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President’s report  Jenny Leong

The State of SUPRA

The last year has been one of significant change not just for SUPRA, but for all student organisations at the University of Sydney and across the country due to the introduction of voluntary student unionism.

Hopefully this year will see an equally significant, and much more positive, change to not just the campus we study on but the country we study in, with the downfall of student-unfriendly Howard Government.

Since I began as President of SUPRA in February 2006, I have had the wonderful experience of representing the interests and needs of postgraduate students. I have been inspired by working collaboratively with dedicated student representatives at SUPRA, the SRC and other student organisations across the campus and the country and have had the pleasure of being part of a collective, independent, progressive and student-controlled organisation.

It is most pleasing to be able to report that under the pressure of voluntary student unionism and continued federal reductions in education spending that SUPRA is “going strong”; continuing to deliver improvements for the experience of postgraduate students at the University of Sydney.

Some achievements for Postgrads and SUPRA in 2006/7:

• VSU Funding from the University
• Travel Concessions campaign and was pivotal in the formation of the Cross-Campus Concessions Coalition
• Inaugural free, cross-disciplinary postgraduate SUPRA CONNECT Conference
• Transition to VSU with same services and free access for all pre-VSU services and activities
• Development of the SUPRA Policy on Postgraduate Entitlements.
• Tertiary Education and Postgraduate Income support back on the National agenda after the Federal Budget
• Attendance and very active participation at all Academic Board and Committee meetings, Senate/ SUPRA Liaison Committee meetings, Pre-Senate Meetings with the Vice-Chancellor, Working Party meetings relevant to postgrads, Consultative, Advisory and Central committees relevant to postgrads
• Increase in SAAOs and more direct input between student cases and uni policy
• Media coverage on travel concessions (Chinese Pay TV) and postgraduate income support (SMH and ABC Radio’s PM)

Some ongoing campaigns/issues:

Locally (On Campus):

• Postgraduate Entitlements for Coursework and Research Students
• Ongoing Funding for Student Organisations at Sydney Uni
• English Language Support

Nationally:

• Repealing VSU
• Postgraduate coursework income support, increase to APA,
• affordable housing and childcare,
• equal rights for and fair treatment of international students

Student organisations are a key to ensuring our rights, our interests and our needs as students are protected. They are also a way of ensuring the views of students have an influence in the wider community.

The potential influence of student organisations can only be realised when students get involved – the last year at SUPRA has shown what can happen when committed people work together for the collective good.

I encourage you to get involved with SUPRA and to continue to support the organisation that works to support you and all of the other postgrads at Sydney Uni.

Thank you to everyone who has contributed to the strengthening of SUPRA as a representative association of postgraduate students. The current state of SUPRA is a credit to you all.

All the best for the future, study hard and don’t forget to enrol to vote (and then put Howard last!)

Jenny Leong
SUPRA President (Feb 06-June07)
president@supra.usyd.edu.au
Vice President’s report
Jack Clegg and Kate Barnsley

Over the last year the position of Vice-President has been filled by Roozi Araghi, Jodie Coleman and is currently shared by Kate Barnsley and Jack Clegg (as Co-Vice Presidents). The responsibilities of the President of SUPRA are so broad and time consuming that their successful fulfillment 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 Bearer and being an active member of each of Council’s committees. As the President was on leave for several months this year a significant amount of time has been spent by the various Vice-Presidents filling in this role in an acting capacity.

The Vice-President’s role generally includes any tasks as delegated by the President or Council from time to time. Specific examples of the type of work undertaken include:

- Liaising with the Auditors
- Helping write press releases, reports, submissions and letters
- Organising the appointment of the Returning Officer for SUPRA’s annual elections
- Attending University Committee meetings (either with or in place of the President) and representing SUPRA on various working parties.
- Staff liaison (including weekly meetings) and selection panels
- Meeting with the Chancellor, Vice-Chancellor and representatives of the Senate and senior administration to discuss VSU and postgraduate concerns
- Drafting internal SUPRA policy and constitutional changes
- Drafting content for SUPRA publications and helping oversee content changes to the website.
- Attending and speaking at O-Week inductions in addition to or in place of the President

The Vice President plays an integral role in ensuring the smooth running of SUPRA and maximum representation of Postgraduate Students at the University of Sydney.

