

**VUWSA**  
YOUR STUDENTS' ASSOCIATION

**EXECUTIVE HALF-YEAR REPORT**



<b>NAME</b>	Michael Turnbull
<b>POSITION</b>	Welfare Vice-President

<b>REPORT PERIOD</b>	Jan 1 <sup>st</sup> – July 12 <sup>th</sup>
<b>HOURS WORKED</b>	596
<b>HOURS REQUIRED</b>	560

## Introduction

Never before has half a year felt like three. I have aged like milk. Despite this, my time as Welfare Vice-President has been full of many challenges overcome, and no shortage of growth. I have thoroughly enjoyed leading a hugely wholesome Welfare Team that really gave our all, even when our events were consistently cancelled by the ever-present threat of Covid-19. The VUWSA Executive this year worked amazingly well throughout a global pandemic and, despite some internal changes and restructuring, continued to deliver for students at every possibility.

## Constitutional Goals and Requirements

Constitutional Goal 2: Student Support

Constitutional Goal 3: Equity and Access

Constitution Goal 6: Public Issues

Constitutional Goal 8: Accountability

## Halls Module

One of the first jobs of the year was working with Emma Mossman, of the Student Interest and Conflict Resolution Team, to help create interactive modules for first year hall students around healthy relationships. These modules covered consent, bystander intervention and how to build a healthy dynamic within relationships. I helped to edit and give Emma suggestions for how the modules would be most engaging and impactful. Myself, our Engagement VP Joanna Li, and Thursdays in Black Coordinator Jhala Tran-Lawrence also filmed some of the video involved in the modules.

These modules were implemented in Halls at the beginning of the trimester. They are a step in the right direction in terms of addressing some of the major issues of welfare which consistently arising within the Halls, particularly that of sexual harm.

## NZUSA Conference

While it was still possible, all of the NZUSA affiliated Student Associations converged in Wellington for our annual conference. This was a great opportunity to get to know some of our own exec's new members, and touch base with those in other student associations. We also went over the NZUSA execs plans for the year, and established some relationships between VUWSA and other SA's. It was good to have some additional training from external organizations as well.

## VUWSA Retreat

VUWSA retreat, as per usual, was hella lit and very informative. A great chance for team bonding and year planning, we went through a robust breakdown of the processes within VUWSA and VUW. We also did some personality tests (I am SUCH an ENFP #campaignerlife), to help find out how we work best within in a team. We had a run down as to what the duties and obligations of each member of the executive was.

We also began the planning of four campaigns and initiatives, and the general VUWSA calendar for the year. All up the exec came away with a healthy team spirit and a good idea of the direction of VUWSA for the year.



## National Welfare Committee

The New Zealand Union of Students Association created the National Welfare Committee, a meeting place for Welfare and Wellbeing representatives across New Zealand's universities and polytechnics student associations. This Welfare Committee began early in the year, and became invaluable as Covid-19 began to impact the tertiary sector. As VUWSA's representative I was able to help take part in constructive korero and discussion as to how each Student Association was helping to support student welfare throughout the pandemic.

## Student Assembly

Designed throughout 2019, the Student Assembly is an avenue through which various rep groups can convene to discuss issues arising at Vic. It allows a platform for VUWSA to bring together and better understand the student voice and mandate at VUW. It's an assembly by students, for students, where they are adequately compensated for their time and ideas with a living wage.

The plan was always to implement the Student Assembly early on in 2020, with four 8-hour long hui spread across the year. However, with the onset of the Covid-19 lockdown, we had to approach this implementation quite differently. Instead, after working closely with the University Council Student Representatives, we initiated our first Student Assembly Meeting over zoom. We had a number of other zoom Student Assembly meetings throughout lockdown and, let me tell you, there were some pretty cool backgrounds in them.

## Mosaic Symposium (CW sexual harm)

Myself and Ralph Zambrano, our Treasurer-Secretary, attended the MOSAIC conference on healing people from male sexual assault. It was a very interesting conference, in which we learnt from a wide range of psychological experts who had worked in the field of male therapy. We learnt a lot about which direction we should take in terms of confronting the issue of sexual harm on campus.

## O-Week

We love O-Week. It's fun. It's hectic. I get to drive the VUWSA van (badly). What's not to like? This year we had some pretty sick performances as well. I largely helped at the night time performances and events, assisting in the safe room and dropping off at home people who'd gone a bit too rogue.

