

ANNUAL REPORT SUPRA 2010-11



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Acknowledgment of Country.

SUPRA acknowledges the traditional owners of this land, the Gadigal People of the Eora Nation, and we pay our respects to them and their elders past, present and future.

If you are reading this publication, you are standing on Aboriginal Land.

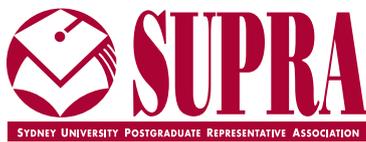
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A special thanks to Anne Coates and Phil Soliman for their help and advice.



Sydney University Postgraduate Representative Association

SUPRA is the postgraduate student organisation at the University of Sydney and is run by postgrads, for postgrads. SUPRA represents all postgraduates at Sydney University, and all postgraduates can look to SUPRA for assistance with any issues that may confront them - both academically and personally - during the course of their candidature.

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President's Report

January - June 2011



Angelus Morningstar

Having come into the role of President half-way through the term has been a mixed blessing. Starting in January has allowed me to have some time to adjust to the role before the University became significantly busy. However, it also required me to hit the ground running on any account.

We must thank the Chancellor, Dr. Marie Bashir, Vice-Chancellor Dr. Michael Spence, Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Education) Professor Derrick Armstrong, Dr. Margaret Edmond, Simon French, Simon Barrie and Simon Malcolm for their ongoing support throughout the year. We would also like to thank the Fellows of Senate for their attention to student affairs, and for making an effort to keep lines of communication open with SUPRA.

Budget and Expenditure

In the first few months of Presidency, I was required to oversee the finalisation of this year's budget, even taking on some of the duties of the former-Treasurer who was unable to provide the necessary time commitment. Concurrent with the budgeting issues were staff concerns about the reduced budget, as we are currently in a situation where our expenditure is not sustainable.

These discussions have had to be mindful of the general environment of funding cuts from the University applied to nearly every unit and sector of the student support services. Also mindful of the potential implementation of the Student Services and Amenities Fee (SSAF) that we might see in the next year, the decisions regarding the Budget for this year have permitted some medium-term solutions to allow our Association to function, but with the need to consider the future of the organisation later this year.

One of the critical aspects of decisions has been how international students would be impacted with any potential reduction of services. This poses a severe equity issue as international students do not have the same ability to access public community services, particularly those like legal services. For many international students, we are the only option of support they have available, and even then we cannot respond to all their needs.

The Vice Chancellor affirmed that he holds a current clear commitment to the idea that healthy student life involves good student representation, and that the student association must be maintained regardless of the form the legislation takes.

In regards to future funding arrangements for student associations, the income from the SSAF will only supplement existing income from the University, but units like SUPRA and SRC should not expect to see an increase of funding. In fact, Derek reported that income would be very tight for the next two years, and that we are likely only to be able to expect increases in funding after 2013.

In raising the question about multi-year agreements, the VC and Derek Armstrong agreed that this would be desirable from the perspective of the University, with perhaps a triennium financing model. However, SUPRA has been warned that we were likely to need at least one year more of single year funding over 2012 because the future of the University's budget that remains uncertain.

Student Services and Amenities Fee

Canberra is likely to move very quickly after June 1st, and we can have confidence that we will see this going through the legislative process. Currently, there are numerous details to be negotiated in relation to the collection of this fee. This includes a need to put in place a team for managing that. Currently there is none.

One concern from the University is that if the SSAF comes in and they cannot collect it from Jan 1st because the University is not equipped to collect them. To prepare for this, there will be an initial outlay needed in place in order to collect. This means there will be an upfront cost about this structure. However, the investments of this cost might still be worthwhile due to savings that could be offset from the current funding needed to go into student services.

The University is not as a stage for student consultation as there needs to be some internal discussion amongst the administration. These discussions will consider what charges relates to part-time vs full-time, postgraduate vs undergraduate, international vs local students. All this needs to happen for the layout structure to be implemented.

The University is confident that it will come into place by January 2012 and that there will be scope to consider what its own arrangements will be, but that this currently involves some second guessing.

Student Wellbeing and Development Project

In the next six months, students at the University can expect to see the implementation of the formerly named "Pastoral" care project, whose remit is designed to identify areas of redundancy of student support services, and consolidate as many of these services where possible. SUPRA currently maintains a curious but skeptical stance on these changes.

The portfolio for the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Education), which is held by Derek Armstrong, is still conducting its portfolio review of student, academic, and staff services. It has an aspiration to ensure that much of the campus-wide expenditure on these services will be reduced, as the financing for them is not sustainable. Thus, there are aspirations to assess the suite of services offered and to identify services that are duplicated and consequently eliminate duplication.

The student services, such as those provided by SUPRA and the SRC, as funded through the Funding Agreement, are one aspect of this review and is being attended to through the Student Wellbeing and Development Project (SWDP otherwise known as the Pastoral Care Project). A

brief on this project is below. This project is falling under the administration of Jordi Austin, the head of Student Services.

Derek advised that it was only part of an internal review going on in the portfolio, which seeks to include a wider range of academic, teaching and student support services that are typically provided solely at faculty levels with their own arrangements. For reference, things like the learning centre and library would be considered academic support, while things like SUPRA and SRC would count as student support service. The SWDP is designed to consider the suite of student services only, but will be mindful of the larger review, taking place in the DVC (Ed) portfolio.

The SWDP has a different rationale from the broader review, but do align in the sense that there is to be a holistic view of the student experience. Part of this is identifying the different characteristics of student groups in order to be properly holistic in its approaches to ways the University support students.

There is some work being developed around the interlinkages between the different suites of services, but are trying to be proactive rather than reactive in the way they embed them into the practices of teaching and learning. They are all intended to shift practice away from remedy to prevention.

Nevertheless, the reduction of many of these student services poses a complication for providing a holistic scope of services to all students. Already the Learning Centre and the Library services have seen cuts in staff and resources as a reduction in areas of academic support service (outside the remit of the SWDP).

Unfortunately, this means that the support network for students is diminishing before the replacement network is in place. Students are beginning to fall through the cracks, and often land in SUPRA's

network as the final break before students have no where to turn. In part, I would deliver a challenge to the University on this issue. In principle, I agree with the idea of providing a holistic services model, but disagree with how many of those services should be provided. Care must be taken to what the purposes of these arrangements are.

Strategic Visions for the Future

This is where the current challenge of the Presidency lies; namely having a strategic vision for the next year. Though I do intend to re-run for the role of President over the next term, to see this vision to its fruition, I do intend to have a strategic plan prepared for the next Council's term. This will be one of the last things I seek to finalise in the month of June as at this time I will have some idea of who the new Office Bearers will be and the shape of the new Council. The purpose of this strategy plan is to help consolidate much of the institutional knowledge of SUPRA and assess the outputs of our Association.

In principle, SUPRA demonstrates a synergy between the representative work that it performs and the case work it provides. Our representative work is designed to approach the University proactively and advise on policy reform necessary for best practice, but also to provide community development to empower our constituency to represent themselves where possible. Both of these types of work require the support and knowledge that comes from our case work. However, without the oversight that our representative work to give a holistic approach to student issues, case work can only put out spot fires and not respond to systemic issues. Finding a balance between these two will be the other challenge for any Council.

Policy Reforms

While the Vice-President (Policy) has taken the lead on most of the submissions and policy work, there have been two areas of work that I have taken a specific lead and interest in. These include restructuring and reforms to our Constitution, and reforms to our meeting procedure (the later simply being work to facilitate the smooth functioning of our meetings).

The Constitutional reforms have all been aimed at ensuring that our Constitution reflects either current practice of our Association, or best practice for our Association. It has also been designed to reflow the content of the Constitution to make it easier to navigate, and more compliant with the requirements of such significant legal documents. Lastly, one of the advantages of the new format and layout as proposed, is that it will mean the Constitution will be closer to that which would be required if the Association ever decides to incorporate. As this was one of the decisions of the 1998 AGM, only to be denied by the Senate, allowing the legal backbone of our organisation to mirror this will help facilitate any decisions that are made in that direction.

Representation Successes

One of the best successes of my Presidency to date have been the challenge that we directed to Campus Living Villages (CLV) relating to the experiences of poor practice and management of the residents there. This was a classic example of the good use of bargaining power, where individual residents felt powerless in registering their complaints to their residential managers. Once SUPRA was able to collectively represent their interests and level concerns about incidents and practices, we were able to get CLV to accede to every single demand we had presented to them. I would like to attribute the success of these negotiations to the soft approach and the mutual desire from both parties to come to an agreement about best practices and communication. We look forward to continuing our consultation with CLV to ensure these practices are maintained.

Student Visa Program

One concern that SUPRA has tried to respond to has been changes and difficulties around student visas for HDR students. SUPRA has worked in consultation and provided contributions to the government review of this issue being headed by the Hon Michael Knight.

It was identified that the big problem for HDR students regarding Visas is that they're caught up in regulations and risk policies that don't apply to HDR students. Michael Knight who has undertaken a review of this student visa program, is sympathetic and wants help create a separate category of visa for HDR students which should be streamlined.

