



EXECUTIVE HALF YEAR REPORT

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| NAME | Rick Zwaan |
| POSITION | President |
| REPORT PERIOD | 1st January – 30th June 2015 |
| HOURS WORKED | 1103.25 hours (942.8 required) |

Reporting on Priority Goals:

Goal 1

Education Quality: To ensure that the University provides the best teaching and learning, research opportunities, assessment and training to students.

a) **Embedding VUWSA at the heart of the student voice at Victoria**

This year I've continued the work of Sonya Clark in embedding the outcomes of the 2013 Student Representation Review which reinstated VUWSA's position as the 'primary representative body of students at Victoria' and has led VUWSA to improve its working relationships with other student groups to ensure student voice at Victoria is independent and authentic. This has involved continuing to support the running of the Student Academic Committee and Student Equity and Diversity Committees as key mechanisms for interacting with the broad array of student representatives. We've also focused on maintaining and strengthening partnerships with Ngāi Tauira, PGSA and PSC as well as Faculty Societies and Representative Groups.

I'm proud of the mutually respectful relationship we've built with the university while maintaining our freedom to critique, challenge and offer input on university activities across the board.

b) **Maintaining student seats on University Council**

When legislation to change University Council passed its final reading in Parliament in March, we swung from opposing it to ensuring Victoria retained a genuine student voice on its Council.

We've actively engaged on the council consultation process to pressure the council to retain student seats on council. So far this has been partially successful, with the retention of 'at least two students' in the proposed statute, however more work is needed to ensure those students are democratically elected. Compared to other

Universities, we've been the most successful in terms of the number of students on proposed new councils.

c) Representation on University Council

Together with Stella Blake Kelly, the elected student representative on council, I sit on University Council and actively input into council matters. Notably this year, we've put Student Wellbeing on the council agenda for the first time which has led to increased visibility of how the university must make improving student wellbeing a priority. I've also raised concerns and provided perspective on proposals as they're discussed and utilised links to the various other committees VUWSA is involved in ensure concerns don't slip through the gaps. I've also worked on how the implantation and measures of the Strategic Plan adopted in 2014 can be effective. I also sit on the Council's Finance Committee, Audit and Risk Committee and Quality and Equity Committee.

The full Council meets monthly and there is generally one or two committee meetings in between each with hefty readings of papers. My commitment to being prepared and attending every meeting has meant a decent portion of my time goes into council. There have also been a number of social council events this year which have provided excellent opportunities to talk about student issues with other council members and senior staff.



d) Representation Academic Board and Committee

I sit alongside our Academic Vice President, Jonathan Gee, and other student representatives from Ngāi Tauria, PGSA and PSC on Academic Board and Academic Committee. This year we've actively engaged on issues concerning teaching and learning, assessment, quality of proposed programmes, feedback mechanisms and equity of assessments.

Specifically this year we've had a focus on how the proliferation of 180 point masters programmes will impact on existing master's degrees and how quality may be slipping. This has been a very public sign of showing VUWSA's independence in ensuring that genuine concerns are raised.

We've also actively engaged on policy changes such as the review of the Academic Progress Statute, the Student Feedback Policy, and Master's Thesis Policy amongst many others.

Moving of the Faculty of Education, changes to the Public Policy programme and a number of Programme Reviews and Implementation Plans, proposed changes to Trimester Three and Course Materials have all involved a lot of time spent working through implications and liaising with numerous staff and students.

e) **Student Representation Coordinator**

With the departure of the previous Education Organiser, Jay Chhana, in 2014 Sonya Clark and I revised the Job Description and changed the name of the role to better align it with the work required. This saw the creation of the full time Student Representation Coordinator permanent staff position.

Jonathan Gee and I spent a lot of time recruiting for this position and now have a fantastic staff person, Gemma Swan, fulfilling the role. The role plays a key part in supporting the Education Team, keeping track of the numerous faculty boards and committees, facilitating the class representative system and drafting submissions on programme reviews.

f) **Raising the profile of academic issues**

This year I've strived to raise the profile of the work of the Education Team both within the Executive and amongst students. This has included simple things like ratifying Faculty Delegate appointments at Executive Meetings and regular Education Team updates to liaising with media about issues such as proposed new masters degrees.

