

# President's Report

**USU Board meeting date:** 30/05/2025**Report Period:** May 2025**Author:** Bryson Constable**Title:** President**Phone/mobile:** +61 488 440 870

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<b>Recommendation 1</b> That the Board note the report.	<b>2-6</b>	<b>1</b>

## HEADLINE SUMMARY

Count	Key Issue	Key Areas
1	Organisational Health and Sustainability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Financial Health</li> <li>• Operational Health <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ F&amp;B Strategy</li> </ul> </li> <li>• New Team Members</li> </ul>
2	Governance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Incorporation</li> <li>• Committee Updates <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ Awards</li> <li>◦ Clubs &amp; Societies</li> <li>◦ Debates</li> <li>◦ WHS</li> <li>◦ Governance</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Working Groups</li> </ul>
3	Stakeholder Engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• University <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ WIG</li> <li>◦ SCAG</li> <li>◦ Joanne Wright</li> <li>◦ Student Life</li> <li>◦ UI</li> </ul> </li> <li>• External <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ ISAG</li> <li>◦ Robin Fitzimons</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Student Groups <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ Canteen Working Group</li> <li>◦ Student Consultative Committee</li> </ul> </li> <li>• SL/C&amp;S</li> </ul>
4	Interaction and Experience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Annual Gala</li> <li>• USU Elections</li> </ul>

## ORGANISATIONAL HEALTH AND SUSTAINABILITY

### Financial Health

The Union recorded a favourable variance of \$139,000 for the month of April against the Revised Forecast (RFC). This outcome was primarily driven by lower-than-anticipated marketing expenditure, reduced payroll costs, and higher-than-forecast commission income from Manning, which continues to be a strong performer well into the fifth month of the year. Offsetting this somewhat was a modest shortfall in revenue across our retail and sponsorship streams.

It is worth highlighting that several outlets underperformed during the period, including Manning, USYD Store, Laneway Café, Manning Milk Bar, and Abercrombie. These venues have already been identified as priorities for review and renewal under our Food and Beverage Strategy. The data from this month reaffirms the strategic direction adopted by the Board, providing a sound evidence base for the upcoming transformation of these assets.

### Operational Health

This month marked a significant milestone in our strategic planning, with the Food & Beverage (F&B) Strategy formally presented to the Board in collaboration with Ash from Future Foods. This proposal represents the most substantial investment into campus food and beverage services in over a decade. The enthusiasm from Directors was clear, and we will now begin developing a detailed implementation roadmap over the coming month, with a view to phased delivery across the next three years. This initiative is expected to reshape the student experience and significantly enhance our commercial sustainability.

I also held introductory meetings with our new Heads of Department, Sam Robinson and Steve Moore. At an SLT level, our team has never been stronger than it is at the moment. We have a wealth of expertise and a complete capacity to enact and achieve our strategy.

Finally, I welcome Laura Camilletti as our new Governance Officer. Laura has made an immediate impact, demonstrating a proactive and forward-thinking approach. She has already identified a number of valuable improvements to our systems and processes, and I look forward to working closely with her as we continue to enhance our governance infrastructure.

## GOVERNANCE

### Incorporation

Following discussions with Professor Joanne Wright, Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Education), the University has indicated its preference that our incorporation planning address three distinct but interconnected streams: legal incorporation, governance reform associated with incorporation, and the review of our affiliation agreement alongside associated occupational licences. It is my view that these processes should never be lumped in together, and the Board should look to address them sequentially. To that end, as explained by our Vice President, we will be pursuing a multi-stage process, and have requested the requisite documents from our lawyers.

It was, however, incredibly disappointing that our most recent round of consultation yielded only a limited number of responses. Whilst the feedback received will nonetheless inform the development of a revised draft constitution, it is clear that motivations other than consultation drove the No vote at the SGM, which is regrettable. This draft will be brought to the membership for consideration at a Special General Meeting in June. This process represents an important next step in formalising our legal status while preserving our commitment to student-led governance.

## Committee Updates

Awards Committee recently conferred USU Life Memberships and Fellowships in recognition of outstanding service to the Union. I would like to extend particular congratulations to Ann Stephen of the Chau Chak Wing Museum, who has been named a Fellow of the USU. Since joining the University Art Gallery in 2009, Ann has been instrumental in supporting both the protection of the USU Art Collection and the broader creative culture on campus. She assisted with the custodianship of the collection until its formal donation to the University in 2019 and mentored several Art History students employed by the USU as Art Collection Officers. Ann has also generously contributed her time and expertise as a judge in the Art category of the USU Creative Awards—first in 2009, and again in 2011, 2013, and 2018. Most recently, she played a pivotal role in curating *Union Made*, the exhibition marking USU's 150th anniversary and its long-standing commitment to supporting diverse artistic expression. Ann's deep dedication to the arts and to the student community exemplifies the spirit of the USU Fellowship. We are sincerely grateful for her many contributions and proud to recognise her as a Fellow.

Clubs & Societies Committee progressed work on the development of a new club matrix to improve equity in resource allocation and transparency in club tiering. The Committee also heard a number of appeals from clubs regarding funding and recognition decisions, continuing our commitment to procedural fairness and responsiveness to the needs of our vibrant club network.

Debates Committee continued its oversight of our world-class debating program, supporting tournament preparation, internal training, and adjudicator development. The Committee remains focused on strengthening the visibility and accessibility of debating for all students.

