

## **PARSA Postgraduate Representative Council (PRC)**

### **PRC meeting**

**Date: 1<sup>st</sup> of February**

**Time: 4pm**

**Location: Online (zoom)**

#### **1.0 Meeting Open**

4:05pm

#### **1.1 Acknowledgement of Country**

#### **1.2 Attendance and apologies**

**Attending:** Delephene Fraser (Vice President), Eleanor Cooper (General Secretary), Gunjan Dixit (HDR Officer), Tristan Yip (Coursework Officer), Upasana Pathak (CHM Officer, Coursework), Nancy Zhang (Women's Officer), Harshita Bhatia (Wellbeing Officer)

Jhana de Silva (Parents and Carers Officer) arrived at 5pm

**Observing:** Jane Brownbill (Operations Manager, Eve Walker (Consultant to PARSA)

**Apologies:** Zhangcheng Qiang (CECS Officer, HDR), Shukla Promite (CoS Officer, HDR), Arushi Ganguly (Equity Officer and Queer Officer), Tristan Yip (Coursework Officer)

#### **1.3 Call for other business**

#### **1.4 Minutes from previous meeting**

**Motion:** to accept the minutes of the previous PRC Meeting, 21 November 2021, as an accurate and true statement of events

Proposed: Delephene Fraser

Seconded: Harshita Bhatia

Passed unanimously

#### **1.5 Items for discussion**

### **1.5.1 PRC to decide on which governance structure is the best 'fit for purpose' model to ensure PARSA maintains student leadership, probity and good governance;**

Eve in her capacity as consultant to PARSA outlined a list of potential 'needs' and 'wants' for the new constitution, as below:

- A multilayered structure (ie. board or sub-committees focused on certain tasks). Your focus needs to be on EY's recommendation that operations and strategy are delegated separately.
- An approximate length (ie. 20 - 30 pages, or shorter). Some associations have a Constitution which details overall structure with regulations that sit underneath. These are policies which will more flexibly evolve overtime with the association (and as such, do not have strict regulations over amendments). Consider whether you'd like to use this type of model.
- Detail irregularities, role responsibilities and responsibilities involving PARSA Cycles
- A distilled version of the organization's aim so the consultants can make sure their draft is fit-for-purpose
- Anything you like from all the previous iterations of the Constitution, found [here](#)

Eve Walker presented her outline of the timeline for the rewriting of the constitution, including the order in which Special General Meetings, consultation and submissions to university bodies would need to be made.

Jane noted that the university has committed to make the third instalment of PARSA's SSAF allocation conditional upon the new constitution being submitted to the ANU Council before their June sitting. Soniya has volunteered to be the main PRC driver of the restructure project.

**Motion:** To delegate the directing of the governance restructure to Soniya Jeena and Jane Brownbill, including the choice of consultant

**Proposer:** Eleanor Cooper

**Seconder:** Gunjan Dixit

Eve noted that in the current constitution there are several uncertainties around responsibilities and the powers held by each member of the PRC and executive. The report commissioned by the ANU in 2021, conducted by EY, suggested that PARSA had a board to separate the operational and strategic sides of the association. They further suggested that the ANU had a representative on this board, which is something that the university has expressed a strong wish for.

Factors noted by Eve as essential to include were:



1. A 'set of rules' (Constitution) that is fit-for-purpose. The rules fit the vision, size and remit of PARSA. Must be student-led, and there are multiple good models from Associations around the country to consider.
2. A clear separation between operations and strategy. This will require clear definitions about elected positions (including detailed role and responsibilities) and how they operate. There must also be clear parameters around delegated authority Chair/Vice-Chair/President, etc.
3. An ability to ensure that PARSA has the skills required for success
4. An ability to ensure strong leadership – who is the Chair and Deputy Chair and what is their remit; how are they elected/appointed?
5. The 'rules' must facilitate PRC accountability and transparency to your membership and funding body
6. An effective dispute resolution procedure
7. A system of gratuity for elected Officers
8. This is a critical issue for PARSA and will involve detailed explanation in Constitution as PRC members are volunteers who are not in an employment relationship with PARSA. The current conversation about scholarships will need to be captured if it is an option
8. An ANU oversight mechanism
9. Make-up of a PRC – what positions are elected

Eve noted that PARSA should also be set up to anticipate a changing educational landscape, especially considering the potential for change on a national level with policies like Job Ready Graduates

Eve noted that there are several reasons for not including aspects in the constitution but rather supporting regulations, especially aspects like elections or honoraria which may need to be more malleable.

