

BOARD REPORT

President

USU BOARD MEETING DATE: 30 August 2024

REPORT PERIOD: August 2024

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Recommendation 1 That the Board note the Report.	1-8	1

HEADLINE SUMMARY

Count	Key Issue	Key Areas
1	Organisational Health and Sustainability	Financial health <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SSAF planning • August results Operational health
2	Governance	Working Party updates Committee updates Committee refresh
3	Stakeholder Management	University <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ISEIP • SCAG • Divestment Working Group • Key individuals Student Groups <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Club executives • Equivalent unions • PULP • SUPRA, SUSF, SRC Members and Staff
4	High Performance Team	Ongoing development
5	Interaction and Experience	Student programs USU 150

It has been a huge month for the USU with the return of students to full-time study. It has also been an important month for a number of critical ventures at the USU, not least of all our campus experience project. Please see the report below for expanded information on the headline summary above.

ORGANISATIONAL HEALTH AND SUSTAINABILITY

Financial Health

The USU is in a strong financial position. Our forecasted deficit was far higher than our realised deficit, and this was driven by favourable outlet sales, which were \$135,000 higher than at the Q2 reforecast, and higher than expected investment outcomes, which were \$130,000 higher than at the Q2 reforecast. Thank you to Michelle and her team for all the incredible work she does to prepare such detailed and well explained reports each month. I am looking forward to the start of the budgeting process for 2025 in September.

SSAF planning has been a major focus of the last month. The USU developed five key recommendation categories, and student organisations were asked to propose one of their five areas for final consideration, as well as two other proposals from other student organisations. I am pleased to report that I was able to negotiate with the other student organisations to ensure that all five of our priority area proposals were included in the final list of areas for which SSAF projects could be submitted.

Priority Area	Student Groups Proposing	Student Groups Supporting
Support and advice to students independent from university services/operations	SUPRA	SUPRA (#1) SRC (#2)
Student Leadership and Representation (Funding, Training, Stipends)	SRC	USU (#2) SUPRA (#2)
Increased SSAF Funding for more learn-to, introduction to, short courses and participation sports leagues and pop-up events	SUSF	SUSF (#1) USU (#3)
Support for student welfare and wellbeing, e.g. training and support services	USU	USU (#1)
Support for Students (Casework and Policy)	SRC	SRC (#1)
Continued support for cost-of-living initiatives	USU	SUSF (#2) USU (#4)
Support for creative outlets and programs for students	USU	SUPRA (#3) USU (#5)
Support for student-informed and led research into food and beverage needs, services, enhancements on campus	USU	SUSF (#3) USU (#6)
Continued support for expansive international student programs and services to build social connections and sense of belonging	USU	SRC (#3) USU (#7)
Community building	SUPRA	USU (#8)

Although the results of the priority area proposals were not available at the time of the Board's SSAF meeting, I am pleased by the proposals put forward by management and Directors and was happy with the robust conversation held last Friday to enquire as to the efficacy of our submissions.

Operational Health

I would like to thank Jess and her team for preparing a full contract review of the organisation. This is an important project that will assist the USU in deciding whether our agreements with suppliers are fit for purpose, and in my discussions with Jess and Michael we identified particular strategies that will assist the USU in securing more favourable contractual terms and entities in the future. I would also like to thank Jane and her team, as well as Jess, for their work in the ongoing sponsorship and marketing review, including the complete brand refresh for the USU, due for completion at the end of the year. It is clear from meetings occurring this month that the sponsorship review is yielding significant benefit, and I look forward to more detailed proposals coming to the Board which will enhance our brand offering as an organisation.

GOVERNANCE

Working Party Updates

A number of working parties were held this month. The C&RR working party, led by Ben, is conducting the final enquiry into the clauses governing executive positions and non-executive positions. Once this is done, those changes will go to the Governance Committee and then to the Board for final approval. The committee will be transforming into an incorporation working party to ensure the USU has a dedicated group working on this important project, as occurred with the EA working party in early 2024.

Furthermore, I would like to thank Grace Porter for the critical work she is doing in leading the Student Safety Conference working party for the next year. In our initial two meetings this month, we discussed increasing the remit of the working party to develop implementation strategies for the recommendations arising from 2024 SSC, and plans to improve the 2025 conference, building on lessons learned. Thank you to Directors for their interest in the project, including Georgia and Julia for participating in the initial sessions.

I also want to note the investment review group being led by James. It has been great to see the uptake from almost half the Board to be involved in this critical reflection upon our investment strategy, and I look forward to participating in the inaugural meeting.

