Acknowledgment of Country

SUPRA acknowledges the traditional owners of this land, and we pay our respects to them and their elders past, present and future. If you are reading this publication, you are standing on Aboriginal Land.

Annual Report Credits:

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Thank you to all SUPRA councillors, staff and constituents who contributed photographs to this report.

SUPRA is the postgraduate student organisation at the University of Sydney and is run by postgrads, for postgrads. SUPRA represents all postgraduates at Sydney University, and all postgraduates can look to SUPRA for assistance with any issues that may confront them - both academically and personally - during the course of their candidature.
## CONTENTS

### PART 1: REPORTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Report</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>President’s Report</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vice-President</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education Officer</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Treasurer Report</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secretary Report</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Director of Student Publications</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Officer</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women’s Officer</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>International Student Officer</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disability Officer</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Queer Officer</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural and Regional Officer</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>List of Current SUPRA Council and Staff</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administration Team</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SAAO Service</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Redfern Legal Service</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### PART 2: FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

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I’m pleased to report it’s been a big year for SUPRA. Without further ado, here is what we’ve been up to.

1. A New Ho(m)e
Thanks to some multi year lobbying, submissions and frank and free discussion in meetings we’ve secured SUPRA a new, and (allegedly) permanent home right in the middle of campus, with sunlit offices, spacious rooms and corridors as well as areas for postgrad study.

2. Activism and other shouting
We’ve stepped up the activism and played a vigorous role in campaigning around Christopher Pyne’s proposed changes to higher education, including fees for HDR students and deregulation, from the Town-Hall meeting and the subsequent letter, to events at Canberra, to various national days of action. We’ve held the first of what is hopefully an annual tradition of activist training days to focus the organisation on activism and build skills among constitutents and councilours at the beginning of the year.

I’d draw special attention to the role we’ve played a role in fighting for the Macquarie University Postgraduate Representative association’s continued existence and independence in organising and supporting protests. As I write this the court-case is ongoing, but there is definite hope for a good resolution.

3. Publications, media and visibility
We’ve strengthened our visibility. For the first time ever we have a consistently active Facebook page, and, for the first time in many years we pages each week in Honi Soit. Our publications work has been strong in general. In addition to the aforementioned new social media outlets and Honi Soit pages we have an excellent Survival guide and we’ve made a running start on the next Thesis guide.

We’ve also expanded our publications capacity: Our admin-officers finally have their valuable work in publications recognised in their PD descriptions and our Director of Student Publications will now have two days a week to perform their duties, instead of the very inadequate one day a week they were previously provided with.

We’ve also done some important work with student and non-student media including the SMH, New Matilda and Honi Soit on a variety of topics including University policy, international student’s housing situation and SSAF.

4. On our backbone, the professional staff
Our staff have done a terrific job- I won’t labour the point because the work of our staff is always exceptional and speaks for itself but the work our staff team has been simply tremendous. In addition to helping out in some capacity with almost all of the projects SUPRA as a whole has worked on the high volume of casework, legal work and administration our professional staff-team has worked on was been exceptional. I’m delighted to announce that we now have a SAAO team, including SAAO coordinator, of five. Even so, all our staff are pulling so much weight both seperately and together.

5. Community and participation: Social events, O-Week and Inductions
Our range of social and participatory events are broader than ever before. We have organised monthly Wine & Cheese, Women’s Coffee, SAAO seminars and Free Coffee Afternoon’s, Fortnightly activist get-togethers in the form of the Postgraduate Education Activist Collective and a wide range of equity events. Our O-Week social events were diverse, and perhaps better attended than any previous. Our coverage of inductions by council members was not ideal, but as an organisation we managed to get out to almost all the inductions.

6. Policy work and lobbying
We got through a lot of policy work. We’ve expanded general student representation on the Academic Board, made some vital changes to special considerations policy, worked on the emerging issue of essential requirements and helped create a student forum on Academic Board. We’ve built good relationships with staff, Fellows of Senate and others in the University.

Perhaps most importantly we’ve focused our attention, and to some degree the attention of the University on the issue of policy compliance. Having the University make good policy is one thing- having it follow that policy is another goal altogether. We need to keep
working hard on this- if University faculties can simply ignore their own rules than the value of our other lobbying work is limited.

We’ve made some important changes to our own nitty gritty rules and regulations. All postgraduate students can now vote in our elections, not only those who had membership at the time of close of nominations. I understand that an extensive raft of changes to the constitution will be discussed at this AGM.

7. SSAF, money, and strings attached

We have a good funding arrangement, enough to fund our activities without deficit- our position has gotten much stronger. Unfortunately one of the things I had set out to do, that is, make sure the funding arrangement reflects our needs around independence hadn’t happened before I finished up as President. I understand that the SRC and SUPRA will still be doing some work on it, trying to bring forward the Memorandum of Understanding (to guarantee non-interference in our activities) which I suggested. I strongly hope that this is achieved before the end of this council term, or at least before the next SSAF agreement.

8. Strategic summary

Our election was bigger than ever, or at least bigger than any that anyone can recall. We’ve got a diverse new team waiting to take office, and I for one am keen to see what they achieve. The future is not ours to see, but early signs are positive.

On a strategic level, here’s what we’ve done as an organisation to strengthen our position this year:

1. We’ve strengthened our connection with our constituency through publications, social media and social events;
2. We’ve greatly built our on-ground activism capability and multispectrum publications and media capacity-effectively giving us more ‘heft’ when it comes to influencing decision makers;
3. We’ve done great work to secure our future by putting our finances on a stronger, more stable footing and gaining a permanent home and;
4. We’ve clarified our strategic direction in policy by building closer ties with the academic board and trying to start a University wide conversation around compliance.

9. In Gratitude

This has been one of the most rewarding, and certainly the most productive year (or slightly less than a year) of my life. On my own behalf I thank the organisation, its staff and officebearers for giving me that opportunity. Thanks to Brigitte, Doug, Forough, Kane, Tom, Grace, Mike, Faisal, Kylee, Jo, Amity, Hank, Francine, John, Pru, Margret, Adrian, Hayley, Louise, Rachel and Ingrid for making this an exceptional year- we got through so much together, every single one of you has gone not only beyond the call of duty, but also the limits of reason. Finally I’d like to single out Gareth Charles, for being there for me at the bleakest hour.

Kylee Hartman-Warren (27th April 2015- present)

It has been an honour to serve as SUPRA’s president for the past few weeks. I also want to thank Tim for his service and guidance as I stepped into the role. His experience and contributions to SUPRA were valuable and I appreciated learning from him.

I’ve learned so much my short time as SUPRA President, and my already deep-rooted respect for the SUPRA Staff, SAAO team, officers and council has grown. In the past month, I’ve attended Academic Board and a few university working parties, voicing support for students in areas of policy such as research progress reviews or special considerations. I’ve seen that SUPRA saw through its contribution to the Students for MUPRA campaign, however I have to say our Education Officer Brigitte initiated SUPRA’s support through social media. Finally, I’ve been at the office and participated in the SUPRA move as well as a hiring process. I also pitched in at a landmark event at SUPRA – the Postgrad Parents Picnic – initiated by Forough – our Women’s Officer. Forough has been an incredible Women’s Officer this year and I hope the Parents Picnic continues.

The one thing I’ve tried to do since stepping up to do the role of President, is to regularly tell the postgraduate community what SUPRA is doing on a regular basis. I think this is something the President should do frequently and we have several platforms to make that information available.

Thanks to everyone who made this year at SUPRA a productive one. I wish I ha the word count to mention everyone but I am grateful for all of the energy everyone does put in. The SUPRA team is talented and ultimately caring, and we could not do what we do without the devoted efforts of our SAAOS, Staff, Officers, Councilors, and Student Volunteers. I wish next term’s team a great year.
Vice-President
Kylee Hartman-Warren (1 July 2014 - 27 April 2015)

Events & Outreach

A key component of the Vice President role is to oversee the planning of Re-O Day and O-Week. O-Week planning began in October this year, and that is the time where we sat down to decide which events to have and advertise to the wider community, and what merchandise or supplies are needed to outfit our activities. This happened October because of deadlines related to campus wide activities, but we’ve done it this way for two years, and the added time to plan has helped SUPRA immensely. By January, O-Week was largely planned, but we still needed to recruit Student Volunteers and carrying out the O-Week plans on the day. This is challenging, because we must also recruit volunteers to promote SUPRA at faculty inductions or events. Thanks to staff, Brigitte – our Education Officer, and Tom Greenwell, our current VP, we all managed to get through this busy time, and O-Week ran relatively smoothly.

