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NAME	Thomas Rackley
POSITION	Treasurer Secretary
REPORT PERIOD	1 st January – 30 June, 2015
HOURS WORKED	301.5
HOURS REQUIRED	291.5

For purposes of focus and fluency I have organised my summary under the relevant constitutional and strategic goals that relate to the treasurer position.

Priority Goals | Strategic:

- **A Strong Association**
- **A Student Friendly Wellington**

Priority Goals | Constitutional:

- **Services**
- **Finance**
- **Accountability**

Goal 4: Services: to provide quality, cost effective services for the benefit of members and, where appropriate, students.

A Strong Association:

In my opinion these goals epitomize the Treasurer position. It isn't a glamorous one, out campaigning, providing welfare or engaging by nature, although a fair involvement in that is included. No the Treasurer is a role which has its representative spending his or her time working at the desk and meeting table ensuring that the associations internal structures continue to function, are relevant and efficient. It is about ensuring that VUWSA is in fact a strong association and at every opportunity looking for ways to increase its strength and outreach for the benefit of all students. The Strong Association goal directly links to this

Constitutional Goal. Our services are the primary way that we interact with our students and if they are not strong then we are not serving them. This is why it is so important that the treasurer secretary work behind the scenes to ensure that these services run as effective as possible.

Independence/Financial Stability:

This is a key and important concept for VUWSA, we are independent from the University, enabling us to truly represent students in University affairs. However the reality doesn't match up with the rhetoric as well as one might hope. VUWSA relies very heavily on the grant it gets each year from the Student Services Levy to provide the bulk of its funding. This grant primarily goes towards funding our services, salient and those who work behind the scenes to make VUWSA what it is.

While reliance on this isn't necessarily a bad thing it isn't particularly positive in itself. VUWSA must negotiate for its lot with the University and sometimes, such as this year, that can be quite a problem. Although not sitting on the committee myself during the negotiations this year I met with Rory and Matt before, after and in-between each meet to discuss what VUWSA wished to achieve and how we might move forward. What this exposure did for me was really highlight what my predecessor had highlighted as perhaps the biggest issue facing VUWSA: reliance on our current forms of income is unsustainable and in order to enhance ourselves and become a truly strong and independent association we must find alternative revenue streams.

This has been the focus of VUWSA's Revenue and Venture Committee, which I chair, who initially reviewed the proposal from the previous year's Treasurer before seeking the advice of the great minds on the VUWSA trust. After meeting and discussing the proposal it was decided that it required greater fleshing out and was perhaps something more appropriate for when VUWSA is stronger financially. I then combined this project with what will be my main focus in the second half of the year. Looking to negotiate with power, insurance, internet or housing providers to offer special deals through VUWSA of which we will take a cut for each one sold. Through a project like this I am working to not only provide more services for students but strengthen our financial independence. At this stage it has been primarily research and discussions but even this has consumed a large portion of time as the intricacies of such plans are detailed but examples from other universities and student associations around the world

are promising. This project also ties in with *A Student Friendly Wellington*, by providing a service such as this VUWSA helps minimise issues that students face when transitioning from Halls into flats, between flats or into university in the first place.

Continuing with the *Strong Association* theme is a quick focus on internal structures and the importance of our constitution. I was appointed as Acting Treasurer Secretary at the end of 2016 and therefore had to be elected at a special election in order to truly represent the students in my position. Especially when having to make important financial decisions on behalf of the association. Thus while planning the IGM, a part of the Secretary side of my role, I was also involved in the planning side of the SGM to be held for an election. I planned the logistics of the event and hired equipment but took a step back for anything which could cause conflicts of interest. My additional treasurer duties took a hit this week as I had to prepare for the IGM, write a speech and balance assignments but ultimately our IGM was successful as was the SGM and I was elected by a majority to serve as the Treasurer for the remainder of the year.

Committees:

Back again to *A Strong Association* I need to acknowledge what really consumes a lot of my time, it isn't flashy, innovative or a lot of the time fun, but it is important. Our internal committees are what keep the internal gears of this association turning and they have been meeting to discuss the nitty gritty details, exciting new opportunities and fulfil constitutional obligations all year long. I will provide a brief overview excluding the Revenue and Venture Committee as that has already been discussed.

