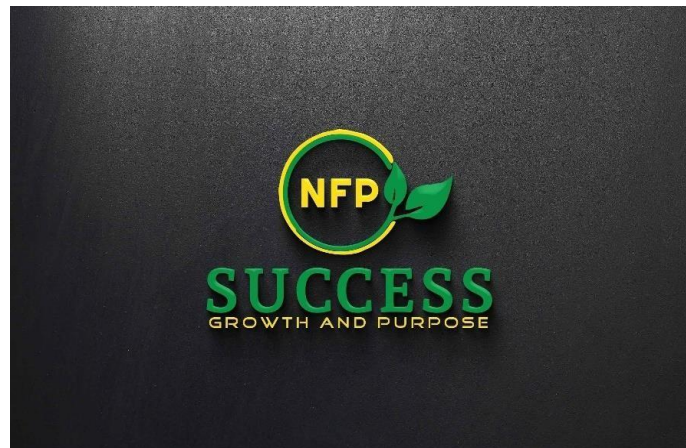


# Governance Review

## ANU Students' Association



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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The governance review of the ANU Students' Association (ANUSA) was initiated following the defunding of the Postgraduate and Research Students' Association (PARSA) in 2023 due to persistent governance and financial issues. As of 1 July 2023, ANUSA became the sole student union representing all ANU students, including undergraduates, postgraduates, and Higher Degree by Research (HDR) students. This transition resulted in increased funding for ANUSA and expanded its responsibilities in representation, advocacy, and service provision.

The primary objective of this review is to identify opportunities for enhancing and reforming ANUSA's governance framework. The review focuses particularly on ANUSA's new role in representing postgraduate students, ensuring it can effectively advocate for, and support this group. Additionally, the review seeks to streamline governance processes, enhance accountability, and improve service delivery. Maintaining ANUSA's core values as an independent, student-led organisation is also a key focus. By addressing these areas, the review aims to strengthen ANUSA's capacity to effectively serve the diverse needs of the entire ANU student community.

## SUMMARY FINDINGS

Overall, the review found that ANUSA has a sound governance framework that has largely served it well to date. Historically, ANUSA has not been highly factionalised, which has facilitated effective governance, service delivery, student support, and collaborative student-staff relationships.

The expanded role of ANUSA in representing postgraduate students has introduced new challenges. Postgraduate students, often less interested in student politics, require tailored engagement strategies to meet their specific needs. Looking ahead, the potential for increased factionalism among student representatives may test ANUSA's governance in the future. To address this, ANUSA's governance must be robust and adaptable. While politics is an inherent aspect of ANUSA, it should not overshadow the principles of good corporate governance and inclusion.

As the peak representative body for all students at ANU, it is vital that both ANU students and the university have complete confidence in ANUSA's governance. Importantly, the governance framework must uphold ANUSA's identity as an independent, student-led organisation, preserving its unique nature and core values.

The review identified a number of strengths in ANUSA's governance, and also found a range of challenges and risks that, if addressed, could enhance its ability to represent and service the ANU student community more effectively:

### ***Governance Structures:***

- The ANUSA Constitution contains a contradiction between section 14(1) and section 10(1)(a). Section 14(1) designates the SRC as "the committee of management," while section 10(1)(a) assigns the responsibility to "manage the affairs of the association" to the executive. Section 14 grants the SRC specific powers that do not encompass managerial authority, such as adopting resolutions on policy. In contrast, section 10 vests numerous specific managerial powers in various members of the executive.

- This discrepancy creates confusion in the interpretation of the constitution. One interpretation is that the SRC holds 'symbolic' authority, whereas actual managerial responsibility is vested in the executive. This raises concerns about the clarity of overall governance responsibility within the organisation. Without a clear delineation of roles, the effectiveness and stability of ANUSA may be compromised.
- The ANUSA governance structure is a hybrid between a governing board and a student parliament. This arrangement combines roles that are inherently different. Members of boards have a fiduciary duty to act solely in the interests of the organisation which they govern, whereas members of parliament have no such duty - they can act in line with their sectional interests, without regard for the health of the institution itself.
- In a parliamentary political context, disagreement in which different policies are advocated can only be resolved ultimately by one side obtaining the power to make its viewpoint prevail over the other. In contrast, an effective governing board establishes a culture of mutual respect, honesty and openness that encourages constructive debate, takes collective responsibility for its decisions, and is shaped by a common purpose and a strategic clarity.
- The SRC primarily serves as a forum for political motions and debate, which limits its capacity to focus on the overall governance of ANUSA. Additionally, with 60 representatives, the SRC is too large to effectively govern.
- The review found that the ANUSA constitution is contradictory as to where governance responsibility sits and needs clarification. In practice, in line with the managerial responsibilities of the executive in the as outlined in the constitution, the executive acts as the governing board of the organisation. This arrangement facilitates better governance as decisions can be made in the best interests of ANUSA rather than in the interests of a particular faction or political ideology in the context of an adversarial SRC.
- The review found strong student support for formalising the executive's role in the constitution to reflect its actual function as the governing body of ANUSA.
- The current inconsistencies in the ANUSA constitution concerning the role of the executive introduce legal risk. Formalising the executive as the "committee of management" with clear governing responsibilities will remove potential uncertainty that could undermine the stability and sustainability of the organisation.
- Overall, while the inclusion of committees in the constitution provides stability and ensures a clear mandate, the review found that many of these committees are not functioning effectively, primarily due to a lack of clear purpose, poor engagement, and difficulties in attracting and retaining members. Many consistently struggle to achieve a quorum. This disengagement highlights the perceived irrelevance of the committees and the critical need for restructuring.
- When committees that are enshrined in the constitution become non-functional, it not only creates governance gaps but also poses significant challenges in terms of making necessary amendments, which require substantial time and effort. This makes it difficult to adapt to changing priorities and needs.