Knight has given concerns why HDR students should be delayed with their visa, as they are all on level 1 or 2 visa (which should be almost immediate), and had his staff investigating these delays. The delays come when students seek to do course packaging, and then they are assessed at the most difficult level.

Knight's recommendations will be that students with a PhD completion shall automatically get three years of residency. Knight states that it should not matter if they're doing work relevant to their PhD, stating that if they cannot acquire relevant work and are only doing other work to support themselves they will probably return home afterwards.

University's housing strategy

Housing has been one of the big strategies for SUPRA over the past year, requiring some particular focus from our representation. In particular, the Building and Estates Committee (BEC) is working on the University's housing strategy bit by bit. What the University has now done up to know is identify all the properties within a 20 min walking distance of main campus that are available and would be appropriate for student housing.

Next, there are two streams of work that have been started. The first is to do a bit more work on the financing of student accommodation. The assumption has always been that the accommodation would be provided on public-private partnership. However, there are many different ways to organise this, with some giving the University greater management and rent control, but also greater administrative costs.

The other question run in parallel, of which they want student input, has started but currently has only a little progress. This is to acquire more detailed research into the housing market. There was some work done when the University started this project about the overall need for numbers of units, but

this wasn't the kind of detailed work needed as it wasn't appropriate at the time. This extra info is now needed, and includes details about the kinds of accommodation that different students need and want, and price points for these. There will be comparisons and ranges to accommodate luxury, college and cheap accommodation, in order to determine what the range in the different markets are.

Similarly, there is market research being conducted in conjunction with CIS, and SUPRA and SRC are invited to raise awareness about this research at the appropriate juncture. Some of the relevant market differentiations are the stability of accommodation longevity and reasonable price difference for those accommodations.

Challenges for SUPRA

One of the most concerning change that is occurring amongst the University administration right now are changes in the way that students are consulted by the Office of the Vice Chancellor and Principal. Significantly, we have seen the end of formal direct consultation with the Presidents of the Student Associations to be relegated to a subcommittee of the Senior Executive Group (SEG). We voiced out concerns that this committee may water down the student voice and opportunities to rejoin the senior academic staff with proper student consultation of the respective constituencies. While the Student Consultative Committee may prove to do the work it promises to do, SUPRA remains sceptical that it will be as effective as it needs to be.

Vice-President (Policy)

July 2010-April 2011



Rashmi Kumar

2010 was a difficult year for SUPRA. Not only did the Council have to deal with funding cuts, resulting in a budget deficit for the first time in memory, but there were also major changes occurring within the University. The final University Strategic Plan for 2011-2015 was released in August 2010, precipitating a number of changes within the University that will affect postgraduate students in particular ways. Of particular note is that the Strategic Plan predicts an increase in the proportion of postgraduate students as an overall percentage of the student load.

SUPRA has also undergone considerable change, with my position and another Vice-President position (Vice-President (Community), currently held by Heidi Claus) newly created, and taking over responsibilities from other Office-Bearing roles. That has meant that considerable time and attention has been paid to the structure of the

SUPRA Council and how best SUPRA can deploy its human resources to achieve the aims of the organisation in the face of funding reductions.

I have tried to use the knowledge I gained in my previous two terms of office as president and co-president to take SUPRA forward in terms of our internal policies and our representations externally within the University, to governments, and within society more broadly.

The 2008-09 Review of Higher Education (Bradley Review) has seen major initiatives in postgraduate education come about, from the development of the Research Workforce Strategy, to the review of base funding for higher education, there have been a number of ongoing processes that SUPRA has been involved in to ensure that postgrads get the best out of the higher education system in the future. The Base Funding Review in particular offered us a chance to put forward positions about the effect of systemic changes in higher education on postgraduate students that had never been articulated before.

Within the University, there are major changes occurring which have huge implications for students. Changes to the library system, the faculties, and a major review of student welfare provision within the university promise quite interesting times ahead for the 2011-12 SUPRA Council. I wish them well in addressing all of these issues as they arise.

I also tried to use the position to support the internal workings of SUPRA by writing new policies to address processes that needed improving. In my previous experience as president and co-president, it became apparent that grievance handling and anti-discrimination processes within the organisation were lacking and didn't offer guidance about how to go about addressing serious issues. With this experience, I worked on

developing a Grievance Policy and Procedures, a Safer Spaces Policy, and a Code of Conduct for the SUPRA Council. These will likely be taken forward by my successors, Lian Jenvey and Katherine Harper.

2011 was also my final year at University, and I have now moved on to full-time employment. I was involved in SUPRA for all three years of my postgraduate degree, and will never forget the experiences I had working with other students to better our lot. I would like to thank each and every person involved with SUPRA over the last three years for contributing to the organisation and to making higher education better for postgrads. I'd like to thank Nick Irving (SUPRA co-president 2009-10) in particular for putting up with me.

Submissions

Over 2010-11, I was involved in working on a number of submissions to University and government

- Research Workforce Strategy (DIISR)
- Residential Tenancies Act Regulations (NSW Government)
- Position Paper on Increased Fee-Paying Places in the Juris Doctor Program (University Senate)
- Draft Minimum Resources Policy for Postgraduate Research Students (University Senior Executive Group)
- Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency Draft Legislation (DEEWR)
- Base Funding Review (DEEWR)
- Student Visa Review (DIAC)

Policies

Over 2010-11, I developed a number of new policies for SUPRA, with the assistance of the SUPRA Council and the Policy Committee.

- Conflict of Interest Policy
- Safer Spaces Policy (in progress)
- Grievance Policy (in progress)
- SUPRA Council Code of Conduct (in progress)
- Review of Affirmative Action provisions in the SUPRA Constitution
- Human Resources Policy (initial)

Committees

I attended a number of University bodies as Vice-President (Policy) and when I acted in the role of the President.

- Academic Board
- Graduate Studies Committee
- Admissions Subcommittee
- SEG Research Training Committee
- SEG Education Committee
- PhD Finance Working Party
- Student Accommodation Working Party

Acting Vice-Presidents (Policy)

April - June 2011

Katherine Harper

Constitutional Review

The main focus this month has been the constitutional review. I picked up on the tail end of this project once Rashmi had resigned. I revised the draft changes proposed to the constitution, and then took the draft to the constitutional review committee for further discussion, deliberation, and revision. The proposed changes to the constitution are now finalized and ready to be put to the AGM on Friday 27th May 2011.

Standing Orders Review

The other major focus this month has been the standing orders review. The changes were drafted and revised, and then put to the policy committee for further revision. The final version of the standing orders review is to be put to council at the 23rd May 2011 meeting.

Review of Draft Policies

Having only started in this role about a month ago, I have spent some time reviewing all the policies that are currently in draft form. I have found numerous policies that are in various stages of production, and shall now prioritize them for completion.

I would also like to thank those council members and SUPRA staff members who have given me help in this new role over the last month!

Lian Jenvey



Since the last council meeting I have been busy getting acquainted with the role of Vice-President Policy. This has included meeting up with my Co-VP Katherine Harper and

discussing what we plan to do in the last part of the 2010-11 council term.

I have also participated in the following policy reviews and drafting processes:

Constitutional review and amendments

This involved reviewing the current constitution and revising it where appropriate to reflect current practices.

Review of standing orders

This involved reviewing the policy document prepared by Angelus and discussing how to draft and implement appropriate changes.

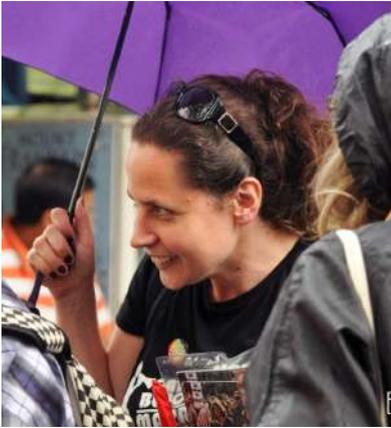
General Review of Policy

After some reflection and discussion with Katherine, I think there is space to develop policy around the following issues the impending library re-development and more developed policy on social justice issues that SUPRA has supported over the years. (Or at least we should collate the various motions and discussions that the council has had over the last few years)

Library Restructure

This is an issue that has obviously drawn the anger of many students. There was a rally of 500 students last week on campus against the restructure. This would be the largest rally on campus in years.

Vice-President (Community)



Heidi Claus

2010/11 was the first time SUPRA had a VP Community (and VP Policy) role. The positions were created to reflect the importance of these areas of work for SUPRA. The Community portfolio combines the old “activities” portfolio, as well as the “campaigns” part of the old Campaigns and Policy Officer, as well as overseeing SUPRA’s relationships with faculties and students, both on the main campus and “satellite” campuses.

O-Week

O-Week is an important time for SUPRA to make itself known to new students. This year we ran a stall all week on the front lawns, held an immigration seminar and an end of week welcome BBQ at our offices, which was attended by 150-200 SUPRA subscribers, both new and subscribers from previous years.

Inductions

At the start of each semester, SUPRA representatives try to attend as many faculty inductions as we can get invitations for. This means months of ringing around and e-mailing all the faculties, finding out when inductions are and trying to get a short spot for SUPRA to talk to students. Most faculties are only too happy to have SUPRA come and speak to new students, and hand out useful information about SUPRA and life as a postgrad at USYD. If you have never had a SUPRA induction, why not get in touch with us and let us know the person in your faculty who organises inductions. We’ll try to ensure future postgrads in your department get to meet us sooner, rather than when they need us later!

