

Sydney University Postgraduate Representative Association (SUPRA)

Annual Report 2005-2006

students working for students

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UNIVERSITY OF SYDNEY NSW 2006
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The 2005-2006 Annual Report was produced by SUPRA.
It is available from the SUPRA website.
The SUPRA Council would like to thank Jaclyn Booton, SUPRA Administration Officer
for her work compiling this report.

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President's Report

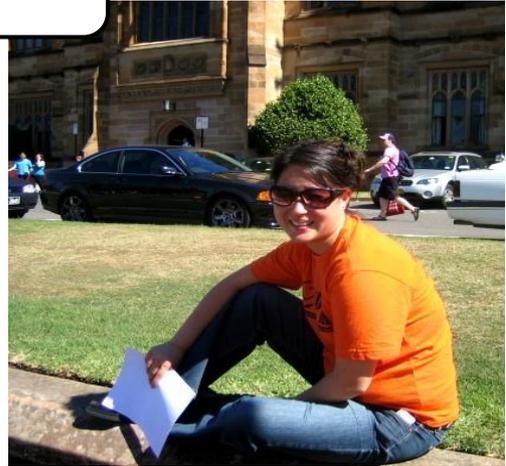
Jenny Leong (Feb – May '06)

Someone told me the other day that they knew of a student association that lost a speedboat. I am pleased to report that of all the things I have discovered about the activities of SUPRA in 2005 we have not lost a speedboat. Although I do wonder if SUPRA had owned a speedboat last year, would still have been in the boatshed when the new SUPRA Council took office in February 2006?

This is not an enjoyable report to write. Not only are there many things we, as members of SUPRA, should be concerned about in relation to the previous activities of our student organisation in 2005 but also, given the inevitable introduction of VSU, there is significant cause for concern about the future of SUPRA beyond 2006.

That said, in the past three months, since your newly elected SUPRA Council took office in February 2006, I have been inspired, excited and motivated. Not because the facts about 2005 were less bad than we thought they would be and not because the future of our Association is looking certain in a voluntary membership environment but because I have witnessed first hand what we can achieve when we are dedicated, committed and passionate about ensuring our interests, needs, aspirations and views are represented.

So before I go into what happened in 2005 I would like to give you a brief rundown of what has been happening over the past three months. I hope that this gives you an understanding of what a functioning, energised, healthy, active and inclusive student association can do and why it is so important that we work together to



ensure our independent postgraduate representative association survives beyond 2006.

What is it that SUPRA should do?

According to our Constitution:

- The overriding object of the Association shall be to promote the interests of the University's postgraduate students.
- The Association shall seek to reflect the views of the postgraduate students of the University, and to that end shall consult their opinions regularly on matters of concern.
- The Association shall represent the postgraduate students of the University and make appropriate representations on their behalf. It shall seek to defend their needs and uphold their aspirations at all times.

And how we have been doing it...

Re-connecting with our postgrad community by:

- Operating a SUPRA O-Week Stall
- Hosting a SUPRA/University of Sydney Union O-Week BBQ
- Distributing SUPRA showbags, mugs, mousepads, and highlighters
- Producing two editions of eXpress
- Attending inductions for new postgrad students including: the Dean of Engineering's 'Welcome for International Postgraduates';

the Pharmacy 'Induction for Postgraduate Coursework Students'; the Nursing 'Orientation for Postgraduate Students' at the Mallet Street campus; the Economics and Business 'Induction for Postgraduate Students'; the Architecture 'Welcome for Postgraduate Coursework Students'; the Arts 'Induction for Postgraduate Students'; the Masters of Public Health 'Induction for new Postgraduate Students'; the Sydney College of the Arts 'Orientation for Postgraduate Students'; and the International Student Services Association Orientation.

- Holding events for women postgrads, indigenous postgrads, queer postgrads and international student postgrads
- Presenting the SUPRA Seminar Series with sessions on casual academics, tenancy and migration
- Sending regular eGrad email updates to communicate with our members
- Communicating with postgrad students at satellite campuses including Sydney College of the Arts, Mallet Street, Westmead, the Conservatorium of Music and the Faculty of Rural Management at Orange.

Re-establishing communication with the University and beyond through:

- Postgraduate student representation on Academic Board and relevant committees, including the Learning and Teaching Committee, the Research Committee, the Graduate Studies Committee, the Postgraduate Research Training Sub-Committee and the Postgrad Coursework Sub-Committee.
 - Meeting with the Chancellor and participation in Senate/SUPRA Liaison Committee Meeting with the Vice-Chancellor to discuss VSU and for regular pre-Senate meetings
 - Meetings with the Dean of Graduate Studies
 - Meeting with the Deputy Vice Chancellor (International)
 - Liaising with the Registrar, the Director of Student Services, Institute for Teaching and Learning
 - Representation at the Disability Consultative Committee and the Occupational Health and Safety Committee
- Participation in the selection panel for the Vice Chancellor's Excellence Awards in Research Supervision
- Regular communication with the Postgraduate Senate Fellow, Jack Clegg
 - Regular meetings and communication with the SRC President
 - Communication with other student organisations and representatives from other campuses
 - Postgraduate questionnaire to University of Sydney Union Board candidates on their commitment to postgrads and a reminder to postgrads to vote in the elections
 - Liaison with our peak body the Council of Australian Postgraduate Associations (CAPA)

"I have witnessed first hand what can be achieved if people are dedicated, committed and passionate about ensuring their interests, their needs, their aspirations and their views are represented."