- The disputes committee, was universally identified by interviewees as a non-functioning committee. It is perceived as ineffective, partly due to its rarely utilised role and the absence of active members. This has led to the committee being viewed as redundant, with many suggesting that its responsibilities could be better managed through a different dispute resolution process altogether, such as mediation or arbitration handled by an external party or a designated independent officer. To date, ANUSA has been fortunate in not being required to manage a significant dispute. However, if there were to be a need in the future, it is clear that the current arrangements are not fit for purpose.
- A restructure of the SRC offers an opportunity to reinvigorate the Education Council (EDC) and to raise its profile within the student community. This renewal would transform the EDC into a more effective forum for discussing academic issues, formulating strategies to protect student interests, and influencing academic policy at the university level. Meetings could be chaired by the education officer and made more interactive and engaging through workshops, discussion groups, and brainstorming sessions, encouraging greater involvement and fostering a more collaborative and dynamic environment.
- The constitution is silent on the relationship between the education committee and the EDC. From a governance perspective, it would make sense for the education committee to function as a sub-committee of the EDC, ensuring better alignment and coordination between these bodies. As a sub-committee of the EDC, the education committee would focus on operational activities, policy implementation, and engaging directly with the student body to address specific educational concerns.

#### ***Balancing Activism and Inclusion:***

- The review received universal praise for the range and quality of services ANUSA offers, including legal services, academic advocacy, the Brian Kenyon Student Space, clubs, societies, events, student assistance, and student meals. However, many students expressed concerns that ANUSA's political activism overshadows its advocacy and support services. Additionally, many students reported experiencing ANUSA as unwelcoming, alienating, and unsafe.
- Political activism is, and will always remain an important part of ANUSA's role. At the same time, ANUSA needs to take this feedback seriously and implement strategies to prevent its political activism from unintentionally creating barriers for students wishing to access its services.

#### ***Effectiveness of SRC and the Executive:***

- A significant number of students interviewed, spoke of poor behaviours at SRC meetings, using words such as "aggressive", "scary", "confrontational", "attacking", "intimidating" and "unproductive".
- Many student interviewees also expressed frustration about the effectiveness of SRC meetings including: overly long duration, lack of focus and discussions descending into personal attacks, which left them disillusioned and disengaged. It was acknowledged that there is a fine line between a legitimate politically driven debate and unreasonable political behaviour. However, on many occasions students described behaviours in SRC meetings that would never be tolerated in another setting.

- The existing ANUSA Standing Orders, particularly Section 1.4 on Conduct at Meetings, are limited in scope. They primarily focus on procedural aspects, such as when speakers may address the meeting, conducting business through motions and amendments, and the Chair's responsibility to explain meeting procedures. However, these rules do not adequately address behavioural expectations to ensure meetings are productive, inclusive, and respectful.
- Both the broader community and the ANU student body are seeking honesty, integrity, and inclusivity from their elected representatives. Instead of mirroring the negative behaviours seen in mainstream politics, (as highlighted in *Set the Standard: Report on the Independent Review into Commonwealth Parliamentary Workplaces* by Kate Jenkins), ANUSA should look at the recommendations in this report and, where relevant, apply them to the operations of the SRC. Addressing these challenges is crucial for making ANUSA more welcoming and effective for all students.
- The review found that overall, the executive fostered a collaborative environment that was capable of overcoming factional barriers to work together in the best interests of ANUSA. This approach enabled constructive debate and collective decision-making, guided by a shared sense of purpose and strategic clarity. Informally, the executive has effectively taken on the role of the board, which highlights the need to formalise this within the constitution.
- Most interviewees considered the executive to be accountable, consistently demonstrating transparency in their decision-making processes and outcomes.

#### ***Election Regulations:***

- Low voter turnout in university student unions, including ANUSA, is a common issue. Many students feel disconnected from ANUSA's activities and believe their vote will not make a difference. Ignoring this problem would be detrimental, as low turnout perpetuates a cycle of apathy, leaving students feeling unheard and further disconnected from the ANUSA's decisions. This issue is even more pronounced among postgraduate students, who have demanding schedules and different priorities.
- If ANUSA does nothing to address this, its reputation as an organisation primarily serving an activist political fringe will persist and become more entrenched. This perception alienates the broader student body, including postgraduates, who already feel ANUSA does not represent their interests.
- Increasing voter engagement fosters a sense of community and belonging, encouraging students to shape their university experience actively. Engaging postgraduate students is particularly important, as their perspectives are essential for comprehensive representation.

#### ***Leadership Roles and Responsibilities:***

##### President

- ANUSA's leadership structure features a unique arrangement where the president holds a full-time role that encompasses both the responsibilities of a chair and a CEO. This dual role is distinctive in the context of student unions and carries significant implications for the governance and operational effectiveness of the organisation.

- As the CEO of ANUSA, the president is responsible for overseeing the day-to-day operations of the association, managing staff, and ensuring the implementation of policies and programs. This role requires a focus on administrative and operational aspects, including financial management, resource allocation, and service delivery.
- As the chair of ANUSA, the president also provides strategic leadership and direction for the organisation, and performs important representational roles, representing the student body in discussions with the university and external stakeholders, advocating for student interests, and ensuring that ANUSA's activities align with its goals.
- With the president serving as the key executive leader, accountability is concentrated in a single position. As such, the role requires balancing involvement with political activism that may be inconsistent with being widely perceived as a unifying figure, representing the collective interests of all ANU students and fostering a sense of unity and inclusiveness within the student community.
- As a full-time position, the president has the capacity to dedicate significant time and energy to the role. This enhances the leadership presence within ANUSA, allowing the president to be more engaged with student issues, more accessible to the student body, and deeply involved in the daily operations of the organisation.
- Review participants strongly supported retaining the combined role for the president, and overall, they viewed the performance of both the current and immediate past president positively. However, concerns were raised about the necessity for the president to carefully balance their responsibilities as both Chair and CEO.

#### Treasurer

- The constitution states that the ANUSA treasurer must oversee financial affairs, arrange audits, prepare and present financial reports, assist representatives with financial organisation, and manage sponsorships.
- Being treasurer of a not-for-profit organisation is a significant responsibility and can be challenging for students. To make the role more manageable, ANUSA could clearly delineate the treasurer's strategic responsibilities from the operational tasks handled by the staff financial controller.

#### Welfare Officer and Education Officer

- Many interviewees raised concerns about the roles of the welfare officer and education officer. It was widely perceived that there had been too much focus on pro-Palestine campaigning over recent months, taking away from core education advocacy and student welfare issues. Additionally, the responsibilities of these roles are perceived as not clearly distinct, leading to overlapping activities and accountability issues.
- There are no standalone position descriptions for executive roles beyond brief role outlines in the constitution. Comprehensive descriptions could include job title, purpose, duties, responsibilities and key skills and attributes required.