I also joined in the packing of the O-Week bags with the exec. We gave these bags out to first year students throughout the week. The exec also had a substantial amount of limelight throughout the week, with myself and Ralph appearing in a video on how to tie a toga, and Joanna and I helping to MC the Welcome Festival. At the latter, Joanna revealed that she low-key high-key hated me in first year, in front of literally thousands of first years. This was news to me at the time. Most of the Halls got into it, but KJ just didn't vibe.



I also helped out with an activation event in the courtyard. It was pretty chill vibes, we enjoyed getting amongst it, and it was a good buzz for the Exec. I attended the refugee welcome event, which was a really wholesome affair.



## Sex Week

It's the most saucy, educational and provocative week of the year... Sex Week. And this year, just like 70% of men, VUWSA just couldn't quite get sex week to its climax.

We started strong with some productive planning, and began earnestly working with a number of different groups to host a wide range of events and panels on campus, all surrounding the idea of safe, positive, sex. We meet with a number of external groups, including VUW TIB, STUDIO, and University Staff, to make sure the event would be as engaging as possible for the largest proportion of students.

Working with Salient we filmed a video to raise awareness and hype for sex week, involving a large and relatively squeaky bed. We asked some students some saucy questions and got them to give us their answers. It was a truly enlightening and very entertaining experience. We also worked with one of our student designers to create posters and media which was inclusive of non-binary and gender fluid students. One of our most exciting events was the Sex Week Market, which brought together a wide range of businesses, NGO's and groups focused on promoting safe, pleasurable and positive sex.

Unfortunately, the weekend before Sex Week, the ramifications of Covid-19 hit New Zealand. Overnight all of our plans were ended and we were unable to continue with any of our Sex Week events in person. We quickly launched "Sex Week: The Digital Get-Down" a digital take on the week. Unfortunately,

students' priorities were, naturally, not focused on sex week. RIP what could have been a fantastically sexy week.

## Halls Committee

Early on in the year myself and Joanna began brainstorming about how to reimplement the Halls Committee. This was a previously existing consultation mechanism, which allowed first year students to discuss issues which arise in Halls. It did not operate last year, and myself and Joanna have so far spent a large amount of time discussing how it could best be re-implemented with Rainsforth Dix, Director of Campus Living, and Stephanie Cottrill, Associate Director of Campus Living.

Our main goal was to revamp for later this year or early 2020. The resurgence of Covid has significantly pushed back the reimplementation timeframe. Our main goal is to turn this into a Welfare focused, VUWSA run forum for halls students to address a wide range of issues within Halls of Residence. We have so far designed a halls matrix to take forward to Rainsforth.

## Submission to on the Residential Tenancies Act

Myself and our Campaigns Officer, Grace Carr, worked on our submission to Government regarding the upcoming amendments to the Residential Tenancy Act. In particular, we focused on access to healthy and warm housing for students. We also gave the oral submission to a government panel, and Grace killed it. Good job Grace.

## TIB IGM

I helped to set up, and briefly attended, the Thursdays in Black IGM. It was a nice way to meet the new executive and get behind a good cause.

## COVID-19 Emergency Response

With the surge of covid-19 in New Zealand came absolute pandemonium on the plans of the Executive. Very quickly we were brought into lockdown, postponing many of our events and causing the cancellation of Sex Week.

We began immediate planning as to how our new executive would run, especially now that many of our usual roles and obligations were unable to be undertaken under lockdown. We had a shift towards a more equally spread workload, with a greater focus on online engagement and work. I continued to operate under the Welfare lens, spending literal hours on zoom in meetings regarding student wellbeing and welfare. This involved reaching out and touching base with a number of rep and equity groups throughout lockdown.

Early on in lockdown, I helped shoot a video online with NZUSA that talked about the impacts of lockdown on students mental and physical health. I was half way through my new beard growth, so unfortunately had no 'good side' to base my filming off.

### Piki Youth Reference Groups

Beginning early in the year, and continuing throughout lockdown, I sat on the Piki Youth Reference Group as a student representative. The Piki program has a specific focus on supplying youth and adolescence with the tools and support required to overcome adversity and help improve their wellbeing. A trial has been implemented at VUW to improve the counselling and mental health support within the university, by supplying additional resources and counselors. Continuing VUW's trial of the program throughout the pandemic was a really informative process, as we were able to gauge student usage of Piki based programs, and how the program actually helped students throughout a time of immense mental fatigue and stress.