Re-activating our campaigns by:

- Following the win by SUPRA in the complaint against the NSW Government regarding international student travel concessions we committed to reactivating the campaign through a rally outside NSW parliament, media comment on the issue, and convening the first meeting of the Cross-Campus Concessions Coalition
- Participating in and speaking at the Your Rights at Uni Rally on the need for increased funding for postgraduate coursework places, postgraduate student access to health care cards, fully-funded and independent student representative organisations and travel concessions for international students

Re-energising our office through

- Constant presence of elected student representatives, usually the President, Vice President, Secretary, Treasurer and other Office Bearers in the SUPRA offices.
- Increasing our Student Advice and Advocacy Officers from 2 to 3 staff members.
- Employing a full-time Administration Officer
- Re-employing SUPRA's previous Finance Manager on a part-time basis
- Resolving outstanding staffing matters from 2005
- Giving the Resource Room and the SUPRA Offices a do-it-yourself makeover



We have not been able to locate a complete record or minutes of Council and Committee meetings for 2005. In fact it is not certain that regular meetings were held. We may never know who all of the elected representatives in 2005 were, or accurate details of which people held which office bearing positions at which times. I am grateful to SUPRA staff for their assistance in preparing the pre-2005 AGM information.

What happened at SUPRA in 2005?

It would perhaps be most appropriate if this report of SUPRA activities in 2005 was presented as an affidavit due to the fact that the overarching theme of SUPRA last year was legal action. As you can see from the Financial Statements and the Treasurer's Report, legal costs and associated expenses used up more than \$300,000 of student money in 2005.

Pre-2005 AGM

Gigi Wong was President of SUPRA from 1 July 2004 to 15 May 2005. There was, however, a dispute between Gigi and Benny Lee as to who was rightfully President of the Association. Benny Lee claimed to have been elected President by Council on 1 February. The Registrar resolved the dispute by expressing the view that the 1 February Council meeting did not make quorum and was invalid and Gigi Wong was reconfirmed as President.

Staff attended some key induction events during this period (eg. ISSU's semester 1 Induction) and kept core services like casework advice and advocacy functioning, but student representatives did not attend induction events and SUPRA did not have a presence at O-Week.

It was not until relatively late in the 2005/06 Council term, and just prior to last year's AGM, that Janet Lee assumed the position of SUPRA President. According to an email sent to staff at the time Janet Lee assumed the Presidency of SUPRA at a meeting of Council on 15 May 2006.

During the first half of 2005, the only presence SUPRA had in the University was the strange toilet posters produced by the University Facilities Management Office that included the SUPRA logo. To this day I still stare at these posters and wonder what they mean.



Post-2005 AGM

The Annual General Meeting called by the President of SUPRA, Janet Lee and the election of the new Council at this meeting caused a number of students to become concerned about what was happening to their Association. We have not been able to locate the official minutes or attendance list for this meeting. After the President ignored numerous motions from the floor, closed the meeting prior to the completion of the meeting and removed all the attendance sheets, about fifty postgraduate students remained in the meeting room to discuss what had just taken place and what was happening to their Association. The minutes of this post-

AGM will be presented to the 2006 AGM tonight as a record of what took place.

The students at the post-AGM meeting agreed to petition the former President for an Extraordinary General Meeting (EGM) and submitted a request as per the Constitution the following day. No response to this request was received.

Another request for an EGM, including notice of the business to be conducted, was submitted to the former President on 12 August 2005. Following this request, the President finally called the EGM for 7 October 2005.

A few days before this meeting the former President attempted to cancel the meeting. Over 100 students met at the set out time and place of the EGM and put the motions as per the notice. Motions to remove the current Council and appoint five students to an Emergency Management Committee (EMC) to conduct new elections (and deal with any urgent matters in relation to the management of SUPRA) were passed with clear majorities. The students given this responsibility were Estelle Noonan, Rosemary Whitecross, Roozi Araghi, Jenny Leong and Jack Clegg.

Just days after these students were established as the EMC and gained access to the SUPRA Offices with the support and endorsement of the University, they received a summons from the Supreme Court of NSW from the former President. The students – to be known from this point on as The SUPRA Five – then spent a gruelling number of months engaged in a Supreme Court action with no financial support and no indemnity from the University but with the invaluable assistance of solicitor Lisa Doust and

barrister Tony Slevin, and a generous support team of postgrad students.

The Supreme Court resolved this matter by ordering the appointment of a Receiver, Peter Hedge. He was responsible for conducting new elections and managing the Association. In February 2006 a new SUPRA Council was elected as the result of a postal ballot and SUPRA was saved.

Where to from here?