### College Representatives

- ANUSA has four representatives for each of the seven academic colleges at ANU. Feedback noted these roles are highly specialised, and students with purely political ambitions often lack the skills and knowledge to perform them effectively. Conversely, those interested in representing their academic college find the SRC's political environment off-putting.
- There was broad support for removing college representatives from the SRC, reducing its size from 60 to 32 members. College representatives should remain part of the EDC, focusing on academic interests without political entanglement. This change would provide an opportunity to review the EDC's terms of reference to ensure a clear purpose and effective access to the SRC and the executive.

### Department Officers

- Department officers manage policy and advocacy for seven key areas: BIPOC, Disabilities, Environment, Indigenous, International Students, Queer\*, and Women. Each officer represents their constituency's interests, ensuring their voices are heard within the broader student community.
- The inclusion of the environment officer raises questions about its fit within ANUSA's departmental structure, as it does not represent a historically marginalised constituency.
- The constitution requires departments to develop their own individual constitutions and regulations, creating a perception that they are separate from ANUSA. This leads to the false impression that departments operate as independent entities. However, the SRC and the executive hold ultimate legal responsibility for the actions of department officers. This arrangement creates significant governance risks for ANUSA, as it must manage the actions and decisions of these departments without clear alignment or oversight.
- To replace individual constitutions and regulations, departments could develop a charter outlining objectives, authority, and processes, operating under the broader ANUSA constitution and regulations. These would not need to be enshrined in the constitution and would mitigate legal risks, enhance operational efficiency, and foster a unified organisational structure.
- Some concerns were raised about department officers' accountability, particularly regarding timekeeping and transparency. Ensuring oversight while respecting autonomy is crucial for maintaining accountability and coherence within ANUSA.

### General Representatives

- General representatives (gen reps) play a valuable role in representing diverse student concerns and nurturing future leaders within ANUSA. However, the review found that they are perceived as having the lowest status within the SRC and lack accountability.
- Despite initial dismissal of their role, student interviewees advocated for retaining gen reps due to their importance in providing diverse representation and fostering future leadership. ANUSA could enhance the role of gen reps by offering a small honorarium for attendance at SRC meetings, targeted training, development opportunities, and establishing clear accountability mechanisms.



### Parents and Carers Officer

- The parents and carers officer position transitioned from PARSA to ANUSA after PARSA's defunding. Initially a part-time role of 5 hours per week, it addresses the unique challenges faced by student parents and carers. However, it remains an anomaly, reporting to the president but not part of the executive or a department.
- As the university does not collect data on students' parenting or caring responsibilities, it is difficult to assess demand for establishing a parents and carers department.
- To make the role more manageable for post-graduate students (who are more likely to be parents or carers), ANUSA could consider having several students share responsibilities, maintaining it as a part-time position with a stipend that reports to the executive, and providing additional support measures like administrative assistance and professional development.

### ***Relationship between student representatives and staff:***

- A key governance strength of ANUSA lies in the positive and collaborative relationships between student representatives and ANUSA staff. Longstanding staff provide essential stability and a wealth of knowledge, supporting each new cohort of student representatives. This continuity is crucial for sustaining initiatives and retaining institutional knowledge.
- Given that key senior staff have been with ANUSA for years, it is important to think about how to manage the transition of their eventual departure. Without proper succession planning, ANUSA risks losing the collaborative and positive culture fostered over many years.

### ***Induction and Training:***

- Most student interviewees reported that they found ANUSA's induction and handover processes relevant and well-delivered. In addition, ANU offers AICD training for senior student office holders to enhance their governance and leadership skills.
- The constitution requires each executive member to meet with the president at the start of their term to understand their roles, set goals, and outline development actions, documented in the statement of expectations form. It is important for the president to undertake this task each year.
- Some department officers reported a lack of support from the executive in facilitating ongoing training, such as Lifeline crisis support. They found initial induction adequate but noted that ongoing training needs were not addressed, impacting their ability to fulfill their responsibilities requiring specialised skills.

### ***Remuneration:***

- The ANUSA constitution outlines two payment types for student representatives: stipends, which compensate ongoing services by elected representatives; and honoraria, which are discretionary payments for voluntary services beyond basic duties.

- Many student representatives expressed concerns that the significant hours they dedicate to ANUSA work exceed their remuneration. However, stipends are not meant to reflect hours worked but to provide reasonable compensation while maintaining the voluntary nature of student leadership roles. An open discussion is needed about volunteer hour expectations and the stipend's purpose.
- There is no objective performance framework in place for department officers whose roles involve a high level of responsibility and workload. They are expected to complete time-sheets, but when this is not done, there are no clear consequences. Additionally, some department officers choose to share a portion of their stipend with their collective. However, there is no transparent framework for this, so it is determined by each individual department officer.
- Long hours and overwork can lead to stress and burnout. ANUSA needs to ensure that realistic workloads and boundaries are established for student representatives. This could include strategies such as: redistributing tasks and responsibilities; setting realistic goals and deadlines; maintaining open communication about workload and resources; and monitoring student representatives' workloads and well-being.

***Representation of postgraduate students:***

- To effectively represent postgraduate students within ANUSA, it is essential to address their distinct interests and priorities, which often differ from those of undergraduates. Postgraduate students typically focus more on their academic and professional development and show less interest in student politics. Replicating the undergraduate approach to representation and engagement will not effectively cater to postgraduate students.
- There was strong acknowledgement among students interviewed that the current system of election to the SRC and executive disadvantages postgraduate students. Many postgraduate students are only on campus for short periods and are combining their university studies with full-time jobs and family commitments. They have limited time to run an election campaign, attend lengthy meetings, and take on demanding roles
- Many postgraduate students reported a widely held perception that ANUSA is only interested in engaging with politically active students which creates a barrier to their engagement. The review found that ANUSA has taken steps to engage with post graduate students through a range of initiatives including newsletters and specific events. However, to address this perception, ANUSA may need to consider targeted communication strategies to convey the benefits and services ANUSA offers to postgraduates.
- While a number of the postgraduate students interviewed for this review, believed ANUSA should consider establishing one or two dedicated identified postgraduate positions, the majority of students interviewed did not support this proposal. They argued that nothing prevents postgraduate students standing for election for any of the SRC roles. Given this resistance, ANUSA needs to consider alternative ways to ensure postgraduate students have a voice in decision-making processes.