Goal 2

Student Support: To advocate for adequate financial support, income and welfare for students in order to remove barriers to education.

(a) **Healthy Homes**

The year started with a continuation of VUWSA's Healthy Homes campaign – this involved a One News piece in January on the issues students face while flatting. Since then, together with Welfare Vice President – Madeleine Ashton-Martyn and Wellbeing and Sustainability Officer, Rory Lenihan-Ikin we've prepared and presented submissions to Wellington City Council, urging them to introduce a Rental Warrant of Fitness, as per many councillors and the Mayor's commitment during the local body elections. I've also followed up with several councillors and the Mayor to progress the issue. Notably, Housing Minister Nick Smith announced minimum insulation standards in June which is the most significant step forward in improving rental standards in decades.

(b) Fairer Fares

We've continued this campaign in a low key manner this year and it has largely involved backroom meetings with Councillors and University personal. However, a very significant step forward was securing a financial commitment by Wellington City Council to support the introduction of tertiary fares. A recent change in the Chair of Greater Wellington Regional Council presents some opportunities in getting this finalised later this year.

(c) Save the 18

Together with Welfare Vice President, Madeleine Ashton-Martyn, we continued the campaign to save the 18 Bus Route which the Greater Wellington Regional Council (GWRC) proposed to remove in network changes. This would have drastic impact on the accessibility of university for students living in Newtown and Mt. Cook. We had a meeting on the bus earlier in the year which was well attended by Councillors and an MP. We've also presented submissions to GWRC on the issue and worked with the University and city councillors who have also applied pressure to retain the route.



(d) Making wellbeing a priority

This year I've continued to support initiatives to make improving student wellbeing a priority for the university. This has involved advocating for it at University Council, to meeting with the Vice Chancellor and Vice Provost Academic and many others to work on shifting the culture of the university. A visible wellbeing campaign, that I was involved in developing in my previous role as Welfare Vice President was launched this year and a physical wellbeing space 'The Bubble' will open in July.

(e) Loans and Allowances and Budget 2015

In response to the dismal increase in student loan living costs and allowances in April we released a media release which got significant media pick up. We also worked on analysing and providing a timely response to the tertiary components of the Governments Budget which was released in May. Increasing student support is key in removing the financial barriers to education. I've also had a few other media interviews on the topic.

(f) Advisory Committee on the Student Services Levy (ACSSL)

I co-chair this committee, which oversees the \$704 Student Services Levy. We help to ensure it is spent effectively and in appropriate ways to support students directly. This year we've been working on finalising a strategic review that will hopefully ensure greater transparency and effective use of the levy in the future.

(g) Stress Free Study Week

I supported Welfare Vice President, Madeleine Ashton-Martyn, in the delivery of the most successful Stress Free Study Week to date. Over the week we served over 8,000 free meals and drinks to students at all campuses.

(h) Living Wage

I've continued to support the Living Wage campaign as decent wages mean that students aren't forced to work ridiculous hours and can afford to focus on study. Alongside supporting local campaigns I also sit on the national governance board. We also held a successful living wage forum as part of our IGM.

(i) Flu shots

I played a part in hosting the national immunisation campaign which was launched on campus with the Minister of Health, Jonathan Coleman. I used the opportunity to challenge the minister to take broader preventative steps such as improving the quality of rentals to prevent students getting sick.

(j) Student Job Search (SJS)

VUWSA being a member of SJS allows Victoria students free access to the service which helps students find part time work. I sit on the National Council of SJS as one of four member representatives. This year we've changed some structures to allow far greater numbers of tertiary students nationally to access the service.