Committee Updates

The C&S Committee and Debates Committee met earlier this month. Although the Honorary Secretary will have more information in her report, it is fantastic to see the vibrant engagement of our membership with the C&S program, and to see so many new club applications. There was also a robust discussion in the Debates Committee regarding the ability of USU members to debate in domestic competitions given prior international experience and a discussion of the points system to ensure fairness between long-term debaters and those that transfer to USYD. Both of these discussion points are critical in maintaining a strong governance framework for our debates program.

Electoral Committee met to review the 2024 USU Board elections. The committee resolved to update rules around the media embargo to consolidate a better understanding of student media timelines, improved dispute resolution mechanisms for colour selection, preventions for deliberate misstatements, and deterrence for bullying. The committee also discussed changes to supplier discounts for candidates, campaigners handing out multiple flyers for a number of causes, the benefits of bringing back USU WeChat, improvements to the post-election financial audit of candidates, and membership rollovers. In addition, the committee discussed a more

contentious amendment with relation to the translation of verbal communication. I would like to thank Sargun and Shirley for providing their additional insight to this amendment which will inform how we take a considered approach to ensuring that information is available to our members during election periods, but also ensuring that cultural sensitivity is maintained. I can ensure the Board that the circular which goes to the electoral committee will be fit for purpose.

Incorporation

Strides have continued to be made towards incorporation, with the bulk of the internal consultation completed. I would like to thank Ben for his excellent work in this space and for assisting me in our engagements with the university on incorporation. I would invite directors to refer to his report for a more detailed overview of the incorporation process.

STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

University

Ben and I met with Michelle Stanhope (Chief Governance Officer, USYD) and Darren Goodsir (Chief of Staff, USYD), with whom I have monthly meetings, to discuss governance reform and incorporation. Following a robust discussion of the incorporation process, with which all parties agreed was a positive step for the organisation, we resolved to establish a working group with the university to begin a more formal process of incorporation negotiation and discussion. I will ensure that directors have ample opportunity to contribute to these forums. In addition, James and I are ideating on proposals to pursue DGR status with the university, akin to what SUSF has in relation to their donors. This will unlock a previously untapped source of revenue which will allow us to expand our student programs. I am meeting with Darren early next month for an initial conversation on this project.

The Immersive Student Experience Infrastructure Program (ISEIP, now Placemaking PWG) group met this month to discuss changes to campus infrastructure. I am continually concerned by the lack of forewarning that the USU is given regarding changes to placemaking and have notified the university and UI of these concerns. I will continue to push for greater transparency in their decision making and for any damages to be rendered to the USU that have arisen from the last decade of negotiations around critical projects. More positively, I am pleased by Student Life's engagement with the USU on a number of projects and appreciated the opportunity to provide insight to the PWG regarding spaces where the USU could take a greater role in F&B operations. Our new coffee carts at ABS and SWHB, and potential new capabilities for food trucks at ABS, represent our expansion into under-resourced areas of campus.

In ISEIP, UI noted significant disruptions to Carlaw may occur during a new set of renovations set to occur to uplift the public seating and amenities of the precinct. I will endeavour to provide the Board with more updates to how our retail at Carlaw Kitchen may be affected once our discussions with UI occur.

I will begin engagements with the university as part of their seven-person divestment working group this September. I will keep the Board abreast of the committee's developments and provide an opportunity for Board members to provide insight to the committee.

The Safer Communities Advisory Group met in early August. As part of the working group, I am engaging with the university to redesign the consent modules as proposed by the recommendations arising from the SSC. The university's report on sexual misconduct, released August 7th, demonstrated the significant journey the USU and USYD must undertake to reverse

trends in sexual harassment, particularly in our clubs and societies. I am confident that members of the committee, including many of our portfolio holders, are in a position to assist with fixing some of these issues.

Student Organisations

I am looking forward to the launch of PULP #17 next month, and was pleased to bump into the publisher of PULP earlier this month! Despite the serendipity of that meeting, a very deliberate defamation session was held with the PULP team earlier this month, led by our defamation lawyer Max Bonnell. I would like to thank him and the PULP team for their engagement in ensuring that our legal risks are minimised.