# RECOMMENDATIONS

## Constitutional Amendments

1. Amend the constitution to formally designate the executive as the primary governing body of ANUSA with legal responsibility for key decisions, fiduciary duties, and overall governance. This shift would address several current risks associated with the SRC serving as the “committee of the association”. These risks include the current contradictions and ambiguity regarding the roles of the SRC and the executive contained in the constitution; the inefficiency and ineffectiveness of managing governance with such a large and diverse group; the potential for factionalism to undermine unified decision-making; and the challenges of maintaining fiduciary duties in an adversarial, highly contested political environment.
2. To ensure clarity and strengthen governance, section 10 of the constitution that relates to the role of the executive should explicitly state that the executive is collectively responsible for the strategic leadership of ANUSA and is required to:
  - act in the best Interests of ANUSA at all times;
  - make decisions with care, diligence, and honesty, ensuring all actions benefit the association;
  - avoid situations where personal interests could conflict with those of ANUSA and maintain transparency in their actions;
  - maintain confidentiality of sensitive information acquired through their role, ensuring it is not misused for personal or political gain; and
  - collectively ensure accountability within the governance structure.
3. Expand Section 1.4 of the ANUSA Standing Orders (Conduct at Meetings) to include behavioural rules that ensure all voices are heard, maintain respectful and constructive discussions, prohibit interruptions, bullying and personal attacks, and outline clear consequences for disruptive behaviour. This will foster a more inclusive and effective SRC environment. While the SRC is a forum for robust debate, it must also be safe and respectful.
4. Retain the current membership of the executive, along with the current structure with the president as both chair and CEO.
5. Amend Section 9 (Representatives) of the constitution to remove college representatives from the SRC and prioritise their roles to focus on the EDC, allowing them to concentrate on academic interests and advocacy without the distraction of broader political issues.
6. Amend Section 11 (Departments of the Association) of the constitution as follows:
  - Remove the requirement for departments to have their own constitutions and regulations. Instead, implement department charters that outline the purpose, objectives, authority, and reporting processes to the SRC and the executive. Department and committee charters do not need to be included in the constitution. Charters provide flexibility, ensure alignment with ANUSA's overall governance framework, and simplify oversight and accountability.
  - Remove the specific reference to the amount of payment (currently set at no less than \$5,000) from the constitution and establish a dynamic policy and procedure framework for determining the funding allocated to each department based on current needs and priorities.
  - Remove environment as a department to reinforce that the purpose of autonomous departments is to represent and advocate for historically marginalised student groups. If this cannot be agreed, consider making the environment officer a standalone specialist officer similar to the parents and carers officer.

7. Remove Section 18 (Committees of the Association) of the constitution and abolish the existing Education Committee; Disputes Committee; Financial Review Committee; Academic Management Committee; and Parents and Carers Committee.
8. Amend Section 15 (Education Council) of the constitution to give the education officer the responsibility for convening, chairing and organising the EDC with the vice president being the only other executive member represented on the council. Use this change as an opportunity to:
  - reinvigorate the EDC and transform it into a more effective forum for academic discussions, strategy formulation, policy influence and postgraduate engagement;
  - review the EDC's terms of reference to ensure a clear purpose and effective access to the SRC and the executive;
  - consider expanding membership to provide for a number of open merit-based positions to enable non-elected post graduate students the opportunity to participate along with the college and academic representatives.
9. Review the ongoing requirement for an education committee in addition to the EDC. If assessed as still having a useful purpose, from a governance perspective, the education committee can be established by regulation or policy and should function as a sub-committee of the EDC to ensure better alignment and coordination between these bodies. As a sub-committee of the EDC, the education committee could focus on operational activities, policy implementation, and engaging directly with the student body to address specific educational concerns.
10. Streamline the ANUSA constitution by removing detailed operational elements, including redundant roles and non-functioning committees, and replacing them with adaptable policies and procedures. This approach allows for quicker and more effective responses to changing student needs and priorities, providing the flexibility to adapt roles and committee functions as necessary.

### **Role Clarity and Accountability**

11. Review and update the ANUSA code of conduct that outlines behaviours expected from all employees, elected officials, club and society representatives, and individuals in a relationship with ANUSA. The updated code of conduct should include clear consequences for breaches and a robust enforcement mechanism. The code of conduct should also form part of the induction for all new student representatives and staff.
12. Once the executive is established as the governing body of ANUSA, every 3-5 years, the executive should engage in a strategic planning process that involves ANUSA student representatives, and ANUSA staff to develop a clear, well-researched, strategic plan that sets out broad goals and establishes high-level priorities for the organisation.
13. As chair and CEO of ANUSA, the President must weigh the extent of their involvement in divisive political campaigns to avoid undermining their ability to represent ANUSA as an inclusive organisation for all students. This dual role demands a careful balance between activism and impartiality to ensure effective support and representation for the entire ANU student body. This aspect of the role should be incorporated in the position description.

14. Ensure there is clear differentiation and accountability between the roles of education officer and welfare officer. Clarify the responsibilities and expectations for each position to avoid overlap and ensure both officers are accountable for delivering on their core responsibilities relating to education and student welfare.
15. Clearly define the role and responsibilities of the parents and carers officer within ANUSA's governance framework, ensuring it reports directly to the executive. Develop a detailed position description to outline the objectives, duties, and expected outcomes.
16. To complement key role summaries contained in the constitution, develop more detailed position descriptions for each student representative role that includes: the title and purpose of the role, key responsibilities and duties, any required skills (eg financial knowledge and skills for role of treasurer) and attributes, reporting relationships, and performance expectations. Regularly review and update these descriptions to reflect changing needs and responsibilities.
17. When committees are established, ensure they have a clear purpose and are regularly monitored to ensure their continued relevance and effectiveness. A committee charter should detail why the committee exists, what it needs to accomplish, and how it will go about its work.
18. Ensure that the constitutional requirement for each executive member to meet with the president at the start of their term is implemented each year. This meeting should focus on understanding their roles, setting goals, and outlining development actions, documented in the statement of expectations form. Establish a process for performance reviews and clear consequences for non-performance, ensuring that executive members who fail to meet their outlined responsibilities are held accountable.
19. Develop and publish transparent guidelines for setting and managing stipends and honoraria. This will promote fairness and accountability, ensuring all members are aware of how compensation decisions are made and the criteria used.