WHS Committee met to review current incident data, assess key risk areas across our outlets and events, and ensure compliance with updated health and safety procedures.

Governance Committee held a key meeting to progress incorporation planning, particularly in relation to constitutional redrafting and stakeholder alignment. The Committee also addressed new disclosures of interest from Board Directors and refined procedures to ensure the effective management of actual and perceived conflicts of interest.

## Working Groups

The Investment Working Group is scheduled to reconvene shortly to undertake a fresh review of our investment pools. This process will involve reassessing our current portfolio allocations and risk settings, with a view to ensuring alignment with both our financial objectives and emerging ethical considerations. The working group will provide updated recommendations to the Board in the coming quarter.

## STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

### University

The Welcome Implementation Group (WIG) is actively preparing for a refreshed approach to Semester Two, building on learnings from the first half of the year. The group is exploring new opportunities for activations, including a reimagined use of Gadigal Green, and addressing operational concerns identified in Semester One—particularly around access to shade and water. These improvements are aimed at delivering a more comfortable and engaging welcome experience for all students.

The Safer Communities Advisory Group has begun implementing key recommendations from the recent Student Safety Conference. One of the most immediate outcomes has been the increased

visibility and accessibility of sexual assault response resources. These practical changes are the first step in a broader push to ensure safer environments across all USU-affiliated spaces and programs.

I met with Professor Joanne Wright to discuss the next phase of the incorporation process, as outlined above. Further meetings will be held in the coming weeks with the Chief Governance Officer, DVC(E), Jeremy Hammond, and the Office of General Counsel to advance the legal and governance aspects of our transition.

Our monthly meeting with Student Life continues to strengthen institutional ties. This month, we discussed the upcoming 175th anniversary of the University of Sydney and explored opportunities for collaboration on archival and alumni engagement initiatives. We also flagged vending operations as a revenue stream that will directly support cost of living relief for students—ensuring commercial outcomes continue to serve student needs.

At the most recent UI/USU Quarterly Meeting, we made substantial progress on our long-term footprint in the Wentworth Building. The University has now signalled a willingness to move from a 2–3 year occupancy guarantee to a 5–10 year commitment. This would provide critical stability for USU tenancies and services, and we will continue to advocate firmly for the formalisation of this extended guarantee.

### **External Stakeholders**

The International Student Advisory Group has been focused on developing new approaches to enhance engagement with our international student cohort. While this year's International Festival showed marked improvement over last year's iteration, both in turnout and visibility, there is still significant room for growth. The group will continue working to refine programming and communication strategies to ensure stronger and more inclusive engagement going forward.

I have met several times with Robin Fitzsimons to explore strategies for protecting the Union's commercial ventures from potential encroachment by the University. These conversations have centred on preserving the USU's independence and ability to operate services in student-centric ways. I have also begun engaging with key alumni to seek their counsel on this matter. Should the University move to displace the USU from any of its core spaces, we should be prepared to publicly mobilise this network of alumni in support of our continued presence and service to students.

### **Student Groups**

The Canteen Working Group has continued its efforts to secure a dedicated, affordable food service on campus—a project that stands to deliver significant benefits to students. Currently, there are four key consumer groups on campus: those who bring lunch from home, those who cannot afford food and rely on free offerings, those who are indifferent to price, and those who wish to purchase food but are constrained by a limited budget. It is this fourth group that the canteen will be designed to support. The USU has developed a short-term proposal to trial subsidised meal offerings in Semester Two, with the goal of establishing a permanent canteen facility by Semester One 2026. This initiative complements our broader cost of living relief efforts and positions the USU as a leader in student welfare provision.

The Student Consultative Committee met for the final time under this Board to discuss a range of academic matters. Of particular relevance to the USU was the University's intention to extend student email access post-graduation to improve alumni engagement. This change is a welcome development. The USU works closely with the Alumni Office on initiatives such as Board elections, and this improved continuity of contact will strengthen our capacity to involve graduates in future democratic and community-building activities.

At the recent joint Student Life and Clubs & Societies meeting, preliminary discussions were held on streamlining our C&S policy framework to reduce unnecessary bureaucracy and improve accessibility for club executives. This project will be a personal priority for me in my capacity as Immediate Past President, and I will work closely with the incoming Board to ensure that reform efforts strike a balance between compliance, fairness, and administrative simplicity.

## INTERACTION AND EXPERIENCE

### Annual Gala

We held our Annual Gala this month, and I am pleased with its success. I would like to thank the staff and student team who worked to deliver an event that was both celebratory and inclusive. The decision to open the event to the broader membership and elevate the level of formality proved highly effective, creating a sense of occasion that reflected the importance of our work. This year's format should serve as a strong blueprint for future galas, reaffirming the Gala's role as a key moment in the Union's annual calendar.

### USU Elections

The 2025 USU Elections have now concluded, with results formally certified. I extend my sincere congratulations to Archie Wolifson, Sally Liu, Michelle Choy, Layla Wang, Annika Wang, and Noah Rancan on their successful election to the Board. This year saw a marked increase in voter turnout, with 5,480 students participating—an encouraging sign that more members are engaging with the Union and its democratic structures. The rise in participation reflects the strength of our communications, the credibility of our processes, and a growing interest in student leadership.