

Under section 5.11 I present to you the President's Report. This document is a high-level view of our activities since the last AGM. For more detail, please see the PRC Minutes on the [PARSA website](#) or direct questions to the appropriate PARSA Officer.

2015-16

P R E S I D E N T ' S R E P O R T

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Following on from previous Presidential reports, I'll be taking a sequential top-down snapshot approach beginning with the Australian Higher Education sector and narrowing finally to the collaborations that PARSA engages in with stakeholders of the ANU.

The Higher Education Sector

PARSA and its representatives have been working actively to better the conditions of University students, both domestic and international. It was pleasing to see the Federal Government take deregulation off the table in the May 2016 Budget but this is not the end of the battle for Postgraduate students. As you are aware, much of the coursework Postgraduate sector is already deregulated with prices increasing across the sector, which is a major area of advocacy for PARSA.

Concerning research, throughout 2015 there were two concurrent reviews into research training and research funding (the Watt and ACOLA reviews). These reports have since been tabled with recommendations that will significantly improve the research training system which include greater access to industry placements, equal access to resources, and increased autonomy for Universities to provide scholarships to PhD candidates.

At this stage we are still unsure of which recommendations will be implemented by the government or the University but have seen some positive steps in the recent Federal budget regarding research training. To

assist our members, we have maintained and strengthened our association with the peak body for Postgraduate students, the Council for Australian Postgraduate Associations (CAPA), as well as the National Tertiary Education Union (NTEU).

Council of Australian Postgraduate Associations (CAPA)

PARSA was buoyed by the election of our inaugural Women's Officer, Alyssa Shaw, to the role of Vice-President (Equity) of CAPA for 2016. In this role she advocates strongly for many disenfranchised groups and has completed a lot of good work within the ACT, as well as on the national stage.

The CAPA Executive has continued to visit PARSA on an almost quarterly basis and our close relationship is allowing us to input on a number of issues that affect postgrads. Some of the main advocacy focuses for CAPA this year have included increased stipends for PhD students, equitable access to university entry, and increased funding for the research system as a whole.

Council of International Students Australia (CISA)

PARSA has again contributed significantly to CISA in 2016 following a large attendance at the CISA national conference in 2015. A former PARSA Representative, Hassan Riaz, was elected as CISA Treasurer whilst ACT is well represented with over a quarter of the total executive positions.

CISA's main focuses this year have been on stopping exploitation of international students in the workplace and equality of concessions between states on public transport. On top of lobbying governments around the country, CISA has provided editorials in most major newspapers. Our own International Officer, Dominic Nadvillaveetil, has helped CISA extensively by donating his own time and even conducting an interview on ACT local radio concerning conditions for international students.

The University

ANU Council

As PARSA President, I have had the pleasure of serving on the ANU Council for the last year. Whilst a standard meeting involves over 500 pages of documentation, a few issues have dominated the agenda items over the past year. These have been optimising the University's finances to deliver a world class education, enacting the Walker Review, the Union Court redevelopment, and the changes at both the School of Music (SoM) and the School of Culture, History, and Languages (CHL).

The last point has had a particular effect on students and the Council is keen to provide an environment of ongoing success at both places. The finances are beginning to shape up nicely such that the University can consider a sizeable design on the redevelopment of Union Court.

ANU Strategic Plan

Since his appointment as Vice-Chancellor, Professor Brian Schmidt has spent considerable time working on the Strategic Plan for the ANU moving forward. To aid him, he has formed 12 working groups each looking at a particular strategic area comprising of a senior executive, an academic and professional facilitator, as well as up to 17 individuals from around the University, including students. These groups are working hard and the Strategic Plan should be finalised and released early in Semester 2, 2016.

Union Court: Most probably happening

Since last year, a lot of consultation and design work has gone into what Union Court should do, and what it should look like. Whilst a definite decision is yet to be made, a broad list of priorities including housing, childcare, and new classrooms has been developed. As of May 2016, further funds have been allocated to continue investigating all the options available so keep an

ear to the ground as this development will define the University for the next two decades.