### **Student Engagement and Communication**

20. Develop a communication strategy that reassures the wider student community about the impartiality and inclusivity of ANUSA's services. This should involve regular updates, transparent decision-making processes, and feedback mechanisms to address student concerns promptly and inclusively.
21. Establish more effective communication channels to keep the student community informed about the EDC's role, activities, meeting agendas, and outcomes. Utilising social media, newsletters, and the ANUSA website for regular updates would also enhance transparency and engagement. While the website currently contains information about the activities of the education committee, it lacks any information about the EDC.
22. Collaborate with the university to collect data on enrolled students with parenting or caring responsibilities. This information will help assess the demand for specific support and resources, ensuring that the parents and carers officer can effectively address the needs of this student population.

## **Complaints and Dispute Resolution**

23. Develop a clear and well understood procedure to manage internal complaints and dispute resolution. Any process for dealing with disputes or misconduct will need to comply with the requirements of the *Associations Incorporations Act 1991 (ACT)*. The process should include provisions to:
  - facilitate informal complaint resolution mechanisms where appropriate;
  - appoint an external independent person to deal with a complaint or dispute when needed;
  - incorporate processes for timely, reasonable and workable sanctions and consequences;
  - protect students and staff from being victimised because they have made a complaint;
  - protect students and staff from vexatious and malicious complaints; and
  - ensure appropriate confidential records are kept about complaints and that this information is stored and managed appropriately.

## **Training and Development**

24. Provide targeted training, mentorship, and a small honorarium for gen reps to enhance their effectiveness and engagement. This support will encourage their active participation, indicate that ANUSA values their contribution and support the development of potential future leaders.
25. Ensure continuous training opportunities for all roles, in particular, addressing specific needs and providing support for department officers. This training should be tailored to the unique challenges and responsibilities of each role and should include both initial induction and ongoing professional development.
26. Implement measures to establish realistic workloads and boundaries for student representatives. These measures could include strategies such as: redistributing tasks and responsibilities; managing role expectations; setting achievable goals and deadlines; maintaining open communication about workload and resources; and actively monitoring the workload and well-being of student representatives.

## **Postgraduate Engagement**

27. Establish merit-based, non-political roles specifically for postgraduate students to ensure their voices are heard. These roles could include advisory roles and representation on committees, or working groups with a focus on specific issues such as academic support, student welfare, and university policies. This approach may encourage greater participation from postgraduate students who may not be interested in political roles but are keen to take on a role within ANUSA.
28. Build on existing engagement strategies by consulting with postgraduate students to ensure initiatives and activities addresses their specific needs and priorities.
29. Proactively contact international postgraduate students before they arrive in Australia. Use this as an opportunity to introduce ANUSA, provide information about available services and support, and build strong, early connections to ensure these students are well-supported from the outset.

30. Since many postgraduates only attend campus for classes or college-based activities, organise events within individual colleges. This could incorporate involvement of EDC to initiate and support college-based activities, with the aim of making it easier for postgraduate students to participate and engage with ANUSA.
31. Promote the services and benefits ANUSA offers to postgraduate students to dispel the perception that ANUSA is only relevant to political activists. Implement targeted marketing campaigns, information sessions, and direct outreach to postgraduate student groups. Utilise platforms and strategies that resonate with the postgraduate community, highlighting success stories and testimonials to build trust and demonstrate ANUSA's commitment to all students.

# 1. INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 Background

The governance review of the ANU Students' Association (ANUSA) was initiated following the defunding of the Postgraduate and Research Students' Association (PARSA) in 2023 due to persistent governance and financial issues. As of 1 July 2023, ANUSA became the sole student union representing all ANU students, including undergraduates, postgraduates, and Higher Degree by Research (HDR) students. This transition resulted in increased funding for ANUSA and expanded its responsibilities in representation, advocacy, and service provision.

The primary objective of this review is to identify opportunities for enhancing and reforming ANUSA's governance framework. The review focuses particularly on ANUSA's new role in representing postgraduate students, ensuring it can effectively advocate for, and support this group. Additionally, the review seeks to streamline governance processes, enhance accountability, and improve service delivery. Maintaining ANUSA's core values as an independent, student-led organisation is also a key focus. By addressing these areas, the review aims to strengthen ANUSA's capacity to effectively serve the diverse needs of the entire ANU student community.

## 1.2 Terms of reference

NFP Success was appointed to undertake this review. Our brief was to consider:

1. ANUSA's governing documents, including its constitution and regulations;
2. ANUSA's representative and governance structures and practices;
3. The above areas with particular attention to ANUSA's recent transition to representation of postgraduate students; and
4. Opportunities for improvement and reform of ANUSA's governance, mindful of ANUSA's nature as an independent, student-led organisation.

## 1.3 The review process

The Review process has included:

- conducting individual interviews with ANUSA student representatives, staff members, and university stakeholders;
- inviting submissions from all ANU students;
- observing an executive meeting; and
- carrying out a desk review of the ANUSA constitution and other relevant policies and rules.

In total, 20 student representatives contributed to the review by participating in an interview and the review received 10 submissions from the broader ANU student community. Interviews were also held with the following ANUSA staff members: Operations Manager; Principal Lawyer; and Senior Student Assistance Adviser. Interviews were held with the following university stakeholders: Senior Adviser, Student Experience; Interim Director Student Experience; Manager, Corporate Governance and Policy; and Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic).



## 2. GOVERNANCE & STRUCTURE OVERVIEW

### 2.1 About Governance

Governance refers to the processes, systems, and structures through which decisions are made, implemented, and regulated within an organisation. It encompasses the principles, rules, and practices that guide the exercise of authority, ensure accountability, and promote the effective management of resources and the pursuit of collective goals. Good governance is characterised by transparency, participation, fairness, integrity, and responsiveness, with an emphasis on promoting the common good and safeguarding the rights and interests of all stakeholders.

