



THE ANU OBSERVER

General Meeting 2020-04-15

Agenda

Location: Zoom

Time: 1900

Item 1: Meeting Opens and Apologies

Meeting opened at 7:21pm

1.1 Acknowledgement of Country

1.2 Apologies: None received

Item 2: Minutes from the Previous Meeting including Matters Arising

2.1 Minutes from the Previous Meeting

https://docs.google.com/document/d/1FuyhydsA62ioKjPv_-pWFhFhbxu3SoURd0w0kbmKdTw/e/dit?usp=sharing

Moved by Hayley, seconded by Angus. Motion passes.

Procedural to move to item 4.1. Moved by Tristan. Motion passes.

Item 3: Reports and Matters Arising

3.1 Report of the Chair of the Board (Appendix A)

Kon: I will take my report as read. Thanks everyone for attending. I know we would usually have pizza, hopefully this will be happening next semester. I would like to thank everybody in the team for their hard work. Everyone has been impacted and it has been a challenging start. Thanks everybody for the questions and work on this. Other than that, I would like to say that it's been a really good board this semester and I have been really enjoying my time. It's hard work but essential. I am happy to take questions.

Skanda: About the office. Has ANU confirmed you will have it for next year and years following?

Kon: It's a two year lease. The price will go slightly up. As long as SSAF exists, it is expected that we will have the office so hopefully we will continue having it. I think it's good to find some kind of reserve so we will be able to maintain the office. The worst thing would be to be locked into the lease and not have money for the second year. So, I just need to explore different ways for when a situation like that arises. For the moment, we will definitely be having the office for next year.

Moved by Tristan, seconded by Hayley. Motion passes.

Chair passes back to Konstantinos.

3.2 Report of the Chair of the Editorial Board (Appendix B)

Anthony: I'll take my report mostly as read, I just want to go through a couple of things. Recently we hired a lot of new reporters. I am glad to say they have been doing stunning work and I am happy to have them all on board. Earlier in the year we only had 3 reporters, in terms of sheer numbers we were struggling. It is a shame all this stuff has happened.

Fortunately it has meant there has been a lot of work to do, we have plans to deal with [when content goes down]. I want to thank all those people but also apologise that things have been so disruptive. If there's any questions people have I would be happy to answer them.

Skanda: Congratulations on your article output this year especially the Wage theft series. I was wondering if you had plans to return to explainer/longform reporting.

Anthony: We are definitely [intending to do that] and have a few things coming down the pipeline. [The more we do] the more comfortable people feel coming to us. We are also going to put out a request for tipoffs to retain that output and providing that kind of journalism. In terms of explainers, that's our plan for when the university is closed. Due to lack of events, and lack of college news we are planning to supplement that with explainers (and not only the mythical PARSA explainer). We are planning to do stuff like that, and things that are more substantive. Also we want to do more lighthearted stuff, like explaining 'why is it like this' style articles which spotlight things at the university that spotlights why something at the university is the way it is. We have another article coming out this week that is also along that sort of track.

Moved by Tristan, seconded by Angus. Report passes.

3.3 Report of the Visual Content Team (Appendix C)

Tristan: Take my report as read. There's a bunch of stuff there, I think I went a little bit overboard with writing the report. I would like to echo what Anthony said about the COVID-19 stuff. Visual team have had a number of problems from the start of the year as well. We were down to two visual team members in the whole team. Due to bushfires I didn't get final confirmation of who was staying/going and did not recruit [until later]. There were some communication issues at the start of the year. Our team has been very enthusiastic about putting up their hand for assignments and training. So in terms of plans for the future, we wanted to hire. We had 7 applicants, 3 were successful but the university went into lockdown following this. We have had to tell them that we will contact them when this crisis is over. Our plans for the future regarding that are that we will get them on the team when we actually have stuff to do. We are planning to get our Instagram and Youtube going, as well as to upgrade our graphics and website. If you are interested in reading a six page long report, I salute you.

Skanda: Congratulations again, especially in these circumstances. I wanted to ask how you intend to maintain team integrity and morale during this period of isolation, especially if people have gone home. Is there more focus on graphics?

Tristan: So one of the things that was discussed was, I would like for my team to work on improving the templates for god knows how long now. It is looking a little bit dated. One of the problems is that most of the people we hired are not graphic designers but photographers and videographers. It has translatable skills, but they aren't graphic designers. We can't take photos for article specific events so some have been pretty abstract. In terms of team morale and integrity, I think everyone is just keeping busy. With our 2 team members we have been staying in the same routine. Really, there's not a lot for us to do because of the nature of our organisation. We are a hard news organisation and like I covered in the report, we want

instagram to be a playground for the team with it has a reward that is a little bit of fun and indulges their creative spirit/vision. If you have any ideas, I'd love to hear them.

