

BOARD REPORT

PRESIDENT

USU Board meeting date: 27/11/2025

Agenda item: 10.4

Report Period: November 2025

Author: Phan Vu

Title: President

Phone/mobile: +61 493 322 268

	Page No.	Res. No.
Recommendation 1 That the Board notes this report.	2-5	1

SUMMARY

As the year draws to a close, we are seeing key projects crystallise and their impact on student life become more visible. The USU is well-placed to finish the year on a positive note, both in terms of financial performance and student outcomes.

For October, the USU delivered a profit of \$341k against a Q3 RFC of \$139k, a positive variance of \$202k. Approximately \$81k of this variance is attributable to unspent SSAF Contestable funds, with the remainder largely driven by higher-than-forecast revenue in HostCo operations, lower cost of goods in Holme and Manning (linked to lower sales volumes), and savings in marketing expenditure.

Governance activity has been significant, with four committee meetings held and continued positive progress on incorporation. Externally, our relationship with the University continues to strengthen, highlighted by the renewal of the graduations contract for a further five years and the commencement of discussions on a collaborative merchandising strategy.

Our cost-of-living initiatives, including the \$5 meals program, continue to deliver strong results and meaningful savings for students.

A further Board meeting will be held on 11 December to progress outstanding matters prior to the end-of-year shutdown period.

GOVERNANCE

Committee Meetings

Four committee meetings were held this month: Clubs & Societies; Work, Health and Safety; Debates, and Finance.

Clubs & Societies:

The committee met to consider outstanding club governance matters, including finalising approvals for new club applications and hearing appeals. Four club appeals are presented to the November Board meeting for determination.

With the rollout of the new clubs platform, MyUSU, scheduled for January 2026 to streamline management and improve administration for both club leaders and the Clubs team, new club applications will be suspended until further notice to ensure sufficient resources are allocated to the migration.

The committee also considered new due date guidelines for clubs' financial reviews to be reflected in the 2026 C&S materials. These guidelines are designed to address recurring issues with outdated or unusually defined constitutions, provide a clear rule for executives to follow, and better integrate with the new clubs registration system by introducing a due date that is not dependent on a society holding a particular meeting.

Work, Health and Safety (WHS):

The WHS Committee met to consider new policy developments and receive updates from WHS representatives on opportunities to improve WHS practices across different areas of the organisation. The committee endorsed the Out of Hours Access Policy, which establishes clear procedures and safety requirements for staff, students and contractors who require access to USU facilities outside standard operating hours, ensuring after-hours activities are conducted safely, securely, and in line with our WHS obligations.

Debates:

The Debates Committee resolved to implement several initiatives aimed at fostering greater inclusion and strengthening community participation. Work is now focused on ensuring a smooth transition to the incoming 2026 Debates Committee, including a structured handover process, documentation of key practices, and early planning to support continuity of competitions and programs.

People & Culture (P&C):

The P&C Committee considered a range of matters, including:

- A second round of endorsement of the Out of Hours Access Policy following the WHS Committee discussion.
- Budget and training initiatives under the Learning and Development Strategy.
- Key people risks for 2026, which remain broadly stable, with continued emphasis on resourcing pressures, overtime and time-in-lieu management, and succession planning for critical roles.

The committee also reviewed the new performance guide, designed to support consistent performance assessment and to form the basis for a pay-for-performance scheme, subject to financial viability, which is scheduled to be trialled in December 2025. The CEO performance review framework is underway, with feedback from committee members being collated and to be brought back to the next P&C meeting.

Finance:

The Finance Committee reviewed the outcomes of the pricing workshop held with Board representatives, and how this analysis informs the 2026 budget. The committee resolved to endorse the 2026 budget for Board approval at the November meeting. The budget includes increased investment in campus events and student-facing initiatives, ensuring the USU can continue to deliver a lively, inclusive, and community-building program of activities across the year.

Student Safety Conference Working Group

The Working Group is in the process of finalising speakers and workshops for the 2026 Student Safety Conference, which is scheduled to be held as a one-day event on 13 February 2026 in the Holme Building.

Incorporation

The constitution for the newly incorporated USU Ltd is being finalised following multiple iterations and consultation with the Chief Governance Officer (CGO). The final outstanding issue concerned the University's role in approving USU constitutional amendments. This has now been resolved through a Senate approval mechanism that includes defined review periods and "deemed approval" for amendments required solely for regulatory or legal compliance.