Now that we have re-established SUPRA as a vibrant and active student representative association the challenge is ensuring our organisations survives in a voluntary membership environment. We have been working hard to prepare

ourselves for this through regular Post-VSU Strategy Meetings, discussions of constitutional changes, negotiations with the University, discussions with other student representative organisations and submissions to the University/Senate VSU Working Party.

Thank you to everyone who engaged in the campaign to save SUPRA last year. Thank you to everyone who has engaged with the new SUPRA Council this year. Thank you to SUPRA staff. And thank you to the current SUPRA Councillors for your commitment, passion, dedication and hard work over the past three months.

Jenny Leong
SUPRA President
May 2006
president@supra.usyd.edu.au

"Now that we have re-established SUPRA as a vibrant and active student representative association the challenge is ensuring our organisations survives in a voluntary membership environment."



Vice President's Report

Roozi Araghi (Feb – May '06)

The non-specific nature of the position of Vice President means that this role, quite simply, is what you make of it. In many organisations, this means doing very little. However, the responsibilities of the President of SUPRA are so broad and time consuming that their successful fulfilment requires significant work on the part of the Vice President. In a sense this has required doing whatever needs doing, including providing support to other Office Bearers and being an active member of each of Council's committees.

This has included tasks such as:

- Design and production of materials for SUPRA campaigns and events, such as the April EGM, the April 12 'Your Rights at Uni' rally and the 'SUPRA Seminar Series'
- Helping write press releases, reports and submissions
- Organising the appointment of the Returning Officer for SUPRA's annual elections
- Attending University Committee meetings (either with or in place of the President)
- Staff liaison (including weekly meetings) and selection panels
- Meeting with the Chancellor, Vice Chancellor and representatives of Senate to discuss VSU and postgraduate concerns
- Being involved in the Travel Concessions Campaign
- Drafting internal SUPRA policy and constitutional changes
- Drafting content for SUPRA publications and helping oversee content changes to the website, including drafting a feedback form
- Attending and speaking at O-Week inductions in addition to or in place of the President
- Working with the Administrative Officer to reorganise space and storage in the SUPRA Offices

Providing an exhaustive list would be difficult, but hopefully the above examples offer a useful insight into the hugely diverse work of SUPRA. The following examples give more depth on some areas in which I have had particular involvement.



Learning and Teaching Committee

Both Jenny and I attend this University Committee (with me attending the Library Subcommittee also) and we've had a significant impact on it. In one particularly rewarding meeting, SUPRA and the SRC presented strident objections to a proposal from the Faculty of Economics and Business to commence charging students for remarking of assessments. It was exciting to see a pretty overwhelming rejection of this idea, with the Chair of the Committee summarising that it as a whole strongly discouraged the idea. This was a real win for students.

Recommendations on the University of Sydney Postgraduate Handbooks Submission

This submission to the Graduate Studies Committee, written by Gina Browne, SUPRA's Policy Advisor, Jenny and myself, with input from many Councilors, was a significant undertaking.

We offered ten recommendations about the revision of this handbook, most significantly arguing for:

- separate coursework and research handbooks
- more attention to distribution and use of the handbooks
- more information about SUPRA in the handbooks
- the investigation of combining the handbooks with SUPRA's Survival Manual.

We have yet to hear back from the committee on this, but there may be a significant project ahead of us if the University shows interest in a joint publication.

Council of Australian Postgraduate Associations (CAPA)

Jenny and I recently attended the Special Council Meeting (SCM) of CAPA, one of its two major meetings each year. This was held over three days, and saw SUPRA contribute very actively to debate around CAPA's preparations for VSU, its future funding and its budget and core functions. The conference was a chance to meet representatives of Postgraduate representative organisations from around Australia; we made strong ties in particular to representatives from other NSW campuses and compared and discussed strategies for post-VSU survival.

Attending CAPA also helped strengthen the links that we have made in respect of the NSW Transport Concessions Campaign, with CAPA electing a new National International Students' Officer from NSW (Shehbaz Singh from Newcastle University).

I was also elected to the position of CAPA National Queer Officer for the remainder of 2006, which is a position on CAPA's executive. I hope that this role will not simply be an added responsibility but an important way to help SUPRA reinvest effort in an important organisation that we have historically been very involved in. I have begun the process of organising a Postgraduate session (or sessions) at the Queer Collaborations (QC) Conference being held in Sydney this year as my first task as CAPA Queer Officer, and am looking forward to helping the CAPA Executive in confronting the challenges of the next 6 months and beyond. As CAPA Queer Officer I will be focused on both QC and Queer spaces under VSU.

"Attending CAPA also helped strengthen the link that we have made in respect of the NSW Transport Concessions Campaign"

Future directions

The last four months have been some of the busiest of my life, and I've been proud to be a part of getting SUPRA back on track. Working together with such committed people has been extremely rewarding, and I wish to acknowledge and thank the Officers, Councillors, staff and members of SUPRA for this experience.

It is my sincere hope to continue working for the Postgraduate students of the University of Sydney for the next twelve months. This will be a critical time, and – regardless of who is elected – will require all Councillors to work together with the best interests of students at heart.