Executive Reporting Committee

This is probably the least exciting so I will do it first. This committee meets to review, amend and approve the Work Reports of the Executive. It has met a few times and as of the publishing of this report will have read through each executive members reports for the first half of the year 2 – 3 times each. Fun.

Audit and Finance Committee

This committee meets once a month to discuss the internal finances of the association and decisions which need to be made. This is a chance for myself and the CEO to fill the committee abroad in on what we are discussing and seek opinions from the wider executive. This was a big forum for early discussions on the budgeting issues, early discussions on the election campaign and later discussions on ways to improve the association through avenues such as purchasing a new van for clubs and rep groups to utilise.

Policy Committee

Initially the committee discussed the early stages of constitutional review which would later consume much of my time. Then we began to assume our constitutional duty of reviewing Terms of References and Internal Policies to make sure they are up to date and relevant.

Student Media Committee

This committee is an interesting one. It met a few times during the first half of the year although there were repeated issues with scheduling due to contact issues with the student media coordinators. Initially the meetings primarily concerned the financials for Salient in 2017 but no major decisions were made. Discussion then moved to the reformation of the committee to better reflect the internal structure of VUWSA today. This would eventuate in the Constitutional Review Process later however these early discussions and motions were hugely important and influential moving forward. Finally the committee discussed Salient's development plan moving forward which is exciting.

Goal 7: Finance: to maximize the member benefits by minimizing fees or user charges.

Back to *A Strong Association* we come to the primary focus of the Treasurer, the budget. While working towards greater financial independence has been a primary focus for the second Quarter much of the first quarter was spent acclimating to the internal financial structure and then helping resolve issues which arose.

Remunerations:

The first initial project was gaining remunerations for the officers of VUWSA. The officers work long hours, often significantly over what they are constitutionally obliged or even expected to do. Coupled with high prices of living in Wellington and New Zealand today, having to balance full time study, part time jobs and VUWSA can be quite a strain on the executive. This has prompted Exec burnout to be a prominent problem in the past. Increasing the honorarium for future officers from \$2000 to minimum wage for constitutional hours is an important first step and this was where I spent my earlier time with the CEO working out the logistics and then assisting its presentation and implementation at our IGM. This was an initiative strongly supported by previous executives, the current executive and as we discovered at the IGM, the student body as well. However it was not to be without trial.

Budget and Deficit:

Shortly after the IGM was announced it was discovered that there was significant costs unaccounted for in the 2017 budget, namely auditing. Unfortunately this was discovered too late resulting in the increased remunerations for the executive being added to what was no

longer a no deficit budget. Then to top it off, updated projections from the beginning of the year changed our forecast for income, decreasing it significantly. All together this had a major impact on the budget for 2017, casting us into major deficit. This was in violation of our constitution as VUWSA could not run a deficit budget and so I ran a budgeting workshop to explain our budget to the executive and then at our next meeting explained the repercussions of approving different levels of acceptable deficit within our budget. The executive at that meeting passed what it would find an acceptable deficit under the condition that to the best of our reasonable ability we avoided a deficit budget in 2018 also. From this I continued the internal consultation process I had been running in asking executive members about where cuts could be made to our budget. We tightened up our ship even further than the already tight constraints that we had been operating under. In order to try and offset this and also fund an additional project that I was assisting Rory on I helped prepare two memorandums for the VUWSA trust. The idea behind these memos were for funding for an Alumni connection project for the second half of the year and for a one off grant to offset our deficit by funding the Executive remunerations for 2017. This grant was approved on condition of proving that the need for another such grant in 2018 would be unnecessary so myself and the CEO prepared follow up documents then had a meeting to discuss this with the trust. Offsetting our deficit and significantly improving our 2017 financials. This financial difficulty is not an uncommon one for VUWSA and further highlights the importance of my aforementioned project to increase alternative revenue streams through additional services, however it is important to note that the committee and myself is also looking to find additional grants or sponsors for VUWSA and its events to supplement this. Initially some discussion and research was done into finding sponsorship for Stress Free Study Week however ultimately time was a resource we didn't get to exploit and this has been pushed into the second half of the year. This brings us back to *A Student Friendly Wellington* as incorporating sponsors, especially local firms or small to medium enterprises could open but a world of co-operation and deals for students in Wellington.