Campaigns

SUPRA has been undergoing serious changes to the way we organise due to lack of funding. In 2006, the Howard government introduced legislation they called “voluntary” student unionism (VSU). In reality, this legislation is more like compulsory NON-Unionism, as it makes it illegal for universities to collect membership fees on behalf of student organisations (as they did in the past), and also makes it illegal for student organisations to charge a compulsory membership fee for the provision of their services. Hence SUPRA is mostly reliant on the University for funding.

For the last few years, SUPRA has been able to negotiate funding on an annual basis from the University. Unfortunately, the amount SUPRA gets from the University has been decreasing, while costs for providing our basic services (mainly student rights and advocacy) have been increasing. The logic of this arrangement is inevitable, and service cuts will be the outcome.

But we don't want this to happen! We don't want to lose student control of student organisations like SUPRA. We don't want to lose the independent advice and advocacy that only a student run organisation can provide. We don't want to lose the ability to campaign for student rights.

"How can I help?" I hear you cry.

The main way you can help SUPRA stay independent and funded is by being involved with SUPRA! By using our services and providing us feedback, by being involved in the political campaigns we participate in, by coming along to our events, by reading our eGrad bulletin and staying up to date with what's going on in the University and specifically with SUPRA. It is much harder for the University to argue that SUPRA not be funded when it is an active, vibrant organisation of students making their voices heard, at rallies, in forums, on committees, in faculty meetings and all the ways postgraduate students interact with SUPRA.

An example of political campaigns that SUPRA supports and in which postgraduate students at the University of Sydney are involved is the Marriage Equality campaign.

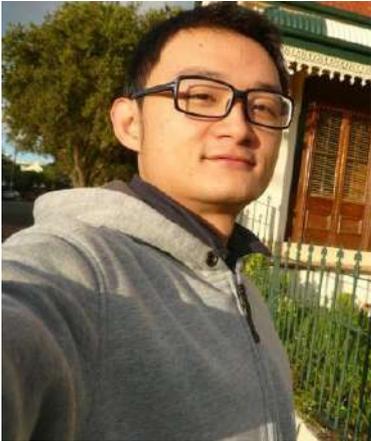
One of the most successful campaigns around, the marriage equality campaign has been going for nearly seven years, and although we have not won marriage equality yet, many feel that we are getting closer with increasing rapidity. Not only could we actually win this campaign, some of the side effects of having a vibrant and dogged campaign that mobilises people in reasonably numbers on a regular basis, have had real and materially positive effects on the lives of many LGBTI students.

For those who don't know about the campaign, it is about opposing homophobia and gaining equal rights for Lesbian, Gay, Bi, Trans and Intersex people, and people who identify as sex and gender diverse. Not only in marriage rights (although we want that) but in all areas of law, with the aim that by removing the official means of oppression, the unofficial ones will be harder to maintain. To that extent, our campaign has been really successful already, with many laws being changed to our advantage over the last few years: we've won these changes and advances, not because we asked nicely, but because we won't give up, because we keep on kicking up a fuss, because we keep making it an election issue every election, and because we keep it in people's minds by our constant campaigning.

The next rally will be held on the anniversary of the ban on same sex marriage on Saturday 13 August, 1pm Sydney Town Hall. This will be a National Day of Action, with protests happening all around the country.

Treasurer Report

June - December 2010



Chihong Choi

January - March 2011
Angelus Morningstar

Despite funding constraints as last year, this year has seen some progress in the financial management of SUPRA with the help from members of the Budget Committee. Our achievements are as followed:

Balancing the Budget

Last year the association made a strategic decision to operate at a deficit budget with the hopes that operating according to our expenditure would demonstrate to the University the necessity of funding many of the services provided by SUPRA.

With the establishment of the new Council for 2010-11, the strategic direction was that the 2011 Budget should work towards being balanced and have no deficit. This was the direction that was taken to the Budget Committee, where a number of drafts of the Budget were prepared. These decisions were not easy and often quite controversial as some of them would have meant radical restructuring of our organisation or severe cuts of

our services.

These were negotiations that were conducted over a process of three months, with staff and with the University. Unfortunately, our first round of Budget was halted when the University stated they would provide us with tens of thousands of dollars less than they had first estimated they could provide in a preliminary verbal agreement. This meant that they already constrained Budget that had been prepared was unable to accommodate this decreased income and still provide a completely Budget or compromise SUPRA's services and representation work.

The final decision was a Budget that was not as balanced as we would have liked, and operating at some deficit for this year.

Operational Efficiency

The decision to operate once more at a deficit was not taken lightly. Unlike the previous year where the strategy was to operate as the status quo of earlier years, with a mind for growth, this would not be an option this year. The deficit proposed is simply an extension of our finances to cover the suite of services that SUPRA constituents have come to expect from our organisation as any less expenditure on these would compromise the Associations ability to deliver them completely.

Consequently, the decisions moving forward on the Budget will be to focus on methods of reducing expenditure across the organisation. Already any expenditure that was considered non-essential to the operation of the organisation has been pared down or cut entirely. Similarly, one of the major decisions taken by members of Council and spearheaded by the Office Bearers was to institute an organisation-wide reduction in stipends as the primary strategy for reducing expenditure. This was an act taken in good faith by the Council to demonstrate necessary leadership and responsibility for cost reductions. The rationale being that any reductions should be lead through example.

April - June 2011

Nevertheless, the later half of this year will need to focus on prioritising the resources of SUPRA. SUPRA simply does not have the resources to conduct itself in a situation of growth and must be conservative about our existing resources (both in terms of assets and personnel).

Budget Processes

One of the most significant outcomes of the Budget process of the last year was the apparent need to put in better structures for the management and production of a Budget, as well as more focused scrutiny of expenditure. Consequently the budget documentation was examined in-depth during the budgeting process, which allowed for the elimination of outdated line items and accounts while simultaneously minimising the effects on accounting practice and auditing process, in order to achieve a more effective accounting and budgeting practice and to provide a clearer level of details of transfers of the funds.

One of the initiatives sought in the coming months will be the formalisation of the Budget Committee with a remit to conduct much of this work and ensure best budgetary practice for the coming Council Term.

Accounts Management

One final achievement was a change in the nature of the bank accounts held, where the accounts were re-negotiated and restructures to maximise the interest of SUPRA's liquid assets of SUPRA's reserves.



David Latimer

In the famous movie retelling of Watergate which led to the downfall of the US Nixon Administration, the shadowy figure of 'Deep Throat' offers some advice to journalist Bob Woodward: "Follow the money"

It's advice which should have been followed by the Howard Government when they decided to abolish up-front student fees. The members of that government took a nostalgic view of a student society. They imagined an organisation like SUPRA as a lingering flower-child of the 1960's protest period. They saw student funds supporting political causes and underground newspapers with anarchist, subversive propaganda. They asked the question as to whether it was appropriate mature-age, international or students on remote campuses should pay good money for "services" wasted by the politically-active younger students of their imagination.

They should have taken Deep Throat's advice.

Had they followed the money, they would have discovered that the vast majority of SUPRA's financial resources were directed primarily towards essential student welfare. In the financial report from 2006, which was the last year of compulsory membership, 80% of the \$672,000 raised from student subscriptions was paid for student advice and advocacy services. This included a caseload covering educational appeals, social security, tenancy and legal work.

Full-fee paying international students faced and still face an even greater range of problems as most need to adjust to a new way of life in a foreign language. And these students help make education Australia's second largest services export behind tourism.

From 2007, University of Sydney has underwritten SUPRA's services. To do otherwise, would undermine its position as a world-class education provider. Furthermore, it just doesn't make sense that student welfare services can be provided on a user-pays basis. SUPRA is not selling coffee-beans. It is representing students and providing crucial assistance to those facing educational or other hardship.

In 2010, the financial resources available to SUPRA continue to be directed primarily towards these laudable objectives. Of the \$738,420 provided in funding, approximately \$630,000 or 85% was paid to provide casework student advice and advocacy.

Our student publications are not subversive manifestos but practical guides covering student services and assisting educational course work. In 2010, website and publication expenses were \$12,785. Further savings are expected in 2011 as we complete the transfer of published works from hardcopy to online services.

The campaigns and projects budget, which some argue was the true target of the Howard government VSU policy, continued to receive millions in the currency of student enthusiasm. But in hard dollars, expenditure was \$2543.

The post graduate community appreciates the funding and indirect assistance provided from the University. Faced with the continued investment repercussions from the Global Economic Crisis, the University pushed for further reductions across all faculties and its administration. SUPRA's representatives were not able to secure the support required to fully-address the welfare concerns of postgraduates.

Long-term savings were used to cover a final 2010 deficit of \$58,589 (7% of expenditure).

The SUPRA council and staff recognised the both the responsibility of reversing this deficit and the impact of cutting student services. Negotiations commenced with the Redfern Legal Centre to see whether services could be terminated or reduced by a third. It was soon recognised that our solicitor was facing even higher workload in 2010 compared to any previous year, yet continuing to provide a level of service arguably superior to commercial law firms.