We continued with such events like Wine and Cheese or the special end of the semester edition. I want to thank SUPRA councilors and staff for giving time and energy to all of this year’s SUPRA events.

Conferences, Representation & Policy

The year always begins with a day of Council Inductions, and this year we focused on SUPRA Management. The other great addition to this year’s SUPRA training suite was participate in an Activist Training Day. I encourage the 2015-2016 team of councilors to get more involved in training next year.

I also had the opportunity to attend two conferences on behalf of SUPRA. I attended the Council of International Students Australia Conference (CISA) in Adelaide, and the Council of Australian Postgraduate Associations in Canberra (CAPA). Both conferences provide great opportunities for postgad reps to meet other postgrad reps and work together. These connections helped SUPRA get involved with supporting MUPRA and UTS’ newly established Postgraduate Association, and I’m in regular contact with other student representatives in the community.

Policy

I’ve stepped back from the Policy portfolio since Tom came on board in February. That said, I was active on University Committees this year, and I helped to make some reforms in the Electoral Regulations, which allow all students to join SUPRA and vote up to the final polling day of the elections. There is policy work to do on conduct, grievance, Induction Packs, and what SUPRA’s principles are in the digital age of Skype meetings and social media. I encourage the next Vice President to sit down early to action the policy documents that need the most attention before it gets too busy. The challenge faced in doing this is the VP’s role is very busy from the start, with Inductions, and Re-o Day preparations taking place mere weeks after the 1st of July.
Starting late February, I have had the opportunity of taking over the Vice President portfolio. I have been charged with maintaining the policy of the organisation, maintaining a keen eye on the internal workings of SUPRA as well as State and Federal Government policy movements. More than this, I have also been charged with maintaining and improving the social lives of SUPRA's constituents through social events such as Wine & Cheese and Coffee Afternoons.

Social Events

On the 29th of April I restarted the Coffee Afternoon events for the year. Many postgraduates who attended expressed appreciation for a free warm drink in the middle of one of the coldest afternoons I've weathered whilst in Sydney. I hope that Coffee Afternoons becomes a regular event in Semester 2 and, with any luck, a permanent calendar feature in the coming years.

As part of my new duties, I have taken over the organising and running of Wine & Cheese, with plenty of help from dedicated Councillors who have tirelessly helped out at these events. I would like to take a moment to express appreciation to Brigitte McFadden, Kane Hardy, Gareth Charles, Guien Miao, Doug King and every other regular Councillor who has assisted me with Wine & Cheese and made the events great. I have heard nothing but praise for these events, despite my ongoing efforts the events transition from great to perfect, and many postgraduates have remarked that these events are something they look forward to every month.

Policy & Representation

As part of my policy portfolio, I have participated in the Education Action Group and the NSW Education Action Network as best I can. I have offered the postgraduate point of view as best I am able, and kept Council and the executive abreast of activism surrounding opposition to fee deregulation policy – as well as Federal policy put forward in the disastrous 2014 budget. SUPRA has participated successfully in the March 25th National Day of Action, and maintained a strong presence at these demonstrations.

I have attended education conferences, and speeches delivered by opposition leaders, including Mr. Shorten's major pre-budget speech held at the University of Sydney, in an attempt to understand the coming developments in federal policy regarding education funding and postgraduate students during the next election cycle. Further, I have participated as a representative on ASP and SEG Ed, making sure the postgraduate perspective is heard during the development of University policy.

Perhaps most of my energy and time in the role has been devoted to development of internal policy. I have held Policy Committee meetings frequently during my time as Vice President, and have attempted to draft reforms that respond to the questions raised constitutionally in the course of this council term. I hope these reforms surrounding the precise duties of councillors will lead to a much more amicable and smoothly run Council during the next term.
In the wake of the 2014 budget announcement, student unions and community activist groups across the country were in overdrive when I started my term (July 2014). In one of the most cruel and neoliberal budgets in recent history, low income earners, pensioners, Indigenous people, families, people with disabilities, the environment, and students were handed a shit sandwich. So, it’s not surprising that 2014 was a flurry of political activism on campuses nationwide!

**Portfolio work**

The Education Officer role is very broad and the position outline provides little guidance when conducting portfolio work. Nevertheless, throughout my term I:

- Attended the National Union of Students’ Education Conference in Perth WA. During the conference, I organised a postgraduate student meet up where a group of us discussed the place of postgrads in NUS campaigns, our relationship with CAPA and the effect of the budget on us. This was the perfect start to the year, as it provided space for me to build networks with postgraduate students across the country.

- Helped organise the 20th of August National Day of Action, which was by far the largest student protest since the anti VSU protests of the early 2000’s. Thousands of students turned out to express anger at the deregulation of universities that Christopher Pyne and his lackeys in the Liberal party were pushing in their budget. This action was instrumental in establishing contemporary student power in the face of university fee deregulation.

- Organised and promoted the Postgraduate Issues Survey and the launch alongside President Timothy Scriven.

- Attended Student Consultative Committee (SCC) with the President Timothy Scriven and the NSW Education Action Network meetings, when I was available.

- Distributed red squares on behalf of SUPRA at political actions, in an attempt to get the ‘Squarely in the Red’ phenomenon that originated in Quebec to catch on in Sydney. It was mildly successful.

- Convened the SUPRA Postgraduate Education Action Collective (PEAC) meetings and organised the first PEAC social event.

- Attended the ‘Australia Needs a Brighter Future’ forum in Canberra alongside Vice President Tom Greenwell.

- Went to Canberra for the last sitting week of the Senate in 2014. We disrupted the event to highlight student dissatisfaction with university fee deregulation. We got a reasonable amount of media coverage!

- Organised SUPRA contingents to actions on campus, including the ‘Library Cuts Campaign’ rally, the ‘Protest Against Pyne’ and the ‘Students’ Strike Back’ protest.

- Organised a ‘Death to Deregulation’ funeral action outside UTS alongside the NSW Education Action Network.

**Solidarity work**

I believe it’s important that SUPRA provide solidarity with other unions and community groups, so I always helped out other groups where possible!

- In July, I addressed a ‘Save Medicare’ Forum as the SUPRA Education Officer. I spoke about the effect of the budget on postgraduate students and what a deregulated higher education sector meant for future students and International students.
In September, Vice President Kylee Hartman-Warren and I spoke at the UTS Postgraduate Representative Union Launch.

I engaged in solidarity work with the Redfern Aboriginal Tent Embassy, alongside the SUPRA Indigenous Officer, Mike Butler. We secured a donation from SUPRA for firewood and food for the Embassy.

I helped to organise a solidarity action with the Macquarie University Postgraduate Representative Association (MUPRA) outside the NSW Supreme Court in May 2015.

Other stuff

In addition to working on education specific tasks, I also:

- Designed and produced two t-shirt designs and a calico bag for the organisation and worked with the Secretary Guien Mao to produce new SUPRA badges!
- Secured a space in the University Sydney Union (USU) access show bags for material that publicised SUPRA.
- Monitored SUPRA’s social media presence and was the primary administrator of the Facebook page.
- Attended the ‘Campus Security and Safety Conference’ alongside our SAAO Hayley Stone.

- Helped out extensively with general SUPRA events, including Wine and Cheese, the O-Week BBQ and the Poverty Week BBQ. I also organised the SUPRA O-Week stall and ran a SUPRA Queer O-week drinks event to engage queer postgrads in the SUPRA community.
- Designed posters and infographics for Wine and Cheese, Coffee Afternoons, PEAC and the Academic Bullying Survey (an initiative of our SAAO Hayley Stone).

Recommendations

Because the role is quite broad, I found it difficult to pin down exactly what was expected of me. In turn, I focused my attention on what I knew and where I knew my strengths were, which was mostly organising political actions and event organising. In the future, I would like to see the role fleshed out a little more in the duty statements, to provide guidance to incoming education officers.

Unlike Treasurer or Secretary, Education Officer is quite erratic and their work ebbs and flows depending on the political climate. For this reason, I would have really liked a partner to bounce ideas off and share the role with. I often found myself overwhelmed with tasks and had trouble enacting many of them due to lack of (wo)man power.