### WSVA

The WSVA, Wellington Student Volunteer Army, was set up as a response to the needs of the Wellington community during the initial stages of New Zealand's lockdown. With a particular focus on working to help protect the dignity and rights of those struggling during Level 4, the WSVA offered training to student volunteers, who in turn ran errands, dropped off community food packages, or simply helped keep company (via phone!!!) those vulnerable in their communities. I was lucky enough to be a community leader of the Kelburn area, alongside Aoife Crumley, and together we helped to train our volunteers on how to hygienically deliver food parcels and our free menstrual product service.

Initially, both the Community Pantry food stockpile and menstrual products were sourced from VUWSA themselves, and we later switched to bulk buying from Pak n Save to continue to stock the pantry. I was the main coordinator of the Community Pantry stockpile, running the entirety of the food package service out of my flat, until another stockpile was set up in Porirua. Student volunteers would be put in touch with a community member in need, and then liaise with me as to how much food the family needed and organise a pick-up time. Some days were very full on, with consistent food packing and pickups, but it was a really worthwhile and effective job, which I am very grateful to have been involved in.

At the end of lockdown, the remainder of the food stockpile was returned to VUWSA. A debrief was given to volunteers, and some final calls were made to those we had supported throughout lockdown. I'm very proud of the work that the volunteers undertook, many students gave hours of their time to support those in need in their communities.

## Ongoing Meetings

Throughout the year, I was involved in a number of recurring meetings with members of academic staff. There were several of these such meetings.

## Vice-Provost Academic Meetings (Throughout Lockdown)

Throughout lockdown, the Vice-Provost Academic, Stuart Brock, held a meeting with Associate Deans, Senior Leadership Team Members, and some student reps and faculty delegates. Myself, Joanna Li, Taylah Shuker and Geo Robrigado attended these meetings on behalf of VUWSA. On the whole, and especially at the beginning, these meetings were relatively inefficient and poorly run. Often times, the student voice was not adequately considered, despite our vocalness within the meetings. Ultimately, these meetings were often rife with frustration from both students and staff alike.

## TEU Meetings

Also beginning early in lockdown was our fortnightly meetings with the Tertiary Education Union. These meetings consisted of myself, our advocate Erica Schouten, Taylah and one- two members of the TEU. These meetings were a sounding board for issues arising in both the staff and student spaces, and allowed both sides to gain a better and more holistic understanding of the impacts of academic decisions made by



the SLT. We continued these meetings until well after the lockdown, and continue to have a strong relationship with the TEU until this day.

## Uni Council

The regular meetings between University Council student representatives and VUWSA remained steady during the lockdown period. The assistance of these representatives, and discussions between us, were invaluable, especially when discussing how best to approach issues such as the Student Assembly and major academic decisions.

## Meeting with Director of Campus Living

Myself and Joanna had a recurring meeting with the Director of Campus Living, Rainsforth Dix, throughout lockdown. This meeting was highly effective in dealing with a number of Halls based issues that arose, specifically the room holding fee and Stafford House. This also helped us to cement a stronger relationship with Rainsforth, which will be valuable for work that needs to be done next year.

## VUWSA Student Rep Meetings

I attended the VUWSA Student Rep meetings throughout lockdown on behalf of VUWSA. These meetings were set up and run by Pam Thorburn, the director of Student Academic Services at VUW. In contrast with the VPA meetings, these allowed an open space for student reps from a number of different groups to bring forward issues and have them proactively and efficiently resolved. There was a feeling of genuine understanding and that the student voice was adequately consulted and listened to throughout these meetings.

## Re-Orientation

With many students experiencing a tough time throughout the pandemic lockdown period, we thought it was only appropriate to give them a lil summin-summin to return to. Re-Oweek this year was largely held in the hub. I assisted in helping with the safe room during some of our Hub-based performances, and also attended some other re-Oweek events. It was a fun time and good to see the Hub put to use.

## Fast-Forward Campaign

Throughout the Covid-19 period, there was a number of areas in which substantial groundwork was made to better student living and academic success here at VUW. An example was the implementation of lecture recordings, something that VUWSA had been pushing on for a number of years, as well as the work done to provide online counselling and doctors' appointments for those who could not make it into Mauri Ora for health or equity reasonings.

The Fast-Forward campaign, brainchild of our Wellbeing and Sustainability officer, Sophie Dixon, and our Equity Officer, Parminder Kaur, was designed to ensure that we retain these wins outside of lockdown. We focused on three main areas, Academic, Welfare and Engagement, and pushed to ensure we had an equitable and accessible university system. We managed to secure a number of wins, such as ensuring that lecture recordings were mandatory for a number of courses, the provision of online tutorials, and more accessible recordings for those with auditory and visual impairments.