Kate Barnsley and Jack Clegg
Co Vice-Presidents
May 2007
vicepresident@supra.usyd.edu.au
Treasurer’s report
Anthony Kachenko

It gives me great pleasure to present the audited 2006 financial records of SUPRA and in doing so wish to acknowledge the remarkable enthusiasm and expertise of all Councillors who have held office since February 2006. Nearly a year has passed since the Federal Government introduced Voluntary Student Unionism (VSU) legislation and I am pleased to say that efficient, accountable and fiscally sound management of the SUPRA finances has ensured that SUPRA continues to function as a financially viable Postgraduate Association. SUPRA’s financial management has undergone a significant restructure in order to ensure SUPRA’s continuing existence; however this task is ongoing and will undoubtedly continue whilst negotiations post 2007 continue. In conjunction with the independently audited 2006 financial statements contained herein, I will endeavour to highlight the significant fiscal issues that resulted in an overall positive financial year for SUPRA.

Total 2006 revenue was primarily made up of subscriptions and totalled $688,092, which was down some twenty two percent from the previous year. This can be attributed to a significant reduction in semester 2 subscriptions following the introduction of VSU.

The 2006 calendar year posted an operating deficit of $117,442, some $14,000 lower than in 2004. This deficit resulted from $230,120 of the 2006 revenue being invested into the National Entitlement Security Trust (NEST). Monies are held in trust on behalf of employees to cover annual leave, long service leave and redundancy provisions. I should note that the pre 2006 Council did not adequately resolve provision for staff entitlements despite numerous requests from SUPRA staff.

Total expenditure for 2006 totalled $806,191, down some twenty percent from the previous year. In regards to the Administration and Finance Committee, there was a significant drop in legal expenses from $178,859 in 2005 to a mere $2,796 in 2006. Moreover, there was a significant reduction in the receivers expenses from $118,182 in 2005 to $9,290 in 2006 (see 2005-2006 SUPRA Annual Report for historical account).

Stipends and wages have largely remained the same with the noticeable exception of the President’s stipend, down $23,867 from 2005. There was a $53,221 reduction on administration salaries largely due to a reduction in the cost of accounting and bookkeeping services. Executive Officer, Outreach Assistant and Publications Coordinator positions were made redundant prior to February 2006 and these positions have not been filled.

The 2006 year saw two editions of eXpress and the redesign, reediting and release of the 2006 Survival Manual following a year of inactivity. Moreover, there were numerous campaigns, talks and seminars in addition to the inaugural SUPRA Connect Conference scheduled during September 2006. With all these activities, functions and campaigns, there was a twenty eight percent reduction in costs as compared with the previous year. Importantly, the quality of events was by no means substandard! In fact, overwhelmingly positive feedback was received from postgrads attending the various events.

It has been a great pleasure and honour to serve the SUPRA community as Treasurer during the past 17 months. SUPRA has been through some tough times, however has always managed to survive and grow stronger. As in life, there are always hurdles to conquer and I wish the future council all the success in doing so. I would like to thank fellow SUPRA Councillors for their support, encouragement and at times ‘colourful’ debate and John Fell, SUPRA Financial Manager who taught me the ins and outs of accounting and financial management. Finally, a big thank you to all postgraduate members and I sincerely wish you all the very best with your studies and endeavours in the years ahead! Cheers!

Anthony Kachenko, Treasurer
May 2007
treasurer@supra.usyd.edu.au
After having been Secretary in the previous Council from February to June 2006, I was again elected as Secretary for the current Council. I also convened the Management Committee (known as the Administration and Finance Committee until December 2006) this year. The Management Committee looks after SUPRA’s staffing, administration, finances, infrastructure and internal policy and regulations. Consequently I have taken lots of minutes! Once minutes are approved at a Council Meeting, they are put on the SUPRA website and are also available in hard copy in the Reception area.

Last year, while the President was heavily involved in negotiations relating to SUPRA’s survival post-Voluntary Student Unionism, the then Vice President and I agreed to split the week between us and be in the office as much as possible to deal with the day to day running of the organisation.

I have represented SUPRA and postgrads on the University’s Disability Consultative Committee and the Central Occupational Health & Safety Committee. I have also deputised for the President at other meetings such as the Research Training Committee.

I helped organise and attended some of our outreach visits to campuses other than the Camperdown/Darlington campus. I also spoke about SUPRA at several second semester 2006 faculty and departmental inductions and at ten 2007 inductions spread over five campuses.

