

WORONI

Australian National University Student Media

Minutes: Special General Meeting
10/10/2018, 6:00 p.m., Copland Building Room G030

Item 1: Meeting Opens and Apologies

Meeting open: 6:08 p.m.

Acknowledgement of Country:

Mia Jessurun: I would like to acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of the land on which we meet, the Ngunnawal and Ngambri people, and pay my respects to their elders, past and present, and extend that respect to emerging elders. I would also like to extend this respect to any Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander peoples that we have in the room with us today.

I would also like to note that this land, which we benefit from occupying, was stolen and that sovereignty was never ceded. It is also important to point out that we, as people involved in student media, are incredibly privileged to have this platform. It is important to think about how we can use this platform to lift the voices of Indigenous people, their history and their culture and to always remember that in the production and distribution of our content.

Present: Benjamin Lawrence, Mia Jessurun, Noah Yim, Jonathan Tjandra, Brandon Tan, Millie Wang, Maddy McCusker, Xavier Anderson, Kathryn Lee, Keegan Knott, Shiu Foong, Georgia Kamvissis, Jonah Kaufman, Alice Ward, Kate Brien, Stella McRobbie, Jack Illet, Soumyadeep Sengupta, Alida Huang, Reddhi Mehta, Abigail Manning, Miriam Sadler, Phoebe Lupton, Jasper Lindell, Isabella Ostini, Katherine Carrington, Joanne Leong, Nick Richardson, Jason Pover, Max Koslowski, Nathalie Rosales-Cheng, Gil Rickey, Laurie Brown, Rhys Thompson, Ben Rowley, Bentan Honeywood, Niall Cummins, James Eveille, Caroline Dry, Melissa Nuhich, Bremer Sharp, Savannah Benson, Suhbri Arora, Nathan Ruser, Jeremy Abdul-Karim, Steph David, Zoe Halstead, William He, Ben Jefferson, Erin Ronge, Nicholas Pagonis, Ben Grant, Georgia Winzenberg, Alisha Nagle, Christina Fawns, Catherine McGrane, Aishwara Taskar.

Apologies received from: Sophie Bear

Chair passed to Benjamin Lawrence, his chairing was not subject to dissent.

Item 2: Discussion Items/Motions on Notice

2.1 Special Resolution: "That the members of the Association vote and accept the removal of section 14.2.a from the ANUSM Constitution."

Moved: Mia Jessurun

Seconded: Jonathan Tjandra

Mia Jessurun *exercising mover's speaking rights*:

Hi everyone, thank you so much for coming out tonight. I want to firstly, clarify exactly what this special resolution is, and what it means for the association. Then, I will explain why this change is important and timely for the future of ANU Student Media.

The motion tonight is to remove the section of the constitution that mandates a fortnightly print publication. In practice, this change gives the Board the power to determine how frequently Woroni's print publication is released. Retained in the constitution will be a requirement for a print publication, and for there to be an addition of this publication that coincides with both O-Week and Bush Week.

We have produced *The Move to a Magazine* document that you have hopefully had a chance to read, which is circulating tonight, to provide you all as members of the association with a snapshot of a possible alternative model that this change would facilitate. However, tonight is not a vote on whether or not to adopt that model. I would implore you to read that document as context, but your vote tonight should be decided based only on the motion at hand, which concerns giving the Board the agency to determine the frequency of print publications.

This change has to happen now because the current print model, with a newspaper every two weeks, is unsustainable and, often, dysfunctional. Although I am incredibly proud of every newspaper we produce, their production represents huge sacrifices by editors, sub-editors and other parts of the Association. To give you a quick snapshot, for most of the 11 newspapers I have worked on so far this year, at least four editors have spent the entire of Saturday and Sunday in the office, and stayed up until between 2am and 8am on Monday morning to submit it. This is a Monday on which these editors have to get up and go to class, work other jobs and continue their role as directors of the Association. This same model was reflected in the brief snapshot data we present in *The Move to a Magazine* document, which includes really basic information provided about the experiences of at least one member of every print team and executive since 2016. For these generations of editors, this extreme time commitment has represented a huge sacrifice that affects all parts of their lives, including how well they can fulfil their roles at Woroni. This year alone, we have had two casual vacancies within the layout team, which were both in large part due to the massive toll that print weekends take on editor wellbeing.