The untenability of having students unprotected and legally unrepresented, especially those on a study visa, gave the council great pause. Staff rallied for the continued provision of this service offering to reduce administrative costs to the bare minimum. The executive accepted a substantial drop in hourly pay. Nevertheless, we are continuing to expect a deficit of \$48,000 by the end of 2011.

SUPRA is positioning itself to return to surplus by ensuring the 2012 budget committee commence work as soon as the new council takes its seats. Our Vice-President for Community, Heidi Claus, has taken the lead in preparing a carefully-formulated campaign to ensure the university does not lose sight of our need for their support.

A tribute must be paid for the former treasurer Chihong Choi, who tackled all the budget issues raised by the current financial situation with both tenacity and dedication. He patiently discussed solutions with council members, staff, SUPRA committees and university decision makers to obtain the best possible results. Thanks also must go John Fell our financial manager who has diligently managed our financial operations and prepared our independently-audited annual statements.

I urge you to 'follow the money' and check the value for students SUPRA provides. The full financial statements appear in the second half of this report.

Secretary Report

December 2010
- May 2011



Kylee Hartman-Warren

I was first elected as the Acting Secretary of SUPRA in December 2010, when John Nowakowski left the President role to serve as President of CAPA, and when our Secretary at the time, Angelus Mornignstar, became the President of SUPRA. I was then appointed as Secretary in January. My responsibilities as Secretary were challenging at first, largely because the Minutes must be taken accurately, and in fairness to reflect the voice of SUPRA and its council. With practice, the job became easier.

Another responsibility at SUPRA involved preparing a report for the auditors. I have to give credit to Angelus Morningstar and John Nowakowski, Secretaries who came before me. They maintained a neat filing system and earlier minutes were easier to access and track when I needed them. This procedure took place last February.

In February, I also helped with Orientation. I attended a few inductions, and spoke on behalf of SUPRA and its services. I also helped with the BBQ, and with an afternoon tea at Sydney College of the Arts.

In March, I attended the Universities Australia conference. I found this experience particularly interesting, and engaging. I was encouraged to see so many students from other Student Unions in Australia, and I was also encouraged by the fact that chairs of the conference were welcoming of student feedback and participation. I was also discouraged to see many discussions with regard to enhancing the business aspects of a university, with little attention to the student experience, and I realize how hard it will be for student organizations like SUPRA to survive in the future, if they are not directly bringing in money for the university.

April and May involved a continuation of duties involving minute taking, attending meetings, and providing assistance to SUPRA elsewhere. All this time, I have also been attending the Academic Standards and Policy Committee meetings, and filling in at other meetings when the President or other SUPRA representatives were unable to do so. In May, I was also involved with a hiring process, which I found to be both tedious and interesting. I believe I have learned a great deal as Secretary, and I have a greater understanding for the responsibilities involved with supporting a Student Organization which provides vital services to Postgraduate Students, and working with staff and other councillors to meet SUPRA's ambitious goals.

On Professionalism

I think what I took away from being Secretary involves the importance of an active student presence on campus, but I also realize how useful professionalism can be when attempting to be a voice for a diverse body of students, at one of Australia's highly regarded universities. Student unions and organizations are important on campus because they give students an outlet to represent and be represented by fellow students, however sometimes it is appropriate for a student to act with a level of professionalism when supporting and representing other students. Attending meetings, inductions, and conferences are vital if we want our voice to be heard, but I notice the students who present and conduct themselves with an intelligent level of professionalism are the ones who are heard and given the most regard in these venues. Professionalism is also vital to representing postgraduate students, especially since SUPRA provides an important support structure for students from diverse national, cultural or religious backgrounds who may feel put off when treated unprofessionally. For this reason alone, I think it is vital that the SUPRA Council and its Office Bearers maintain a level of professionalism that does not promote conformity, but allows for negotiation, and collaboration when it comes to working with university professionals, and promotes openness and support when it comes to working with a diverse body of postgraduate students. I am not saying we should conform to be polite and silent, however we should use politeness and professionalism as we firmly, persistently and intelligently maintain a strong postgraduate student voice.

Director of Student Publications

Kylee Hartman-Warren

I served as a Co-Director of Student Publications alongside Sophia Barnes. This position began as an answer to the fact that SUPRA was losing a Publications Officer, and working on a deficit budget. As an effort to save funds, SUPRA decided to give the Director of Student Publications seventeen hours in stipends, and this allowed two people to work in this position. Sophia and I decided to share the role.

Sophia Barnes and I worked well together. She is a strong editor, and in tune with the details that need attending to in the writing process, and I am strong when it comes to concepts and design. We held regular Publications Meetings from August through December, as we attempted to put together the Postgraduate Survival Guide. I also worked on fliers and leaflets in this time.

We assessed that SUPRA would greatly benefit if it had an online format to host its publications. Printing is expensive, and policies often change halfway through the year, which means printed material quickly becomes outdated. While we firmly believe it is a good idea to have a printed version of our guides, an online version can be edited as changes take into effect – thus saving a large rush at the end of the year, for SAAO's and council to push out a Survival Guide.

This is the exact difficulty SUPRA had with its Survival Guide this past year. While we did not intend to leave it to the last minute, SUPRA's end of the year activities kept the SAAO's engaged

to the point that they were overwhelmed when getting Postgraduate Survival Guide material to the Directors of Student Publications on time. The process drew out through the first half of the year, and I am still waiting for a final review, so I can review the material, and approve the final draft for print. This by no means reflects badly on anyone, though my major weakness was in the fact that this is my first time acting in a managerial role. I have since learned a great deal enough to know how I would manage such projects in an environment like SUPRA, for next time. It also demonstrates the reality that SUPRA as an organization, has too much work to do in the time allotted for that work.

In retrospect, I think it is important that SUPRA treats its publications deadlines with a certain degree of priority. I think it would immensely help if the Director of Student Publications became a formal position among SUPRA Council, and within its constitution. I also think the ongoing challenge of publications is one of budget, and reducing printing costs and I fully support a move to electronic formats when it comes to producing SUPRA publications and media. I think SUPRA should attempt to improve its presence on the internet, as a way to reach out to the greater student body, and distribute its publications. Anything SUPRA does to reduce such costs would immensely help, and electronic formats are not only more environmentally friendly, but they're far more affordable than printed media.

I would like to thank Sophia Barnes for being a good partner in crime over the last year.

Acting Disability Officer



Rosemary Whitecross

As the Constitutional changes agreed to at the 2009 Annual General Meeting of Council were not actually put to the University Senate for approval until the end of 2010, we did not have an election for the Equity Officer position of Disability Officer last year. As a member of the SUPRA Council, I was elected to act in the position for the 2010-11 year. We hope that we can elect an Equity Officer for the 2011-12 Council term.

Disability is an issue about access, not an issue of difference. SUPRA recognises and supports the social model of disability. Disability can include mobility issues, sensory issues, learning difficulties, neurological issues, some chronic health issues and other differences that prevent the equal access of learning opportunities. We will shortly be producing an information sheet on issues and rights of students with disabilities. We have also joined with the SRC in meetings and at O-week to try to raise awareness of the facilities and services available.

This year we have established a network/email list for postgrads living with a Disability. This list is an opportunity for postgrads to share information relevant to your experiences on campus and elsewhere; to let each other know about upcoming events; to discuss whatever is important to you. We would really like to hear from you! The list will be moderated by the SUPRA Disability Officer, who can be reached at:

disability@supra.usyd.edu.au

To join the list visit:

<http://mailman.ucc.usyd.edu.au/mailman/listinfo/supra-disability>.

I have been SUPRA's nominee for the twice-yearly meetings of the Disability Consultative Committee. This Committee provides advice and guidance on a range of issues, and will shortly be looking at proposals for the University's new Disability Action Plan for 2011 onwards. The University has also recently conducted a building audit which has been assessed by an independent advisory group for accessibility issues.

I am also SUPRA's representative on the University's Central Occupational Health & Safety Committee, which sometimes covers issues which are of significance to students living with disabilities.

International Officer

Chihong Choi

Similar to last year, this has been another uneasy year for the International Students Portfolio of SUPRA. The International Students Portfolio carried out the representation tasks as follows:

1. Supported the Accompanying Partners Program (APP)

APP is an ISSU program giving partners of the postgraduate students a platform to socialise and learn English and be familiar with the Australian culture, together as a group led by a accredited English facilitator. However, ISSU decided to postpone this program due to budget constraints after the White Paper. Students and their partners have been quite keen on getting this program running again, either under ISSU or on their own. I, as the SUPRA representative, helped the fellow students via the provision of advice and information on the administration culture of the university and the Resources Room in SUPRA offices for the gatherings.

2. Submission on the Inquiry into the International Students Visa to the Department of Immigration and Citizenship in April.

Two main suggestions were made.

The first one is that a number of students will not be able to attend Graduation Ceremony in October because the visas are always granted up to 31st, August. With the reference from the Deputy Vice Chancellor, I have had a meeting with the Director of International Office and the Director of Students Centre, who have offered to lobby the DIAC to extend visa periods for students graduating in July and try their best to adjust the graduation ceremony schedule in second semester to solve this issue

respectively. More will be reported back in the ISO report to council meeting in SUPRA.

The second suggestion was to lower the fees for visa application, which are relatively higher than other countries with a significant amount of international students.