Good governance is important as it:

- maintains and strengthens stakeholder confidence – positively engaged stakeholders can generate support for the organisation but disillusioned stakeholders can lead to an overall lack of confidence in the organisation's capacity to function effectively;
- provides the framework for achievement of the optimum performance and results within existing resources and capability; and
- ensures the organisation is well placed to respond to a changing external environment.

Governance can be thought of as the more strategic tasks of setting the organisation's goals, direction, limitations and accountability frameworks. Management is concerned with carrying out the day-to-day operations of the organisation, in a way that helps the organisation reach the goals and direction set by the board.

ANUSA operates as an incorporated association and is registered as a charity with the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission (ACNC). As the governing body of ANUSA, the Student Representative Council (SRC) has responsibility for ensuring that it has taken appropriate steps to comply with the ACNC Governance Standards. These require a charity to remain charitable, operate lawfully, and be run in an accountable and responsible way. Compliance with the ACNC Governance Standards is a condition of an organisation's registration as a charity.

### 2.2 Organisational Structure: Meaning and Importance

Organisational structure provides a framework for how an organisation operates, ensuring clarity, efficiency, accountability, and adaptability. It is a crucial element for achieving organisational goals and supporting long-term success. A good organisational structure is important for several reasons including:

- provides clarity on roles, responsibilities, and reporting relationships which helps avoid confusion, duplication of efforts, and misunderstandings;
- ensures tasks are allocated appropriately and that there is no duplication of effort;
- supports clear reporting lines so as individuals know who to consult or seek approval from - this improves efficiency and reduces bottlenecks;
- clarifies the decision-making authority at various levels, which promotes faster decision making and improves accountability; and
- enables an organisation to respond to challenges, seize opportunities, and adapt to evolving circumstances.

On the other hand, if an organisation lacks a good organisational structure, it may face several risks including: communication breakdowns, role ambiguity, inefficient resource allocation, a lack of accountability and resistance to change.

## 2.3 ANUSA - Governance & Structure

ANUSA is the peak representative body for all students at ANU. The association is funded by the ANU via allocation of the Students Services and Amenities Fee (SSAF), the compulsory fee paid by all students. The SSAF is intended to enhance student services and amenities on campus. For the year 2024, ANUSA was allocated \$3,205,094.98, which constitutes 55% of the total SSAF funding distributed. This substantial allocation underscores the importance role of ANUSA in providing services and support to the student body. The SSAF funding is meant to cover a wide range of student services, including welfare support, legal advice, student clubs, and events, among others.

ANUSA exists to fulfil its purposes as outlined in the constitution as follows:

- a) to promote the welfare of, and further the interests of, students;
- b) to work for quality and equity in higher education;
- c) to afford a recognised means of representation for students within the University and the wider community;
- d) to foster student life by providing support and representation for Clubs; and
- e) to foster community, equity and diversity within the University.

All undergraduate and post-graduate students are automatically members of ANUSA. Members have the power to elect their student representatives and vote at General Meetings. ANUSA representatives are elected during Semester 2, and serve for one year beginning on 1 December.

ANUSA uses a preferential voting system where voters rank candidates by preference. If no candidate wins a majority, votes are redistributed until a majority is achieved. Candidates must submit nominations during the specified period before elections, meeting eligibility criteria.

Campaign rules aim to ensure fair competition, covering conduct, spending limits, and promotional materials. Votes are counted starting with first preferences, and if necessary, votes are redistributed from the candidate with the fewest votes until a majority is reached. The electoral process is overseen by an independent electoral committee.

ANUSA's governance structure is a hybrid between a governing board and a student parliament. It holds significant legal and governance responsibilities, including overseeing the actions of the executive, and establishing ANUSA's official positions on various issues.

According to the ANUSA constitution, an officer of the association (which includes any elected representative or member holding a position under the constitution, regulations, or policy), "must act in good faith in the best interests of the Association and for a proper purpose in the discharge of their duties", as required by Section 66B of the *Associations Incorporation Act 1991*.

The constitution designates the SRC as the "committee of the Association in accordance with the Act" and gives the executive primary responsibility for policy execution and association management.

According to the constitution, the executive is responsible for:

- (a) managing the affairs of the Association;
- (b) overseeing its employees; and
- (c) implementing its policies.

These executive roles come with significant responsibilities.

The SRC is composed of 60 voting members, structured as follows:

**1. Executive Members (7 members):**

- President: Oversees daily operations, represents students on the University Council and other committees, and acts as ANUSA's official spokesperson.
- Vice President: Focuses on internal education matters, coordinates student appeals, and supports the President.
- Treasurer: Manages ANUSA's finances, including budgeting and auditing.
- General Secretary: Responsible for internal administration, organizing meetings, and interpreting the constitution.
- Clubs Officer: Oversees the clubs' program and organises events such as O-Week and Bush Week.
- Welfare Officer: Advocates for student welfare, addressing issues like housing, food security, and access to services.
- Education Officer: Manages higher education policy, organizes educational campaigns, and prepares submissions to government bodies.

**2. Department Officers (7 members):**

- Women's Officer: Represents female, non-binary, gender-diverse, and trans students.
- Queer Officer\*: Represents LGBTQIA+ students.
- Environment Officer: Focuses on environmental issues.
- Indigenous Officer: Represents Indigenous students.
- International Students' Officer: Advocates for international students.
- Disabilities Officers: Represents students with disabilities.
- BIPOC Officer: Represents Black, Indigenous, and People of Colour.

**3. College Representatives (28 members):**

- Four representatives for each of the seven academic colleges:
  - Two Undergraduate Representatives
  - One Postgraduate Coursework Representative
  - One Higher Degree by Research (HDR) Representative

**4. General Representatives (14 members):**

- Provide general support to the Association and assist with various projects.

**5. Academic Representatives (3 members):**

- Undergraduate Coursework Officer: Represents undergraduate coursework students.
- Postgraduate Coursework Officer: Represents postgraduate coursework students.
- HDR Officer: Represents HDR students.

**6. Parents and Carers Officer (1)**

- Supports student parents and carers.

ANUSA student representatives are supported by a team of professional staff members, including student assistance advisors and lawyers. The staff team is led by an operations manager who reports directly to the president of ANUSA.