Ideally, PEAC would be large, dynamic and active, but due to the infancy of the group it is quite small. I recommend that the next Education Officer work on

Photo credit: Peter Boyle
building the active membership of the group and in
turn the vibrancy of SUPRA’s education activism.
A suggestion for toppling university fee deregulation:
target vice chancellors. I really think they’re the key
to defeating it once and for good.

Finally, the MUPRA court case is undeniably the
most important postgraduate battle currently
being fought. The university is suing the Macquarie
University Postgraduate Association to the tune of
$600,000. If successful, the university will be setting
a legal precedent that threatens every single student
union in this country. This isn’t just about $600,000
and MUPRA itself, this fight affects us all, so I
courage the next education officer to provide as
much support as is necessary to that campaign.

This year has been an incredibly busy one, both
within and outside of SUPRA. I’m just really chuffed
that I had the opportunity to work alongside such
passionate people in such a strong student union.
Thank you!
The 2014-2015 SUPRA Council year has seen, in the Treasury portfolio and generally, a continuance of the positive outcomes of last year.

Negotiations between student associations for division of the Student Services and Amenities Fee (SSAF, through which we are solely funded) commenced late this year, and failed to yield a result amenable to all parties. A decision was made for each association to submit an individual submission for SSAF funds, with the final division of funds determined by the University’s SSAF Allocation Committee, under the Registrar. SUPRA entered a very convincing, detailed and tight submission. Pressure was put on student associations to identify potential non-essential ‘projects’ for defunding. For SUPRA, this was nonsense: we have no ‘non-core’ pet projects, every dollar we receive is needed for the maintenance of our staff, services and community-building. We responded accordingly, with additional figures and documents to prove our position. We appear to have gained recognition from the University of the vital nature of our work and current funding levels as, despite the unfortunate lack of final consensus between student bodies, SUPRA came out very well. Our funding was once again increased (from $1,148,000 to $1,214,030), keeping us at the historically needful level of funding we argued so forcefully for in last year’s SSAF process. This funding will allow us to maintain the increased staffing and services as outlined in last year’s budget. Huge thanks must go to all staff and executive involved in this year’s SSAF negotiation and submission, especially to chief negotiator ex-President Tim Scriven, our Finance Manager John Fell, our Administration Co-ordinator Pru Wirth and our SSAO Co-ordinator, Adrian Cardinali.

Budget-wise, due to the unfortunately lengthy SSAF process this year, Council has not, as of the time of writing, approved a final budget for the year. An interim budget was approved in March in line with the as-then predicted SSAF return. A modified version of this budget is being worked on for approval by Council, most likely on our meeting of 9th June. In the meantime there is no hindrance to the normal activities of SUPRA.

Our audit for 2014 shows our financial position continues to improve, even while we increase services. Our deficit for the 2014 year, $13,479, is less than half that recorded for the 2013 year which, in turn, was less than the deficit recorded for 2012. This improved result for 2014 was even after increasing provisions for employee entitlements, as advised by our auditor, in line with our increased workforce.

This will be my last annual report as Treasurer for SUPRA: I am not intending (and indeed, am unable) to run again so as to spend more time on my poor, neglected PhD. I thank heartily all staff and councillors over the last 2 years for support, guidance and friendship. There’s been some tough times but plenty more good ones, and my heart rests easy knowing that, in these troubled times for higher education, SUPRA is more fit to fight the good fight than when I entered it. I most especially thank our devoted Finance Manager, John Fell. Treasury is a position of manifold figures, approvals, budgets and other strange and wonderful beasts – John fearlessly advises and acts such that everything operates as it should, and always with his characteristic good humour. I couldn’t have done it without him, and it’s been an honour and pleasure to work so closely with him.

I trust whomever the incoming Council sees fit to inherit my position will approach the job with vigour and watchfulness. It’s important to ensure we are financially viable, but more important to bear in mind our mission of service to our fellow postgraduates. Ultimately, we are not a for-profit outfit: we are a student union. Everything we do must be for the postgrad cause; if we record a profit at year’s end greater than that required for our long-term sustainability, we are failing our constituents.

It’s been a joy to serve. May SUPRA thrive well into the future, and continue our tradition of service to postgrads.
I was elected as SUPRA Secretary and served in the position from 1 July 2014 – 10 February 2015. I had already held various other positions within SUPRA since 2012 and so I came to the role with a good understanding of how the Secretary role could help facilitate Council functions and support the good governance of the organisation. I was also fortunate that a number of my predecessors were very well organised and diligent, so I inherited a well-structured set of records that were complete for at least a few previous years, and my time as Secretary consisted mostly of continuing the practices and standards of the previous Secretaries, Guien Miao and Mike de Waal.

The great majority of the Secretary portfolio consists of regular, but crucial tasks, and during my time as Secretary I can say that I maintained full and comprehensive records as required by the Constitution. Indeed I took comprehensive minutes at Council and Executive meetings and ensured that these minutes were circulated, ratified, and maintained in electronic and hard copy archives. I also ensured that the public copies of minutes were available to staff on the central server, and implemented a system by which hard copies of public minutes could be always available for viewing by any member who visited the offices during business hours, even without prior notice.

I ensured the secure custody of SUPRA's in camera and sensitive records – both hard copy and electronic versions – and provided all requisite records to the auditor at the annual audit. Subsequent to that audit, I contributed to the improvement of our voting practices by recommending that a minimum set of details (such as dollar figures) are always included in the body of a motion where the motion involves financial decisions.

I am happy to report that SUPRA's records were all in order and to the auditor’s satisfaction at the last audit of January 2015.

Requests for information, records, and general inquiries were responded to promptly – as should be expected for postgrads by postgrads! Vacancies on Council were advertised widely, and elections for casual vacancies were properly conducted, often attracting many more candidates than there were positions. Prospective and new councillors were provided with sufficient information and encouragement to get involved in SUPRA, and welcome emails were routinely sent that included information on policies, inductions, and sources of further information where appropriate. Records of Equity profile of Council were also adequately kept and maintained, ensuring that casual vacancies were filled as per equity requirements where necessary.

During my term I also maintained, updated, and regularly distributed current Council contact lists so that individuals could communicate with one another easily, and so that everyone, but in particular staff, could stay aware of any changes within Council and in Office Bearer positions. This is something that I believe should be a permanent part of the Secretary’s duties as any instability within the Council can leave gaps in communication and make collaboration difficult. Ensuring that contact details are readily available and routinely circulated to all is one simple measure that can be taken against fragmentation or possible isolation.
Finally, I cheerfully report that meetings were properly conducted and documented throughout my term. Documents and agendas packs were circulated with ample time for councillors to be able to read through the information prior to any meeting or decision. It is of note that while postgrads are notoriously time-poor the SUPRA Secretary has for years now been circulating notices and documents well in advance of the constituted minimums. I tip my hat to past Secretaries for this excellent practice that is well suited to a postgrad council, generally promotes good governance, and which has become something of a tradition within the portfolio.

As I write this report I am still very new to this role. I was only officially elected to the position on the 11th of May 2015, though I had been filling in parts of the role from the 16th of April. SUPRA had been without a Secretary for quite a while and I was a bit hesitant to take on the duties of the Secretary, but surprisingly I’ve enjoyed it a lot so far!

There hasn’t been anyone with relevant experience available to properly handover to role to me, but many office bearers have been happy to guide me through certain tasks of the Secretary. I’ve also learnt a lot about the organisation just from carrying out my duties. Being the minute taker of council and committee meetings, I’ve been able to better engage with the meetings and have improved my knowledge of SUPRA’s constitution, which will be useful for my next year on Council.

Through SUPRA’s move this year, I’ve been able to get a look at the records kept by the past secretaries. It’d be great to have a little more time in this role and learn more about the workings of the organisation, but I’m happy to have gained the skills I have and to have had the experience as Secretary until now.
The past year has been both dynamic and successful for projects and activities within the Publications portfolio. SUPRA has seen a more unified approach to our media and publicity, and this has produced strong results for students. In particular we have observed consistently strong growth within our social media presence and online communities, and we have maintained the production and distribution of popular print publications that continue to attract high levels of demand.