3. Held two Consultation Meeting with fellow students.

Two consultation meetings have been called via eGrad and International Student Network e-mailing list by me after July's international student conference, in order to gather students' questions and issues, and therefore decide what SUPRA should focus on for our representation work. However, there was only 3 students present each time. International students tend to be busy. Hopefully, the next ISO will find a solution of getting students' feedback.

4. Immigration Policy Seminars and Consultation

As usual, immigration policy seminars have been held to update fellow students with the development of the immigration policies in place.

5. E-mails from fellow students.

We did get e-mail from fellow students throughout the year. Students might not be satisfied with what we do. Unfortunately, that is the best we could do with the current resources for the International Students Portfolio. Your involvement will be much appreciated if you believe more should be done by SUPRA!

6. Your Ideas Are Important to SUPRA to Work for You

SUPRA works for fellow international students based on what would be most helpful for international students' life and study here. If you would like to have your issues solved, please feel free to contact us through email, or phone call, or even just drop by

SUPRA office and talk about them!

Acting International Officer

Jan - Feb 2011

Kylee Hartman-Warren

While I only served as Acting International Officer for a brief period of time, I wanted to report on that period because I believe it was a significant period.

My short tenure as Acting International Officer involved preparing for, presenting at, and wrapping up affairs having to do with International Student Orientation. Oddly, I remember watching student representatives at International Orientation last year, with the thought of "I'm hoping to get involved in Student Unions - Will that be me next year?"

I helped International Student Orientation by presenting at the Orientation itself, and planning an Immigration Seminar with Visa Lawyers Australia, who were so generous to give their time and knowledge to this event. I would also like to thank Rashmi Kumar for assisting with setup on that day.

Later that month, I also attended an International Students Fair to help CAPA and CISA, however I also represented SUPRA's needs as well.

One thing I've learned in this period of time is International Students often receive a great deal of bad information with regard to visas and immigration. When they attend discussions about immigrating to Australia at booths or seminars, they are given a breakdown of a points test which will go into effect starting July 2011. This points test is simpler than last time, and a postgraduate often appears to meet the criteria at first glance. However, this is deceptively optimistic, because most do not fit the criteria to even consider the points test. Before one can consider their result in this points test, their occupation must be on "Schedule 3" of the Skilled Occupations List, and most students do not fit this criteria.

At the International Student Fair, I spoke to many disheartened International Students with regard to this problem. This problem inspired me to help Rashmi Kumar with the Student Visa Review, and while I did not do so under my purview as the Acting International Officer, it was my time as Acting International Officer that got me involved in this issue.

I think it's important that International Students continue to voice their interest in Australia, and the concerns they might have with how they are dealt with by those who are seeking to capitalize on them. As an International Student myself, I cannot stress the importance of staying on top of International Student issues, and I believe SUPRA is a great outlet for International Students to get involved.

Thanks to SUPRA for this great opportunity.

Queer Officer

Angelus Morningstar

As the queer officer for the past year, I have had a number of amazing opportunities to pursue certain advocacy and activism goals. It can still be pretty daunting to be a postgraduate student and queer at university, though the increasing visibility of the various communities allows the issues of GLBTIQ persons to become more mainstream. Indeed, there have been three predominant themes over the last year as to particular discussions within the community and they have all framed much of the work that I have done.

The role of Queer Officer has been a magnificent opportunity as it has given me a platform to speak about queer issues and develop my representational work in this area. Over the course of the year I have represented queer issues at a number of levels, and maintained a networks of allies through various different organisations. This has included representing SUPRA at conferences in a queer capacity at both Queer Collaborations 2010, and the Annual Council Meeting 2010 of CAPA.

Human Rights context

I should also acknowledge that my time in office has had a particular focus on human rights as this is my education and background. I employed this knowledge base to ensure representations of the many issue through rights that can be achieved locally here and overseas. This has helped build upon a multi-sectional engagement with queer issues, recognising ethnic and cultural diversity through experiences of queerness. I have also used this as an opportunity to learn more about many of my queer allies including narratives of intersexuality, trans*, and sex and/or gender diverse narratives.

Networking

In the past year I have managed to build up a comprehensive network of allies and associates for the purposes of achieving broad representation. This has included working with the following organisations: Council of Australian Postgraduate Associations (CAPA), the Gay and Lesbian Rights Lobby (GLRL), the Queer Student Network NSW (QSN), the City of Sydney, ACON, Amnesty International Australia (AIA), Equal Love, the Organisation Intersex International (OII), and the International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Intersex Association (ILGA).

I have had the fantastic opportunity of meeting and working with some amazing people in the field and I would like to thank them all:

Penny Sharpe MLC, John Kaye MLC and David Shoebridge MLC, Clover Moore MP and Pip Ditzell (GLBT project coordinator), Boris Dittrich (Advocacy Director, GLBT Project Human Rights Watch), Senthoran Raj (Senior Policy Coordinator, GLRL), Robert Knapman (Anti-Violence Project ACON), Gina Wilson (President, OII), and Greg Murrie and Elisabeth Price (Co-Convenors of the NSW GLBTQI Network for Amnesty).

Conferencing Success

Over the course of the last year, I have successfully hosted and helped organise a number of queer specific conferences under the auspices of SUPRA. This has included a think tank during the International Day Against Homophobia and Transphobia last year.

A second conference was held during September of last year, designed to be a much broader engagement of these rights based issues, and was a collaborative effort between SUPRA, Amnesty International, City of Sydney, International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Intersex Association (ILGA), and Organisation Intersex International (OII).

The consequence of these conferences has been that ILGA has approached me and requested that SUPRA help in the organisation of an international queer conference with the proposal that it be held at the University of Sydney. This will be the ILGA Asia Regional Conference, with 200 international delegates in attendance to be held during the final week of the Mardi Gras festival in 2012 and formally as part of the festival. This will be an exciting opportunity for students at the University of Sydney to observe and consider large-scale queer issues affecting the Asian region. I was elected Chair of the organising committee.

Campus Representation

Of course, these broad scope issues have not prevent me from doing direct campus representative work. During March 2011 I had a consultation with the Principal of the Women's College about admission for different types of women* and to enquire about their anti-bullying and anti-harassment policy.

I'm glad to say that the Principal was most agreeable and more than helpful in making sure the policy and culture around the college was inclusive. I'm glad to also say that admission for women is based of self-identification as a woman, and that this is inclusive of other intersex, sex and/or gender diverse persons. I similarly referred the Principal to both OII and Still Fierce for better representative consultation.

I was also given an opportunity to review their policy and made a number of recommendations about language that was either exclusive or problematic and these were all taken on. I have also been given an invitation to speak at the next meeting of the heads of the colleges, so that I can address them more generally about queer issues for students in their colleges.

Women's Officer



Sophia Barnes

The past year has been a busy and eventful one on campus; lots of changes have taken place within the university, affecting undergraduates and postgraduates. The experiences of Higher Degree Research students have been studied in particular detail, with regards to the impact of student gender on HDR supervision. At SUPRA we're looking into how to interpret the available data and work towards improving conditions for women postgraduate students (and for all postgraduate students, for that matter!). We want to ensure that the gender identification of postgraduate students does not effect their experience of either course work or research, particularly in the areas of supervision relationships, networking within and outside the university, and in the academic community.

This year saw the centenary of the march for International Women's Day, and we had a lively, exciting march through the Sydney CBD on Saturday 12th March; marches took place in cities all around the country. This year's march and surrounding events were focused on the theme of equal access to education, training and employment. This is certainly relevant for all of us here at The University of Sydney, and is hopefully something that the ongoing research into postgraduate experiences, and conditions for postgraduates, can help us to do something about.

The most important message, of course, is get involved! If you're interested in sharing your experiences as a postgraduate student, or in advocating for the rights of postgraduate students, come along to SUPRA and have your say. If you are a female postgraduate student, we'd particular love to hear your voice on council.

SUPRA Council

as at 27 May 2011

Angelus MORNINGSTAR	President / Queer Officer
Heidi CLAUS	Vice-President (Community)
Lian JENVEY	Acting Co-Vice-President (Policy)
Katherine HARPER	Acting Co-Vice-President (Policy)
Kylee HARTMAN-WARREN	Secretary / Co-Director of Student Publications
David LATIMER	Treasurer
Sophia BARNES	Co-Director of Student Publications / Women's Officer
Chihong CHOI	International Officer
Rosemary WHITECROSS	Acting Disability Officer

Andrew CLAYPHAN	John NOWAKOWSKI
Ben FERRIS	David ROBERTSON
Marie GERMA	Elizabeth 'Lizzie' SCALLY
Marie LENNA	Bradley WELLS
Thomas MUNROE	Simone WHITE
Phillip 'Pip' MURATORE	Felicity WILSON
Christopher NEFF	

Councillors for part of the year

Richard BAILEY	Hanrui LI
Fiona CURRAN	Ami NUSRAT
Andrew ELDER	Kathrine PETERSEN
Nick IRVING	Alex ROSSER
Rashmi KUMAR [Vice-President (Policy) until April]	Lynne XIE

SUPRA Staff

Adrian CARDINALI	Student Advice and Advocacy Officer Co-ordinator
Margaret KIRKBY	Senior Student Advice and Advocacy Officer
Francine SEETO (from November 2010)	Student Advice and Advocacy Officer
Stephen KILKEARY	Student Advice and Advocacy Officer
Anne COATES	Office Co-ordinator
Phil SOLIMAN (from November 2010)	Administration Officer
Pru WIRTH (from May 2011)	Administration Officer
John FELL	Finance Manager
Ingrid VAN TONGEREN	Redfern Legal Centre Solicitor
Claire PETTIGREW (until July 2010)	Administration Officer
Caroline VU (until September 2010)	Student Advice and Advocacy Officer
Rachel ENGDAHL (until April 2011)	Administration Officer

Administration Team's Report



Anne Coates



Phil Soliman



Rachel Engdahl

The Admin team continued to strive to provide exceptional service to our members during the last year. As the first point of contact for the majority of students and visitors contacting SUPRA, we aim to be welcoming and knowledgeable about our services and other referral options for students.