Skanda: I will pass them along if I have thoughts.

Moved by Vienna, seconded by Angus. Report passes.

3.4 Report of the Web Team (Appendix D)

Angus: I will take my report as read. I am happy to answer any questions.

Moved by Adelle, seconded by Tristan.

3.4 Secretary's Report (Appendix E)

Skanda: I recall seeing in Kon's report that there is a change in structure. Inclusion of a CEO role?

Moved by Tristan, seconded by Angus. Report passes.

Chair passes to Adelle.

3.5 Report of the Finance Executive (Appendix F)

Kon: I will take it as read, noting that what I said at the start we had a few issues in the beginning. We hadn't received all the money that we were supposed to. It's all in the report, but if you want me to clarify anything that was not clear just let me know.

Adelle: Any questions?

Moved by Hayley, seconded by Angus. Report passes.

Item 4: Items for Resolution

4.1 Appointment of Arbitration Panel Members.

Returning Officer: Eben Leifer

Kon: We have not received any nominations before the opening of this meeting, so I assume that nobody was willing and we cannot take nominations from the floor so nothing will be happening in this instance. We still need to pass this, I think.

Eben: As returning officer, I report that we received no nominations for Arbitration Panel member.

Report moved by Adelle, seconded by Angus. Motion passes.

Moved by Tristan, seconded by Vienna. Motion passes.

Item 5: Items for Discussion

Nil

Item 6: Notices of Motions

Nil

Item 7: Elections

Nil

Item 8: Other Business

Item 9: Date of next meeting and Close

The next meeting of the Members of The ANU Observer will be held in Semester 2, 2020.

Meeting closed at 8:02pm

Appendix A: Report of the Chair of the Board (Konstantinos Katsanis)

I would like to start my report by thanking everyone for their patience and work in this hard time. The effect of COVID-19 in Australia and the ANU has had a considerable impact on our organisation. Content has slowed down, as events and other major things we usually cover have been cancelled. It is good to see this difficult time as a challenge to learn from. I believe it will make us reflect what we are doing as student news, how to act in challenging and unpredictable circumstances, and how to prepare better for those in case they happen again. So, thanks to everyone who continues doing work, while we have been locked out of our working space, in Canberra or elsewhere.

Observer has received its largest SSAF to date for 2020, totalling \$51000. Financial details will be provided in the Finance Executive's report. I believe we are in a good direction and hopefully we will be able to retain the amount we received. Most of the money is going into two important line items; Allowances and Honoraria, and the Office. It is great that the elected officers are receiving a reward in the form of money for their hard work, and although it was the case since 2018, this time I think the amount reflects better the amount of work put in by the officers. Having a larger pool for Honoraria also allows us to reward others team members for their contribution to news and visual content.

We finally have received an office! We were supposed to have an office since the beginning of last year, but we were not allowed entry until November. So far, it has been a great working space! It's huge, it has a conference room, two smaller offices, two toilets and a large working/social space. Unfortunately, due to the university lockdown following the spread of COVID-19 in Canberra, we haven't had the chance to see the space evolving and used by our reporters. So far, it was used mainly by the exec. However, I think the rest of the team would benefit from such a space as much as the exec team. Because it's so spacious, quiet and not shared with any other organisations, as we did back in Square One, members feel very productive and as if they are working in a professional space. I hope that in the near future we will be granted access to it again.

Negotiations with the university have been good. Not anything significant to report here. The governance training organised by the uni in February was beneficial and useful. It gave an idea to all of our members that attended about what the Board is, what should be discussed in meetings, how to manage risks, made us aware of the different levels in governance and taught

us technical terminologies used. Most importantly, it helped us to realise what changes Observer needs, especially in how to distinguish, but also enrich, the management and administration of the organisation. At the moment we are still working on what changes should be implemented, so it is expected that in the next General Meeting there will be suggested changes to our Constitution. One of the most important changes is the addition of a CEO in the management level. Someone who would have the upper authority in dealing with News and Visual Team content. At the moment, this is mostly negotiated between the members of the two teams, but what we have realised is that it would be more useful to have a leading figure to manage the content creation of the organisation in places that the Board does not and should not intervene. This is a work in progress and will be discussed more among us in the next term.