The ever popular 2015 SUPRA wall calendar was available in late 2014, and, as usual, it was very well received. SUPRA staff reported many students making a special visit to the SUPRA offices to grab their copy before the summer break, and students who were unable to make the visit were able to request their copy early via post. The annual calendar continues to attract positive feedback, with students highlighting its usefulness and helpfulness in the postgrad-specific information that it contains. Copies of the calendar were again issued in SUPRA’s O-week packs and distributed at the various faculty inductions.

In a similar story of success, a 16th edition Postgraduate Survival Guide was also released this year with print copies officially launched at O-week 2015. The new edition incorporated some big updates reflecting recent changes made to University policies that impact postgrad students. SUPRA staff and office bearers put a phenomenal amount of work into ensuring information is accurate and as up to date as possible, and while the Guide is popular across a broad spectrum of postgrads it has been particularly sought after by those who are new to the University and those who are new to the Sydney area. While resourcing constraints continue to restrict the production timeline, there have been discussions around shifting the production of this publication to an earlier date so that it is available at early postgrad inductions. This plan would have to be contingent on sufficient resources being available to allow SUPRA to begin production at a slightly busier time of year, however, if possible, such a change would make a big difference to the Guide’s availability to postgrads who study at satellite campuses and those who may not be able to attend O-week.

Aside from the healthy uptake of print publications, one of the most interesting areas of growth for SUPRA this year has been within our social media and online presence. Our SUPRA Public Facebook Group will soon approach 2,000 members and is growing by the day. By comparison, this number was around about 1,000 at the start of the council term, and a year before that the group was only at about 500 members. The group now is a busy hub of information and ideas being shared daily, not only by SUPRA councillors and staff but by our members themselves. This achievement is not in isolation, though, as the relatively new and official SUPRA Facebook Page has also gone from infancy to 600+ likes in next to no time at all. Posts regularly reach audiences in excess of a thousand individuals and provide a convenient way for postgrads to stay up to date on SUPRA news, campaigns, surveys, education and welfare developments, and general University goings on.

None of this has been by any stroke of luck but is directly due to consistent and coordinated work between councillors and staff alike. Although it is difficult to single out individuals for this group achievement, particular special acknowledgement must go to Hayley Stone (Student Advice & Advocacy Officer), and Brigitte McFadden (SUPRA Education Officer) for their concerted efforts on the social media front throughout the year.

The trusty SUPRA eGrad e-newsletter continues to
make its weekly journey to postgrad inboxes directly from SUPRA, and provides, in its characteristically succinct style, some of the most important postgrad news each week, including enrolment/administrative notices, welfare tips, and equity and organisational news. Some discussion has begun around renovating eGrad to a new look, however this project (as have a number of others) has been put on hold due to SUPRA’s office relocation and delays in the redevelopment of the new SUPRA website.

While the past year has been a very active one in the Publications & Media portfolio, all of the signs and metrics indicate that Sydney Uni postgrads thirst for postgrad-specific news and look specifically to SUPRA as an important source of information and community. Glancing at the Financial Statements we can all recognise that there are obvious limits to what SUPRA can provide in terms of media and publications, due to both funding and staffing size. However, the ever increasing engagement of our constituents leads us to wonder what if SUPRA had the resources to meet the true demand for services in this portfolio?

My report would be incomplete without wholeheartedly thanking all of the staff of SUPRA, as well as all of the postgrads who are or have been councillors throughout this past year. While there are too many to name individually, I wanted to personally thank Pru Wirth, Louise Thatcher and Amity Lynch of the SUPRA Admin team for their hard work, much of which goes on behind the scenes but all of which ultimately enables me to report so positively on this portfolio. A lot has been achieved because of your energy, patience and commitment.

Here’s wishing the incoming SUPRA Council and office bearers all the very best, and may there be a continuance of our long held tradition of doing a great lot with really very little, although hopefully the future will bring postgrads just a little more...

Sincerely,
Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Officer

Michael Butler (1st July - present)

This was the first year that an indigenous postgraduate was elected to fill the role since the 1990’s and at the start of 2014 the portfolio had no infrastructure and only abstract concepts of an equity network. In one sense this has been a blank canvas that I’ve made a good start on.

Over the year this is what happened:

- Made indigenous postgraduates aware of SUPRA but also its importance to them in supporting them with their studies. The majority of indigenous postgraduates I have met were either not aware of SUPRA or didn’t know how it could help them.

- That’s particularly so of the health and education block students who come in from out of Sydney for an intensive learning fortnight during semester at the main campus. They make up the majority of the University’s indigenous postgraduates and last year SUPRA hosted lunches in their classrooms to make them aware of us. Most come from rural NSW and are either teachers or health administrators in their communities and whether it’s reviving indigenous language to teach to school kids or managing health outcomes, they’re at the pointy end of change. But when they get here they are excluded by places like our “members-only” sports union and can feel quite segregated. I’m working on changing that through establishing links to alternatives around the University like Redfern’s Eora centre and making the fortnight blocks a more positive and welcoming experience.

- Started working with Kaiya Aboagye (Project Officer: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Research, Research Portfolio) who is focusing on other main group of indigenous postgraduates - the higher-degree and research students scattered across the University. This includes non-indigenous academics doing indigenous research and she bought them together for networking and to appreciate the depth and scope of the indigenous research at the University. Currently there are postgraduates breaking new ground on reviving lost indigenous knowledge, establishing indigenous political voices and empowering First Nations people. The nature of academic research work can be very isolating and creating connections between themselves is the goal. SUPRA will continue to support that.

- Created SUPRA’s first indigenous Facebook webpage.

- Started the first Welcome to Country at the Sydney Law School Ball. Ingenious people are desperately under-represented in the law school and there are currently only two indigenous law postgraduate students out of something around 1500 currently studying there (I’m one of them). But given that the Faculty was at the heart of racist regulation against aboriginals, specifically in NSW, this is particularly significant and is something I think all the faculties should adopt for their annual party.

- Made relations with the Aboriginal tent Embassy in Redfern. The tent embassy was set up by Redfern local Jenny Munro and is a protest against the drive to de-aboriginalise “The Block” with a multi-story development including student housing. While affordable student housing is critical, this is something the overwhelming majority of postgraduates don’t want and it’s important that the University’s neighbouring indigenous community know that. The tent embassy has been there for almost a year now, and has resisted eviction as well as welcomed students to the embassy to share and learn about their stand. SUPRA has helped with around $500 in support to get ready for this year’s winter, particularly after the embassy was hit by
the mini-cyclone in April. It's an important piece of community as well as indigenous activism that is on the University's doorstep and it is good that SUPRA is involved.

I tried to establish better connections with the Koori centre and DVC Shane Houston. Collectively they make good noises about increasing collaboration but don't deliver. This is disappointing, however there have been a number of key managerial changes this year and hopefully this new blood will change the situation.

- Started working with two aboriginal elders Raymond Finn and Sonny Bullen, one of whom was a postgrad in the 1970's, who are raising the awareness of indigenous servicemen as well as the contribution of horses to WW1. Aboriginals were initially banned from enlisting in WW1 but many did enlist, particularly with the Light Horse Brigade. Australia's real value in WW1 was supplying 100,000's of horses for the battlefield and the Sydney University Vet School pioneered equine surgical and medical care techniques that are still used today. Bullen and Finn's plan is recreate the 1917 Charge of Beersheba using horses and riders from the former missions like Hermansberg. I'm doing what I can to help. Surry Hills elder Raymond Finn with one of the descendants of the horses Australia sent to WW1.

- On an individual basis I have assisted one indigenous student challenge their faculty (successfully) as well as found accommodation for another indigenous student who was homeless.

- Although not specific to indigenous people I've challenged the University's bursary system. Bursaries are different from scholarships in that they are not for academic merit but to help financially disadvantaged people survive at University. The University's bureaucracy however refuses to consider a student's circumstances if they don't reach a “satisfactory academic attainment” level which is set higher for better-off students who don't need bursaries. There are both indigenous and non-indigenous postgraduates who are doing it really tough – some are maintaining families on a pittance, some are homeless because they can't afford rent. Setting the bursary bar higher than normal students is antithetical to the purpose of bursaries and reinforces the elitism it is meant to tackle. I'm working on fixing that.