Goal 3

Equity and Access: To promote equity for disadvantaged students in access to and within the University.

a) Student Equity and Diversity Committee

I sit on this committee which is convened by Welfare Vice President, Madeleine Ashton-Martyn. Its membership consists of a number of student representative groups from around the university. The perspectives from students of different backgrounds allows us to discuss issues of equity and diversity and gain a better understanding of how decisions will impact various people.

b) University Strategic Plan and Quality Assurance and Equity Committee

The University's Strategic Plan, adopted in 2014, sets a focus to "secure the intellectual potential put at risk through experience of disadvantage" (Primary Strategy 4). This year I've worked on seeing how the implementation plans will give effect to this. I also sit on the University Council's Quality Assurance and Equity Committee which was created this year and I've worked on ensuring the committee has a broad and effective scope.

c) Making Wellbeing a Priority

See above

d) ACSSL

See above

e) SJS

See above

f) Fairer Fares

See above

g) Save the 18

See above

h) Budget day

See above

Goal 4

Services: To provide quality, cost effective services for the benefit of members, and, where appropriate, students.

a) Improving Staffing Capacity

Earlier this year I led the recruitment of new personal for virtually all staffing positions after a restructure occurred in 2014 leaving a number of vacancies. This has allowed for the creation of a new position, Association Secretary, which has a focus on ensuring VUWSA's day-to-day operations are working effectively and efficiently. Through careful budget management, I've managed to increase the hours of a number of key positions to full time and increase the overall number of staff we have this year. In appointing people to the positions of General Manager, Association Secretary, Student Advocate, Student Representation Coordinator and our Reception Team, I've taken the time to ensure we find talented and passionate people. Compared to previous years I've been on the Executive, our staffing capacity is far higher and this has led to improvements in consistency and quality of service delivery.

b) Service improvements

A fresh set of staff has allowed for significant service improvements, with systems and processes being revised to meet today's needs and basic issues like reception being staffed addressed.

c) Reception

Reception staffing shortages which plagued 2014 and previous years have been addressed this year through a revamp in the staffing model. This year I've implemented the change to having a number of talented student's staff reception on a part time basis. This has the dual benefit of increasing employment opportunities for current students as well as ensuring our key front facing staff are relatable to students. The systems, processes and policies that reception uses have been revised and are quality and consistency is maintained by the new Association Secretary.

d) Website Redevelopment

This year we're well underway on the long overdue revamp of the VUWSA website. Once completed, this will improve access to services with more available online. The redevelopment also allows for far easier changes in the future as services evolve and the way students access them change.

Goal 5

Activities: To support sporting, social and cultural activities for and by members and students, particularly through Clubs.

a) OWeek

This year's OWeek saw VUWSA offer the most diverse line up of events in recent time. I supported the work of the Events team in pulling it off. Most of the evening events we had were sold out and for the first time we incorporated the Fringe Festival, Newtown Festival and Homegrown into the schedule. This involved a double decker bus taking



hall students to Newtown and sponsoring a free stage at Homegrown which feature local Wellington acts. On campus, we had a series of Fringe Solo Snippets which often featured Victoria students. Throughout OWeek we had partner events with several student groups including PGSA, PSC and the Engineering Club which enabled us to broaden the range of activities available. For the first time for a VUWSA President, I co-MC'd the University's official first

year welcome which significantly increased VUWSA's exposure to new students. Learnings from OWeek 2015 have already been incorporated into planning for OWeek 2016 which is well underway and far ahead of where it has been in previous years.

b) Sponsorship panel

Together with Clubs and Activities Officer, Rory McNamara, I sit on the Sponsorship Panel which oversees the distribution of grants to support club activities and support individuals to represent Victoria and New Zealand at national and international sporting and cultural events.

c) VUWSA Van

After a year of being Vanless, I put buying a new van on the top of the asset acquisition list at the start of the year. This leadership quickly bore fruit with the purchase of a 12 seater van with a tow bar, specifically chosen to enable clubs to travel with a team of people and equipment. I also worked on improving the booking system (it can mostly be done online!) and ensuring the rental rates were well below market rates to increase accessibility. Insurance, policies and procedures have all been updated to ensure the great 'VUWSA Van' folk stories of days gone past aren't repeated.