Finally, I would like to point out the Board meetings have been quite useful and beneficial. We tried to have Board meetings every four weeks, however that failed terribly and we resumed to fortnightly ones. The reason why we were considering moving the meetings from two weeks to every four weeks was because it seemed that we were meeting too frequently. However, the nature of the organisation, which is different to ANUSA's or PARSAs and should not in any way be compared, suits to have meetings more frequently and to last shorter. For instance, our mean time spent in meetings is 1 hour for this year. We are a new organisation and there are plenty of things to discuss each time, including approving people and reading reports to keep track of content. That is good, because we are new. There has not been a year yet that we have not made changes to our regulations or our constitution. There are always things changing and unfortunately, if we want to improve, there will be changes for a couple of more years. As we have new things to discuss all the time, it's best to keep our meetings more frequent. Large part of them this semester has been discussing content. For the past few weeks we have shifted to talking more about admin than management, which is a good progress. However, a large portion of the meetings is questioning reports and content output. We don't generally want this to be happening, however, it also shows the need for the Board to express concerns when the organisation experiences a slow down in content output or conflict within the organisation. The Board had to intervene and hold strategic meetings to resolve conflict between the News and the Visual Content Team. Furthermore, it was also required for us to set some KPIs and organise both teams a little bit. We are heading in a good direction, but more work is definitely required. On the bright side, the Board has been quite good this year, as it has attracted a majority of passionate people that work together really well. The following may seem as a controversial opinion. I have heard about concerns that people have due to the fact that our Board does not consist of any members with a previously-held student association or leadership experience outside of the Observer (or at least in a student capacity), or a legal studies background. This, first of all, is not true as there are some members who have held such positions previously. Secondly, we all seem to be on the same level and share the same passion to be there, we let everyone speak and give their own opinions and we encourage everybody to have a say and not feel that the only reason to be there is to vote on things. It is a strong and functional Board and I think the amount of time put in the meetings reflects how much time each member is willing to contribute. For future reference, I think a mix of experience and passion is the best to ensure that the Board is functioning well.

Appendix B: Report of the Chair of the Editorial Board (Anthony Lotric and Sam Wright)

COVID Coverage:

Overall, I am proud of how we have covered the COVID crisis. However, it has not always been perfect. The main example of this is that during the pause week we only published one breaking graphic and no articles, although this was in large part because of a lack of major developments, and the fact that ANU media were overwhelmed, which delayed the wage theft article that we had scheduled to be published that week.

I am also happy with the way we covered the impact of the virus before it led to major domestic disruption. We published an initial article where we reported on the impact that the travel ban had on international students, and another article that followed up on how the ANU responded, and other developments. The first article is an example of an article that requires a little more initiative and imagination than our standard fair - and therefore is the sort of thing we have to continue doing.

I also think we have been generally good at staying on top of major developments, and digging a little deeper as to how they are actually affecting students (for instance in our article on the cancellation of on-campus events, and the recent one about exchange students).

One criticism we have received is that we may have used too many breaking graphics. I think we should consider as a team when an announcement needs to be announced immediately, and when a short article, without comment, is more appropriate. The decision to choose one option or the other will never be a perfect one, as it has to be made under time pressure, and with incomplete information. Even so, it is worth having some criteria that the editorial team can refer to in the moment. We also have to think about how comfortable we are publishing short articles with little value added.

Wage Theft Articles

I would like to commend Keeley on her stellar work on the series of wage theft articles that we have been publishing this year. The first article did a great job of highlighting the findings of the young workers centre report, and the second was a great bit of investigative work that involved other people in our team. These are the sort of articles I would love for us to do more of - not only are they harder hitting than the regular campus happenings or stu pol fare, they also have

the potential to grow into further articles as things develop as a result of their publication, and as more people come to us with tip offs.

These sorts of articles also underline and remind us of the importance of source protection, which we would never compromise. There is an article coming out soon which will make this doubly clear.

I was surprised with how passive ANU media was in their interactions with us concerning these stories. Considering how they overreacted to less important stories (for instance, by calling our reporters), they were quite cooperative. This is either because I was extra careful that we gave them a reasonable deadline for comment, showed them all the allegations in full, and didn't use 'background' as comment, or because they felt that they could not afford to be perceived as interfering with student media in this case. It is worth assuming that both of these could have been a factor, and proceeding accordingly by taking the above precautions and asking tough questions without hesitation.

Our attendance at the wage theft forum was also crucial, as speaking to people afterwards helped us develop the story, and put us into contact with people which helped us develop the wage theft series of articles further.

Other Articles

Two articles whose analytics really stand out are RESIDENTS "HIGHLY CONCERNED": SEVEN-STOREY CAR PARK PLANNED FOR DALEY ROAD and DIPLOMA OF LANGUAGES REINSTATED FOR 2021. I'd like to shout out Helena, who wrote both of these articles and did an excellent job. I think the amount of attention the articles received can be explained by the fact that their subject matter is of general interest to all students, and that they contained information that was both consequential to a large number of ANU students, and also could only be found in our articles. The analytics was driven in large part by people, because of these characteristics, tagging their friends in the comments of the article.