This is an issue that keeps coming up in terms of the University's policies around social inclusion. Whether it is charging rates for student accommodation that are unachievable for students on income support, introducing requirements that isolate students with disabilities or perpetuating financial inequality they're symptomatic of the creep of the University's business model which emphasises revenue generation, assessing risks and losses and liabilities. I think this is not the type of model that postgraduates expect from their universities.
It is time that we all see gender as a spectrum instead of two sets of opposing ideals. We should stop defining each other by what we are not, and start defining ourselves by who we are!

Gender disparities have existed throughout the human history. Education, evolution and constructive activism have helped in correcting this disbalance. However, women are still faced by countless gender related challenges and a constant struggle by activists like us is needed to spare the society of this menace.

I have been serving as Women’s Officer for SUPRA for two consecutive terms to play my role as an active participant for women’s rights. I have established a strong women’s network across the various campuses of Sydney University in order to spread awareness about particular issues amongst the women. I have continued the Women-only coffee event where all the postgraduate women are welcomed to participate and discuss their problems with fellow students. I have also distributed promotional t-shirts, specifically designed for women, in order to promote SUPRA’s Women’s Network.

Moreover, I have taken a unique initiative of arranging an event specifically for student-parents, offering a barbecue for the parents and balloon twisting and face painting for their children, and most importantly the opportunity for student-parents to socialize with others of their sort. Alongside, I have successfully organized a bushwalking event as well as an end-of-year lunch in order to provide maximum opportunities for the postgraduate students to expand their network and meet other students.

Other than the social activities, I believe in issue-based activism and have successfully managed to follow it in true spirit. It is reflected by the fact that I’ve represented University of Sydney in discussion on Sexual Assault Consultation Facilities with the Royal Prince Alfred Hospital, and later on held a poster promotion to highlight the issue. Alongside, I’ve also represented SUPRA in consultations with the University’s Child Care Coordinating Committee and conducted a survey about the University’s child care facilities (thanks to Hayley Stone for helping me with the survey!). I have also repeatedly represented SUPRA at the Students’ Consultative Committee organised by the Vice Chancellor’s Office and have recently brought to attention the issue of revocations of travel concessions for students holding International Postgraduate Research Scholarships.

Overall, SUPRA has exposed me to different horizons of social activism and enhanced my vision regarding women’s issues. I cannot be grateful enough for being provided with this opportunity and I strongly encourage fellow postgraduate students to engage with SUPRA and make use of all the wonderful services it has to offer.

Design for 2015 SUPRA Women’s T-shirts
International Officer

Maral Hosseinpour (1 July 2014 - 11 Dec 2015)
Nayeem Faisal Shaikh (11 December 2014 - present)

I have been working as International officer of SUPRA from the January, 2015-May, 2015. In this short period of time, I have tried to follow up some issues among the several issues and challenges of International postgraduate students. The majority of the Postgraduate students in USyd are the International students. Most of them are coming from diverse culture and languages as well as ethnic backgrounds for which it is difficult for them for the first time to match with the Australian culture and society. They face a lot of difficulties in every stage of life due to the lack of knowledge about the rules and laws for which they have to experience a lot of issues regarding accommodation, visa, work place safety, fair pay etc. SUPRA is always supporting the postgrad students with almost all the issues related to postgrad studies as well as the rental issues, visa advice, legal support and advocacy.

In my period, I have tried to make network with the international postgrad to hear their problems and the issues. I have organized a visa seminar in the beginning of the semester, couple of coffee evening to get the fellow students. I have got two major issues, which we are currently working on. One is related to the shorten of research period for the PhD students, According to this issue the future international PhD students need to submit their thesis before two months from their latest date of submission. We are still observing this and will take necessary action if anyone has suffered. Another one is to re-include the transport concession for the IPRS students. They were getting the concession on transport for a decade but recently that is cut off without any notice. We have sent a letter to the Vice-Chancellor regarding this issue and waiting for his attention. Beside those, I am planning to raise the awareness for work place safety and fair pay for the International postgrads for their casual or part time work outside the campus. I am also planning to arrange a career seminar based on the Post-Grad internship program by which we can make a Q & A panel for the job requirements for the international postgrads.

From this current period, I am going to arrange a coffee afternoon for the International Postgrads on every first Friday around 3-30 pm to build a strong network and follow up the issues. Beside these, I am going to attend the Students Consultative Committee meeting of SRC to focus the agendas. I hope, we all together can make this University as a suitable and friendly place like home away from home for the International Postgrads.
SUPRA Council

As at 28 May 2015

Alex DORE
Armen AGHAZARIAN
Brendan MCMONIGAL
Brigitte MCFADDEN
Celeste ELLIS
Douglas KING
Ensiyeh GHANIZADEH KAZEROUNI (Forough)
Gareth CHARLES
Guien MIAO
Helen CHEN
Joanne GAD
Joseph CALLINGHAM

Kaitlin TAGG
Kane HARDY
Kieran LATTY
Kylee HARTMAN-WARREN
Michael BUTLER
Nayeem Faisal SHAIKH
Paul STEWART
Philip ROBERTS
Timothy SCRIVEN
Vanessa WELLS
Zachary Benjamin THOMPSON
Thomas GREENWEEL

The current SUPRA Executive Officers (as of 28th May 2015) are:

President
Vice President
Education Officer
Secretary
Treasurer
Director of Student Publications

Kylee Hartman-Warren
Thomas Greenwell
Brigitte Garozzo
Kane Hardy
Douglas King
Joanne Gad

The current Equity Officers (as of 28th May 2015) are:

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Officer
International Student Officer
Women’s Officer
Queer Officer
Disabilities Officer
Rural and Regional Officer

Mike Butler
Nayeem Faisal Shaikh
Ensiyeh Ghanizadeh Kazerouni (Forough)
vacant
vacant
vacant
SUPRA Staff

As at 28 May 2015

Student Advice and Advocacy Officer (SAAO) & Legal Team

Adrian CARDINALI SAAO Co-ordinator
Margaret KIRKBY Senior SAAO
Francine SEETO SAAO
Hank WHAN SAAO
Hayley STONE SAAO

Ingrid VAN TONGEREN Solicitor Redfern Legal Centre

Administration Team

John FELL Finance Manager
Pru WIRTH Administration Co-ordinator
Louise THATCHER Administration & Publications Officer
Amity LYNCH Administration & Publications Officer

We sincerely apologise for any misspellings or exclusions.
What a year it has been for SUPRA and for the admin team! 2015 has seen considerable growth in the services SUPRA delivers to students and our engagement with the postgraduate community. This work is underpinned by the administration team.

The student advice and advocacy team has grown, and sees more students walking through the door each day. In addition, council has been very active in 2015, with well-attended, regular events for Postgrads. The admin team provide professional support to the advice and advocacy service and to SUPRA council, and have an ever-growing workload. Assisting students, booking appointments, data entry and management, compiling e-grad, filing, archiving and record keeping, assisting with events, making room bookings, organising catering, ensuring IT and maintenance requests are lodged and filled and staffing the reception desk are all daily tasks performed by admin that keep the organisation running on a basic level. The Administration team has twice-yearly planning mornings, and tie this in with council and advocacy planning.

As well as regular duties, we have had multiple projects to manage.

Reclassification

In order to reflect the duties carried out by the administration team, particularly with respect to Publications work, the team sought to change the title and position of description of the administration officers to Administration and Publications Officers. This has long been an issue in our team, and following our performance development reviews a process was initiated through WCC and council. Council approved the re-classification and changes to the position description on 16th April 2015.

Council Inductions, training and planning

The 2014 council induction was well attended. In addition to the induction, the administration coordinator organised three events to assist the 2014 council with its functions. Firstly, council had an in-house activist training day to learn about strategic campaigning. Secondly, in-house governance training was organised for executive and office bearers to ensure they were prepared for the demands of managing an organisation with a large budget and a team of staff. Lastly, a planning day was held in January 2015 to help council make the most of the second half of their term. This day helped orientation week to go smoothly, and set a few goals for the months that followed.

Faculty Inductions

SUPRA attends the semester 1 and 2 faculty inductions. The admin team have built relationships with administrative staff across the university over a number of years, to ensure communication about inductions comes to SUPRA, and that we are invited to as many as possible. We produced material, organised induction packs and coordinated the attendance of SAAO’s and councillors to ensure SUPRA was represented at each induction. Semester 2, 2014 and semester 1, 2015 inductions were a success and we have just started to receive the invitations for semester 2, 2015 inductions.