The SUPRA Constitution contains provisions for declaring the position of a Councillor vacant if they have not attended Council or committee meetings without previously being granted leave of absence or submitting appropriate apologies. As part of my duties, I have monitored Councillors’ attendance at meetings, and advised the Council if a Councillor has been in breach of these provisions. In some cases, we have then contacted the people concerned, who have tendered their resignation. This has freed up positions on Council, which can be filled by people who are keen to fulfil the role of a SUPRA Councillor and participate in SUPRA activities.

Rosemary Whitecross, Secretary
May 2007
secretary@supra.usyd.edu.au
Publications Officer’s report  Richard Bailey

Over the past Council term the position of Publications Officer has changed a bit. This is mostly as a result of the different skills and interests I brought to the position. I have taken on more of the day-to-day publications such as eGrad and material for SUPRA events as well as coordinating the publication of eXpress and the Survival Manual.

This approach has brought advantages and disadvantages. On the positive side it has kept Council more connected to publications like eGrad and enabled us to respond to important issues through eXpress Alert. It has freed up the admin staff to concentrate on other things like the website and subscriber database.

The downside has been that it significantly increased the workload and even though I could commit more time, the absence of a functioning Publications Committee slowed the production of bigger jobs down.

If there is a new Publications Officer next term we’ll have to re-examine these issues again. But in my opinion there are two somewhat separate aspects of the role, the day-to-day publications and the larger projects. We should be flexible and open to more than one person working on them depending on the resources we have available.

We changed the name of the position from Director of Student Publications to Publications Officer. We felt this reflected the way I was approaching the position and the way Council viewed it. We also established an Editorial Committee made up of the President, Vice President and Publications Officer. The Editorial Committee has overseen the content of publications.

As mentioned, the Publications Committee was sadly inactive all year. Those Councillors that expressed interest in it basically didn’t turn up to meetings or play much of a role at all. This proved a big problem, especially when we took on larger projects that really needed more than one person working on them.

Hopefully you’re all aware of the publications we have done over the past twelve months, having read, enjoyed and distributed them! But in case you need a reminder...

We have produced a Connect conference edition of eXpress. We would have liked to have produced another non-conference edition, but were too busy with other publications.

We introduced a new publication eXpress Alert. It is an occasional four-page, photocopied, bulletin-style publication. We produced three editions, mostly around the height of the funding agreement campaign. It gave us an opportunity to keep members informed of the negotiations without the huge amount of time to produce the glossy version.

We reviewed and have almost reissued Survival Manual. It has just come back from the designer and needs to be collated and proofed for publication. It should be available in a few weeks.

I did all of the material for the Connect conference. Most of my time in the 6 weeks leading up to the conference was taken up with this and other conference related activities.

I have made posters and flyers for heaps of different events over the year, from Queer Network Forums to Migration Seminars. I have also put together the regular eGrad bulletin.

We bought a digital camera (pictured above) and I have used to to take most of the pictures we have used in this and other publications throughout year.

I designed four new SUPRA t-shirts which initially hoped to use as a fundraiser. However printing costs ended being higher than we hoped but the shirts should still help raise our profile.

We produced bookmarks, stickers and glossy brochure to promote the new Subscriber and Supporter categories.

Lastly, Thanks to Councillors that helped out with editing and feedback when I needed it.

Richard Bailey
publications@supra.usyd.edu.au
Women’s Officer’s report
Kate Barnsley

It has certainly been an eventful term for us here at SUPRA and I am pleased to say that much has been done both in the Women’s portfolio area and in the organisation as a whole.

The women’s e-list has been set up, as have forums on the SUPRA page for both women and for parents. At this stage the use appears to be minimal but I have found it useful to have a place to post information and, judging by the number of people reading the postings on the forum pages, we are doing well.

What follows are some of the highlights of my year as SUPRA Women’s Officer.