The future of SoM and CHL

It is no surprise when I say that the changes in these two places have been handled poorly by the University. Both have taken far too long, lacked appropriate consultation, and left staff and students devoid of morale for long periods of time. PARSA is committed to making sure that every student in each location is supported and PARSA is in constant contact with the University to ensure that appropriate resources are allocated. For CHL specifically, PARSA has added its voice to the CHL Students' Group and will only accept that each PhD student is left no worse off from the job losses within CHL.

Education, Student Experience, Research and Services.

Education

Throughout 2015-16, PARSA, under our Education Officer, Bishal Chalise, has continued to prioritise the educational component of our Association. In our SSAF bid, we requested almost \$265,000 in our Education portfolio and were awarded just under \$165,000. This allows us to arrange and provide a range of services and training and led to the establishment of our flagship academic event, ANU Tomorrow. In 2015, ANU Tomorrow was headlined by Brian Schmidt, Sam Bennett, and Ryan Goss who all showcased their world-leading research to over 500 ANU students and staff.

Around campus, PARSA continues to represent Postgraduate students on over 50 committees, from school and college level committees, all the way to education and academic board, and the ANU Council itself. After seeking feedback, anecdotally our efforts on these committees is ever increasing and our participation continues to be welcomed and appreciated.

Research

In 2015 and 2016, PARSA has supported research students through providing a range of training and academic services to assist in their studies. PARSA does this by partnering with a range of on-campus providers including Division of Student Life, the Library, SECD, and importantly the Research Training cell to provide services/courses/programs including :

- HDR Inductions, University level and College level,
- Shut Up and Write!,
- 4 Thesis Bootcamps,
- Tutor Cafes, and
- 3 Minute Thesis.

On-Campus partnerships

PARSA sees itself as a key stakeholder in delivering the best possible experience for all students, not just Postgrads. As such, we work closely with a range of on-campus partners including:

- the PVC (Student Experience) and his team,
- Dean of Students,
- Tjabal Centre and NCIS,
- Division of Student Life (DSL),
- Student Experience and Career Development,
- Academic Skills & Learning,
- Accommodation Services (Continued strong engagement with all of the Heads of Residences, Senior Resident teams and Resident Committees),
- Counselling Centre,
- Access & Inclusion,
- Student Equity, and
- Health Services.

Other Student Groups

PARSA works closely with the four other major campus-wide students' groups which are ANUSA, ANU Student Media, ANU Union, and ANU Sport. Through these relationships we put forward a united front in the best interests of students.

I would especially like to thank Ben Gill for his leadership on campus; we at PARSA would not be able to achieve nearly as much without his support and the support of his team, elected reps and staff. I'd additionally like to thank Jacob, Waheed, Alex and Mitch over at Woroni for placing an importance on Postgraduate issues in their reporting.

PARSA has also worked closely with cultural and interest groups on-campus through our own events, including our remarkable Multi-Cultural Festival and Global Café series, as well as through the administration of both GAC and SEEF. GAC and SEEF allow other student groups to access nearly \$500,000 in funding for their clubs which makes a huge difference in the vibrancy of campus life. Our Campus Life Officer, Cat Martin, does a supreme job in assisting the 220 odd clubs on campus access this funding as well as aiding the GAC and SEEF committees to operate smoothly.

Advocacy Efforts in 2015-2016

PARSA, as the body representing ANU's over 11,000 Postgraduate students, spends much of its resources on its advocacy efforts. At all of school, college, and University level, PARSA reps have fought for the best interests of students and their families. Some of the areas we focused on this year include (in no particular order):

- Events for families,
- Reduced price increases for student accommodation,
- International student rights,
- Supervision issues for PhD candidates,

- Reductions to library fines,
- JD Online integration,
- Increases in research training and support,
- Women's rights, safety, and representation,
- Internships for Postgraduates, and
- Too many more to name!