Roozi Araghi Vice President

May 2006

vicepresident@supra.usyd.edu.au

Treasurer's Report

Anthony Kachenko (Feb – May '06)

I am pleased to present my first financial report as Treasurer and in doing so wish to acknowledge the support and expertise of all the Councillors who have worked tirelessly to re-establish full financial control of SUPRA. This report details the 2005 calendar year before the current Council took office in February 2006.

The events that marred SUPRA in 2005 have undoubtedly translated into a challenging time for the current Council. In particular, the arduous task of reconciling the financial accounts of 2005 and preventing a repeat of the poor financial planning and management that plagued the Association in 2005. These have become the focus of all of us at SUPRA to ensure we move forward and strategically plan to ensure SUPRA's continuing existence with the onset of VSU in July 2006. Commencing my responsibilities of Treasurer in February, little did I know that I would be opening Pandora's Box and experiencing one of the most challenging yet rewarding times of my life. Below, I will endeavour to highlight the significant fiscal issues that resulted in one of the worst years in SUPRA's history.

Total revenue was primarily made up of subscriptions and totalled \$881,279, which was down three percent from the previous year. To highlight the fiscal irresponsibility of the 2005 SUPRA council, the income generated from other sources of revenue such as discounted services (eg. photocopying) and sundries (eg. ticket sales and advertising) was a mere \$631 as opposed to \$19,378 in 2004.

It is with disappointment that I report the 2005 calendar year posted an operating deficit of \$131,656, some \$8,000 higher than in 2004. This will come as a surprise to many considering there were few – if any – events, publications and activities organised for the University of Sydney postgraduate student community. Although this would seem to imply that monies were left in reserve for future Councils and as a safeguard for the looming threat of VSU, they were, however, squandered by numerous means and in most cases NOT in the interest of postgraduate students. Total expenditure for 2005 totalled \$1,012,935.

"these significant fiscal issues [...] resulted in one of the worst years in SUPRA's history."

The independently audited 2005 financial statements contained herein provide a detailed account of the expenditure incurred. In regards to the Administration and Finance Committee, legal expenses to the tune of \$178,859 accounted for some eighteen percent of total expenditure. These expenses related to a number of matters including staffing arrangements, constitutional changes and election issues. The appointment of the Receiver in late 2005 as ordered by the Supreme Court resulted in expenses totalling \$118,182. This process was necessary to allow for open and accountable elections while also managing SUPRA's day-to-day affairs (See Presidents report for further details).

Stipends and wages have largely remained the same with the noticeable exception of the President's stipend (\$55,124 - up fifty percent) and Indigenous

Officer's stipend (\$6,926 - nearly three times the 2004 stipend).

Fortunately during the course of 2005, the University took control of SUPRA monies and set aside monies for the payment of staff entitlements and redundancies in the lead up to the introduction of VSU.

It should be noted here that the cost of accounting and bookkeeping services in 2005 exceeded \$85,000, and was partly due to outsourcing of accounting services and the increase in hours that were required to perform bookkeeping duties. This figure is more than three times greater than our projected 2006 expenses.

The inactivity of the 2005 SUPRA Council is clearly evident in the expenditure incurred by the Publications Activities and Services Committee. The amount spent on activities and functions decreased by more than eighty percent, similarly the amount spent on campaigns was sixty percent less than in 2004. Furthermore, there were no monies spent on the Survival Manual, Thesis Guide or *express*. This resulted in a reduction in expenditure of almost seventy percent.

In addition to the preparation of the financial statements, all financial documents pertaining to the 2005 Council have been carefully scrutinised by the auditor and the current Council in order to provide a clearer picture of the operating environment of those responsible for the events leading up to the appointment of the Receiver. In doing so, discrepancies were noted relating

to a number of transactions. These appear as an annex following the Financial Statements contained herein. These include expenses with missing supportive documentation and/or receipts for numerous transactions; absence of appropriate authorisation (in some cases no authorisation) for payment of monies and inappropriate spending of members' funds including expenses exceeding those deemed as suitable staff/Councillor expenses.

This brief report paints a clear picture with regards to the mismanagement of SUPRA's accounts prior to February 2006 and highlights the importance of having Office Bearers and staff who act in the best interest of members and, most importantly, without any desire for personal gain. Over the coming months, SUPRA will face a number of new challenges stemming from the introduction of VSU while continuing to rebuild from the tribulations encountered in 2005.

"all financial documents pertaining to the 2005 Council have been carefully scrutinised by the auditor and the current Council in order to provide a clearer picture of the operating environment"

At the beginning of 2006, SUPRA was in a weak financial position with cash and cash equivalents at the end of 2005 totalling \$75,903, down eighty percent on the previous year. It should also be noted that all deposits on term at the end of 2004 (\$416,342) were used during the course of 2005 (Refer to Statement of Cash Flows). Future Councils will have to tread cautiously managing current and future funds to ensure financial members are provided with the same level of advice, advocacy, representation and events provided at present. I would like to thank fellow SUPRA Councillors for their support and encouragement, John Fell, SUPRA

Financial Manager and all the staff who at some stage along the journey have provided me with words of wisdom. Finally, a big thankyou to all members for their trust and support. Good luck with your studies and endeavours over the coming twelve months!