Goal 6

Public Issues: To be the critic and conscience of the University and society, by promoting discussion and action on issues concerning students.

a) Healthy Homes

See above

b) Student loans and living costs

See above

c) Living Wage

See above

d) Fairer Fares & Save the 18

See above

e) Academic Quality

See above

f) University Council

See above

g) Notable Media Appearances and Media Releases:

- 'Students lobby for flats WOF', *Dominion Post*, 19th January 2015. <http://www.stuff.co.nz/national/65177404/students-lobby-for-flats-wof.html>
- 'High debt scares off Victoria University prospects,' *Dominion Post*, 23rd January 2015. <http://www.stuff.co.nz/national/education/65329298/high-debt-scares-off-victoria-university-prospects>
- 'Uni students struggle to find home as flat battle begins', *One News*, 6pm News, 8th February 2015. (lead story on flat availability, affordability and quality). <https://www.tvnz.co.nz/one-news/new-zealand/uni-students-struggle-to-find-home-as-flat-battle-begins-6230148>
- 'Are full-time, unpaid internships exploitative?' *Radio New Zealand: Nine to Noon*, 18th February 2015. <http://www.radionz.co.nz/national/programmes/ninetoonoon/audio/20167685/are-full-time,-unpaid-internships-exploitative>
- 'Victoria Uni misses the bus but northern suburbs catch up', *Dominion Post*, 24th February 2015. (story on Save the 18 campaign). <http://www.stuff.co.nz/dominion-post/news/66563329/Victoria-Uni-misses-the-bus-but-northern-suburbs-catch-up>
- 'Victoria community comes together for Vanuatu', *Media Release*, 18 March 2015. (led to a short piece on Radio NZ as well). <http://www.scoop.co.nz/stories/AK1503/S00496/victoria-community-comes-together-for-vanuatu.htm>
- 'Ninety cent student loan increase slammed as 'piddly'', *Dominion Post*, 1st April 2015. (story originated from VUWSA Media release). <http://www.stuff.co.nz/national/education/67584805/ninety-cent-student-loan-increase-slammed-as-piddly>
- 'Landlords want nearly 8 per cent higher rents,' *Stuff.co.nz*, 22nd April 2015. (story on rental affordability). <http://www.stuff.co.nz/business/67945542/Landlords-want-nearly-8-per-cent-higher-rents>
- 'Health Minister promotes, receives flu jab,' *NZ Herald*, 21st April 2015. (story on immunisation campaign launch and wider student health concerns). [nzherald.co.nz/nz/news/article.cfm?c_id=1&objectid=11436172](http://www.nzherald.co.nz/nz/news/article.cfm?c_id=1&objectid=11436172)
- 'Pulling funds out of Fossil Fuels,' *Radio New Zealand: Our Changing World*. (interview on divestment campaign). <http://www.radionz.co.nz/national/programmes/ourchangingworld/audio/201751332/pulling-funds-out-of-fossil-fuels>
- 'Students say university is risking quality,' *Radio New Zealand: Morning Report*, 30th April 2015. (story on 180pt masters). <http://www.radionz.co.nz/national/programmes/morningreport/audio/201752460/students-say-university-is-risking-quality>
- 'Student army to the rescue in flood-hit Wellington region,' *Dominion Post*, 18th May 2015. <http://www.stuff.co.nz/dominion-post/68615832/Student-Army-to-the-rescue-in-flood-hit-Wellington-region>

- 'Budget 2015: Students left in the dog house', *VUWSA Media Release*, 21st May 2015. <http://www.scoop.co.nz/stories/PO1505/S00272/budget-2015-students-left-in-the-doghouse.htm>
- Weekly *Salient* column and regular comment on *Salient* news stories
- Other media includes regular comment on stories for Newstalk ZB Wellington, Radio Live, *The Dominion Post* and various other media outlets.

Goal 7

Finance: To maximise the member benefits by minimising fees or user charges through internal efficiency and non-member revenue.

a) Improving staffing capacity

See above

b) Budget setting and monitoring

This year I'm proud of facilitating a breakeven budget and getting it passed months earlier than previous Executives. Through careful financial management we've managed to increase member benefits through a better OWeek, more regular events, increased staffing levels and service provision, a larger Stress Free Study Week, a new van, and new IT equipment and increased print quality for *Salient*. This has been achieved without increasing the costs for students and we've been actively pursuing other revenue streams. As chair of Audit and Finance Committee I've led improvements in financial reporting regularity and quality and we've promptly addressed the minor concerns raised by our Auditors. Our Treasurer-Secretary, Jacinta Gulasekharam, has played a key role in revamping a number of policies, processes and reporting procedures.

c) VUWSA Trust

I sit on the VUWSA Trust along with Treasurer-Secretary Jacinta Gulasekharam and together we assist in the financial oversight of VUWSA's assets and investments. This year we've worked on improving the connection between Vicbooks, The VUWSA Trust and the VUWSA Executive and seeing how the 'group' can work cohesively towards shared strategic goals.

d) Relationship with VUW

This year I've continued to foster a mutually respectful relationship with VUW while increasing our independence. This has led to an increase in trust and common understanding. Our current funding agreement expires at the end of 2015 and preliminary talks have started with a positive outlook for negotiating a 2016 and beyond funding agreement.