Eve also made a suggestion for the constitution to be written as clearly as possible, considering the number of PARSA members who have English as a second language.

Soniya began the discussion around the suggested purpose and objects of the Association, and how we wished to have a more specific and wide ranging purpose. Eve had written up a series of draft of objects, copied below:

*The Principal Purpose for which the Association is established is to advance education, including by:*



- (a) advancing the interests and wellbeing of postgraduate students;*
- (b) representing postgraduate students within the University and to the community;*
- (c) providing academic and professional support services for postgraduate students;*
- (d) fostering a sense of community amongst postgraduate students;*
- (e) supporting equity and the engagement of the diverse postgraduate student body in the life of the University; and*
- (f) promoting the role of postgraduate students in building a just and fair society.*

There was a general discussion about the wording of these objects and general approval, with one change of wording suggested by Eleanor.

**Motion:** To approve and commend the draft Objects of the Association for communication to PARSA's governance consultant

**Proposer:** Eleanor Cooper

**Secunder:** Delephene Fraser

Passed unanimously

Jane outlined a proposal of a structure wherein an advisory committee sat alongside the PRC and staff to provide expertise and strategic oversight and guidance. This committee would not have powers over and above the elected members of the PRC, and the President would still have the final decision power in any disputes.

Harshita noted that this form of committee would provide much needed expertise but there would have to be safeguards so that the Association stayed democratically led.

Eleanor noted that expert members of the potential advisory committee could also sit on the PARSA Cycles board, and thereby increase the skills capacity of that board.

**Motion:** To approve the 'Model of Discussion' to be an initial structure

**Proposer:** Delephene Fraser

**Secunder:** Soniya Jeena

Passed unanimously

### 1.5.2 Presentation of firms in consideration to draft new constitution

Eve gave a brief overview of the firms she had investigated and that had been recommended as experts in writing not-for-profit constitutions and similar documents. She had no recommendations as to which to choose, as this choice needed to be made in light of the decisions made at this meeting as well as the costs associated with each organisation.

The list of potential consultants was as follows:

- Queers in Science – recommended based on another Student Association’s experience with their work
- Myer Vandenberg lawyers – in Canberra; PARSA have had previous dealings with them
- Capital Workplace – submitted by one of the current PRC members
- KPMG
- Mills Oakley – has not-for-profit experience with Salvation Army
- Prolegis lawyers – specialise in the Not For Profit (NFP) space (only in Sydney and Melbourne)
- Hunt & Hunt lawyers - specialise in the NFP space (only in Melbourne)
- Lewis Holdway lawyers – has not-for-profit experience (only in Melbourne)

**Motion:** To delegate the authority to choose the consultant to Soniya and Jane

**Proposer:** Jhana De Silva

**Secunder:** Eleanor Cooper

### 1.5.3 Discussion around how to proceed with Eve Walker’s position as consultant to PARSA

Delephene and Jane noted that their jobs could not be done without Eve’s assistance, given the challenges faced by PARSA, and there was general agreement that her experience and academic legal knowledge had been invaluable.

**Motion:** To extend Eve’s contract on a month-to-month basis with monthly reviews

**Proposer:** Sonia Jeena

**Secunder:** Jhana De Silva

Passed unanimously



General discussion, led by Jane and Jhana, about the hours that would be most appropriate for Eve. Jane noted that Eve was assisting not only with governance but also with setting in place a new induction program for PRC members coming in March.

**Motion:** To keep Eve's hours as 15 hour per week

**Proposer:** Soniya Jeena

**Seconded:** Upasana Pathak

Passed unanimously

#### **1.5.4 Discussion of electoral regulations regarding current PRC who are nominating for another role**

Delephene asked for any members who are considering nominating to have a thorough read of the electoral regulations. No PRC members were currently considering nominating for a different position

### **1.6 Other business**

#### **1.6.1 Budget Approvals**

Jhana brought up that the current budget approval process can sometimes be time consuming and could potentially be approved; this would be something to consider

Jane noted that in the rush towards O-Week, this may be something that could be put off, but is something that is being considered by Laurie.

#### **1.6.2 Hours needed to engage with ANU Council**

Soniya mentioned that she had been stretched in the work required to read through documents and engage fully with the ANU Council. As she is Council member without being President, which is an unusual position, there may need to be some kind of readjustment of hours.

Eve mentioned that most members of the Council are remunerated by the ANU itself, and could be a possibility.

**Action Items:**



1. Jane to contact Chris Reid about the possibility of the ANU renumrating the postgraduate member.

## **1.7 Meeting close**

Meeting closed at 5:40pm