And of course, before that weekend can ever happen, sub-editors from the art, news and content team spend countless hours producing and editing work under ridiculously tight deadlines. These conditions are not conducive to producing the highest quality of publication, or to giving all the sub-editors and contributors involved the most positive experience of contributing. In these conditions I think anyone who has sourced content for us in the past could relate to how challenging it can be having to constantly tell contributors that they have only a couple of days to write, and the frustration we continually face as we run out of time to fine-tune articles before they have to be printed. By the time content is finalised, art sub-editors often have only a few days to do original artworks to go with the

pieces to appear in the paper. In terms of news, online news is increasingly the norm throughout the media landscape. Unless a story breaks on a Sunday of a print edition, the news in the paper is often a week or two old, and so is no longer playing the role of topical news. By freeing up the time which the News Editor and News team currently spend on fortnightly layout, they will have more time to pursue to investigative journalism, which is often very time intensive, and maintain accurate, up-to-the-minute online news coverage. We want to diversify our news offerings, and we are currently finding ways to improve our website to better suit online news and ensure that it provides the best quality for the huge audience it reaches, which far exceeds our print circulation. Longer form, investigative journalism in a less frequent print publication will be more relevant, interesting and enduring than simply reprinting and reiterating stories that have already broken.

Beyond the sacrifices the frequency of the existing model has required from print, it has also tied up time that could be spent supporting Woroni's other platforms and governance. This is particularly true for the executive, whose involvement in print made sense before Woroni's other platforms existed. In Woroni as it stands today, as an independent association with radio and TV platforms as well, this is no longer the best model. Increasingly, this time commitment to print acts only to obstruct them from achieving other goals, such as supporting the TV and radio platforms, maintaining strong external relationships, starting new initiatives and running events.

I really firmly believe that this change would have happened earlier if the constitution was not so rigid about fortnightly publication. The media landscape has long since moved away from a model of print newspapers as the primary source of timely news, with news moving online, and print's value becoming increasingly creative. Board after Board have made changes to better suit these changing conditions, such as upping the quantity of art in the newspaper and streamlining the approvals policy to allow fast publication of online news. This change will allow the next Board to make the logical next step to better align the format and purpose of our print publication. I will also note that, in our extensive discussions with Chancelry and the Corporate Risk and Governance Office about this move, they have expressed surprise that such a prescriptive clause about day-to-day operations was included in the constitution. By not only making this change now, but moving frequency of publication to a board decision permanently, we equip future boards to further adjust Woroni to remain relevant as the media landscape changes.

We have consulted with ANU's Corporate Governance and Risk Office and the Chancelry, and been advised to bring this change to the members now. Seeing that it passes, put it into practice from the beginning of 2019. It will then go to ANU Council to be ratified when they deal with all student association constitutional changes in July 2019.

Finally, I want to stress how much consideration and consultation lies beneath the board's decision to bring this special resolution. Countless hours of thought and conversation among our teams, the board and with external stakeholders have gone into deciding that this is the best course of action for the association as a whole. I think it is incredibly important that this resolution passes tonight.

Jonathan Tjandra *exercising seconder's speaking rights:*

Before I go into how I agree with this motion and this change of format I'll start by noting some of the objects of the association outlined in the constitution. Woroni is committed to producing interesting, entertaining, informative and regular content across our print,

multimedia, radio and online media platforms; and to being innovative and exploring new media forms. With these objects in mind it is important to consider the next step for the evolution of the association. The media landscape is changing. The newspapers in the capital cities are moving their printed practices. This move is about bringing us into line with the current trends in media consumption and focussing news online. Bringing news to students. I saw this unironically: It makes news more agile and innovative and allows us to specialise.