The Student Consultative Committee met this month to discuss ongoing concerns from the major student organisations, SUPRA, SUSE, and the SRC. SUPRA spoke to their recommendations for a new accommodation strategy for the university, and a robust discussion was had as to how the university could use new and existing facilities to combat issues with student housing. I noted in my report to the committee that the USU will continue to engage where appropriate with UI and Student Life to ensure that the student experience is at its peak. I shared with the committee our impact reporting and noted my dedication to working with our team to ensure that we set good targets for our student programs. I continue to engage regularly with SUSE, SUPRA, and the SRC on a number of matters, including through ongoing catchups. This month, we have discussed changes to SSAF and campaigns to advocate for issues on behalf of international students.

I have reached out to the Presidents of Activate UTS, Arc UNSW, and the UQU, the latter of which is the most like to our operation, to conduct a knowledge sharing exercise to give each of our organisations a greater understanding of best practices and areas to improve. It is my intention to create a biannual meeting of heads of student unions around Australia to formalise this knowledge sharing process. I have also continued to conduct informal meetings with Ben Jorgensen and Benny Shen, the two student representatives on Senate, to discuss their view of USU/University relations and how best to engage productively.

Members and staff

It was a pleasure for some Board members and our senior leadership team to attend an event hosted by Host-Co to celebrate the incredible work they do for the USU. I would like to thank each and every member of our Host-Co team for their work in operationalising an organisation with the breadth and complexity of the USU, and for their continued commitment to excellence. On a less important but still exciting note, the menu for 2025 is looking like their best ever, so stay tuned!

I have engaged with the clubs community through the clubs conference and the faculty societies meeting this month. With a new AGM process afoot and the clubs communities points system in its teething stage, it is important that this Board remain vigilant to feedback from our community so that we can ensure a smooth regulatory environment for our hard working club executives. I would like to thank Sam and her team for their painstaking work on this project and would also like to applaud them for their innovation, particularly with respect to data collection which should enable the USU to improve the overall student experience.

HIGH-PERFORMANCE TEAM

Engagement with staff

I have prepared updates for staff and for the wider organisation to go out at the end of this month highlighting the first two months of the new Board, and our commitment to transparency. In line with that commitment, the executive will be hosting an open Q&A session with all staff quarterly to ensure that we are directly receiving feedback from our employees.

Engagement with Board

I want to thank each and every member of the Board for their approach to the tasks ahead of us. Particular shoutouts must go to Grace W for her work on the DIAP, Grace P for her vision with the SSC, and Sargun for her work with the sustainability review.

To the point of transparency, I will be providing directors with the opportunity at the end of each Board meeting to provide feedback on the meeting to me so that I can be better informed of ways to improve our sessions together. This will be available through a Google Form and will be distributed through CatHerder. Thank you to G for her incredible work in ensuring that CatHerder is populated with helpful documents for the Board and for managing teething problems as we transition to this much more efficient management system.

INTERACTION AND EXPERIENCE

Student programs

It was fantastic to see a lively campus again following the semester break! Welcome Fest was incredibly well attended, and coincided with the USU reaching 50,000 student members, which is a record. I would like to sincerely thank the effort that was put in by all USU staff to make this Welcome Fest a successful one. Our Party at Manning and Welcome to Sydney Party were sold out, and our campus tours were well attended. It is also pleasing to see the diversity of events run, with non-alcoholic events such as the movie night a beneficial inclusion on the welcome calendar.

Battle of the Bands also occurred this month, and my congratulations go out to all finalists, including our three placegetters. Sticking with music, Law Review was held last week, and I would like to congratulate Beau Glass and his team for making it such a success. I look forward to Science Revue and Med Revue in the coming weeks.

Someday Soon was sold out on the 21st of August and is a testament to the popularity of festivals and music events on campus. I am dedicated to ensuring that our festivals program is as encompassing and sustainable as possible and look forward to working with our team to making this a reality. International Fest, which had a consultative meeting earlier this month which Sargun, Shirley and I attended with key staff members, will be part of this reimagining of the student experience.

USU150 Events

This month we celebrate 150 years of the USU. The USU has always been more than a collection of buildings and events. It is a vibrant tapestry of people—students, staff, alumni, and friends—who have contributed to the dynamic culture and spirit of this institution and are united by their passion for the student experience. The USU started as a debating society with a few clubs and

has grown to encompass arts, culture, entertainment, and innovation. It has continually adapted to meet the changing needs of its members.

With the launch of the CCWM exhibit and the Gala on the 28th of August, I would like to thank the steering committee and the countless hours of staff input and design, that has made this reflective celebration a possibility.

Thank you to staff, members, and the Board for their productivity over the last month. As always, my door is open to questions and feedback. I am looking forward to another busy month in September.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Bryson Constable". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Bryson Constable
President