Capital Sinking Fund 2014

SUPRA was granted some funding from the 2013 SSAF Capital Sinking Fund for renovations to our then office in A06. The admin coordinator organised consultation with staff and council and consulted with Campus Infrastructure Services to ensure work was carried out. This was a lengthy process, and was only completed mid way through 2014, but it resulted in the renovations to the kitchen area and courtyard, and a few smaller office improvements. This made a huge difference to SUPRA’s capacity to host events for Postgrad students, and the facilities were very well utilised over the last year. Though SUPRA has relocated, others in the demountable village continue to benefit from the alterations to the space.

Towards the end of 2013, the then SUPRA President, Joanne Gad, requested that the admin coordinator assist in compiling a business case to go to the University, arguing for a permanent home for SUPRA. This business case outlined our space requirements, and made a case for permanency, emphasising the impacts of repeated moves on our capacity to provide services. This was followed by Joanne and Tim Scriven through university committees and by the admin coordinator through campus infrastructure services. As a result of this combined effort, SUPRA was offered a permanent space in the Holme Building. This space has a Postgrad resource room for use by students and will have work stations and study space set up shortly. This is a huge win for Postgraduate students and Joanne and Tim should be congratulated for their representations to the University around the issue.
Publications

The administration and publications officers have worked hard to ensure SUPRA's publications continue to be of a high standard, and have made several improvements to our annual publications, and the publications production process. Amity project managed the 2015 Survival Guide with Joanne Gad (DSP), coordinating sub-editors and completing all layout and design work. Amity's approach is thorough and this shows in the Survival Guide. Louise has project managed the 2015 SUPRA wall Calendar, doing an outstanding job. The calendar has again been very popular with students. Louise also published eGrad each Monday, SUPRA's weekly e-newsletter. Her patience and reliability ensured eGrad went out each week for the past year.

The admin and publications officers have commenced liaising with the SAAO team about a range of brochures, have done countless posters, flyers and info sheets for students as well as a number of advertisements for SUPRA's Honi pages. We are looking forward to updating the Thesis Guide with new content from the advocacy team.

Website

SUPRA's website acts as one of the main contact points for students in need. While it is need of improvement, admin staff field several student enquiries coming through the website each day. SUPRA is in the process of reviewing quotes for the re-building of our website. The admin team and DSP have put a great deal of work into preparing for this build and look forward to the engagement for a new web developer.

Casework data entry and Database

The admin team have been assisting the SAAO team with data entry. Rachel Engdahl has been of great assistance with this project. SUPRA has also engaged Phil Byrne to build a new casework database to ensure records are kept into the future and that accurate statistics can be generated from our database. The admin team have been working closely with Phil Byrne to develop this database, and ensure it is user friendly.

Relocation

The relocation has been a massive project for the admin team. The admin coordinator has worked closely with council and campus infrastructure to ensure the move to the Holme building went as smoothly as possible and that the space was ready for us to occupy. We also had to ensure that our office in A06 was vacated in time. This was a massive effort with over ten individual offices and communal spaces to pack up and unpack. The Administration and Publications officers did a great deal of preparation for the move, and would like to thank Doug King for his efforts in particular on the moving days. We look forward to settling in properly in Holme, and to the space becoming more functional and comfortable for Postgrad students.

Elections

The admin team provided administrative support for the SUPRA elections. This was an over-whelming task, given elections coincided with our office relocation and the advertising of the admin and publications officer position.

Comings and Goings- Goodbye Louise!
The admin team will be very sad to farewell Louise Thatcher. Louise has worked for SUPRA since 2012 and has been a valued member of the team. She will be missed by all at SUPRA.

We have just completed recruiting for Louise’s replacement. We received 92 applications for the role, and had a high quality of applicants. We look forward to introducing our new Administration and Publications Officer soon!

Moving forward

We are looking forward to inducting the new SUPRA council, commencing work on our major publications and readying the resource room so it can be opened to postgrad students as soon as possible. We enjoy dealing with students accessing SUPRA's services each day and will continue to ensure students in need are prioritised and feel SUPRA is a place that will help them.
SUPRA employs 5 full time advocacy staff to provide a free, professional, independent and confidential casework service for postgraduate students. The service is multidisciplinary and over the years has employed lawyers, psychologists, social workers, welfare workers, activists who have trained up to be professional advocates, and community health workers. The experience and different professional backgrounds of workers over a long period is embodied in high quality and sophisticated advocacy support. The advocacy service works closely with SUPRA's Legal Service deepening the multidisciplinary character of SUPRA's suite of services.

Postgraduate study can be a great joy and rightly inspires strong commitment and high levels of intellectual and emotional investment. Related to such commitment and investment, and along with the demographics of a postgraduate population juggling the personal and professional demands of modern living, is a very wide range of personal and academic challenges. Given such challenges the model of multidisciplinary advocacy we have developed at SUPRA is best practice for our target population, and generates consistently high levels of satisfaction on internal and University feedback measures. As can be seen below we provide this support in a very wide range of student relevant areas.

Our model of advocacy recognises the diversity of the postgraduate population and respects and celebrates the inherent strengths and abilities of postgraduate students by fostering and supporting the ability to self-advocate. At the core of our work is the fundamental commitment of respect, a principle that is embodied in our steadfast commitment to talk, listen and respond to students directly, and to make use of shared experiences in SUPRA's submission and policy work. Having this model of genuinely independent and professional service in place is part and parcel of a commitment to justice and fairness for students, as well as fulfilling for the University its various requirements under Student Services and Amenities Fee legislation and related Guidelines.

It was a pleasure to serve the postgraduate community in 2014 and below is a brief summary of our achievements.

Achievements of 2014

SUPRA's funding agreement with the University for 2014 committed the advice and advocacy service to producing outputs in six areas. These were: i) provision of individual advice and advocacy; ii) provision of a briefing service for SUPRA student representatives; iii) provision of content for SUPRA publications; iv) submission writing as appropriate; v) participation in SUPRA outreach activities; and vi) support for SUPRA networks equity activities. Outcomes in each area are summarised below.

i) Individual Advice and Advocacy Service

Our funding agreement committed the advice and advocacy service to meet individual demand for casework services. We predicted a 5% increase in cases in 2014 and committed to extending our work at the satellite campuses of the University. We have met our commitments. In 2014 we assisted students with 650 cases. This has grown progressively from 438 cases in 2008, to 541 in 2009, 610 in 2010, 605 in 2011, 585 in 2012, and 623 in 2013. The growth in cases in 2014 represents a 4.3% rise in the number of cases as compared to the previous year. As a note on the limitation of these figures, they clearly do not represent the amount of time that is dedicated to individual students, nor the increasing complexity of the issues students face. Complex cases can involve intensive advice and advocacy over several months and significant casework investment by individual advocates. With refinements to our data collection methods and a new database expected to come on line by the middle of 2015, we expect to be able to provide more quantitative information on complexity of matters for future reports.

Of the students who used our service in 2014 and provided us this information, 47.3% were international students and 52.7% domestic students. International students are consistently recognised as an area where additional support is appropriate and needed. Given this need and given international student enrolments are only 25.8% of the postgraduate population, SUPRA is proud of the over representation of this population in our statistics, and the high level and quality of support we provide. Other major statistics are more or less in line with the University’s demographic profile for postgraduate students, in-
indicating SUPRA’s promotion and outreach activities are attracting an appropriately broad cross section of the postgraduate population.

Of those who specified gender 38.0% of our cases were male compared to 41.3% of the postgraduate population. Female students were 54.6% of our cases as compared to 58.6% of postgraduate students that may help to reduce the unspecified figure. We have 7.4% of cases without specified gender.

With the introduction of a new database system in 2015 we will move to use of gender categories that include transgender and intersex students. Research students were 25.8% of cases as compared to 23.4% of the postgraduate population. Coursework students were 74.2% of cases as compared to 76.6% of the student population.

In 2014 86.0% of our cases come from full time students and only 14.0% are part time, as compared to 39.2% and 60.8% of the postgraduate population respectively. The low figure of use for our services from part time students may well be appropriate when one takes into account the lower enrolment load, but this does warrant further investigation.