Whilst we have had victories and setbacks in nearly all of the above, there have been noted some areas that PARSA will need to increase its advocacy efforts in the future. Some noted areas for improvement existing concerning our advocacy include:

- On-campus accommodation for Postgraduates,
- Support for fully online students,
- International student integration,
- Fee price rises for both classes and accommodation, and
- Implementation of the ACOLA and Watt reviews for research training.

The Organisation

Highlights

Given our SSAF bid document ran to over 60 pages, it would be impossible for me to even list, let alone describe, PARSA's highlights over the last year!

To name just a few, I'd highlight the multiple Global Cafes which have introduced students to different cultures, PARSA's Winter Wonderland and Big Day which were fun for kids of ALL ages, ANU Tomorrow, our multiple educational initiatives, the re-release of our newsletter, our inaugural overnight Indigenous cultural immersion trip, our many trips to show students this marvelous country, the activity in our Environmental portfolio, our first ever Women's Week, and our Paris-themed Ball.

I could literally go on forever speaking the praises of our officers, representatives, and staff for the super effort they've maintained throughout the year to deliver such an extensive program - so thank you.

Governance

Following on from the improvements made in our internal governance in recent years, 2015-16 saw an increased focus on up-skilling our PARSA representatives. It is now mandatory for our elected representatives and staff who are handling money to complete Fraud Awareness training and for the Executive to complete a Not-for-Profit Director Course. These changes mean our representatives are better able to utilise their time and skills to deliver our program and help students.

Staffing

During 2015, PARSA undertook a small restructure to better utilise the resources of the Association and deliver best value for money for our members. This involved changes in staff supervision and small changes to reporting lines of staff to overcome the limitations of the previous supervision arrangements, largely that the student Executive, as volunteers, only are available part-time.

In late 2015 PARSA hired a General Manager, Mike Heffron, to be able to assist the student representatives with higher-level functions, including handover, governance, and Human Resources functions. This new capability will free up a lot of time for the student Executive in the future and allow the students to spend more time directly advocating in students' best interests and representing students. PARSA has additionally begun the new role of Administrative Assistant with the aim of more seamlessly implementing the PARSA complete program.

Student structure changes

2015-16 was a year of firsts on the student side of PARSA. Following our May election, PARSA elected its inaugural General Secretary and Women's Officer, Chris Orchard and Alyssa Shaw respectively. Both have conducted their roles with aplomb and have filled much needed roles for the Association.

Also 2016 was the first time PARSA has had an Orientation Week Director to deliver our biggest Orientation Week ever! In actual fact, there were 2 O-Week Directors in 2016, Alanna Esslemont-Clow and Rushikesh Nivalkar, who worked together with our experienced Communications and Marketing Manager, Monica Fernandes, to effectively, and enjoyably, induct our new Postgraduate students.

The Year Ahead

In late 2015, the PARSA PRC voted to complete a 15-month term (having the option of anywhere between 9-15 months) in order to align the PARSA term closer to the bidding process for our major funding negotiation, the SSAF agreement. This move generated a lot of debate within PARSA with positives and negatives for and against the change made by experienced voices. The change should allow PARSA more stability in the future and allow the incoming PRC to more completely enact their plans.

And A Special Thank you to...

I would like to thank the dedicated staff in our Student Assistance Unit (Wayne, Carolyn, Bronwyn, Emily, and Ray) and wish Carolyn the best in her year in Nepal. I would also like to thank our professional staff who consistently go the extra mile for the Association and students in general (Michael, Ray (again), and Brendan). I'd also like to thank our long-term Administrator, Gaea, for all she did for PARSA over a number of years.

I would lastly like to thank all of the PARSA PRC, who all put in countless hours for the Association. The Executive have made my job easy so thank

you to Kim-Marie, Defu, Chris O, and temporarily Dom, Bish, and Alyssa. Absolutely lastly, my best wishes to those PARSA people who have left the Association during the year including Lilli, Gemma, Weqing, and most of all Ben Niles.

I would personally like to thank Ben for his service to the ANU over a number of years and appreciate the guidance he provided to the incoming team, especially when he stepped up into the acting Social Officer role for a significant part of 2015.