EVENTS HELD:
• As I noted in last year’s Annual Report, I have secured a Postgraduate position on the committee of the Sydney University Network for Women (SUN). This has proved to be a fruitful collaboration and we have held some successful combined events. The most notable was a seminar for early career academics and late higher degree by research students entitled Behind the Ivory Tower: Demystifying Academia. The intention of the seminar was to give women researchers and academics insight into career paths within Academia and also some tools to use when applying for jobs and promotion at Universities.
• In August as part of the University’s NAIDOC week and the University of Sydney Union’s Women in Education Week, SUPRA, SUN and USU invited Linda Burney to speak to us about Indigenous women in education. The event was a great success. Ms Burney is a fantastic and inspirational speaker. It was great to hear not only about the wonderful things happening in indigenous communities around the state and the country but also her passionate commitment to correcting the gross injustices still suffered by Indigenous people in Australia. I would like to thank SUPRA’s co-Indigenous Officer Leona Oliver for her help in organising this event.
• Thursdays in Black was a success over the last year. SUPRA raised around $200 for Rape Crisis NSW through donations for our Thursday’s in Black t-shirts. The campaign was also a great way of forging closer links with the SRC Women’s department too. I look forward to the two departments continuing to work closely together.
• Childcare is an ongoing, thorny issue on campus. 2006 saw the closure of one of the childcare centres servicing the University and as yet there are no plans to replace it. Through Senate/SURPA liaison committee we requested a survey be conducted on childcare and student services undertook that for us. The results of the survey as well as a report on the results are available on the supra website. In response to the difficulty of achieving significant results on this issue we have been developing a childcare guide.
• In conjunction with the Women’s Collective we also had a rally in order to protest an anti choice action on campus and we attended another event organised by the same group this year. It always nice to engage in some feminist activism and make our voices heard in protecting our rights as women.

Council of Australian Postgrad Associations (CAPA)
• Along with Roozi Araghi, the then SUPRA Vice President, I attended the CAPA Equity Forum and Annual Council Meeting (ACM) in Melbourne in November. At that meeting I was elected as the CAPA National Women’s Officer and subsequently have been elected as Chair of the CAPA Equity Committee and the Equity Nominee to the CAPA Executive. This position is ongoing until the end of 2007 and I am looking forward to continuing my work as an advocate and activist for women and women students in the national arena.

ONGOING PROJECTS:
• The Network of Women Students Australia (NOWSA) annual conference is being held at Sydney University this year and I am in the process of organising some sessions for that event. I hope to organise a plenary session on childcare and workshop on working in the university

To finish I would like to note that I have also been heavily involved in other aspects of SUPRA, including preparing information and support for funding agreement negotiations, acting in the role of temporary Vice President in February and assuming that role permanently in conjunction with Jack Clegg in March.

I would like to thank all the staff of SUPRA, the SUPRA Council and all the subscribers who have helped make the last year an extremely rewarding one; it has been an awesome experience. I would also like to congratulate Estelle Noonan on her election as SUPRA’s Women’s Officer for 2007-2008 and I wish her all the best for her upcoming term.

Thanks again everyone
Kate Barnsley, SUPRA Women’s Officer.
After being elected as SUPRA International Officer, I began to carry out my meaningful and eventful duties.

My year began with a series of activities to continue the “Travel Concession Campaign NSW”. It was my major duty and also was close to my heart. I really wanted to see its success. The NSW government has treated international and local students differently on the travel concession issue for many years. International students need justice and an equal treatment on their expensive transport fees.

Many travel concession activities were organised by SUPRA and with the SRC. SUPRA worked with other universities to flight for the rights of all the international students in NSW.

Besides the travel concession campaign, many entertaining and helpful activities and events were organised. Such as BBQs, Pizza nights, international conference, equity cup cake events, regular migration seminars and international network meetings … etc.

Varied international events were held regularly to match the needs and requirements of SUPRA’s international members. Recently, I also suggested raising a big campaign against racism and discrimination on campus and which was supported by SRC.

In order to promote the International Students Network, I also put lots of effort into organising and communicating with the international members from SUPRA’s international online forum. A guide booklet for international students living in Sydney was also published and distributed in O-week.

This year has been very important and busy for me as the SUPRA International Officer, and I appreciated the great help from all the SUPRA councillors very much.
Queer Officer’s report

Lian Jenvey

My term began with a new attack on queer rights in the form of the Howard government overturning the ACT civil unions legislation. Campaigning for equal marriage rights for queers was a great way to start the year of standing up for queer rights and representing and involving queer postgrads at Sydney uni.

The election of the new SUPRA council also coincided with the implementation of the Liberal’s VSU legislation. In that vein, everything the 2006-7 council has done, including the Queer officer has been part of the campaign to oppose and limit the effects of VSU.

Over the last year I have done the following to reach out to and involve queer postgrads in their student organisation and campaign against homophobia.

