*Exam Misconduct*

There was a high volume of matters in the last semester. Rebecca Bywater who has been appointed by the University to conduct a review has read the service quarterly reports and will be getting back in contact with Phoebe to discuss this further. Speculation that, after several semesters of fairly lax invigilation - students thought it was ok to bring mobile phones, etc., into examinations. Many students we saw appeared genuinely unaware that this was a problem. That is, they knew the rules, but assumed they were not strictly enforced – because they hadn't been previously in their experience.

There were also reports of invigilators assuring students it would be ok and nothing further would happen – however those students would then receive a formal allegation of academic misconduct.

Most students were unsuccessful on appeal, with a penalty of zero for the subject a frequent determination.

*Special Consideration*

We are still identifying various problems with special consideration, and are able to provide this feedback through the Special Consideration Practice Leaders Advisory Group (SCPLAG). From our experience, poor reasoning and

decision making has generated a significant amount of appeals. Phoebe will document this more in the next quarterly report.

#### *Discrimination, Bullying and Sexual Harassment matters*

The service has seen an increase in these matters. We can assist students with framing their experience within the context of a compliant/grievance, but we are not DBSH advisors and cannot provide specific advice on these matters. We note that the University does not currently have a conciliation service for students who have experienced discrimination, bullying or sexual harassment. This may be why students are continuing to be referred to our service with these matters. We will be producing an information sheet that we can provide to students outlining the limitations of how service and referral points. The Legal Service is the appropriate referral point for sexual harassment/assault matters.

## 2.2 Legal case work

Reeanna gave an update on the Legal Service. It is difficult to give a breakdown of comparative data between now and this time last year – the service was previously run very differently and had more of a file based approach rather than advice focus. Tenancy matters are the number one matter we see currently, followed by infringement notices. Students who have tenancy matters usually contact us for bond disputes or maintenance repair issues.

The service sees more graduate students than undergraduate – this could possibly be due to graduate students have more legal matters, or the matters being more complex. The service now provides mainly telephone advice in the first instance, we find this is a more efficient way of operating and we can assist more students. Our response time is very fast and we're able get back to most students on the same day. Overall we have found that this new service delivery model is going well.

## 2.3 Projects and initiatives

### 2.3.1 UMSU Advocacy Service –planning day report back

- Changes to service delivery model

The Advocacy Planning Day was held on Thursday 9 February. We Reviewed how we can streamline and provide a more responsive framework. We are currently trialling a 'drop in clinic' between 2-4pm Monday – Thursday. We have found that a lot of advice can be given in a 10-minute window with SSO/duty advocate during drop in. we have found this is a much more responsive service so far and we will continue to evaluate its progress. We have found this new service delivery gives us more time to develop self-help resources and tools. Will report back on progress at the next Advisory Group Meeting.

### 2.3.2 Legal Service 'Launch' @ SummerFest All went well.

Papers - Student Union Advocacy Service Report: October – December 2016  
(herewith)  
- Legal Service Statistics (to be tabled)  
Discussed.

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

#### 3.1 Items of interests related to Advocacy or Legal Services

Yasmin has recently attended several misconduct hearings. Staff who sit on these disciplinary committees have indicated they are keen to receive copies of the governance training booklet. There have previously been discussions about staff receiving training on their roles in these hearings. From our experience, staff on committees lack an understanding of the policies, and we have seen many allegation notices that weren't correctly formulated.

### **4 Other Business**

N/a

### **5 Next Meeting**

Phoebe to send out dates.

### **6 Close**

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#### **Membership:**

**Executive Officer & Chair:** Phoebe Churches, Manager, Advocacy & Legal

2 representatives elected by and from the Education Committee;

2 representatives elected by and from the Welfare Committee;

2 representatives elected by and from the UMSU International Committee;

2 representatives from GSA;

Education (Academic Affairs) Officer(s);

Indigenous Officer(s);

Welfare Officer(s);

President, UMSU;

Secretary, UMSU;

President, UMSU International;

Vice-President (Education and Welfare), UMSU International; and

Members of the Student Representative Network.