Anthony Kachenko, Treasurer

May 2006

treasurer@supra.usyd.edu.au



Secretary's Report

Rosemary Whitecross (Feb - May '06)



I was elected as Secretary of SUPRA in February this year, as part of the newly-appointed Council. Life has been busy since then. After a three month period in which SUPRA had had no Council or Office Bearers, there was a great deal to do.

We started by reorganising the office, both in the physical layout and in some of the administrative systems, procedures and practices. Contracts had to be renegotiated, e.g. IT services and equipment. Telephones needed some sorting out, locks had to be changed, security passwords allocated and so on. When many of the systems involve a bureaucracy as large as the University's, this can take some time.

We started our term in office with the run-up to O-Week. O-Week itself - and the following couple of weeks when faculty inductions were taking place - were very busy. We stuffed SUPRA showbags, packed them into my little car and drove furiously all over the main campus and beyond to outlying campuses. I spoke about SUPRA at a couple of the inductions.

I have deputised from time to time for the President and Vice President and have been involved in selection and interview panels for SUPRA staff.

I have also convened the Administration and Finance Committee which is responsible for the day to day running of the Association. This, together with Council and other meetings involves a lot of preparation of agendas, distribution of papers and minute-taking! To save trees and costs we have been printing Council papers with a two-to-a-page layout and photocopying them double-sided.

As part of the current SUPRA Council's commitment to open and accountable management, we now have all Council and committee minutes up on SUPRA's website. They are also available in hard copy in the Reception area.

Rosemary Whitecross, Secretary

May 2006

secretary@supra.usyd.edu.au

Policy Advisory Committee Report

Jodie Coleman (April – May '06)

Jack Clegg was the Policy Advisory Committee (PAC) Convenor until mid-April when he was forced to resign from the SUPRA Council in order to participate in the Senate VSU Working Party as the Postgraduate Fellow of the Senate.

When the current Council took office, we found ourselves without any policies or regulations for effectively running the organisation so we went about writing some. We put together policies on:

- Finances and delegations spending authority including cheque signatories
- Duty Statements for Office Bearers
- Stipends Policy
- Timesheets Policy
- A Grievance Policy (which is still in development)

We also:

- Wrote the electoral regulations
- Drafted constitutional changes
- Talked about the health care card issue....
- Had lots of fun
- Added to our membership, via birth (congratulations to Kirsten on the birth of Kimi!)

I took over as PAC Officer on 27 April after Jack's resignation. Over the last month PAC has been working on the following issues:

Elections

We helped set up policies and procedures for SUPRA's first online election. This included fine-tuning the process of the election, finalising a contract with the online provider and liaising with the Returning Officer. PAC also helped to write guidelines for the election of Equity Officers.

Constitutional Amendments

PAC wrote amendments to the SUPRA Constitution to be presented for consideration by the AGM to make SUPRA's procedures more democratic, transparent and accountable.

Senate/SUPRA Liaison Committee

PAC helped to formulate questions to ask of the Senate/SUPRA Liaison Committee which met for the first time in over a year on 9 May 2006.

Now that we have dealt with most of the pressing internal SUPRA policy concerns, we look forward to turning our attention to Sydney University and State and Federal Government higher education policy.

Jodie Coleman

Policy Advisory Committee

Convenor

May 2006

policy@supra.usyd.edu.au

"Now that we have dealt with most of the pressing internal SUPRA policy concerns, we look forward to turning our attention to Sydney University and State and Federal Government higher education policy"

Publications, Activities & Services Committee

Timotheos Roussos (Feb – May '06)

It has been two years since a report for PASC (the Publications, Activities & Services Committee) was last issued. At that time, PASC served as the reporting committee for the Indigenous, International, Women's, and Queer Officers. Such involvement has not been possible in the short time the current Council has been in office.

However, since the court-mandated election at the beginning of this year, PASC has been very active in re-establishing and updating publications as well as helping to organise several activities for SUPRA members.

Since February we have had two issues of *eXpress*, your SUPRA magazine. We coordinated the SUPRA information booth during O-Week (including the distribution of those handy cloth shopping bags with mugs, highlighters and mousepads), had an O-Week welcome barbeque for all postgraduate SUPRA members, organised SUPRA presence at the anti-VSU student rally, and supported the many initiatives of other committees (such as the seminar series).

For financial reasons we have been unable to actively promote the group funding scheme available in previous years. However, we have been dealing with a backlog of requests left over from the previous council, and in most cases have been able to approve most, if not all, of the amounts requested.

The current Council has many ideas on how to improve services and activities for SUPRA membership, however, we need your help.

Although a new council will be taking office in July, there is still scope for active involvement on many levels. Feel free to drop by the office or send us an email with your ideas. SUPRA is your organisation; help PASC make it work for you.

Finally, I would like to thank all SUPRA Council, especially the members of the Publications team, for their hard work and dedication over the last few months.

Timotheos Roussos
PASC Convenor

May 2006

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Director of Student Publications Report

Estelle Noonan (Feb – May '06)

It has been a hectic, though rewarding, three months for the Publications Team. The majority of my time as Director of Publications has been spent engineering the revival of SUPRA's flagship publication, *eXpress* magazine. The first issue, released in March to coincide with O-Week, was a sixteen page introductory edition, welcoming students to an open and accountable SUPRA Council, and providing profiles and contact details of Councillors. It also introduced students to the issue of SUPRA's survival in a post-VSU environment, featuring valuable journalistic reportage on the topic.