We also continued to provide administrative support to the SUPRA Council and staff members, taking on additional duties to help the Association cope with increased demand on our services, while on an ever-tightening budget.

As reported in the last Annual Report, SUPRA was unable to financially support the continuation of the Publications Officer role. Many of the duties performed by this role have now fallen to the Administration team, with the Administration Officer role now equivalent to 6 days per week shared between two staff members, with the capacity to increase days in peak-periods.

Some of the projects the Administration team have been involved in over the last year include:

- Participating in the negotiating team for the 2010 SUPRA Enterprise Agreement.
- Participating in the Workplace Consultative Committee, which has dealt with a number of significant workplace issues.
- Coordinating SUPRA attendance at Faculty Inductions each semester, a great way to let new postgraduates know about the services and support SUPRA has to offer.
- Arranging and undertaking a range of training, including OHS, ergonomics, editing skills, website programming and dealing with students in distress.
- Improving processes for inclusion on our list of Proofreaders and Editors so that students can be assured that all those who are listed are qualified to edit their academic writing.

- Offering additional administration support to the Student Advice and Advocacy Officers (SAAOs) in an attempt to alleviate some of their workload.
- Working on populating our new website to inform students of our services and resources.
- Updating our range of brochures, designing the 2011 Postgraduate Survival Guide and wall calendar and moving to a HTML format to improve the design of our eGrad bulletin.
- Inducting and training new staff, with a new Administration Officer joining us and two new SAAOs over the course of the year.
- Helping to organise events, including BBQs, outreach events at non-main campuses, immigration seminars, and of course our O-Week events.
- Assisting with the organising of internal events, including SUPRA Council and staff planning days, end-of-year lunch and closure, and the staff development day.

At the time of writing, our next big project is our office relocation. Ahead of us is lots of packing and coordination for this move. We will endeavour to make this as painless as possible on staff and Council and of course all the students who access our services.

2010 was a difficult year and we would like to thank the staff and Council for all their efforts to keep the voice and representation of postgraduate students strong in this climate. If you're a postgrad student we encourage you to get involved, as SUPRA is here for you and made stronger by your involvement and support!

SAAO Team's Report



Adrian Cardinali



Margaret Kirkby



Stephen Kilkeary



Francine Seeto

SAAO Role

The SAAO casework service, is central to the assistance SUPRA offers postgraduate students. Provision of individual casework is the primary role of the SAAOs. The casework service is free, professional, confidential, and independent. SAAOs also offer a briefing service for SUPRA's elected student Councilors, who represent SUPRA on various University Committees. We support SUPRA Council with research and case statistics, and offer de-identified case examples, for use in drafting submissions on postgraduate issues, to various University and Government bodies. We provide content for SUPRA's publications, and participate in outreach activities and events. The team is made up of Stephen Kilkeary, Francine Seeto, Margaret Kirkby, and Adrian Cardinali. The current team also thanks Caroline Vu and Penny Huisman, who worked with the team in 2010 and provided outstanding service to students. All advocates are professionals and are committed to ongoing training and professional development. All provide the highest quality of independent advocacy services for students.

Casework

The SAAO team recognises the diversity of the postgraduate population, and we tailor our services to the individual needs of the students we assist. At over 17, 000 students as of 2011, the postgraduate population at the University of Sydney, is not only the biggest postgraduate student population at any University in the country, but is also notable for the fact that they are enrolled in over 300 courses in which students are enrolled, and for the wide variety of ways in which students engage with these courses. Many of the 46% of postgraduate students who are part time may have relatively little day time contact with the University, when compared to their full time counterparts. There are over 5000 international students in the postgraduate population from well

over 100 countries. Their experience of adjusting to study in Australia, usually for the first time, can make their postgraduate experiences very different to that of a local postgraduate student entering their fourth, fifth, sixth or more years of consecutive study at the University of Sydney.

The 26% of postgraduate students who are enrolled in higher degree research programs, can have a radically different kind of experience from the 74% of postgraduates who are coursework students. And then there is the growing number of students enrolled in professional postgraduate programs, such as the Juris Doctor, Master of Teaching, and Master of Pharmacy. These have traditionally been taught only at undergraduate level, and students in these courses will have a different experience to those in long established advanced learning master programs, such as the Master of Arts or the Master of Science. All this does not yet touch on the diversity within the postgraduate cohort, in terms of religion, ethnicity, disability, sexual preference, and age. If one continues to break down the postgraduate population, many more characteristics can be found, that may have a bearing on student experiences, and responses to adversity. These factors demand a casework service that accommodates this complexity.

The advocacy service at SUPRA celebrates diversity, and embraces it by giving each and every student who accesses our service professional, inclusive and holistic attention. We would like to see much more diversity on campus, particularly in the areas of increasing Indigenous student participation, and the participation of students from low socio-economic status (SES) backgrounds. We are heartened to see some tentative, first steps by the University to redress historic under-representation by these and other groups. We believe that our way of working at SUPRA can serve as a template for how to encourage and retain a diverse student

population. That is, by upholding the student's right to self-determination, by fostering their own strengths and abilities to self-advocate and to learn from shared experiences. At the core of our work is that fundamental principle of respect, a principle that is embodied in our steadfast commitment to talk, listen and respond to students directly, and to make use of their shared experiences to drive our submission and policy reform work.

Statistics

At the time of writing this report, 573 students were recorded as using the SAAO service in 2010, with a small back log of data still to input from what was a very busy year. Even with more data to enter, we can confirm that we saw at least 14% more students than in 2009, when we had 501 clients. In turn, the 2009 figures were an increase of more than 20% over 2008, when we assisted 415 students. The story of ever increasing demand for advocacy services is also reflected in the number of consultations offered, which are listed as an extraordinary 5138 for 2008, increasing by over 20% to 6214 for 2009, and we expect the figure for 2010 to be higher again.

We put the increases down to a combination of strong and increasing need for academic and welfare advocacy in a complicated and challenging environment, some decrease in capacity for students to receive individual attention within the University as workloads and staff/student ratios increase, word of mouth recommendations by students who have used our services, concerted efforts to promote the service through SUPRA's e-bulletins and via networks within the University, our participation in various outreach and community building events, and the steadily increasing postgraduate population. We note that our case statistics growth is far outstripping the pace of growth in student numbers.

The top presenting reasons for students using the SAAO service in 2010 were

Academic Appeals

98 students (70 in 2009 and 58 in 2008)

Academic Dishonesty & Plagiarism

70 students (19 in 2009 and 15 in 2008)

Supervision

68 students (57 in 2009 and 39 in 2008)

Tenancy & Accommodation

63 students (34 in 2009 and 21 in 2008)

Enrolment

50 students (38 in 2009 and 39 in 2008)

Show Cause & Exclusion

48 students (59 in 2009 and 32 in 2008)

Centrelink

25 students (23 in 2009 and 24 in 2008)

An important note about these figures is they only give a picture of the primary issue a student first comes to us with. It is very common for a student pursuing an academic appeal, to seek and receive independent and impartial advice about a Centrelink problem. Or for a student seeking help to write a letter asking them to show good cause as to why they should be allowed to re-enroll, to have a separate enrolment issue or need advocacy because they have suffered disability discrimination. Or for someone who has experienced poor supervision, to also need referral and assistance to access health services of various sorts. In other words, whilst the raw statistics and their growth give some indication about the quantum and type of work we do with students, the complexity is hard to capture with statistics alone.

Academic Appeals

Growth in academic appeal cases has outstripped growth in demand for the service overall. Our easy to use academic appeals flow chart in SUPRA's Survival Manual and Academic Appeals brochure, remains the only place we are aware of where easy to use flow chart explanations of process are outlined to students. The strong majority of our appeals casework is resolved in the first 2 stages of the appeals process, being appeals to the original decision maker and then appeal to the Faculty, respectively. However we have seen a growth in the number of cases that are being taken to the highest appeals body in the University, the Student Appeals Body (SAB). There are some cases that proceed further and external, to bodies such as the NSW Ombudsman for external review. We help students to assert their rights with respect to these complaints as well.