Jasper Lindell: *Procedural motion – Suspension of Standing Orders.*

I move that so much of standing orders be suspended as would prevent a question and answer session with the current board of editors of ANUSM.

Moved: Jasper Lindell

Seconded: Katherine Carrington

For: 4

Against: 20

Abstention: 20

Noting that Jasper Lindell voted for the motion.

Noting that Mia Jessurun and Jonathan Tjandra abstained from the motion.

Status of motion: Failed.

Return to the speakers list for the original motion.

Jasper Lindell: *Speaking against the motion.*

My name is Jasper and I am speaking as a former News Editor of Woroni. During my time I saw the return of news to the front page and increase in the disseminated numbers of the paper. Student media around the country fights very hard for the amount and kind of funding we have access to. ANUSM is fiercely independent. It is worth noting that a number of former editors, including myself, Kat Carrington, Kanika Kirpalani and Alex Joske were not contacted directly, and I would argue we were not contacted intentionally. This appears to indicate that a lack of adequate consultation, and I would question this decision in light of this representing such a major change for Woroni. This form of printing is also more environmentally unfriendly than the paper which is currently used for the newspaper.

Nathalie Rosales-Cheng: *Speaking for the motion.*

Hi I'm Nathalie, I'm a former DEIC during second semester 2017 and for the first semester this year. I consume a lot of media in many different modes, and also am involved in media through working at *Sky News*. I think it's important not to conflate the motions being considered. Tonight the motion at hand purely considers moving the print cycle to a monthly model. The fortnightly model, which has been the practice, is incredibly detrimental to the emotional and physical wellbeing of the Editors, and produces an incredible amount of stress. I was part of the Print Team and would take part in the fortnightly cycle, working each time into the early hours of the morning. It negatively

impacted my academics so much, and it takes more out of you than just the weekend because you have to recover physically and catch up with everything else. The move to a magazine is more in line with the media landscape and will enable the showcasing of more art.

Joanne Leong: *Speaking for the motion.*

Hi I'm a former Art and Design Editor. I oversaw the redesign of the print format and the redesign of the website. Basically while I was doing that redesign I had to make a lot of artistic compromises because of the newspaper print format. The newspaper structure doesn't allow for as wide a range of content and art as a magazine. I see this change as a way for a wider range of students to participate in Woroni, especially art and design students, than the paper does. Magazines are also more of a timeless piece which people will want to hold on to. The move to a slower print cycle will also allow Woroni more freedom to produce even higher quality content, and I think it's overall a good idea.

Zoe Halstead: *Speaking for the motion.*

I was the Radio Editor this year until my resignation. I wanted to echo what was said the time that goes into the fortnightly publication. It takes up so much time out of the executive's schedule, meaning that the other two platforms do not have the benefit of the attention of the executive. The current system means that Radio and TV Editors have a larger workload on their shoulders and they have to manage more on their own, because the exec are simply unable to provide the time and assistance.

Noah Yim: *Speaking for the motion.*

I'm the current News Editor. I think that it's fair to say that news has started to move online. *The Guardian* has moved to a tabloid and *The New York Times* paper has been shrinking too both in width and number of pages. This allows for a dynamic news reporting experience, where the News Editor can focus on the team, management, delegation, sourcing, and longer investigative pieces, rather than have their time drained by layout every two weeks.

We have been experimenting with formats to be in the newspaper: Vox pops, and longer investigative or explanatory pieces.

It's also clear that our news consumer culture is changing. For reference, most of our news pieces are not clicked on: while pieces get tens of thousands of views on facebook, we almost never get more than one the piece itself.

Therefore, it is wiser that we stay relevant and up to date with news consuming culture, and we focus more on the online aspect of news.