The second issue of *eXpress*, released in May, greatly expanded upon the first with respect to content, size and design. The twenty-four page issue featured content detailing key SUPRA interests, ranging from the inaccessibility of childcare for postgraduate parents, to SUPRA's struggle for travel concessions for International students. Aside from boasting a more innovative and eye-catching design, it featured a variety of content designed to address specific postgraduate concerns, ranging from an Agony Aunt column (assisted by the University Counselling Service) to a Frequently Asked Questions page (authored by SUPRA's caseworkers) providing specific advice on candidature-related issues.

The hard copy distribution of issues one and two of *eXpress* has consisted of 3000, then 2000 copies,

respectively. An inventory of recipients has been formulated including all Faculties and satellite campuses of the University which offer postgraduate programs, and appropriate links established in order to ensure optimum access to and circulation of current and future issues. The publication has also been made available as an online resource accessible from the SUPRA website.

In addition to *eXpress*, work has also commenced on the updating and re-release of SUPRA's Postgraduate Survival Manual (last published in 2004). Thus far all content has been reviewed, and the Publications Team is in the final stages of the editorial process. Redesign is scheduled for the month of June, and release is anticipated for the beginning of July.

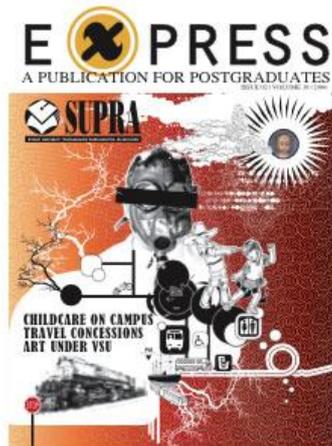
Finally, SUPRA has been issuing its *eGrad* bulletin, detailing current and upcoming activities, campaigns and/or events to over 3000 postgrads, on a regular basis.

I must extend my warmest thanks to all those writers who have contributed to *eXpress* thus far, and to all members of the Publications Team for a job most well done. Thank you, and lets hope, in the name of accountability as well as a vibrant postgraduate life, that SUPRA's publications continue to flourish.

Estelle Noonan, Director of Student Publications

May 2006

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Women's Officer Report

Kate Barnsley (Feb – May '06)



The beginning of 2006 has certainly been an eventful one for me. After being elected Women's Officer in the January Council elections, I jumped in with both feet to get things up and running.

My year began with an unofficial but fruitful meeting with the Women's Rights Officer at the Victoria University of Wellington Students Association (VUWSA). She and I had a discussion about ways to engender some trans-Tasman collaboration on women's issues. We also talked about some great ideas for future campaigns.

One that is close to my heart and that I would love to see operating in Sydney is the Thursdays in Black campaign. By wearing black on Thursdays we demand a world without violence against women. The statistics surrounding rape and domestic abuse are still horrifying and in the current climate of war and oppression we should not be complacent about the normalization of violence or silencing of the abused. This is a campaign I am passionate about and I am excited about the prospect of launching it on campus in the coming year.

Possibly the biggest challenge I have faced during my brief term as women's officer has been reviving the Women's Network. It has been slow going, although I am pleased to say my contact list numbers about 70 women. I am currently in the process of setting up a mailing list for women. This will be a members' list that women can subscribe to and, once subscribed, you will be able to send emails to the whole list.

This will be a great way to create a network that can keep in touch and share information quickly and easily.

There is also an online Women's Forum in the SUPRA Chatroom and of course there is a women's page on the website which has information about the network and upcoming events. It will also have links to some other useful resources, shortly.

Student organizations are not the only groups that offer support to women on campus. Sydney University Network for Women (SUN) is a network for general and academic staff here at Sydney Uni, however, they are also interested in supporting postgraduate students - in particularly research students and those women who also work at the University.

Earlier this year I contacted this group and have managed to secure an ongoing position on the SUN Committee as the postgraduate representative. I hope that this position will continue to be filled by the incumbent SUPRA Women's Officer. I have raised the idea of having a workshop run by SUPRA and SUN to help demystify the application and promotion process for Academic jobs. Hopefully this event will happen in the second semester. I am also in the process of working with the Committee to establish a peer-mentoring network for postgraduate women and to help provide access for students to participate in their more general mentoring programme. This is a valuable resource for women studying at the University, especially those who would like to continue in Academia after they graduate. For details, or to register, visit: www.usyd.edu.au/sun.

"The issue of childcare on campus is of particular concern to me since we are coming into the brave new world of VSU..."

Childcare is big news at the moment. The issue of childcare on campus is of particular concern to me since we are coming into the brave new world of VSU and I am committed to making sure the Union and the University continue to provide and, in some cases, subsidise childcare on campus.

The campaign is being co-ordinated in conjunction with the Women's Officers from the SRC. We have been thinking about ways to improve access and availability of childcare places on Campus. Aside from attempting to gain more places and lower the cost, we are interested in creating a Parent's Room on campus and investigating the possibility for childcare bursaries or scholarships.

