**Minutes of the annual general meeting of the Sydney University Postgraduate Representative Association to be held online via Zoom on the 25th of May 2020 at 5:30PM**

**Chair:** Minran Liu

**Minutes:** Xinheng Wu

**Attendance:** Ada Choi, Di Wang, Keyuan Chen, Luhua Li, Michael Li, Mujie Ren, Olivia Evans, Shaun Yang, Shenyang Li, Shiyang Geng, Shuyu Zhu, Tiange Wu, Wenrui Guo, Xuning Feng, Yan Liu, Yanru Li, Yao Ma, Yihe Li, Yuhang Xia, Zhen Chen, Ziyao Ding, Zora Jiang, Boquan Chen, Esme Qiu, Hang Jia, Hanling Cao, Shiyu Bao, Jinzhong Dou, Yanning Bai, Marguerite Biasatti, Junying Chen, Ashley Ubrihien, Xiner Yuan

**Staff:** Francine Seeto, Ingrid van Tongeren

**Guests:** Rafael Mazzoldi

# Acknowledgement of Country and Welcome

We acknowledge the Gadigal people of the Eora Nation as the traditional custodians of the land. We acknowledge that the land upon which we meet is stolen land, and that sovereignty was never ceded. We pay our respects to Elders past and present and extend those respects to all First Nations persons here. This always was, and always will be, Aboriginal land.

# 2. Governance & Declaration of COI

# 3. General Election Report ★

Xinheng Wu shared Returning Officer’s General Report to every attendee for their reading.

The returning officer (Rafael) reported 2020 online General Election.

He said that It was the first completely electronic election that he has been involved in running. On the whole, He was pleased with the outcome. While there were some teething issues and inconveniences on the whole, He was satisfied that SUPRA members eligible to vote had an opportunity to cast their vote. The voter ‘turnout’ was up from approximately 1000 last year to 1351 voters this year. This number represents 21.3% of the total eligible electorate at the close of polls. He said in total there were 6348 electronic votes have been distributed, there were 286 undeliverable emails at close of polls. He believed that this represented a very favourable distribution of ballots.

He reported some tech issues during the electronic election. One of them is Domain issues when some voters cannot get the voting email due to their certain email domains that BigPulse had blocked due to spam they had received in the past. At one stage there were almost 500 bouncing emails. Once they were able to identify the issue, they notified all the candidates and requested BigPulse unblock those domains.

He said that this year we have two reserved equity positions, that’s non-cis male. And he received some concerns from students saying that the definition of non-cis male is not clear in the SUPRA constitution. This unclear might cause confusion to whom it may apply. He recommended that either a definition of the term be added to the constitution or the council develop material to educate potential candidates and members on the meaning of the term. For these vacancies, he recommended an online supplementary election.

He said this year we are not going to do electronic voting for Equity Election, because candidates have to be voted based on. His advice to the current Equity officers who were responsible for calling each election was that given the current COVID-19 crisis it would be very difficult for them to hold their elections and comply with the SUPRA constitution. He advised they wait for a safe time when lockdown rules ease to hold these votes.

Overall, He is generally happy with the way electronic voting played out. He said he believes it contributed to higher voter participation. It also led to cost and material savings as we did not need to send out over 5000 physical voting kits to members.

Francine appreciated Rafael’s effort in coordinating SUPRA’s first electronic election.

# 4. Supplementary Elections ★

The report has been included in the General Election report (item 3).

To fill the current two reserved equity vacancies, Rafael commented that the two positions may be filled by a supplementary election that takes place at the SUPRA Annual General Meeting. However, there are difficulties in attempting to conduct secret ballot during the course of online AGM. He was unable to find a satisfactory method for conducting the Supplementary election in time for the AGM, as a result He have asked the AGM to postpone this election, either to a special supplementary election held online or, as provided by the constitution, pass the process of filling the two vacancies to the incoming council that will take its seats in July.

following the suggestion of the returning officer, Minran Liu suggested passing the process of filling the two vacancies to the new council.