Goal 8

Accountability: To ensure accountability to, and representation of, members

a) Initial General Meeting

General meetings are a key way for members to hold the Executive to account and to influence policy. This year I successfully chaired our Initial General Meeting in March where I prepared and presented the 2014 Annual Report and audited accounts. For the

first time, all components of the VUWSA Group (Vicbooks, the VUWSA Trust and VUWSA) were audited together. To ensure we had the accounts ready in time required me to put in a lot of time meeting with the auditors and facilitating progress with the other components of the group. Notably, we reached quorum earlier than previous years.

b) Executive Meetings

These are open to all members and *Salient*, they are key way of ensuring the Executive is on track and accountable to each other and our members.

c) Executive Work reports

These are a key way I report on work done and are scrutinised by the Executive Reporting Committee and are publically available online.

d) Weekly Presidents Column in *Salient*

This is a key method of communication and comment on what VUWSA is doing or on current affairs.

e) *Salient*

I regularly provide comment to *Salient* and liaise with the Editor and News Editor regularly on topical matters.

f) ACSSL

See above

g) Scrutineer and Signatory to VUWSA Accounts

I'm normally one of the signatories on any and all uses of association funds and regularly question expenses.

Goal 9

Sustainability: To recognise the needs of current and future generations by promoting sustainable lifestyles and actions to members while ensuring the sustainable operation of the Association and University members

a) VUWSA Strategic Planning

This year I've continued the work started by 2014 President Sonya Clark on developing a long term strategic direction and plan for VUWSA. This has involved analysing where we're at, incorporating stakeholder research and reviews from 2014, and looking ahead to see how we can improve on our weaknesses and grasp opportunities. This includes seeing how we can diversify and increase our revenue streams which is also a key goal I've set for our new General Manager.

b) A focus on climate change



Together with Wellbeing and Sustainability Officer, Rory Lenihan-Ikin, I've ensured VUWSA has promoted concerns about the largest issue facing our generation. This has involved pushing the University to follow through on divesting from fossil fuels (via my role on the University Foundation), as well as promoting the issue in the media (see above) and working with the Trust to check our investments are ethical. I have also been working with the Vice Chancellor to ensure climate change is on the agenda in terms of strategic risks and to ensure the work of our leading climate scientists is promoted. Climate change has also been a key part of submissions to WCC and GWRC. We also co-hosted a 'climathon' event with WCC and Victoria.

c) **Fairer Fares and Save the 18**

See above for detail – ensuring our public transport system is affordable and accessible is a key part of promoting sustainable lifestyles.

d) **Waste**

I've supported the work done by our Wellbeing and Sustainability Officer, Rory Lenihan-Ikin, on improving the waste management systems in the VUWSA offices and more widely in the university. This has involved recycling bins being installed in the VUWSA offices and compost bins installed in Kelburn and Pipitea.

e) **Budget setting and monitoring**

See above

General Tasks and Initiatives

- 1. Preparing for meetings (reading reports, liaising with people, etc.)**
- 2. Meeting and liaising with Executive Members and supporting them with their projects**
- 3. Reviewing and editing management reports**
- 4. Meeting and liaising with VUWSA Staff**
- 5. Meeting and liaising with Victoria staff**
- 6. Meeting and liaising with external people (e.g. Councillors, MPs, media etc.)**
- 7. Representing VUWSA and students at events (e.g. Graduation Ceremonies, Distinguished Alumni Awards, etc.)**
- 8. Helping out and supporting with events**
- 9. Responding to emails, tweets, facebook messages and yaks from students with concerns**
- 10. Negotiated space use of Student Union Building to maximise student use**
- 11. Negotiating membership levy issues with NZUSA**