Once the CGO's final response is received, the Constitution will proceed to the University's People and Risk Committee on 28 November before being considered by Senate at its December meeting. Subject to Senate approval, asset transfer and transition of governance to the USU Ltd Board are expected to occur in March 2026.

The CGO, Michelle Stanhope, has requested an updated asset transfer plan and indicative timeline for the member vote on the transfer, to provide assurance to Senate given that Senate approval of incorporation and the Constitution will occur prior to the asset transfer. We are also preparing an update for members on the current incorporation process.

ORGANISATIONAL LEADERSHIP

Senior Leadership Team Update

This month we welcome our new Director of Finance, Tania Maiolo, and new Director of People & Culture, Peita Lane, to the USU.

We also farewell outgoing Director of People & Culture, Nicole De Freitas, and wish her all the very best as she commences maternity leave.

Recruitment for the Director of Student Experience role is ongoing, with the second round of applications open and phone screening of candidates currently underway.

STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

S1 2026 Welcome Implementation Group

Planning for Welcome Fest is underway, both internally and in collaboration with the University. The implementation group discussed:

- The 2026 Welcoming Ceremony to formally welcome all newly commencing students to the University, encourage engagement with USU programs, and showcase the breadth of opportunities available.
- Presentations from different faculties and Schools to support student transition and orientation.
- Embedding a sustainability framework into event delivery to align with broader institutional ESG commitments.

The group also highlighted two upcoming student support events for students with details below:

- **Student Support Services Symposium – Monday 8 December**
A training and professional development day for student-facing teams across the University to ensure readiness for 2026, with catered lunch provided.
- **International Student Services Symposium – Friday 28 November**
A professional development session with a focus on student wellbeing and support for international cohorts.

Student Organisations

Once again, I extend my congratulations to **Grace Street** on her election as the 98th SRC President, and to **Burn for Honi** on their election as the 2026 Honi Soit editorial team. I thank the outgoing Spill for Honi team for their work this year in covering USU news for our members and the broader campus community. We look forward to working closely with the incoming Honi team to further enhance news coverage for our members.

STUDENT EXPERIENCE & IMPACT

Screamfest

Following on from the success of the Manning Night Market in October, Screamfest, held on 1 November, was a major success, attracting over 4,000 attendees with no significant incidents. The event was funded through SSAF contestable grants and delivered strong engagement, positioning the USU well to expand the concept in 2026.

\$5 meals at Laneway

Throughout Semester 2, a total of 32,477 \$5 meals were served at Laneway, saving students an estimated \$194,862 through the USU and University subsidy. This is one of several cost-of-living initiatives we are proud to deliver for members, and we are committed to maintaining and building on this support into 2026.

Retail and Graduations

This month, we are excited to renew the graduations services contract with the University for a further five years, reinforcing the strength of the Union–University partnership and the value of a student-centred organisation delivering such a significant milestone experience.

Sustainability

The University has agreed to fund branded bin solutions for three years, which aligns closely with our ESG strategy. This initiative will support our waste-awareness objectives and contribute directly to meeting our waste-reduction targets across USU-managed spaces.

PULP

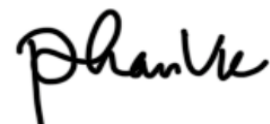
PULP Issue 24 was launched on 30 August at the Lord Gladstone, with approximately 150 people in attendance. The launch included a bake sale that raised \$900 for Olive Kids, demonstrating the team's ongoing commitment to pairing creative student media with meaningful community impact.

Verge

The Eddie Abd *folded in* exhibition opened on 20 November and is the final Verge exhibition for the year. A fundraising print is available for \$200 (or \$150 for USU members), with proceeds supporting the Hassala & Koorabung Project.

The *ESSSENSSE* travelling exhibition has moved to Coffs Harbour, where it opened on 22 November, extending the reach of USU-supported creative work beyond the Camperdown/Darlington campus.

This year has shown the depth of commitment across our staff, volunteers, and student leaders to improving student life in tangible ways. On behalf of the Board, I extend our sincere thanks for your hard work and resilience. We look forward to building on this momentum in 2026, and I wish all students the very best for their exams and a well-earned summer break.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading 'Phan Vu' in a cursive style.

Phan Vu
PRESIDENT