Olivia Evans against with the suggestion of filling the two vacancies to the new Council. They commented that the definition of Non-cis male was unclear both in the constitution and in the nomination form. Actually, they are non-cis male but in the queer community, no one use this term and many queer people should be represented in the council. Olivia asked if this problem can be fixed next year.

Rafael responded positively and said that the new council can decide how to improve.

Minran Liu suggested to postpone the supplement election to a special supplementary later.

**[200525-1]**: To postpone the supplement election to a special supplementary later.

**Moved:** Minran Liu **Seconded:** Olivia Evans

24 in favour, 0 against, 2 abstentions

**Motion carried.**

# 5. Minutes and Reports of Meetings ★

## 5.1 Minutes of AGM 2019, 17th May 2019

Xinheng Wu shared the Minutes of AGM 2019 to every attendee for their reading. After 5 minutes, Minran Liu asked if anyone have any questions, and raised motion to accept these minutes as a true reflection of the AGM 2019.

**[200525-2]**: To accept these minutes as a true reflection of the AGM 2018.

**Moved**: Minran Liu **Seconded**: Xinheng Wu

23 in favour, 0 against, 3 abstentions

**Motion carried.**

# 6. Annual Report of the Association ★

Xinheng Wu shared the Annual Report to every attendee for their reading.

The Annual Report has also been included in the Agenda pack.

Minran Liu reported the Annual Report of the association. Below is the speech.

The 2019–2020 term has been an extremely tough one, probably one of the most difficult in the history of SUPRA since its foundation in 1970. It was marked by widespread xenophobia within the University and Australian society at large, a global pandemic that resulted in the shutdown of the University campus, and almost four million people have been infected worldwide to date. There have also been funding cuts and severe sewage flooding in the SUPRA office. Despite this crisis, the president's office and our hardworking councillors, dedicated committee members and excellent staff, along with the selfless volunteers who took responsibility for various issue areas withstood the tremendous pressure and achieved concrete results. During the 2019-2020 term SUPRA achieved our highest funding grant of $2.03M, from the Student Services and Amenities Fund (SSAF) which is administered by the University of the Sydney.

SUPRA puts the interests of its fellow postgrad students in its heart. The response to the COVID-19 pandemic has been a great example of our advocacy work. SUPRA began to closely monitor the situation right from the beginning. To date, SUPRA has written four letters to the Vice-Chancellor regarding the lack of support being offered to students impacted by COVID-19. There were numerous meetings and email exchanges between the President's office and University executives, SUPRA executives, councillors, staff and SUPRA's online peer support

assistants. Our student representatives on various University committees also pushed hard to encourage the University to offer supports for our students and helped the University to make the right decision.

SUPRA was the first organization at USYD fighting for fee reduction after the University moved classes online. We argued that the tuition fees for online courses should not and could not equal those of face-to-face instruction, which resulted in the University's rebate of tuition fees policy. We also pushed hard for extensions for all the students who require more time to do their work, which resulted in the University's new simple extension policy. Moreover, based on the many complaints we’ve received about poor teaching quality, we succeeded in getting an agreement by the University to ensure proper support for unit coordinators and tutors delivering online teaching.

We responded and offered our support to many ongoing campaigns that are relevant to our fellow postgraduate students and staff members, including the coalition of Sydney organisers committed to defending vulnerable people in increasingly precarious housing amidst the COVID-19 crisis, the National Tertiary Education Union (NTEU) campaign to support all tertiary education staff impacted by COVID-19 measures , the anti-racism campaign and helped to find people who are willing to participate in an ABC antiracism documentary. Along with SRC, we are calling on the Federal Government to urgently review the Youth Allowance and Austudy benefits' eligibility and payment rates. We have prepared many personalized stories to help CAPA pressure the government, and we have offered our full support to many CISA campaigns.