We give honest and frank practical advice, about how to pursue an appeal, and some general guidance on our best guess as to whether it is a strong chance of success or not. Beyond that, we are guided by what the student wants. We recognise and uphold the right of students to make decisions about whether to pursue an appeal, and that sometimes means we help students to pursue appeals where the prospects of success are not as high as we would hope. On many other occasions it means that strong appeals that we would encourage a student to pursue, are not taken up. On all occasions we uphold and promote the right of students to appeal decisions, and to receive independent assistance in order to do so. It is the cornerstone of a just system.

Despite not in any way picking and choosing cases, we are not aware of any student who used SUPRA's advocacy service to help prepare an SAB appeal, having their appeal declined for hearing in at least the past 2 years. This is despite 56% of all appeals

by postgraduate students in 2010, being rejected before they even got to hearing. The success rate of students who use us to help prepare for actual hearings is also high, and runs at well in excess of the total average of 32% of SAB appeals upheld across the whole student body in 2010. The kinds of academic appeals we assist with range from appeals against marks in an individual assignment or exam, to appeals against a plagiarism finding and penalty, to appeals against refused Special Consideration applications, right up to appeals against termination from programs on grounds of alleged lack of progress.

Academic Honesty and Plagiarism

In the last annual report, we advised that Academic Honesty and Plagiarism casework was a relatively small proportion of our work, but based on early indicators we expected it to grow in 2010. Our prediction has proved accurate, with this type of enquiry moving from the seventh most common on 2009 data, to the second most common enquiry in 2010. There are several factors driving the demand. Prime amongst them is increased use of text matching software. There is one Faculty of the University that has already extended its use across all units of study. And frankly, based on our experiences of casework, the expansion has happened faster than the training of staff in the proper use of the software, and the development of policy, and the expansion of support services for students, has been able to match.

We feel that damage has been done to students as a result, with approaches that have, at times and in some circumstances, been far too punitive and not focused enough on education. The large number of cases and consultations, reflects the needs of students who felt deeply distressed by their experiences. We witnessed examples of poor treatment and have taken it up with relevant

University officials, in an effort to improve practice markedly. Despite some truly startling statistics in some Faculties around numbers of students found guilty of plagiarism, there were some very minor cases investigated, that, in our view, did not constitute plagiarism at all. Rather, they followed from a mistaken over reliance on the capacity for text matching software to identify problems. We are also receiving strong feedback from students, that the support for them to learn the requirements of the University, particularly where returning to postgraduate course after a long hiatus from study, or studying in Australia for the first time, needs marked improvement.

To that end, SUPRA advocates partnered with the Learning Centre and helped to run successful workshops in Semester 2, 2010, to help students to learn how to reference assignments. We have also substantially updated the advice to students on rights and responsibilities in SUPRA's Survival Guide 2011. Students need to know that they have basic rights to receive details of allegations, proper documentation, the right to professional advocacy support, and the right not to incriminate oneself, if an allegation is made. We are aware of cases where the investigating officer of the University, intended to commence a meeting by asking the student to state what they think they had done wrong, before detailing the allegation to them. We are aware of other cases where students have been wrongly interviewed and punished as a group, rather than having matters investigated individually. We are aware of still other circumstances where aggression and bullying of students has occurred, but where students are too frightened of potential victimization to make a complaint.

To try and improve the quality of dealing with identification of alleged plagiarism, SAOs have continually passed on case issues to SUPRA's President, who, in turn, has been making these

known within University committees. Amongst the outcomes of this systemic advocacy, we are hoping to see better training in the use of text matching software so that we don't continue to see false and highly damaging allegations made. We hope to see high quality training and support extended to University staff who deal with allegations, including in confidentiality, and due process generally. We want to see universal guidelines on the conduct of investigations established. And in our work direct with students, we aim to educate you on your rights. A new self help booklet will be released shortly, explaining what due process means, your rights to confidentiality, what you are entitled to in terms of treatment in investigations, and similar.

We finish this section by noting that the postgraduate student body has made vociferous complaints about treatment in plagiarism investigations, and we not only provided students with individual advocacy, but also intend to respect your comments by continuing to advocate for improved systems in future.

Supervision

In SUPRA's pages in the undergraduate student newspaper, Honi Soit, the SAAO team published an article on the bullying of postgraduate research students. It was based, in part, on newly released research that exposed bullying problems across institutions in Australia. It was also based on our concern that there was not adequate policy in place at the University of Sydney, to both allow students to take complaints of bullying forward, and for them to be both adequately resolved and for students to be protected from victimization in the process. A considerable number of the complaints we received from students about their supervisory arrangements in 2010, involved complaints of bullying of one kind or another. The confidential complaints process that we were pushing for and reported wanting to see in place for this annual report, has not yet materialized, though based on feedback we keep giving SUPRA continues to push for introduction of better systems.

Tenancy and Accommodation

The numbers of tenancy and accommodation complaints have increased in tandem with the continued tightness in the Sydney rental market, and the almost complete absence of genuinely low cost housing around the Darlington/Camperdown campus. During the course of 2010 we assisted students to pursue complaints to local councils over severe breaches of proper occupational health and safety regulations, particularly in regard to over crowded share houses. We helped students to successfully make a number of complaints to the NSW Consumer, Trader, and Tenancy Tribunal (CTTT), and as a consequence helped get many thousands of dollars of improperly held bond refunded.

We worked closely with the Tenants Union of NSW, and continue to attend their Legal Working Party meetings, and push student issues at those. We have worked with the Tenants Union on test cases in the past and expect to assist them to run at least one test case in the near future, in an attempt to try and show that tenant liability when leaving a rental, is much lower than landlords are claiming under new laws. We have also been active in identifying and encourage the reporting scams in the accommodation market, to the NSW police, to the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission's Scam Watch service, and the University. Some particularly nasty scams continued in 2010, whereby students were asked to deposit money to secure rental premises unseen, and the money was taken and the rental property turned out to not be available at all. We have worked with the SRC, and the University's providers, to get appropriate warnings up on websites and to continually promote vigilance when renting.

Enrolment

The numbers of enrolment cases we have, reflects everything from problems with negotiating late discontinuation of units due to ill health or misadventure, to helping students to make cases for refunds in such circumstances, to situations where students have just had problems with the enrolment process in their Faculty, and want to report it and get some help to resolve.

Show Cause and Exclusion

In 2010, we updated our highly successful Show Cause and Exclusion Survival Kit. It is available for download from the SUPRA website. While we always encourage students to come and see a SAAO to get assistance with, for example, writing 'show good cause' letters, it would seem that the strong promotion we do of the kit, directly to students and via various University student services, is enabling many students to feel empowered to self-advocate on show cause and exclusion matters. Within this particular aspect of our advocacy work, we have noticed a trend toward the presentation of more complex cases and therein, more complex cases involving students who are living with disability. That trend has revealed numerous policy flaws within the University setting. Moreover, in keeping with Article 3 of the Convention on the Rights of Persons Living With Disability (CRPD), of which Australia is a signatory, we aim to facilitate the participation of students at the University who are living with disability at all stages in the development of the University's 2011-2015 Disability Action Plan.

Centrelink

Centrelink casework has remained a relatively small part of our work, though we do note that it is somewhat misrepresented in our statistics, because there are many other types of cases where we offer some advice on Centrelink issues, whilst working on other cases. We continue to think that the number of cases will rise later in 2011 and into

2012, given all Masters by Coursework programs will become approved for the purposes of Austudy and Youth Allowance payments. Our intention is to promote this new entitlement widely within the current postgraduate student population, and to the new cohort of students commencing in 2012. Inevitably that will lead to more enquiries, and to the need for assistance to know rights in terms of what needs to be disclosed to Centrelink, complaints about Centrelink decisions, and similar. We note that the extension of Austudy and Youth Allowance to postgraduate coursework students comes after years of campaigning by postgraduate representative organisations including SUPRA. The next step will be to continue the fight for similar entitlements to apply to research students.

Submissions

We assisted SUPRA to make strong submissions to the University in relation to the University's Green Paper, and Strategic Plan development process, in 2010. Amongst other things SUPRA called for, much greater levels of support and attention for postgraduate coursework students. We assisted the Council of Australian Postgraduate Student Associations (CAPA) in the development of their policy statement on minimum resources for postgraduate students, and in early 2011 helped SUPRA to continue its local advocacy with a submission to the University on the same topic. We gave input to SUPRA in making a submission to the Federal Government on the Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF), which will set national requirements regarding what can be labelled a Masters or Doctoral degree, and what such degrees must include. We helped SUPRA make a submission to the Research Workforce Strategy review of the Federal Government, arguing that both the dollar value of individual scholarships, and the overall number provided, are woefully inadequate. We assisted SUPRA to make a submission to the Student Services and Amenities Fee review by the Federal Government, calling for advocacy and representational services to be supported in any new legislation.

Publications

Content provided by the SAAOs was used in the 12th edition of the Survival Guide, which should be going to print any day. The Guide continues to offer advice on a wide range of academic and welfare issues. This year, the re-write has focused on expanding our practical advice to students, on what their rights are and what they should do in a range of common situations within the University. It is one of only a few guides still being published for students on an annual basis, by any student association in the country. It receives widely positive feedback from students and staff alike.

We provided weekly content for one of the two pages in SUPRA's section of the Honi Soit student newspaper during Semester 1, 2010. We continue to make regular announcements on student welfare issues in SUPRA's eGrad newsletter, that goes out to thousands of postgraduates. In 2010 we expanded our suite of helpful links to external services that postgraduates might need to use, and promote these in eGrad on a regular basis.