Childcare, or lack thereof, is an issue that affects almost all students who are parents, no matter what faculty or department they are in, or if they are doing research or coursework degrees. I have devoted much of the last three months to investigating this issue and my research has resulted in an article in the latest eXpress. Having spoken with a number of students about issues surrounding childcare as well as some of the other challenges inherent in being a student who is also a parent, what I am discovering is that this is a massive issue and requires some serious attention.

On Wednesday 1 May, the Women's Network held a Forum about Women in Academia. Deputy Chancellor, Emeritus Professor Ann Sefton addressed to the group. She spoke to us about her experiences as a student and an academic and she gave us some great insight into dealing with some of the issues we are facing.

One point that Professor Sefton made was the potential for isolation while doing postgraduate study. As a group we talked about ways to combat this isolation. One is to get in touch with SUPRA or sign up to the Women's Network. The other idea is to set up a directory or contact page for postgraduate groups. This is a great idea and one that SUPRA will be moving forward with.

I would like to express my gratitude to Professor Sefton for making the night such a success and I am really looking forward to the next one.

A Women's Network meeting preceded the forum. The meeting was called primarily to elect a Women's Officer for the 2006/2007 term of Council. It is with great pleasure that I can report to you all that the Network voted to confirm my position as Women's Officer for SUPRA and I will be continuing in the role during the term of the new Council. I am honoured that so much confidence was shown in the work I have done so far and I am excited to be undertaking the role over the next year. Thanks must also be given to the current SUPRA Council for all their support throughout my first term as Women's Officer; I really appreciate it.

I am always eager to hear from you, if you want to suggest an event, some content for the women's page, tell me about an issue that concerns you or just to say hi, please don't hesitate to contact me. I would also love for all of you to sign up to the women's list and stay in touch with the goings on of the Women's Network.

Kate Barnsley, Women's Officer
May 2006
women@supra.usyd.edu.au

Indigenous Officers' Report

Brian Doyle and Leona Oliver (March – May '06)

The vacant SUPRA Indigenous Officer position on Council was filled by both Brian Doyle and Leona Oliver, in a shared role, with an election held at a meeting of Indigenous postgrads in early-March.

An issue that was brought to the table by Indigenous postgrad students was the fact that the Graduate Diploma in Indigenous Health Promotion was not recognised by NSW Area Health Services. This matter has since been resolved, and it has been agreed that these people will be back-paid, in one instance for a period of 3 years.

At an Indigenous Postgrads Network meeting recently, Brian Doyle and



Leona Oliver were voted in to continue in the role of Indigenous Officers. At the present time, there are no other matters.

Leona Oliver and Brian Doyle
SUPRA Indigenous Officers
May 2006

International Officer's Report

Mark Kelly (Feb – April '06)

It's been a very hectic month to be International Officer, with the first major movement on a travel concessions complaint which was filed close to four years ago when I was first on SUPRA Council. Exciting though this has been, ultimately it's been a lesson in how slowly the legal machinery moves, and in fact it seems to have ground to a halt again.

My term as International Officer was only every going to be about three months' long; it was never going to be enough to address the enormity of the issues that face us. International students are in a difficult position because so many of us have to work to support ourselves (and the University's profiteering from our educational aspirations), leaving little

time for us to act to defend ourselves. We have no vote in Australia, though we are major contributors to the economy, and as such government clearly feels that it can ignore our demands. There does seem to be an unprecedented militancy in Melbourne of late. In an increasingly competitive education market, we may be able to win significant concessions, not just for travel.

Mark Kelly
International Officer
May 2006
international@supra.usyd.edu.au

Queer Officer's Report

Lian Jenvey (Feb – May '06)

It's been a hectic three months for SUPRA and I have been very busy as the Queer Officer.

It's been wonderful to see postgrads represented properly through the newly revitalised SUPRA. More importantly the various activities organised by SUPRA over the last three months have shown the potential to draw more and more students into campaigning for their rights and active participation in their union.

Of course, the backdrop to all this is the Howard government's relentless attacks on students and workers. SUPRA has been involved in the ongoing campaign against the Liberal's VSU legislation as well as taking up the anti-war campaign and encouraging postgrads to attend the upcoming ACTU mobilisation against "WorkChoices".

So where does the activities of the Queer Officer and action on queer issues fit into all of this?

As the Queer Officer, I have done the following things to highlight issues affecting queer postgrads and involve campaigning around these issues. I have also raised other issues such as the anti-war campaign and the campaign against VSU and encouraged queer postgrads to get involved.

I convened the Queer Postgrads' Network. The Network has met three times and involved a small number of postgrads. The Network decided early on that it was going to focus on the issue of same-sex marriage.

We held a discussion in the Network about the Liberal's most recent attack



on queers in the form of the attempt to overturn ACT same-sex legislation.

As a result of these discussions, the Network organised a forum on gay marriage and homophobia inspired by the film *Brokeback Mountain*. The speakers at the forum were Ken Davis, a long time queer activist and David Scamell the co-convenor of the Gay and Lesbian Rights lobby.