Representation

VUWSA

1. **VUWSA Executive (Chair)**
2. **VUWSA Audit and Finance Committee (Chair)**
3. **VUWSA Executive Reporting Committee**
4. **VUWSA Performance Review Committee (Chair)**
5. **VUWSA Policy Committee**
6. **VUWSA Management Committee**
7. **VUWSA Trust**
8. **VUWSA Publications Committee**
9. **Student Academic Committee**
10. **Student Equity and Diversity Committee**

Victoria University

11. **University Council**
12. **University Council – Audit and Risk Committee**
13. **University Council – Finance Committee**
14. **University Council – Quality Assurance and Equity Committee**
15. **Academic Board**
16. **Academic Committee**
17. **Advisory Committee on the Student Services Levy (ACSSL) (Co-chair)**
18. **Joint Student Union Board (JSUB)**
19. **Disciplinary Committee**
20. **VUW Foundation Trust Board**
21. **Student Leaders roundtable**
22. **Sponsorship Panel**
23. **Regular meetings with the Vice Chancellor, Provost, Director of Academic Services, Director of Campus Services, Director Academic Office and various other staff members.**

External

24. **Student Job Search National Council**
25. **Living Wage National Council**
26. **NZUSA National Executive**
27. **Meetings with various Councillors and the Mayor**
28. **Representation at ANZAC Day services**
29. **Meetings with various MPs**
30. **Regular comment to media outlets**

Strengths

- 1. Leadership** – I think I have effectively led the Executive team and put a lot of time into ensuring we have a cohesive culture and shared vision.
- 2. Dedication** – The role of President is a never ending one and I tend to stick around until any particular job is done. This ranges from flirring lecture theatres first thing in the morning to staying up late writing submissions or packing food for Stress Free Study Week. This is also shown in my recorded surplus.
- 3. Financial Prudence** – As described above, the budgeted surplus and strict monitoring takes a lot of time and careful planning.
- 4. Institutional Knowledge** – Having been on the Executive for two previous terms has meant I've built up a decent knowledge of VUWSA and the University this has proved helpful on many occasions and makes decisions easier.
- 5. Long Term Vision** - A key part of my role is working on how to set VUWSA up well for the future and working things that will take years to reach fruition. VUWSA has been around for 116years and I hope it will still be around in 116 years' time. This involves thinking about how we can ensure VUWSA will still be around and relevant as the nature of the student body evolves. I've also tried to focus on ensuring that VUWSA has a sustainable, both financially and environmentally.

Weaknesses

- 1. Balance** – At times I haven't balanced my VUWSA University, Social Life commitments that well. However this is largely due to a desire to achieve outcomes, although at times it is due to a lack of prioritisation or organisation.
- 2. Delegation** – In some areas I haven't effectively delegated tasks to relevant people, however this is something I'm actively working on improving.
- 3. Communication** - keeping a team of 10 Executive members and many other staff, and students, in the loop on a broad range of topics isn't always easy and at times I haven't done the best job at this.
- 4. Focus** - The role of a President is very varied with many different competing demands. Generally something unexpected comes up every day and can completely change the focus of any given week. This means it is often difficult to focus on a particular task as much as I would like to. As someone who is generally impatient to get things done, I can often move onto new tasks and projects without completing others to the extent I would like to.

Overall Rating

Overall I am proud of the work my work as President and the work of the entire VUWSA team. I'm privileged to have such a dedicated team driving projects forward. It's a fantastically diverse job where you get a unique insight into all levels and areas of the university community. While fascinating, dealing with a large and unwieldy bureaucracy can often be frustrating when you're trying to make things happen. However, to date, I think I've effectively utilised my institutional knowledge to make incremental progress.

Starting the year with virtually no staff has meant I've had the opportunity to build a team from scratch and set the culture. However this has also meant a large amount of my time has been spent on internal operational matters which is often unseen. Although this work is crucial to 'get VUWSA on track' I'm looking forward to refocusing for the

latter half of the year on more outward facing projects and knocking off key things I first got on VUWSA to do.

I'm confident that VUWSA is in good shape and well ahead of where we've been in the past. I'm looking forward to using the rest of my term to ensuring there is a clear direction and plan to see VUWSA thrive into the future.