The seven most common types of cases in 2014 were as follows: 90 Academic Appeals; 79 Tenancy; 75 Show Cause and Exclusion; 49 Academic Dishonesty and Plagiarism; 41 Supervision; 26 Harassment and Discrimination; 23 Centrelink. Please note that this is a substantial under reflection of the actual range and number of matters addressed. A complicated show cause and exclusion case might involve issues with tenancy, supervision, discrimination, and more. The database originally designed for us by the University does not presently allow us to record additional issues against each case, leading to an under reporting of actual matters being addressed. This data collection issue will also be addressed as we upgrade our system in 2015.

Finally the below table provides a breakdown of access to our service by Faculty. Particularly pleasing in these figures are that students from Faculties located away from the Camperdown and Darlington campuses have been accessing our services in substantial numbers. Here we specifically point to statistics from the Sydney College of the Arts, Sydney Conservatorium of Music, and the Faculty of Health Sciences. Access to our services from students in these Faculties is further evidence that our outreach efforts are effective.

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<th>Faculty</th>
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<td>Agriculture, Food and Natural Resources</td>
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<td>Architecture, Design and Planning</td>
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<td>Arts and Social Sciences</td>
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<td>Business School</td>
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<td>Dentistry</td>
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<td>Education and Social Work</td>
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<td>Engineering and Information Technology</td>
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<td>Health Sciences</td>
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<td>Nursing and Midwifery</td>
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<td>Sydney College of the Arts</td>
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<td>Sydney Conservatorium of Music</td>
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<td>Veterinary Science</td>
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ii) Briefing Services

Our funding agreement required the advice and advocacy service to provide briefing and support services for SUPRA student representatives. In 2014 there were 15 University committees where briefing support services were provided to the relevant postgraduate student representatives. The committees were: Student Consultative Committee; Academic Board; Graduate Studies Committee; Academic Standards and Policy Committee; SEG Education Committee; SEG Indigenous Strategy and Services Committee; SEG Research Training Committee; SEG International; SEG Workplace Health and Safety Committee; International Student Program Committee; Student Wellbeing Working Party; SEG Disability Action Plan Committee; Child Care Coordinating Committee; Science, Technology and Business eLearning Group; Thesis Examination Process and Process and Procedures Working Party.

The briefing service assists SUPRA's student representatives to prepare well and participate fully in committees. It also supports a measure of continuity in representation from year to year, and from elected Council to elected Council. In a University context where policy and program development is an ongoing process that spans more than the terms of office of many elected student representatives, the institutional stability provided by briefings increases the quality of SUPRA's work over time. The briefing service also gives a direct means for experience from SUPRA's casework to inform SUPRA representation. Information fed up from our cases gives the University real time and quality feedback on pressing issues for postgraduate students at any given moment. A detailed internal policy that is updated from time to time governs the operation of the briefing service.

iii) SUPRA Publications

Our funding agreement committed the advice and advocacy service to produce content for professional standard publications. During 2014 we updated substantial parts of the content for SUPRA's 16th edition of the Postgraduate Survival Guide, released in February 2015. The portion of the content produced by the advice and advocacy service for this 120-page publication is extensive, and covers all the main welfare and academic issues postgraduate students come across. Separately we reviewed the Thesis Guide in 2014 for the purposes of making updates. In both cases the work required to complete updates has been substantial due to changes in University policy in 2014.

On top of these major publications the advice and advocacy service contributes weekly to SUPRA's eGrad newsletter, with short announcements and information on topics of interest and importance for postgraduate students. We published a brochure on disability rights. Separate to that text has been updated for several smaller SUPRA publications, including brochures on academic appeals, plagiarism, and a show cause exclusion and survival kit, and these will be laid out and made available in hard copy and on the SUPRA web site in 2015.

iv) Submission Writing

Our funding agreement commits the advice and advocacy service to support SUPRA Council representatives in preparing submissions for University and relevant external government and non government bodies. Internal to the University the advice and advocacy service was involved in responding to various facility and policy issues. We liaised with the University's Accommodation Service over the future use of the Queen Mary Building and provided relevant survey feedback on this matter. We provided submissions in relation to Special Consideration Policy and Procedures, advocated policy reform in relation to Academic Dishonesty and group work matters, and prepared a SUPRA submission over the forthcoming University wide Students Complaint Policy. In each area our feedback and submission work improved policy development.

Externally the advice and advocacy service prepared submissions for two affordable housing inquiries at both State and Federal Government level. A staff member also presented at an Informa National Student Accommodation conference in June of 2014. As part of the research for the housing submissions and the conference presentation student surveys were conducted. Separately a staff member presented at the Informa National Student Experience Conference in December 2014. We prepared a submission for SUPRA to the Federal Government over the Higher Education Standards Framework.

v) Outreach activities

Our funding agreement committed the advice and advocacy service to build greater awareness of services through outreach activities. Given Cumberland campus is home to the single largest postgraduate population outside of the Darlington and Camperdown campuses, we devoted one day a week of staff time to be available at the Cumberland library. Also at Cumberland campus we ran a 'Tea and Sympathy' stall on 5 strategically chosen days in February and November. The stall was set up outside exam venues and staffed by advice and advocacy professionals. We provided assistance with matters like Special Consideration applications.

During 2014 we also provided a survey and pizza event at the SCA. We ran a similar event at the
Conservatorium along with a trial fortnightly on site casework service for 2 months. At the Nursing School we operated a three-hour per fortnight stall for students. Survey feedback from students and staff at these campuses about what they would like in 2014 is being used to formulate our 2015 outreach plan. Ad hoc outreach activities were conducted at most of the remaining campuses of the University given their relatively smaller postgraduate populations. Information on the advice and advocacy service and relevant publications are made available to postgraduate students as part of all our outreach activities.

Advice and advocacy staff participated in other events such as providing talks at relevant Faculty and Departmental inductions, and participation in O-Week activities. We assisted in organising once per month free migration advice for international students from a reputable external legal firm. In August we participated in two Indigenous students lunch meet and greet events. We operated a stall for a September 2014 disability week event on campus.

The advice and advocacy service ran a seminar series in 2014. Topics included a Welcome to SUPRA event in February, International Students Fact Forum in March, Renting 101 at both main campus and Cumberland campus in March and April respectively, Surviving Your Supervisor in May on both main campus and Cumberland campus, and a Renting Issues Presentation in October. In October we participated in Poverty Week Activities, including provision of material for a special poverty week edition of our eGrad newsletter, and preparing special 2-minute noodle packs to promote awareness of student financial needs.

The advice and advocacy service uses Skype for contact with students who are not located at the main campus and all postgraduate students are able to contact our service by email, via an online contact form from our website and/or phone as well as in person.

vi) Postgraduate Network and Equity Group Support

Our funding agreement committed the advice and advocacy service to support representative participation and equity group activities. One new initiative of SUPRA Council in 2014 was the establishment of a Postgraduate Education Action Committee. The advice and advocacy service supported their work by helping to develop a survey on postgraduate facilities and needs.

As part of our commitment to equity and community engagement a member of staff provided volunteer hours once per month, for Monthly Domestic Violence Course Support Safe Relationships Project.

The project provides domestic violence court assistance to people in same sex relationships, or transgender and transsexual and intersex people in relationships. The skills and networks developed externally are then used to inform work in SUPRA. Briefing and support with their portfolio areas was provided to the SUPRA Women’s Officer, the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Officer, and Disability Officer.

I would like to take this opportunity to sincerely thank the entire Advocacy team for their hard work and dedication. Thanks to Margaret Kirkby, Senior Student Advice and Advocacy Officer who coordinated the service in my absence on long service leave up until October 2014. Margaret put heart and soul into the work and could not have been more committed. To Hank Whan, Hayley Stone and Francine Seeto, you are extraordinary workers who go well over and above the call of duty, much to your own credit and to the benefit of the postgraduate students we support. Thank you all.

Prepared by Adrian Cardinali, Advocacy Coordinator
Overview

The RLC branch office at the Sydney University Postgraduate Representative Association (SUPRA) has been in operation since 2008. The service is funded by SUPRA, which in turn receives funding from the University from the Student Services & Amenities Fee (“SSAF”) for the service. It provides legal services to postgraduate students from any of the University’s seven campuses.

The SUPRA legal service employs one full time solicitor. Face to face appointments are available at various times during the week with Thursday afternoons being dedicated to a drop in service. Students at distant campuses and students unable to attend the SUPRA offices can also make telephone appointments or receive advice by email.