The forum was held on the 24 May and was a great success. Over 65 students attended and many participated in a round-table discussion. The forum helped promote SUPRA and the Queer department as conscientiously taking up issues in Australian society and showing solidarity with the oppressed and those targeted by the Howard government.

During my time as Queer Officer, SUPRA has also sponsored a couple of social evenings, which have also drawn in a small contingent of postgrads.

Thanks to all the SUPRA Councillors for making the last three months an interesting and enjoyable experience.

Lian Jenvey
Queer Students' Officer
May 2006
queer@supra.usyd.edu.au

SUPRA General Councillors

SUPRA is an organisation run by postgrads for postgrads. Its governing body is the SUPRA Council and there are 25 elected representatives on this Council. The Council's role is to: direct the organisation, its office bearers and staff; formulate policy on matters of concern to postgraduates; and ensure that the Association is acting in accordance with the its objectives.

The following individuals were SUPRA Councillors during the period of February to June 2006. Also provided are details of their enrolment, period of time as a Councillor and General Council meeting attendance.

Roozbeh Araghi

Faculty of Arts, PhD History
Period on Council: Feb – June 2006
Council meetings attended: 7 of 8

Richard Bailey

Faculty of Law, Master of Criminology
Period on Council: Feb – June 2006
Council meetings attended: 7 of 8

Kate Barnsley

Faculty of Arts, PhD English
Period on Council: Feb – June 2006
Council meetings attended: 6 of 8

Mike Beggs

Faculty of Economics and Business,
PhD Political Economy
Period on Council: March - June 2006
Council meetings attended: 5 of 5

Jaclyn Booton

Faculty of Arts, PhD Performance
Studies
Period on Council: Feb 2006 only

David Carmichael

Faculty of Science, PhD IT
Period on Council: Feb 2006 only

Jack Clegg

Faculty of Science, PhD Chemistry
Period on Council: Feb – April 2006
Council meetings attended: 5 of 5

Jodie Coleman

Faculty of Education & Social Work,
Masters of Teaching
Period on Council: March – June 2006
Council meetings attended: 6 of 6

Roni Demirbag

Faculty of Economics & Business, PhD
Period on Council: Feb 2006 only

Frances di Lauro

Faculty of Arts, PhD Religion
Period on Council: Jan – June 2006
Council meetings attended: 1 of 8

Alison Dorian

Faculty of Arts, MA Media
Period on Council: Feb – June 2006
Council meetings attended: 4 of 8

Brian Doyle

Faculty of Medicine, Grad Dip in
Indigenous Health Management
Period on Council: March – June 2006
Council meetings attended: 2 of 5

Caroline Hamilton

Faculty of Arts, PhD English
Period on Council: Feb 2006 only

Kirsten Harley

Faculty of Arts, PhD Sociology and
Social Policy
Period on Council: Feb – June 2006
Council meetings attended: 3 of 8
(maternity leave)

Lian Jenvey

Faculty of Arts, MA History
Period on Council: Feb – June 2006
Council meetings attended: 5 of 8

Adrienne Jerram

Faculty of Arts, MA Creative Writing
(Coursework)
Period on Council: Feb – June 2006
Council meetings attended: 4 of 8

Anthony Kachenko

Faculty of Agriculture, Food and
Natural Resources, PhD
Period on Council: Feb – June 2006
Council meetings attended: 6 of 8

Mark Kelly

Faculty of Arts, PhD Philosophy
Period on Council: Feb – May 2006
Council meetings attended: 3 of 7

Sophia Leon de la Barra

Faculty of Medicine, MPhil Aboriginal
Health
Period on Council: Feb – June 2006
Council meetings attended: 3 of 8

Jenny Leong

Faculty of Arts, PhD Performance
Studies
Period on Council: Feb – June 2006
Council meetings attended: 8 of 8

Xue Yang (Leeyon) Li

Faculty of Arts, Master of Media
Practise
Period on Council: Feb – June 2006
Council meetings attended: 3 of 8

Zhen Yi (Allen) Li

Faculty of Economics & Business
Period on Council: Feb – June 2006
Council meetings attended: 1 of 8

Estelle Noonan

Faculty of Arts, PhD English
Period on Council: Feb – June 2006
Council meetings attended: 3 of 8

Will Noonan

Faculty of Arts, PhD English
Period on Council: Feb – June 2006
Council meetings attended: 6 of 8

Leona Oliver

Faculty of Medicine, Grad Dip in
Indigenous Health Management
Period on Council: March – June 2006
Council meetings attended: 1 of 5

Julian Pinder

Faculty of Arts, PhD English
Period on Council: Feb – June 2006
Council meetings attended: 5 of 8

Timotheos Roussos

Faculty of Arts, PhD English
Period on Council: Feb – May 2006
Council meetings attended: 5 of 7

Rosemary Whitecross

Faculty of Arts, PhD Archaeology
Period on Council: Feb – June 2006
Council meetings attended: 8 of 8

Jun (Joan) Zhao

Faculty of Economics and Business,
Masters of Commerce
Period on Council: Mar – June 2006
Council meetings attended: 2 of 6