Another non-COVID or wage theft article worth mentioning is the Governance review article Hayley put together. It is an example of more niche work that appeals mainly to student

politicians and other people involved in student organisations. Nonetheless, it is worth doing because it serves an important role in maintaining transparency and providing non-partisan information on student politics and governance. The article also showcased Hayley's great knowledge of governance.

I would also like to highlight O-WEEK CLIMATE EVENT CANCELLED AFTER STUDENT OUTCRY. Bec was able to get into contact with SPA and get them to put out a press release regarding the controversy (which, for all practical purposes, was a statement to us). This gave the story

As the year goes on, it is more and more likely that the news we have to report on will be COVID related. Therefore, we try as best as we can to maintain as much article subject variety that is showcased above as much as possible.

SRC Liveblog

As SRC meetings, like all student organisation meetings, have moved to zoom, we have had to adapt how we cover them. We met beforehand in Zoom to assign duties and ensure that everyone understood how we would communicate.

SRC 2 was our opportunity to see how this approach would function in the wild. I have to congratulate everyone who attended - I think we did a just as good, if not better, job than we usually do in person. The only major issue that still needs to be addressed is ensuring that someone is assigned to share the liveblog to facebook, which will likely be the same person that sets it up on wordpress.

It has also been noted that our liveblogs have become less funny this year. We will try to improve on this, but it is difficult to compete with a humorist as skilled as Eliza.

Digital Collaboration

Issues were raised at the beginning of the year in regard to the news teams ability to work effectively with the digital team. There was a lack of communication between the two teams and as a result stock photos and graphics were not up to the usual standard. Since these

issues were first raised, however, there have been major improvements despite the obvious difficulties brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic. Weekly meetings with Tristan are now held when necessary, so that the digital team has a list of all the articles we intend to publish for that week.

Year Ahead:

Our situation as an organisation has obviously changed dramatically, as the Uni is now effectively in lockdown, and we are all now far more spread out geographically. This has had two major consequences. Firstly, it changes the sort of news that we will be able to report on, as very little is happening on campus and the colleges are far less occupied. Secondly, it means that all collaboration has to occur over slack or through Zoom.

Nonetheless, we aim to keep up our output as much as is humanly possible. Zoom meetings, while attracting less attendees than our in person ones, are very functional as a way of updating the team about the week ahead, and talking to individual reporters about stories in a setting where others can have input.

When regular news content starts to run a little thin, we plan to switch to focusing more on publishing explainers, and other more general and lighthearted content, such as 'why is it like this' spotlights on something at the university. This content will hopefully help student's stay connected with their university while they are not physically present, which we hope will be well received by them. We plan for much of this content to be entertaining, or otherwise of general interest.

Thankfully, however, we still have a number of stories in the works. I am very glad to report that many of these stories have been sourced by reporters themselves, which is a great development from last year, when this was quite rare. The editorial team will be encouraging this as much as possible moving forward.

Another reason that we have been able to put out investigative stories (a number are also still in the works), is that people seem more willing to come forward and tip us off because of recent work we have done (for example, the second wage theft article). We are planning to put out another request for tip offs on our page soon to capitalize on this effect, which will hopefully carry us through a few more weeks.

Other Matters:

Something I have focused on while working with reporters on articles has been emailing ANU media as early as possible - ideally not long after 9am on the weekday after the article was assigned, with a midday deadline two days later. I have found that this deadline allows for relatively quick article turn around while also being acceptable to ANU media, who have complained in the past about us not giving them enough time.

We have received very few corrections over the last few weeks, which is a great improvement from the beginning of the year. While our previous errors were minor, it is great that we now seem to avoid them entirely. If I remember correctly, we have not had to amend an article since week three. This is the standard that we should maintain for the rest of the year: corrections only being necessary a couple of times a term.

I think we have approached the point where our more junior editors are capable of doing an equal amount of work as our senior editors. I now feel confident asking any of my fellow editors to do first edits, without any oversight.

As an editor, I have felt continually supported by our elected officers, namely Hayley, Kon and Angus. They have been constantly on the ready to assist with queries, and have consistently performed their duties to a very high standard. They have also all evinced initiative in reviewing the procedures and assets that have been left to them, and devising ways of improving on them - for example Angus working towards replacing the website, or Hayley reviewing our Governance Structures.