## Halls Issue

A significant issue arose when the university began to charge students for their Halls of Residence rooms, despite the students not being able to return to the halls to occupy them. As expected, the student community was significantly frustrated, and a group of students called for a rent strike. I helped to draft communications around this issue with Joanna and Taylah, and attended meetings with Rainsforth Dix and Stephanie Cottrill to work through it. Through working with a number of student representatives and groups, and through certain University avenues, we managed to successfully reverse the decision.

However, it became quickly apparent that the issues within VUW's Halls of Residence were not only relevant to our beloved University. Issues of everything from poor hall management, to harmful cultures and processes, were brought to light by a number of hall-living students across New Zealand. This spurred on the Inquiry into the Student Accommodation, led by the Education and Workforce Select Committee.

We also used this time to better understand some more of the processes present within Halls at VUW. One such example was our discussions with Emma Mossman, Student Interest and Conflict Advisor, as to how critical incidences within Vics halls are dealt with. Additionally, I undertook a discussion with the EVP

and WVP of MUWSA as to how they can implement a 'Halls Committee' at Masey Wellington to help them make bigger and better changes within their Halls.

### **ANZSSA Covid Conversation**

I attended the ANZSSA, Australia and New Zealand Student Services Association, conversation on Covid. This was a meeting of multiple members of the student services industry across New Zealand and Australia, who came together to discuss how they had managed throughout the lockdown in providing services to their students. Many of these professionals were involved in the student health sector, and I was invited to speak to the student perspective of student services throughout lockdown. I gave feedback on how well our student services at VUW had been delivered throughout lockdown, and also spoke to some of the major issues students faced during this time.

### **Black Lives Matter March**

I was very grateful to have been able to assist in the setup of the Black Lives Matter march, which rallied at Civic Square and then marched on Parliament. I predominantly helped with the technology set up, assisting our CEO Matt Tucker in audio set up and delivery of speakers down to Civic Square.

### **SFSW**

Stress Free Study Week was, surprisingly, actually reasonably stress free this year. I manned the stall at Kelburn, which, due to covid, consisted of cereal and instant coffee. Not quite the spread as we have had in previous years, but students seemed pretty thankful regardless.

### **University Resiliency Planning**

With the huge financial impacts of Covid-19 on the University, there was bound to be some proposed restructure or changes to the way the University is administrated and managed. This came in the form of the University Resiliency Planning program, a multi-faceted program which split into several different streams, each focused on a different aspect of the University and how it can build resilience in the face of the pandemic.

We pushed early on for the inclusion of student voices in the planning streams. After a lot of back and forth, passive-aggressive emails, and a few fairly taut meetings, we gained a fortnightly meeting with Rawinia Higgins. These meetings involve a wide number of student representatives from various groups, and we have so far had a number of initial meetings which have discussed the direction of the planning, as well as worked on creating a Terms of Reference to guide the program.

### **Just Speak Workshop**

I attended the *JustSpeak* workshop, which focused on how to spark change through conversations. Although I had to leave early as I was ill, I still gained a lot from the initial portion of the workshop.

### **Scenario Building Workshop**

The University hosted a scenario building workshop, with a particular focus on how the University should react to various external scenarios impacting upon VUW's financial wellbeing. It was a very interesting initiative and allowed a wide range of students to better understand how the University goes about its strategic planning.

### **Expansion of Menstrual Products**

Near the end of Trimester 1, I began to communicate with groups at Pipitea campus as to the expansion and implementation of Menstrual Products. Working alongside our advocate Alice Dell, we began to initiate the implementation of further expansion of our menstrual products scheme down in Pipitea, primarily communicating with Victoria University of Wellington Feminist Law Society and Victoria University of Wellington Law Students Society.

### **Sustainability Week**

The welfare team began to plan for the upcoming Sustainability Week. All going well we should be able to go through with our full week this time, market included.

## VUWSA Re-Retreat

VUWSA re-retreat was an awesome chance for us to re-establish the Executive, welcoming the newly minted Max Salmon into his role as Education Officer, and also allowing Taylah Shuker to step into her new role as Acting-President. We spent a lot of time planning and team bonding, enjoying each other's company whilst reviewing the year as a whole and learning how best we can improve upon our previous mistakes. It was a real pleasure to reflect and reconnect after a shocking couple months under lockdown.