Certain members of the SRC receive stipends for their roles. These stipends are intended to compensate for the time and effort dedicated to their responsibilities. Positions that receive stipends include:

- Executive Members (President, Vice President, Treasurer, General Secretary, Clubs Officer, Welfare Officer, and Education Officer);
- Department Officers;
- Academic Representatives (Undergraduate Coursework Officer, Postgraduate Coursework Officer, HDR Officer); and
- Parents and Carers Officer.

The Education Council (EDC) is another formal body established under the ANUSA Constitution. The purpose of the EDC is to analyse academic issues of relevance to the colleges and university, and develop strategies to ensure that the academic interests of students and categories of students are protected. The EDC is comprised of the president, vice president, education officer, general secretary, and welfare officer of the association; the academic representatives; four college representatives from each college elected in accordance with the election regulations; and any students representing classes or departments within the colleges as the EDC may choose to co-opt.

The ANUSA constitution also outlines several key committees integral to the association's governance structure. These committees include:

- Disputes Committee - Considers the validity of resolutions for the dismissal of representatives and addresses breaches of the constitution and regulations.
- Financial Review Committee - Oversees financial controls and compliance, and investigates financial breaches.
- Education Committee - Focuses on educational policies and academic affairs.
- Wellbeing Committee - Addresses student health and wellbeing issues.
- Safety on Campus Committee - Ensures safety measures and policies are upheld on campus.
- Parents and Carers Committee - Supports students who have caregiving responsibilities.

### 3. EFFECTIVENESS OF GOVERNANCE & ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURE

#### 3.1 Organisational Purpose: Balancing Activism and Inclusivity

As the peak representative body for all students at ANU, ANUSA's very existence is fundamentally tied to fulfilling its purposes, as outlined in the constitution. The review received universal praise for the range and quality of services offered by ANUSA, for the benefit of ANU students, including: legal services; Brian Kenyon Student Space; clubs, societies and events; academic advocacy; student assistance; and provision of student meals.

Political activism is, and will always remain an important part of ANUSA's role. However, many students who participated in this review through interviews and submissions, highlighted that ANUSA's political activism often overshadows and undermines its capacity to inclusively serve and support the entire ANU student community.

This governance review occurred during a period of heightened conflict and protests on campuses around the world in response to the ongoing Hamas-Israel war. This conflict has not only intensified political debates globally but has also significantly impacted university environments, including ANU. Within this context, ANUSA has faced considerable scrutiny and some criticism for its handling of political activism and representation.

In the context of the current conflict, many students have found ANUSA's involvement particularly divisive, making them feel unwelcome, alienated, and unsafe on campus. This feedback underscores the importance of ANUSA balancing its role in representing the views of certain students through political activism with its equally important purpose of providing services to all students and fostering community, equity, and diversity within the university.

Some key quotes from the feedback include:

- *“ANUSA must draw a clear dividing line between their services and their activist elements and stress that the political stances of the former do not impact the results and accessibility of the latter.”*
- *“We are struggling to do our duty of representing all students.”*
- *“A lot of the student body has a negative perception of ANUSA.”*
- *“ANUSA should develop an alternative governance structure which sees that ANUSA’s apolitical student services are not affiliated with the activist stances promoted within it.”*
- *“A lot of students want more service provisions rather than endless motions on geo-political conflicts.”*
- *“Students are divided on what ANUSA is, Palestine issue is exacerbating that. Some people see ANUSA as services and student assistance while others see it as an activist body.”*
- *“A lot of ANUSA spaces are quite hostile.”*
- *“ANUSA has not been as balanced as it could be – some things have been neglected.”*
- *“Currently people think that ANUSA is for political people”*
- *“Very few postgrads are interested in doing political things.”*
- *“We need a greater emphasis on the services ANUSA provides to students.”*
- *“Don’t think we are very good at explaining that everything we do is motivated by improving students’ lives”*
- *“There needs to be an expansion of ANUSA activities beyond political activities.”*
- *“We have lost faith with ANUSA. While ANUSA purports to be the representative body of ANU students, its activism is riddled with antisemitism.”*
- *“As soon as the organisation takes a political stance that is controversial, many students feel as though they aren't represented - so disengage.”*
- *“The reputation of the association...is strongly associated with fervent political activism, student protests and advancing issues in a way that may seem immature or irresponsible.”*

The current governance arrangements combine the inherently different roles of a governing board and a parliament. Members of boards have a fiduciary duty to act solely in the interests of the organisation which they govern, whereas members of parliament have no such duty; they can act in line with their sectional interests, without regard for the health of the institution itself.

In a parliamentary political context, disagreement in which different policies are advocated can only be resolved ultimately by one side obtaining the power to make its viewpoint prevail over the other. The acquisition of power therefore, is a prerequisite of achieving political objectives. Power is the capacity to get things done. In contrast, an effective governing board establishes a culture of mutual respect, honesty and openness that encourages constructive debate, takes collective responsibility for its decisions and is shaped by a common purpose and a strategic clarity.

Many universities in Australia and overseas have resolved this dilemma by adopting a two-tier structure for student leadership and representation comprising:

1. a governing board (often incorporating both elected students and co-opted external members) which has ultimate responsibility for the governance, financial and strategic direction of the students' union; and
2. a student's representative council which is essentially the parliament of the student body and gives expression to the student voice and politics.

## 3.2 Elections and Student Representation

Low voter turnout in university student unions, including ANUSA, is a common issue. Many students feel disconnected from ANUSA's activities and believe their vote will not make a difference. Ignoring this problem would be detrimental, as low turnout perpetuates a cycle of apathy, leaving students feeling unheard and further disconnected from the union's decisions. This issue is even more pronounced among postgraduate students, who have demanding schedules and different priorities.

If ANUSA does nothing to address this, its reputation as an organisation primarily serving an activist political fringe will persist and become more entrenched. This perception alienates the broader student body, including postgraduates, who already feel ANUSA does not represent their interests.

Increasing voter engagement fosters a sense of community and belonging, encouraging students to shape their university experience actively. Engaging postgraduate students is particularly important, as their perspectives are essential for comprehensive representation. By making election information more accessible, transparent and engaging, ANUSA can rebuild trust and enhance participation. Ignoring the issue deepens the disconnect, weakening ANUSA's ability to serve all ANU students effectively and undermining its legitimacy as a representative body.