Briefing Service

In 2010 SAAOs provided briefing services for Council on 17 different Committees where SUPRA had representation. All SAAOs participate in briefing for Committees. It helps to ensure that SUPRA's student representatives have timely feedback about issues that students are facing, through offering case statistics and de-identified case examples.

The SAAO service does research to help Council members prepare for these meetings, helping to ensure that their advocacy is based on the latest available data and research, and to represent the entire postgraduate student body as effectively as possible. The work on briefings has a benefit for casework too, insofar as it keeps us abreast of policy changes within the University, and encourages us to do prodigious amounts of reading on postgraduate student issues. It follows that our briefing work not only helps SUPRA Council, but it also helps to ensure that our casework service to individual students, is informed by the latest policy developments and research on postgraduate student matters.

Outreach and Events

In 2010, SAAOs again accompanied Councillors to events at most of the major campuses away from Camperdown/Darlington. At events organised by the Activities Convenor and for inductions we were on hand to give advice to students and to promote SUPRA's professional services. We maintain a presence at SUPRA's events to promote our services. We have helped to arrange free migration advice for students through a reputable migration firm, and that will be available on a regular basis and by appointment throughout 2011. We are also organizing further information seminars on topics of interest to students, with some being run in first semester 2011, with further events occurring in semester two.

Legal Service Report

Ingrid van Tongeren

History and outline of the service

The Redfern Legal Centre branch office at the Sydney University Postgraduate Representative Association ("SUPRA") has been in operation since late February 2008 with each of the years since being characterised by an increasing demand for the service. This service is funded by SUPRA, which in turn receives funding from the University for the service. It provides legal services to postgraduate students from any of the University's seven campuses including the affiliated campuses of the Sydney College of the Arts, The Conservatorium of Music, Orange Agricultural College and Camden Farms.

Redfern Legal Centre employs one part-time solicitor to operate the SUPRA office. Face to face appointments are available at various times throughout the day on Tuesdays and Thursdays with Thursday afternoons being dedicated to a drop in service. Students at distant campuses and students unable to attend on those days can also make telephone appointments or receive advice by e-mail.

The solicitor primarily provides advice and casework services. Casework services are provided either through representation or through providing assistance and support to enable students to represent themselves in their matters.

Deciding who to represent and who to assist is made after consideration has been given to the potential for the client to effectively and successfully manage the matter themselves with assistance from the solicitor, the other legal services available to the client, and their own resources. The aim is to allow the solicitor to spend greater time on clients who have a high degree of need and are unable to access other services for whatever reason whilst at the same time providing the most efficient and useful service to the entire postgraduate student community.

The solicitor also provides regular legal and strategic advice to the four Student Advice and Advocacy Officers ("SAAOs") employed by SUPRA who deal with a variety of issues concerning students such as academic or welfare matters. The solicitor also maintains a close link with and provides assistance to the other staff and office bearers of SUPRA in relation to any other legal matters that may arise, for example by providing advice in the areas of Intellectual Property or Defamation Law to office bearers or those involved in preparing SUPRA publications.

The solicitor also undertakes community legal education and policy work. Community legal education aims to increase the ability of clients to avert legal problems or to solve them themselves by providing legal information, for example in the form of fact sheets, information brochures or contributions to SUPRA publications. Policy or law reform work is work that may not be related to any one particular client but aims to achieve some systemic change in the legal system or the University in order to benefit a group of postgraduate students or all postgraduate students.

Advice and casework

Advice and casework has been provided on the full gamut of legal issues. Overwhelmingly, the involvement of the legal service has resulted in achieving favourable outcomes for the students involved.

Intellectual Property & Other University/ Administrative Matters

As the legal service remains independent of the University it can advise students on University matters and can represent students in conflicts with the University. The service provides a high percentage of advice in the area of Intellectual Property, either through the provision of independent advice to students on contracts prior to the assignment of rights to the University or in handling disputes with the University. This year the service has also advised students on a large number of other University related and administrative/government complaints and other matters.

Advice on the Civil Legal System/ Process in NSW/Australia

As there are a high percentage of international students in the postgraduate student population, the service regularly provides advice in relation to local government, state and Federal government legislation and the civil legal system/ processes operating in NSW and throughout the Commonwealth.

Credit/Debt Matters & Consumer Complaints

The legal service receives a large number of enquiries about consumer contracts and credit/debt matters. Many of these enquiries relate to aggressive sales techniques or onerous credit contracts. Further a significant number of the complaints received in

this area are in relation to consumer contracts with telecommunications service providers particularly in relation to mobile phones or internet services. The legal service has been able to negotiate successful outcomes for students in a range of matters in these areas. In addition, a number of students seek advice from the solicitor regarding money owed to or by the student in relation to housing. Many students are living in situations where they are not covered by the Residential Tenancies Act and/ or are not able to access the CTTT at this point in time. This is because they are either residents or are in co-tenant disputes. The necessity for the party seeking to recover the money to take these matters to the Local Court creates unnecessary legal complexity and cost issues for the students irrespective of which side of the matter they are on. The legal service has provided advice to, and conducted negotiations on behalf of, a large number of students in relation to such matters. The service has also provided representation to students in these matters at the Local Court.

Tenancy

Due to their poor economic situations, students are often ill placed to afford rent increases and so often fall into arrears. In addition, lack of funds or the need to make the financial resources they have last as long as possible often means that they are residing in accommodation that is of a poor standard which leads to tenancy issues such as the need for repairs, compensation for breaches of the tenancy agreement and the like. The legal service has provided advice, and conducted negotiations on behalf of, a large number of students in relation to such matters. The service has also provided representation to students in difficult tenancy matters at the Consumer, Trader and Tenancy Tribunal (CTTT).

Employment

Many students are working outside the University to supplement their other income (usually parental support, scholarships or part time University employment in their departments). They are often working in positions where their conditions and entitlements are questionable and often in positions where their employment status (ie whether they are in fact an employee or sub-contractor) or the requirements and legal obligations imposed on them by virtue of their status are unknown to the student until a dispute arises, the employment ends or they find themselves being investigated by government departments such as the Tax Office. The legal service has successfully negotiated on behalf of many students to recover wages and entitlements, assisted them to resolve concerns about working conditions, and assisted them in their dealings with government departments and in complying with their taxation or other legal obligations.

Road Traffic and Motor Vehicle Regulatory Offences

Inexperience or lack of familiarity with the road rules, coupled with having older or less well maintained vehicles due to economic constraints often means that the clients of the legal service present with penalty notices received for these offences. For the same reasons they are often less able to meet the financial burden imposed in paying a penalty notice. A significant number of clients have chosen to court elect and plead guilty. In these situations, the legal service has either represented or assisted them, either in person or by way of drafting their written pleadings. In addition, the service has successfully represented a number of students in defended hearings.

Motor Vehicle Accidents/Property Damage

A significant number of students attend the service to seek advice in relation to recovering damages and/or defending claims for damages following motor vehicle accidents. They are often young and/or inexperienced drivers or holders of international licences who are unfamiliar with the rules and regulations in New South Wales. The financial impact of these matters can be significant for students who rely on their vehicles and earn a small income or have limited financial resources. The service has successfully assisted a number of clients to obtain compensation for the damage done to their vehicles. In addition, the service has successfully represented a number of students and obtained orders in their favour in situations where it was necessary to both defend the matters against them and cross claim against the other parties. It has also assisted a number of students to obtain judgements in their favour and, where necessary, to successfully enforce the judgements obtained against the other party. Where the students have admitted liability but disputed the amount claimed, the legal service has also successfully negotiated to reduce the amount to be paid to an acceptable amount and/or to allow the clients to pay the sum off by instalments.

Criminal Matters

The solicitor has provided advice and representation in Local Court to a number of students mostly in relation to matters concerning possession of drugs, driving offences (mostly alcohol related offences), assault, carrying prohibited weapons, larceny (by a servant), and fraud.

Legal Education / Policy and Law Reform

The Service has provided information and education to a number of students in the areas of intellectual property, traffic offences & fines, privacy issues, consumer contracts (specifically telecommunications service provider contracts), motor vehicle accidents (property damage), tenancy, and employment. During 2010, the solicitor has also provided information and education to the SAAOs on changes and amendments to the law in areas of relevance. The solicitor has also been involved in an advisory capacity in the policy work being undertaken by SUPRA.

Advice and Casework Statistics

Total Number of Matter Types Advised On (Advices/Cases): 687

Percentage Distribution of Matter Types

University/Government/Administrative Matters	19%
Intellectual Property	13%
Other Civil Matters	11%
Civil Legal System/Process	10%
Credit/Debt	9%
Consumer	8%
Tenancy	8%
Employment	5%
Road Traffic & Motor Regulatory Offences	4%
Motor Vehicle Accidents/Property Damage	4%
Criminal	4%
Other Matter Types (including Family)	5%

Percentage Distribution of Country of Origin

China	22%
Other Asian Countries	11%
Australia	10%
Europe	7%
South America	5%
Indian Sub-Continent	5%
Middle East	4%
North America	3%
Other Pacific Countries	2%
Africa	1%
Not known	30%