The solicitor primarily provides advice and casework services. Casework services are provided either through representation or through providing assistance and support to enable students to represent themselves in their matters. Deciding who to represent and who to assist is made after consideration has been given to the potential for the client to effectively and successfully manage the matter themselves with assistance from the solicitor, the other legal services available to the client, and their own resources. The aim is to allow the solicitor to spend greater time on clients who have a high degree of need and are unable to access other services for whatever reason whilst at the same time providing the most efficient and useful service to the entire postgraduate student community.

The solicitor also provides regular legal and strategic advice to the five Student Advice and Advocacy Officers (“SAAOs”) employed by SUPRA who deal with a variety of issues concerning students such as academic or welfare matters. The solicitor also maintains a close link with and provides assistance to the other staff and office bearers/Council Members of SUPRA in relation to any other legal matters that may arise, for example by providing advice in the areas of Intellectual Property or Defamation Law to office bearers or those involved in preparing SUPRA publications.

The solicitor also undertakes community legal education and policy work. Community legal education aims to increase the ability of clients to avert legal problems or to solve them themselves by providing legal information, for example in the form of fact sheets, information brochures or contributions to SUPRA publications. Policy work is work that may not be related to any one particular client but aims to achieve some systemic change in the legal system, the University or the community in order to benefit a group of postgraduate students or all postgraduate students.

Casework & Advice

Demand for the Legal Service has continued to grow each year. In 2014 the Legal Service assisted 377 new student clients. Of these, 58% were international students and 42% were domestic students. For those who specified gender, 55% of student clients were female, with 45% being male. Further, 70% of student clients were course work students, with 30% being higher degree by research students. In addition, 21% were students from campuses of the University other than the main Camperdown/Darlington campus.

All faculties of the University were represented as follows: - Business School 19%, Medicine 15%, Science 9%, Law 8%, Arts & Social Sciences 8%, Sydney College of the Arts 7%, Engineering & Information Technology 6%, Architecture, Design & Planning 5%, Health Sciences 5%, Dentistry 4%, Pharmacy 3%, Education & Social Work 3%, with Veterinary Science, the Sydney Conservatorium of Music, Nursing & Midwifery, and Agriculture, Food & Natural Resources being 2% each.

The seven most popular areas in which legal assistance was provided in 2014 relate to the following areas of law: - University, Government & Administrative Matters (23%), Intellectual Property (15%), General Civil Matters not Listed Separately (15%), Consumer (8%), Credit and Debt (6%), Employment (5%), and Motor vehicle accidents – property damage (5%).

University matters

As the legal service remains independent of the University it can advise students on University matters and can represent students in conflicts with the University. The overwhelming majority
of university matters have concerned the area of Intellectual Property, either through the provision of independent advice on contracts prior to the assignment of rights or in handling disputes with the University.

**Consumer and Credit/Debt Matters**

The legal service receives a large number of enquiries about consumer contracts and credit/debt matters. Many of these enquiries relate to aggressive sales techniques or onerous credit contracts. A significant number of the complaints received in this area are in relation to consumer contracts with telecommunications service providers particularly in relation to mobile phones or internet services. The legal service has been able to negotiate successful outcomes for students in a range of matters in these areas. In addition, a number of students seek advice from the solicitor regarding money owed to or by the student in relation to housing. Many students are living in situations where they are not covered by the Residential Tenancies Act. The necessity for the student to take these matters to the Local Court creates unnecessary legal complexity and cost issues for the students irrespective of which side of the matter they are on. The legal service provided representation to students in these matters at the Local Court.

**Employment**

Many students are working outside the University to supplement their other income (usually parental support, scholarships or part time University employment in their departments). They are often working in positions where their conditions and entitlements are questionable and often in positions where their employment status (ie whether they are in fact an employee or sub-contractor) or the requirements and legal obligations imposed on them by virtue of their status are unknown to the student until a dispute arises, the employment ends or they find themselves being investigated by government departments such as the Tax Office. The legal service has successfully negotiated on behalf of many students to recover wages and entitlements, assisted them to resolve concerns about working conditions, and assisted them in their dealings with government departments and in complying with their taxation or other legal obligations.

**Motor vehicle accidents**

A significant number of students attend the service to seek advice in relation to recovering damages and/or defending claims for damages following motor vehicle accidents. They are often young and/or inexperienced drivers or holders of international licences who are unfamiliar with the rules and regulations in New South Wales. The financial impact of these matters can be significant for students who rely on their vehicles and earn a small income or have limited financial resources. The service has successfully assisted a number of clients to obtain compensation for the damage done to their vehicles. In addition, the service has successfully represented a number of students and obtained orders in their favour in situations where it was necessary to both defend the matters against them and cross claim against the other parties. It has also assisted a number of students to obtain judgments in their favour and, where necessary, to successfully enforce the judgments obtained against the other party. Where the students have admitted liability but disputed the amount claimed, the legal service has also successfully negotiated to reduce the amount to be paid to an acceptable amount and/or to allow the clients to pay the sum off by instalments.

Road traffic and motor vehicle regulatory offences Inexperience or lack of familiarity with the road rules, coupled with having older or less well maintained vehicles due to economic constraints often means that the clients of the legal service present with penalty notices received for these offences. For the same reasons they are often less able to meet the financial burden imposed in paying a penalty notice. A significant number of clients have chosen to court elect and plead guilty. In these situations, the legal service has either represented or assisted them, either in person or by way of drafting their written pleadings. Overwhelmingly, the involvement of the legal service has resulted in achieving very favourable outcomes for the students. In addition, the service has successfully represented a number of students in defended hearings.

**Crime**

The solicitor has provided advice and representation in Local Court to a number of students mostly in relation to matters concerning driving offences (mostly alcohol related offences), assault, carrying prohibited weapons, larceny (by a servant), and fraud. Again, overwhelmingly, the involvement of the legal service has resulted in achieving more favourable outcomes for the students.

**Tenancy**

Due to their poor economic situations, students are often ill placed to afford rent increases and so often fall into arrears. In addition, lack of funds or the need to make the financial resources they have last as long as possible often means that they are residing in accommodation that is of a poor standard which leads to tenancy issues such as the need for repairs, compensation for breaches of the tenancy agreement and the like. The legal service has provided advice, and conducted negotiations on behalf of, a large number of students in relation
to such matters. The service has also provided assistance (or arranged advocacy) for students to assist them to run difficult tenancy matters at the New South Wales Civil & Administrative Tribunal.

Community Legal Education

The legal service has provided community legal information and education sessions to a number of students in the areas of intellectual property, traffic offences & fines, consumer contracts (specifically telecommunications service provider contracts), motor vehicle accidents (property damage), tenancy, privacy law and employment.

In addition the service has produced a range of legal facts sheets in areas of special interest to postgraduate students, specifically in the areas of intellectual property, fines, consumer law, contracts (specifically telecommunications service provider contracts), and privacy.

During the period, we contributed the Legal Section of the 2015 Postgraduate Survival Guide. This included legal information on matters of interest to the postgraduate student population including Intellectual Property, Contracts, Privacy, Consumer Law, Tenancy and Fines. We also contributed the Intellectual Property Law Section of the 2014 Thesis Guide.

Policy Work

The Legal service has been involved in an advisory capacity in the SUPRA work in these areas. Specifically, the service has contributed to both external submissions written by the SUPRA staff and Council members on matters relevant to postgraduate students and international postgraduate students, and to internal policy submissions written by SUPRA staff and Council members in relation to a variety of proposed changes to University Policy and Rules. Briefing/Advice services to Council Members and equity groups on legal issues or questions that arose for Councillors in the course of their duties were also provided.
SUPRA Events 2015

Postgrad Parents Day organised by the SUPRA Women’s Officer

Postgrad Wine & Cheese in the Cloisters

SUPRA Councillor Guien Miao making a SUPRA stencil

Sydney Uni Postgraduate Representative Association

Postgrad Issues Survey

SUPRA wants to make sure we’re running campaigns about issues you care about. Tell us about your USyd experience and what matters to you, and you go into the draw to win an Apple iPad.

Just follow this link to our short survey, it only takes a few minutes:

tinyurl.com/usydpostgradsurvey
SYDNEY UNIVERSITY POSTGRADUATE REPRESENTATIVE ASSOCIATION
(SUPRA)

FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2014
$100,000 FOR A DEGREE?

...SHOULD HAVE GONE TO HOGWARTS