International students were facing tremendous economic, academic and psychological hardship and pressure, in addition to the regular challenges of being an international student. We urged the University to provide an emergency financial package to support students so they could pay rent and cover their basic living expenses in Sydney. We feel we played a big role in gaining the University hardship fund and bursaries for both domestic and international students who are financially struggling. In order to support our claim, we gathered more than 5,000 student submissions along with SRC, and another postgrad only survey gathered more than 3,000 responses. They all became important data for the University to make the final decision.

In addition to successful representation and advocacy related to one-off issues, we have advocated for HDR students on many fronts. The increase of RTP stipends to only new HDR students was deeply unsatisfactory to many who feel the increase should also apply to existing recipients. SUPRA hosted a town hall

meeting for HDR students to bargain directly with the University executives,

which resulted in a top-up for scholarships on a competitive basis. We acknowledge this was only partially satisfactory. On the other hand our

efforts resulted in significant protections for HDR students in the new Supervision

Policy, and we organized another successful SUPRA Supervisor of the Year

award which received 123 nominations. When the COVID-19 pandemic hit, we

immediately urged the university to offer grant extensions for HDR students.

Also, SUPRA spent lots of time and effort in community engagement, besides traditional SUPRA monthly events, we organised new basketball competition, new fitness class. Moreover, SUPRA Student Advice and Advocacy team and Legal Service have been doing their best to support students. They moved their service online in lockdown and kept providing consultant services in academic and non-academic issues.

Minran said that If you ask a random postgrad student where they should go when they are encountering problems, they will probably say it out loud: 'SUPRA.' He believed that this is what SUPRA is all about.

At the end, He thanks all councillors, committee members, staff and volunteers who took responsibility for different issue areas. They were the real doers behind all the achievements.

**[200525-3]**: To approve the annual report and thanks SUPRA’s effort in term of 2019-2020.

**Moved**: Minran Liu **Seconded**: Xinheng Wu

24 in favour, 0 against, 2 abstentions

**Motion carried.**

# 7. Accepting the constitutional changes 2020 ★

Xinheng Wu shared the link of amended constitution and explaining notes.

Francine commented on the documents that the main revision was allowing electronic voting and other minor revisions were made on terms to make it clearer and consistency.

Xinheng Wu said that as suggested by the lawyer Ingrid van Tongeren, most revisions have been implemented where possible, however, there are some recommendations will be incorporated into the rest of the updating of the SUPRA Policy Manual (refer to item 8) which is the next stage of this project.

**[200525-4]**: To accept the constitutional changes 2020.

**Moved**: Minran Liu **Seconded**: Xiner Yuan

22 in favour, 1 against, 2 abstentions

**Motion carried.**

# 8. Accepting the Policy Manual 2020 ★

Xinheng Wu said that as suggested by the lawyer Ingrid van Tongeren, most constitutional changes have been implemented where possible, however, there are some revisions will be incorporated into the rest of the updating of the SUPRA Policy Manual.

**[200525-5]**: To accept the Policy Manual 2020.

**Moved**: Minran Liu **Seconded**: Xinheng Wu

**Motion carried.**

21 in favour, 1 against, 2 abstentions

# 9. Appointment of the Auditor ★

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Minran Liu noted that every year the AGM appoints the Auditor for the next year. Charles Pitt has been appointed as SUPRA’s Auditor last year and he did a great job.

**[200525-6]**: to appoint Charles Pitt accounting firm to be the auditor for 2020-2021.

**Moved**: Minran Liu **Seconded**: Xinheng Wu

**Motion carried.**

23 in favour, 0 against, 3 abstentions

# 10. Financial Statement and Auditor’s Report ★

Xinheng Wu shared the Financial Statement and Auditor’s Report to every attendee for their reading. After 8 minutes, Minran Liu asked if anyone have any questions, and raised motion to approve the Financial Statement and Auditor’s Report and thanks their efforts.

**[200525-7]**: To approve the Financial Statement and Auditor’s Report.

**Moved**: Minran Liu **Seconded**: Marguerite Biasatti

**Motion carried.**

20 in favour, 0 against, 0 abstentions

# 11. Other Business ★

Meeting closed at 7:31pm.