Without going into too much detail, our interactions with various groups and organisations at the university have been mostly positive, or otherwise only mildly negative, this semester. I doubt this will last once we get to election time, but it is something we should keep up if possible.

By my estimation, our articles have been relatively timely this semester. There are a handful of exceptions, but there was usually a good reason for that (wanting to write a more in depth article than Woroni, ANU Media being slow, etc.).

However, we have, from time to time, published articles much later in the night (around 9pm) than is ideal. This issue has been mitigated by editors ensuring that their reporters finish articles by 5pm at the latest, and editors and reporters making sure that they are available throughout the publishing process. We generally aim to publish at around 7pm, however I think we should soon review the best times, from a facebook analytics standpoint, to publish articles.

Appendix C: Visual Content Team Report (Tristan Khaw)

1 INTRODUCTION

This year has been a challenging one to say the least. Since I started my term as Visual Content Executive (VCE) in December last year, the organisation has experienced all sorts of changes and unexpected upsets. From finally getting our new office, to the bushfires and finally to the current COVID-19 situation, I dread to imagine what more could be in store from 2020.

1.1 Report Structure

For this report, I will first outline the challenges (section 2) posed to both the Visual Team (formerly the Digital Team) and to myself as VCE. I will then detail the solutions (section 3) to those challenges and follow with plans for the future (section 4).

1.2 Background

For those who are not aware, I took over from Konstantine as VCE (formerly the Digital Editor) at our last General Meeting in term 2. Before that, I was a photographer and have been a part of the team for a few years now.

2 CHALLENGES

2.1 Transition Period

2.1.1 Handover

One of the main problems encountered was the transition and handover period between last year and this year. I think most student organisations suffer from a lack of institutional knowledge and high turnover as students rarely stay more than three years at the very most. Last year was especially rough as Eliza Croft, our last founding member, graduated. Due to the

nature of the organisation and student organisations in general, we did not have good handover and transitional procedures in place and lost a lot of the aforementioned institutional knowledge and experience. Adding to that loss was the fact that (1) many leadership positions within the organisation (Board positions, Editors, Executives and so on) were either changed or created at the last General Meeting and (2) those positions were then filled with inexperienced people - myself among them.

2.1.2 Understrength Visual Team

For the Visual Team in particular, we were left with two full time members (not including myself) for the year. This meant that the Visual Team was, and continues to be, severely understrength. To further add to the difficulties, due to the stress and uncertainty around the bushfires earlier in the year, I did not receive final confirmation (regarding their intentions to continue with *Observer*) from several members until O-Week of this term and we did not begin recruiting early enough to fill the gaps.

All of the above contributed to the first few weeks of the term one being a difficult period of transition.

2.2 Communication

During that period, we had to solve some teething issues. Foremost among those were communication problems both within and between teams.

2.2.1 Systemisation

As an organisation, we have experimented with and implemented different attempts to solve the communication. As a result of this organic development, we did not implement any structured systems or workflows for a variety of aspects. For example, there was not a single place or list where the progress of articles and other news items were being tracked - it was up to each editor and executive to keep it in their mind.

While this might have worked for a smaller organisation, *Observer* has now grown to the largest it has been in a while. This lack of structure led to tensions between teams as deadlines (on both sides) were missed and assignments not being communicated.

2.2.2 Communication Within Visual Team

Within Visual Team, it became obvious that the lack of communication between my remaining team members and I was due to the lack of a single, clear channel of communication. During my tenure as a photographer, we tried Trello and a bunch of other Slack channels. It was still unclear at the outset if we were still using Trello, or which Slack channel to pay attention to, or where relevant assignments were. As VCE, I had no idea where my team members were up to as the expectation to do so was not clearly outlined.

Unfortunately, this plus by our team size led to us missing livestream opportunities and not fulfilling news graphics (the thumbnails we use for our website and Facebook Page) deadlines.

2.2.3 Communication Between Visual Team and News Team

Additionally, during the chaos of the first few weeks, communications between teams were sporadic and unclear. Of course, it did not help that (1) we had two new Editors join the team, (2) many of *Observer's* officers were back home interstate and (3) the bushfires were a higher priority in most people's minds.

The miscommunication issues between teams have been a long and recurring problem, even while I was a photographer. From Visual Team's point of view, we were either in a drought of assignments or were deluged by a string of very close deadlines that we could not possibly fulfill. The system at that point, such as it was, was for individual News Editors to remember to contact the Visual Team and usually by that point, it was too late for us to contribute.

2.3 Staff Retention and Satisfaction

The above played a large part in general dissatisfaction for Visual Team and News Team members. For the News Team, it seemed like Visual Team were always late or unable to fill deadlines. Conversely, Visual Team members felt the two extremes of either being generally unneeded or unnecessarily stressed by needing to rearrange their schedules on a drop of a hat.

