



Victoria University Student Union Board Meeting Report

Department & Presenter	VP Welfare - Chandra Altoff
Date	17/10/22

Term as Queer Officer
<p>I commenced in my role as LGBTQIA+ Officer in November 2022 with Emily Bartush. Together we made an action plan to begin revitalising LGBTQIA+ connections within the student base. This was firstly stymied mostly by COVID restrictions that allowed access to campus.</p>
<p>We created a survey to gain responses from the community with regards to the pride rooms which had been largely neglected over the COVID period. This survey also provided us with a short mailing list that we could actively email events and opportunities directly to students which worked very successfully.</p>
<p>We began undertaking the process of how we would maintain the Pride Rooms, touring all campuses as allowed, but were overwhelmed by the current state of most of the spaces. This led to a much longer consideration period about how we could best utilise the spaces.</p>
<p>Emily Bartush resigned from the shared position due to personal reasons, leaving myself as the Queer Officer.</p>
<p>We successfully ran a small event early in the year, with Laneway Learning, which had good registrations but poor turn out, with 6 members of the VU Queer community coming out. Despite this we all had a fantastic time, with us going out to dinner with a few of the students afterwards, which was a great way to introduce ourselves and get to know some of the students.</p>
<p>Further events that were organised included IDAHOBIT in May with Student Life, where we organised resources and did activities such as Tie Dying which was very successful and has been repeated at many other Queer events throughout the rest of the year, as who does not love a tie-dye moment! Other such events have included liaising with Access for a regular Coffee and Dogs meet up, which while I was not able to personally attend was met with success.</p>

During this time we liaise with the VU Pride and Ally network, got interconnected with their projects, including the LGBTQIA+ Staff learning module, where myself and other members of the Union who identify as Queer as well as other students were interviewed for our perspectives as LGBTQIA+ identifying persons. It was a fantastic and really great experience, led by Julia Earley who was such a fantastic champion for the idea.

The Staff Module had a successful launch and I was able to speak about this progress and my experience as a student at VU

I began the process of confirming movement of the Pride Rooms to new, and better suited locations, which includes the movement of St Albans Pride Room into the former VUSU Office, a much larger and more exciting space, and the movement of Footscray Park into the former VUSU Board Room, which is far more accessible. These were determined better options than seeking an entirely new space, as space is at a premium within the VU buildings. Facilities were extremely helpful in providing information and advice.

I successfully handed over the LGBTQIA+ Officer role to Ollie in June of 2022, and they have taken to the role with such amazing speed, despite being thrown into the deep end with it and having a large event in Queernival to organise and has achieved so much in that time.

I commenced in the role of VP Welfare in June 2022

I entered the VP Welfare role in June 2022 and began to acclimate myself to the requirements of the role which had not been properly undertaken and how I could work to those gaps in offerings.

The Food Pantry trial at Footscray Park begun in July 2022 and continues to be successful and provide beneficial information for a full launch in 2023. Gift card amount for FoodWorks in Gisborne nearly all spent, with the last remaining amount to be spent before the end of my term.

I have been considering practical solutions for Welfare next term to be able to continue having autonomy over purchasing further Food Pantry items without needing to be reimbursed a huge amount. Preparing an estimated Monthly budget for stocking in the future in connection with incoming VP Welfare. Keeping items stocked in future will be the hardest task.

Myself and Paris, began conversations with Margaret Theologou of Wellbeing, and the potential for running MHFA courses within VU, with student places being supported by VUSU, and the classes being attended by Staff and Students alike. This will be highly beneficial as organising with the 3rd party, while a great relationship has been maintained, there have been challenges that make organisation more difficult, including scheduling and illness. It will also provide a better usage of student funds and be more cost effective. We will be undertaking this relationship in 2023.

A successful MHFA course ran in September with much great feedback from students and attendees, and I regret delaying on getting them organised, considering their value. I have organised a final MHFA course for November, and would suggest that all Outgoing and Incoming Union Staff attend if they have not gone through it yet.

The two second semester festivals, Belonging Week and Respect and Empathy week were generally very successful and visited by approximately 1000 students across the campuses, and I feel satisfied with the delivery, and definitely provided further insights for Festival running in future. Therapy Dogs HIGHLY successful, as were food truck choices. It was a pleasure to support OB's through the building of their events and provide resources and activities for students.

I assisted with organising two successful International Student Trips in September with a Cruise to Portarlington, and Narrana Aboriginal Centre. Aquarium trip in August also reasonably successful. Arvin in his Student Life capacity was instrumental in the organisation and running of these events, while VUSU provided funding.

Placement Support vouchers offered in September have been well received by students and has had a massive undertaking from students, with as of this report support has been requested 46 times from both Domestic and International students. Responses will be closed shortly once budgetary limitations have been reached and by the end of my term. Further discussions will be had in future about how we can better assist students who are attending placements, as the financial constraints placed upon students during this already stressful time is undue and can be better managed.

In combination with the LGBTQIA+ officer, Margaret Theologou of Wellbeing, new head councillor Tony Jovanovski , Mickey Depeller of the Queer Collective, we proceeded to finalise the results of the LGBTQIA+ Student Safety Survey that was conducted in 2021, and prepare them into a report that was launched on Wear it Purple Day in August. Reviewing the data within was eye opening, especially as a person in that community and reinforced the need to view the welfare of these students with a special lens as the needs are not being met.

The launch was a very successful affair being held in the VUBar with catering and live streamed from the VUSU page and a number of notable guests coming to share in our progress and understanding the strides still need to be made for this community.

I had the opportunity to meet with Jesse from Melbourne University to see what he has been doing with Second Bite and food relief on their CBD Campus. Obviously the Universities are very different in size and scope, but there was a lot gained in terms of ideas and how we can adjust things to suit VU and how internal and external stakeholders can be brought in to provide a more comprehensive and streamlined facilitation of student welfare.