> produced and distributed hundreds of posters for August 13 national day of action for same sex marriage rights.
> held a film screening of “Stonewall”, a film about the beginnings of the gay and lesbian rights movement. It was attended by over 60 people.
> conducted a survey about queer international students to find out about their experience at university.
> organised an anti homophobia sticker campaign in response to homophobic graffiti in the women’s toilets in Fisher library
> organised queer resources for the SUPRA resource room including information on safe sex and treatment for sexually transmitted diseases.
> helped organise a joint equity “tea party” for postgrads in o’week
> organised a forum on the origins of homophobia and resistance today with speakers from the AIDS Council of NSW and APHEDA

Without collective organisations like SUPRA none of this would be possible. The small campaigns against homophobia that SUPRA has been able to facilitate over the last year have helped raise awareness about queer issues and hopefully inspire a bit of confidence amongst queer postgrads.

However, it’s not just limited to queers. SUPRA stands up to all the Liberal government’s attacks, from the defunding of higher education to fund defence and war, to attacks on our rights at work racism towards Muslims and Aboriginal people.

It is this kind of campaigning that the Liberal government tried to destroy with their VSU legislation and it’s the kind of campaigning that SUPRA is determined to see survive.

Lian Jenvey queerr@supra.usyd.edu.au
It’s really a great opportunity to work as the convenor of one of SUPRA’s committee for me to make real contribution to SUPRA as well as postgraduate students and learn a lot myself.

Activities Committee was separated from Publications at the end of last year. The first big thing facing the Activities Committee was the orientation week. We started by having discussions in committee meetings shortly after the semester end in 2006. With the generous support of SUPRA council, we had a great kick-start of the year by successfully implementing our O’week schedule. SUPRA stalls were established at various faculty enrolments as well as on the front lawn during O’week to promote SUPRA and encourage students to Subscribe.

During O-week, SUPRA also organised a welcome week for all postgrads by having a series of activities such as a BBQ and tea party at the SUPRA office and a pub crawl in the Rocks, which attracted quite a few postgraduate students’ attention and involvement.

Before mid-semester break, we also held a Movie Night event for both local students and international students and a migration seminar for international students. At the beginning of the new semester, a special Activities Committee meeting was held where a rough schedule was initiated structuring the whole plan throughout the year.

This doesn’t seem like the report of a convenor I guess, it’s more like a report of the Activities Committee in the sense that we got huge support and help from the Council in organising all those events and I was involved in most of them. Besides, my role as a convenor also involves minute taking and convening. A Big Thank You to the whole Council for supporting the Activities Committee’s operation!!

Nelson Yin 30/04/07
The Policy Committee has the task of analysing and advising SUPRA Council on postgraduate policy issues. It reviews and comments on issues arising across the University, and oversees campaigns and lobbying on higher education, equity, social, cultural and political issues and the needs of postgraduate students at the University of Sydney.

The first thing to report from 2006-2007 would have to be that this Committee had a name-change from Policy Advisory Committee to Policy Committee. The new broader name better suits the fact that through these Constitutional changes the Committee now has responsibility for campaigns relating to a wider range of issues. It also reflects the fact that the Committee not only advises on policy but also comments on and formulates policy.

COUNCIL POLICIES

Now that SUPRA is well and truly back on track as an accountable, representative organisation we have been able to spend less time on writing internal policy for the functioning of the organisation. However, the Policy Committee was involved in writing amendments to the electoral regulations, formulating meeting procedures for SUPRA's monthly Council meetings, and amending the Constitution at an Extraordinary General Meeting on November 16.

UNIVERSITY POLICY ISSUES

With more time to review, investigate and comment on University policies, the Committee was involved in looking at the social sciences review, restructure of faculties, Research Quality Framework, fee-setting procedures and faculty funding formulas, among other issues.

The Policy Committee continued to have responsibility for the issues and questions to be raised through the Senate/SUPRA Liaison Committee.

ENTITLEMENTS POLICY

The Policy Committee’s major project was devising and promoting SUPRA’s Policy on Entitlements for Postgraduate Students. Writing the policy was a lengthy collaborative process. We started with CAPA’s (Council of Australian Postgraduate Associations) Minimum Resources Policy and similar documents from a number of other universities. From these we devised a survey of postgrad students about the kinds of resources they receive. We received a very pleasing 850 responses to the survey and used the information gathered from this process to produce a draft policy. The draft policy was then circulated for comment by postgrad students. This process, and subsequent discussions in Policy Committee meetings then yielded a further round of amendments to the Policy.

A final version of the Entitlements Policy was completed in March this year. Since that time we have been raising awareness of the policy and compiling a petition to present to the Senate shortly. SUPRA is requesting that the Senate adopt an implementation plan by the end of 2007 with university-wide compliance by 2010.

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