Additionally, Visual Team members (generally creative and expressive souls if I do say so myself) tended to feel underutilised and creatively unfulfilled. Many of our members (including interviewees from this term) have expressed a desire to experience the mysterious arena of photojournalism. Instead, it felt that we were relegated to taking stock photos of buildings and setting up livestreams.

2.4 COVID-19

The final disruption to the organisation came in the form of the current COVID-19 Crisis. Besides the emergency measures we had to adopt, the government-mandated lockdown has also greatly affected all of us. Visual Team's bread and butter revolve around attending events to take photos, videos and livestreams. Within a few days, all of these went out the window with the announcement of campus lockdown.

2.4.1 Hiring

To add to the frustration, we had a good number of applications to join our team from O-week. Due to the disruption in content and events however, we have had to inform our applicants that we will not be hiring them currently.

3 SOLUTIONS

I am happy to say that we have emerged from the (admittedly) rough first weeks having addressed and solved most of the problems outlined in the previous section.

Despite still only having two members on the Visual Team, I am proud to say that we have managed to improve our output to the point where we have successfully filled all of our obligations while still having time to pursue extension projects.

3.1 Communication Within Visual Team

To solve the intra-team problem, I worked to implement a structured and clear line of communication between myself and my team members.

3.1.1 Goals for Visual Team

Beyond just meetings and messages however, I made sure to express very clearly my goals and expectations for Visual Team. In return, I also made very sure to ask them about their own desires, expectations and workload. I feel that one of the problems was a lack of motivation to participate strongly. After all, this is essentially a volunteer position. Along with the staff dissatisfaction issues outlined in Section 2.3, it is no wonder that no one reads their Slack messages. To that end, my long term goals with Visual Team is for every member to:

1. Leave with new skills than when they started. These include creative skills such as photography, videography, graphic design and photo/video editing as well as “soft” skills such as working to a deadline, working within a team, time management and so on.
2. (Probably more importantly) Be able to use and demonstrate the above skills to employers. All of these skills are extremely valuable to recruiters (no matter the field), and I want every team member to be rewarded for their hard work.
3. Leave with a portfolio and body of work that they are proud of. I want team members to point to *Observer's* articles and posts after they have left and be proud of their work.
4. Have creative freedom and scope within our organisation to work on personal projects that will fit into their personal portfolio.

All of the above fit with our Constitution's tenet that Officers be given space to experience journalism. I wholeheartedly and genuinely believe in the above goals and will continue to champion them for the remainder of my term with *Observer*.

3.1.2 Intra-team Communication

With the above in mind, it became a lot easier to set up the expectation to read and respond to messages when there is personal motivation to perform well.

First of all, I had to chase up administrative tasks that were not completed during their recruitment last year, including making sure they had office access, their own email address, Google Drive access and so on.

I then standardised the format, manner and means of communicating assignments. I removed Trello from our workflow, and aimed to make each assignment clear and quick to read and keep track of progress. We also agreed to meet weekly to discuss progress and hand out assignments.

Additionally, I have been encouraging my team members to have some self-initiative and chase up certain tasks for themselves. For example, instead of asking me when something was due, I could point them to the relevant resource instead. Teach a man to fish and all that.

3.1.3 Results

As a result of the above changes, we have filled all of our deadlines and covered every assignment since their implementation. Both my team members have been enthusiastic about putting their hand up for assignments and up-skilling opportunities. One of them brought their drone to campus for new photo angles and the other came up with new graphic templates that we are looking to implement.

3.2 Communication Between Visual Team and News Team

Besides the teething problems at the start of the term, inter-team communications have also improved.

3.2.1 Article Tracker

Chief among the improvements was the implementation of a central repository and tracker for events and news articles. While some effort is required to keep it updated, this means that every Officer in the organisation can be kept abreast of the progress of projects and ensures that fewer things get missed

3.2.2 Communication Changes

Other miscellaneous changes included instituting a meeting between myself and the News Editors and standardising the channels of communication between teams

3.3 Institutional Knowledge

Continuing the trend of systemisation, we have been making an effort to codify and formally record things like procedures and protocols. For onlookers outside the organisation, this probably does not mean a lot. However, standardising and setting up an ongoing base of

knowledge will ensure that we do not experience another drop in content when the guard changes again.

