

Handout: PARSA Constitutional Review Townhall Agenda and Reference Material

20 March 2018

Agenda:

6.05pm	Acknowledgement of Country and Welcome
6.10pm	History and context of the project and how the session today will work
6.15pm	Constitutional questions and discussion
6.50pm	Wrap up and outstanding questions and comments
7.00pm	Dinner and follow up one-to-one discussion
7.30pm	Close

Discussion questions and reference material

1. *Number of board members*

Question:

- (a) What is the best size for a PARSA board that will deliver strategic direction and ensure accountability?

Reference Material:

The PARSA board is currently 32 people; best practice guidelines and expert advice has recommended a board size of 9 – 11 people.

2. *Board composition and tenure*

Questions:

- (a) What level of connection between the operations and governance of PARSA should there be? e.g. Should the President (CEO) sit on the board? Should other Officers also be able to sit on the board?
- (b) A challenge for PARSA is that student representatives turn over every year. How do we encourage longer engagement with the board?
- (c) How do we ensure we have a good mix of skills on the board? Should it be postgraduate only or include alumni or external members?

Reference Material:

Currently the PARSA board consists of the 32 elected student representatives who are all currently enrolled postgraduate students. Upon graduation or cessation of study, postgraduate students cease being members of PARSA and are therefore ineligible to be part of the board.

3. Changing the duties of the President

Question:

- (a) Should the same person be Chair of the Board and CEO of PARSA?

Reference Material:

At present, the current role of President is both CEO and Chair of the board. This structure does reflect many corporations, mainly corporations in America, but is less common in Australia.

4. How should the CEO of PARSA be determined

Question:

- (a) Should the role of CEO be determined through direct member election or through appointment by the PARSA board?

5. Ensuring accountability for elected student representatives

Question:

- (a) What body within PARSA should have the power to manage, and if needed, terminate the tenure of the CEO or other elected student representatives?
(b) On what matters should this be allowed? e.g. underperformance or misconduct

Reference Material:

Currently, members of the PRC can only be removed through a vote of no-confidence at a PARSA general meeting (section 10 of the current Constitution), or through the determination of the Disputes Committee (section 34).

The Disputes Committee comprises between 3 – 5 people, one of whom must not be a postgraduate. They handle disputes raised against any member of the Association (for further details see section 34 of the current PARSA constitution).

6. Disciplining of Members

Question:

- (a) What body within PARSA should have the power to manage, and if needed, terminate membership relating to general members of PARSA i.e. postgraduate students?

Reference Material:

Currently this determination is through the Disputes Committee. The Disputes Committee comprises between 3 – 5 people, one of whom must not be a postgraduate. They handle disputes raised against any member of the Association (for further details see section 34 of the current PARSA constitution).

7. Objects of the Association

Question:

(a) Are the Objects (purpose) of PARSA clearly outlined and fit for purpose?

Reference Material:

Current Objects

“(1) The objects of the Association are:

(a) to promote the welfare and further the interests of Postgraduate Students; and
(b) to afford a recognised means of representation for Postgraduate Students both within and outside the University, and a recognised means of communication between Postgraduate Students and the University authorities.”

Proposed Objects

“2.1 The objects for which the Association is established are

2.1.2 to promote the welfare and further the interests of postgraduate and research students in relation to both their studies and daily life and specifically exists to achieve:

- a supportive postgraduate community;
- university policy and practices that take postgraduate needs into account;
- students being better informed about what’s happening in the University that may affect them;
- improvement in students lives;
- students resolving any problems or dispute cases they may have within ANU;

2.1.3 to afford a recognised means of representation for postgraduate and research students both within and outside the University, and a recognised means of communication between Postgraduate Students and the University authorities

BUT AT ALL TIMES recognising that the Association may be constrained to pursue only some of those objects to exclusion of others from time to time or pursue some objects with differing priorities.”

8. Member participation in board meetings and board rights to confidential business

Question:

- (a) What level of involvement and influence in board meetings and deliberations should members have access to?
- (b) What is the right balance between direct member access to the board, and the need to support board deliberations, and confidential business?

Reference Materials:

Current Constitution - Section 14: Operation of the PRC

(4) Meetings of the PRC shall be open to all members of the Association, and all members of the Association shall have the right to speak to any motion or item of business.

9. Calling for, and quorum of, board and PARSAs general meetings

Question:

- (a) Is the current frequency of board meetings sufficient?
- (b) Are the current quorums for meetings (board and general) reasonable and democratic?

Reference Materials:

- Current constitution: board meetings at to be held 6 times a year and quorum is 50% +1 and must include 2 members of the Executive.
- New constitution: Board meetings must be held 6 times a year; quorum is 6 board members
- Current and New constitution: PARSAs general meetings can be called by the board or by 100 members OR not less than 5% of the membership; quorum is 20 members OR not less than 1% of the membership

10. Officer composition

Question:

- (a) Are the Officer (elected student representative) positions currently meeting the needs of our membership?
- (b) How will the changes to the board, and the current staffing profile, affect the positions of Officers?