Furthermore, we have to think about what Woroni really is. It is not primarily a news reporting organisation. We are a media organisation, where all our portfolios: news, content, TV, radio and art have equal footing. This new format is far more conducive to our other print portfolios, especially art. We can cultivate a new art scene on the ANU campus while still delivering the same, and even better content of news journalism than before.

Isabella Ostini: *Speaking against the motion.*

I'm Isabella Ostini and I was a news reporter from last year. I am speaking against the motion because a print publication produces good quality news and disseminates it to more of the student body. The deadline of the fortnightly publication structures the way people think about news and the way it is produced. It makes you think about the release date and tailor the news content to that.

I think that it's a bit of a cop-out to say that disappointing newspaper circulation is not good for news. The website is not currently designed for news. I also honestly don't think that content is *Woroni's* strong point, nor is it particularly high quality, and moving to a magazine does privilege content over news.

Nathalie Rosales-Cheng: *Point of clarification.*

I'd just like to clarify, in response to some claims made, that the largest engagement we had online and in print last semester in news pieces was the Sumo Salad investigation into underpayment of workers.

William He: *Speaking for the motion.*

Hi my name is William He, I'm the current TV Editor and generally I'm not very concise but will try my hardest. There have been points made that the paper itself is integral to *Woroni*, but I think that that overlooks the fact that we are a multimedia platform. The other argument is tradition, which I don't agree with because I don't see the paper being there in 50 years time from now. The motion being considered is to grant more flexibility in the board making the decision, and I very much appreciated flexibility when I set about creating *Woroni TV* so I think that giving the Board some room to formulate the best strategy for the new format is important.

Riddhi Mehta: *Speaking for the motion.*

My name is Riddhi and I'm a sub-editor who works in the content team for the paper. One of the main struggles we face is that it is very hard to source content on the fortnightly paper, and it usually ends up that we are writing for our own, or write for each others' sections to fill spaces. The tight timeline off puts contributors, we've all had many contributors initially express interest in writing however the short time frame of a fortnight is incredibly scary for many and has led to many people dropping out. Moving to a monthly cycle means we fill the space, ensure the quality of what we print and work more collaboratively as sub-editors to work on the content.

Niall Cummins: *Speaking for the motion.*

I'm speaking tonight as someone who is a consumer of *Woroni*. When I find myself picking up a *Woroni* and flicking through the pages I'll often find myself reading something which I have already experienced online – that is where I go to get my news pieces. The only exception that comes to my mind is the Sumo Salad one which was one which I really engaged with because it was a longer form piece. I would really appreciate a longer time frame being granted so that people can practice their craft and produce more of this kind of content for the printed format.

Mia Jessurun: *Exercising her right of reply.*

I just wanted to respond to some of the points raised tonight. Jasper said print is integral, and I agree: Print is integral to what Woroni does and is – we agree, we are in no way abolishing print and the constitution will still mandate print. We have faith in future boards.

With regards to funding and opportunity – we are making the most of our funding to increase opportunities. We will increase reach and opportunities for students to learn radio, art and TV. For people wishing to gain news experience this is more in line with the current media landscape they will be entering, and the digital media they are likely to work with. Currently entering SSAF and bidding directly to improve our news. And it is important to value also the art which is produced by our teams as well.

Things from Isabella, deadlines are essential – and this semester’s news team has consistently produced timely pieces. We often push things past the paper, and cutting off an investigation to meet the print deadline often represents a compromise.

As I mentioned, we are currently reforming news website. We have bidded for SSAF money directly for this the website, and from discussion with news sub-editors and general members this has been reiterated as the priority.

No strength is not just content, but news is one thing we do: art, TV, content, news, radio are all essential to our operation and we value that diversity

The vote was called.

For: 51

Against: 2

Abstention: 2

Noting that Jasper Lindell and Isabella Ostini voted against the motion.

Noting that Kat Carrington abstained from the motion.

Status of motion: Passed.

Item 3: Other business

None

Item 4: Meeting close

Meeting close: 6:53 p.m.