4 PLANS FOR THE FUTURE

4.1 Instagram and YouTube

To give the Visual Team members scope for creative freedom, we will be exploring Instagram and YouTube further. In particular, our plan for Instagram is for each Visual Team member to post regularly (ideally daily) with pictures they take while on campus. This will increase engagement and provide another form of content for the student body. Our rough plan was for a shared general template (e.g. white borders on all pictures and a certain set of hashtags) but allow for each member to bring their own creative vision to their pictures. This will be trialled when the COVID-19 crisis has abated.

4.2 “Fortnightly Five” Video Series

Observer traditionally has focused on articles as its primary form of content. My intention with the Fortnightly Five video series is to push for a different method of delivering that content while still staying true to our hard-news core. In a nutshell, it is a recap of the last two weeks of news and a look forward for the next two. It is intended to be a morning news type of recap for time-poor students.

The videos will build off our pre-existing work. It is fortnightly to avoid competing with the weekly catchup articles we already publish. In fact, the script is written to give just enough detail of our articles to get students interested in reading the full text on our website.

With our new office space and equipment purchased with our last SSAF bid, I believe that this will be the first of many other more ambitious projects that will push *Observer* towards new forms of media.

4.3 Graphics and Website Overhaul

During this downtime, we have been planning to overhaul our graphics and adopt a more unified style. Angus Brooks (our Web Executive) has been working on the back-end of our website and we are hoping to modernise some of our graphical content when he is done.

We have trialled some of these new graphics in the form of our email footers and our advertising posts.

4.4 Hiring

As mentioned in a previous section, we had a good number of applications to join the Visual Team. We have had to delay hiring them until after the current crisis is over as there is not enough work for them to get started on.

4.5 Cross-Training and Further Systemisation

There has been some discussion between myself and the News Editors to also use the downtime to encourage cross-training between teams (i.e. reporters learning how to take photos and photographers learning how to report). Unfortunately, due to the difficulties in working remotely, we have been unable to get the ball rolling.

Further work is being done to resolve the systemisation issues mentioned earlier.

4.6 ANU Sports

Russ from ANU Sports got in contact with us during O-Week. There were some interesting ideas brought up, including interviews with ANU's Elite athletes and the like. Unfortunately, this too was put on hold with the news that all events were cancelled.

Appendix D: Web Team Report(Angus Brooks)

A major focus for me this semester has been auditing and overhauling Observer's systems. So far, this has mainly been upgrades to internal systems that allow our teams to conduct their work as efficiently as possible – such as ensuring all team members have access to the necessary systems such as email and Slack needed for them to do their work.

A number of challenges have arisen, mostly to do with the complex network of interconnected systems Observer has. As the role of Web Executive is new this year, there was no handover process and no documentation. A key goal for me going forward is to develop more policies, protocols and documentation about Observer's various systems to make it easier for my successor and others to fully understand the nature of Observer's systems – eliminating lengthy troubleshooting and diagnosis processes that are both unnecessary and time consuming.

One thing that has become increasingly apparent is that the Observer site needs a major upgrade. Observer has outgrown our existing infrastructure – an issue that is becoming increasingly problematic. We often run into technical problems in periods of high demand - usually when many people are trying to access and edit the site – with ANUSA SRCs being particularly overwhelming for our humble site. Our website is the main place where our content

is accessed, so it is important that it is always accessible – especially during peak times such as SRCs. As such, Observer has decided to proceed with a major upgrade of our website. This is already underway - I'm very excited and look forward to sharing more.

Appendix E: Secretary's Report (Hayley Hands)

General

We've had an interesting year at Observer thus far. Although the circumstances have been less than ideal, I believe we have made a really good effort to keep the organisation functioning smoothly, and in keeping our Officers engaged and informed. Whilst the transition into this role wasn't easy due to a lack of handover procedure(which I am currently working on changing), it has been really great and I feel like I have learned a lot. Observer's participation in the Governance Training for SSAF funded organisations at the beginning of the year was really beneficial for myself and other Board members, and I feel as though this has allowed us to grasp what needs to be done moving forward.

Policies, Resources and Strategic Planning

During my term, I have updated and passed changes to the Payment Policy in removing reference to the now defunct 'Digital Editor' position, which has become the Visual Content Executive. I also added the payment coefficients and reference points for the new Web Executive role. I would like to thank Kon for his assistance with altering this policy. Many other policies require similar changes due to new roles, changed titles (e.g councillor to Board Member), including our Standing Orders. I have identified these policies and regulations and intend to have altered all of these by our General Meeting in Semester 2 (provided that the circumstances allow it). I have also noticed that a number of policies and regulations which have had changes passed have not actually been altered yet. I had not realised this until very recently so I intend to make these changes to the documents and put them up on our website ASAP.