We also began the 2018 budgeting process with preliminary discussions and a student consultation process.

Goal 9: Accountability: to ensure accountability to, and representation of, members.

The primary relevance of Accountability falls under the constitutional review process that was started in this half of the year. Accountability was identified as a major area of focus for the

executive moving forward as while meeting the requirements currently, we do not actively pursue accountability. Thus it became a primary focus in the constitutional review process.

Constitutional Review:

This process was instigated by myself after discovering that, ignoring the remunerations amendment, the constitution had not been reviewed since 2015. Additionally myself and staff members identified many material issues with the constitution. The process began with discussions in the Policy Committee before forming the Constitutional Review Committee. When we first met we discussed timelines and plans and designated areas of the constitution to personal scrutinise. Several areas were identified as problematic and requiring review. After our second meeting I began the research and development stage. I also instigated consultation, opening up to recommendations from the student body and then holding a session to which students could attend to discuss amendments with me. I was pleasantly surprised by how many submissions we received in the end. After this process it was identified that what we were attempting to tackle was too large and we would need to split the review into two sections. Part one would address the primary issues identified while the committee following the initial amendments would re meet to repeat the process for fleshing out VUWSAs election rules and processes. The rest of this review process happened in the second half of the year.

Other Goals:

Goal 6: Public Issues:

On the executive I have in many cases assumed the role of devil's advocate. I am the first to admit that before late last year my involvement with VUWSA was minimal at best, in fact I was quite the critic. So after getting involved and learning about it I try my hardest to bring a disengaged outsider perspective to our discussions. It is VERY easy for a group of like-minded and engaged people who get along to get lost in their discussions without considering the broader student group. Hence when my devil's advocate role comes in, trying to throw alternative and in many cases negative views into the mix. Always in the pursuit of greater discussion and a more effective association.

General Tasks and Initiatives

When I started I found the internal filing system was in a bit of disarray when I began my initial explorations of it. Thus I spent a good part of my time initially re-organising the internal filing system and my emails. There were emails from 2015 still floating in the inbox so it was a substantial task to organise and file nearly a year and a half worth of emails.



O-Week was intense. Thankfully it coincided with moving from full time to decreased hours at work, although not part time I had a significant amount more time to play around with. The whole week was a blast and again great bonding with the new team. Helped out at the stalls a few times signing new students up and doing my best to push the VUWSA gospel out to this new target market. Additionally the gigs and night events were a heap of fun. I helped out at the Toga Party, Kid Ink and Tiny Tempah events. Cheese toastie duty was crazy on toga night. The halls chant off was awesome too, a great chance to reach out to students and try a delicious pulled pork sandwich.



Following O-week and NSO-Week VUWSA had a stall at the Newtown Fair. I volunteered to help out and what a fantastic day in the sun it was. Due to a lack of sign creation had to impromptu create a sign and push my marketing skills around giving away the free furniture that VUWSA was offering but that offered a unique chance to talk with a lot of random people from the community about what VUWSA is about and learn about other community initiatives.





Attending the Wellington Pride Parade with the VUWSA and UniQ contingent was amazing. I had never been before and getting a chance to experience such an emotional and joyful occasion with new friends was a definite highlight of the beginning of the year. Despite the grey weather VUWSA made up for it by carrying the giant rainbow flag that had travelled the world. Overall a heartening and lovely highlight from the start of the year.

Stress free study week was awesome but I was only able to volunteer at two events during it as I had an exam on the Friday of Study week. I supervised the lego station in the hub and ran one of the breakfast sessions. Really hoping my exams are later in the second half of the year as I want to get more involved when the next one rolls around.

Summary

To be cliché, wow how fast time flies. Writing this really makes you re-evaluate how your time is spent. But I can honestly say that I have loved my time in VUWSA this far and am really proud of what I and the executive at large has accomplished. The executive is such an awesome and passionate group of people and I feel privileged to have been a part of it. A lot of my projects shall hopefully reach fruition in the second half of the year and perhaps my second half year report will be a lot more interesting and about external happenings than the joys of the internal machine.

I do have some areas I need to work on however, my time management took a hit for a part of the year and I was not utilizing outlook calendar as well as I should be. Balancing a part time job, 4 papers, one honors paper and VUWSA has been difficult at best but I believe I can improve here in the second half of the year.