In terms of resources, I put together a 'Governance Basics' document which covers everything within the Governance Training that applies to Observer. I hope this will help Officers who were not able to attend Governance Training, or who are interested in recommending further changes. Within this document, I also created a number of planning templates to assist with strategic planning and in setting KPIs for our teams.

Tristan and I also wrote and passed the COVID-19 Procedure (which we are in the process of updating). It advises Observer's planned response to the changing circumstances and helps us to inform our Officers of these responses ahead of time.

Thus far, Observer has held two meetings centred around strategic planning. We had initially intended on publishing our KPIs, but as a result of the current circumstances, I have given

teams the ability to review and make changes to their goals based on the way our content and communication will be adapting over the coming months.

Additionally, I created and have been helping to maintain an 'Article and Contributions tracker' spreadsheet, which helps to see the progress of articles, the corrections we receive as well as contributions by Officers to content. This has been really beneficial for inter-team communication, especially as we are no longer able to meet in person.

Minutes

All Board and General Meeting minutes should now be on the website. Coming into the role I found a fair few missing, probably due to there being no Secretary during this time.

Feedback and Improvement

I also wanted to say that we are really open to any feedback you may have for us. I recently ran a survey with the intent of finding out what we can do to improve, however we had very few respondents. I would like to encourage any student to reach out if they have ideas or issues with what we are currently doing. They can do this by messaging the ANU Observer page on Facebook, or by messaging our primary email news@anuobserver.org. Additionally, anonymous feedback could be provided through our tipoff form. However, I am looking into having a separate form for this following our website changes.

These not so great circumstances are a great chance for us to reflect on what we're doing well, what we could do better and some new things we could look into doing.

Gratitudes

I would like to say a huge thank you to all of our Board Members for sticking it out with us through these tough times. Our transition to Zoom, whilst sad, was relatively painless and we have still been having productive discussions and high attendance. Everyone has really supported each other and I think it has created a really great vibe that reverberates among all of our Officers.

Appendix F: Report of the Finance Executive (Konstantinos Katsanis)

Observer has been allocated \$51000 in SSAF, the most it has ever received by the university. It has been a challenging start, but the situation at the moment has been stabilised. Thankfully, the previous Treasurer provided me with a 3-page handover to guide me on certain things. However, it came to my attention that we were missing some money. I did a full examination of our finances, including looking at all of the history of our transactions in our bank account. What I found was that we had invoiced the university \$9600, whereas the amount that we should have included was \$13194. On top of that, we submitted two credit notes; the first one was supposed to be amended by the second and the system did not catch it. As a result, the system deducted \$4079.31 from the \$9600. This left us with only \$5520.69 for the

remainder of the year. In the limited time we had, we made selective purchases thinking that those were the only money we had.

Fortunately, I received the original invoices and credit notes and I managed to compare them and see what the problem was. When I invoiced the university for this year's installment, they deducted the second credit note, amounting to \$4510.15. This was because the system considered both credit notes. In response, I asked for the university to return the amount that we were owed, which in total was \$7673.31. The university agreed to do so, and I am still waiting for the money to come in. It was a stressful and exhausting task, but I am glad that we are finally receiving the money that we were supposed to have in the first place.

Because of the previous issue and the fact that we have not been charged yet by the accounting firm that we trusted to do the auditing, I will be submitting a credit note with all unspent funds next semester. So far, our expenses look like the following for 2020:

Line Item	Initial Balance	Expenditure	Remaining Balance
Allowances & Honoraria	29530	10926.06	18603.94
Administration	500	215.85	284.15
Auditing	2500	0	2500
Office Rent and Supplies	10500	2618.64	7881.36
Software Subscription	700	607.01	92.99
Legal	2000	0	2000
News Subscriptions	200	0	200
MHFA Training	250	0	250
Meetings and Events	800	151.45	648.55
NUS National Conference (joined bid with Woroni)		1001	
Equipment	3500	1042.28	2457.72
Advertising and Merchandise	500	0	0
Phone	20	0	0

I am keen for SSAF. At the moment I think it would be best to stay close to the amount we have. I don't foresee any project that will be so significant as to increase the budget by so much. Increasing allowances, as well as the admin, software and meetings and events budget would be a priority. I am also interested in finding a way we can acquire a reserve that will mostly accommodate for certain expenses, especially for office rent, in case SSAF suddenly

ceases to exist. Secondly, I am also interested in finding different outlets for sources of income, as I think Observer can benefit from those, too. Last year we had a short discussion with PARSА about how we can collaborate and use their financial controller to prepare for auditing. However, due to the developments with COVID-19 we have been distracted and I will resume those negotiations at the start of the term.