Feedback from students included:

- *Voter turnout for ANUSA elections is historically very low – approximately 10%. This means ANUSA by definition is not representative of the majority of ANU students (as most did not vote)."*
- *"Very few students are participating in elections by ANUSA."*
- *"ANUSA should reform their voting system to encourage a greater number of voters...and by making information about elections more accessible by providing election information in simple language."*
- *"Tickets that are associated with a political party/grouping that aren't labelled as such, and change each year, is incredibly opaque."*
- *"The lack of transparency at ANU means I have never voted in an ANUSA election because I do not want to vote for a particular party or parties and have no idea which ticket is whose."*

## 3.3 Clarity and Transparency of Roles and Responsibilities

### 3.3.1 SRC and Executive Roles and Responsibilities

The ANUSA Constitution contains a contradiction between section 14(1) and section 10(1)(a). Section 14(1) designates the SRC as "the committee of management," while section 10(1)(a) assigns the responsibility to "manage the affairs of the association" to the executive. Section 14 grants the SRC specific powers that do not encompass managerial authority, such as adopting resolutions on policy. In contrast, section 10 vests numerous specific managerial powers in various members of the executive.

This discrepancy creates confusion in the interpretation of the constitution. One interpretation is that the SRC holds 'symbolic' authority, whereas actual managerial responsibility is vested in the executive. This raises concerns about the clarity of overall governance responsibility within the organisation.

Without a clear delineation of roles, the effectiveness and stability of ANUSA may be compromised. Clarity is required as the governing body of ANUSA holds significant legal responsibilities under various legislative and regulatory frameworks. Members of the governing body are equivalent to company board directors, meaning they have fiduciary duties to act honestly, in good faith, and to the best of their ability in ANUSA's interests. Directors must not allow conflicting interests, such as factional or personal interests, to override ANUSA's interests, and must recuse themselves from board deliberations if personal interests conflict with those of the organisation. ANUSA's interests must always come first.

As a registered charity under the ACNC, ANUSA must also adhere to several key responsibilities:

1. The governing body must ensure that ANUSA meets the ACNC's governance standards, which include duties to act with reasonable care and diligence, act honestly and fairly in the best interests of the charity and for its charitable purposes, not misuse their position or information, disclose conflicts of interest, ensure the financial affairs of the charity are managed responsibly, and not allow the charity to operate while insolvent.
2. ANUSA must submit an Annual Information Statement (AIS) to the ACNC, detailing the charity's activities, finances, and compliance with governance standards. The governing body is responsible for overseeing the preparation and submission of this report.
3. The governing body must ensure that ANUSA continues to operate in line with its stated charitable purposes and provides public benefit.
4. The governing body is responsible for maintaining accurate and complete financial and operational records. These records must be retained for at least seven years and be available for inspection by the ACNC if requested.

Under certain circumstances, members of the governing body can be held personally liable for contraventions of relevant laws. Personal liability entails legal responsibility, which may require student representatives to personally bear financial consequences, including fines, resulting from such contraventions. While legal action against members of a not-for-profit (NFP) board, such as ANUSA, is uncommon, it is important to remain vigilant and proactive in adhering to applicable laws and regulations. By doing so, student representatives can minimise the likelihood of facing legal action and the associated personal liabilities.

The current inconsistencies in the ANUSA constitution concerning the role of the executive introduce legal risk to the organisation. Formalising the executive as the governing body or "committee of management" can mitigate these risks, and will remove potential uncertainty.

There was a general consensus from those who participated in the review that, with 60 representatives, the SRC is too large to realistically perform an effective governing role. Furthermore, the SRC primarily serves as a forum for political motions and debate, which limits its capacity to focus on the overall governance of ANUSA. Although ANUSA has not been highly factionalised over the past decade, it is essential that the governance structure is robust enough to withstand any potential future factional changes amongst elected student representatives.

In contrast, the executive is widely perceived to be effectively fulfilling the role of the governing body and generally acting in the best interests of ANUSA. Consequently, many interviewees expressed strong support for formalising the executive's role in the constitution to reflect its actual function as

the governing body of ANUSA. Separately, there was broad consensus among review participants that reducing the size of the SRC would lead to more efficient and effective debates and decision-making processes. A smaller, more manageable SRC could also potentially simplify scheduling, improve active participation, and make meetings shorter and more focused.

The governing body of ANUSA should spend some share of its time shaping an agenda for the future. However, the annual turnover of student representatives with different political/factional agendas limits the ability of student representatives to focus on forward-thinking for ANUSA.

Examples of student feedback highlighting these issues include:

- *“SRC doesn’t think about governance”*
- *“The SRC as it currently exists has too many people.”*
- *“Need to slash the SRC”*
- *“SRC – there are too many cooks in the kitchen”*
- *“SRC decisions are rarely actually real decisions”*
- *“The Exec is quite effective – they all have their portfolios and they work together.”*
- *“Although there are factions in the Exec, they work together.”*
- *“Exec functions very well.”*
- *“Most real decisions are made by the executive.”*
- *“I think the executive do a decent job.”*

### **3.3.2 Observations on the Education Council and ANUSA Committee Structure**

ANUSA's governance structure includes the EDC and the following committees:

- education committee;
- disputes committee;
- financial review committee;
- academic management committee;
- parents and carers committee.

Each of these committees plays a role in the governance and operational framework of ANUSA, yet their functionality varies significantly due to various issues. The review found that many of these committees are not functioning effectively, primarily due to a lack of clear purpose, poor engagement, and difficulties in attracting and retaining members. Many consistently struggle to achieve a quorum.

#### *The Education Council and the Education Committee*

The EDC is an integral part of ANUSA governance, providing a structured forum for analysing and addressing academic issues that impact the student body. By ensuring that students' academic interests are represented and protected, the education council plays a vital role in shaping educational policies and practices at ANU. A restructure of the SRC offers an opportunity to reinvigorate the EDC and to raise its profile within the student community.

This renewal would transform the EDC into a more effective forum for discussing academic issues, formulating strategies to protect student interests, engaging with postgraduate students, and influencing academic policy at the university level. Meetings could be chaired by the education officer and made more interactive and engaging through workshops, discussion groups, and brainstorming sessions, encouraging greater involvement and fostering a more collaborative and dynamic environment.



The constitution is silent on the relationship between the education committee and the education council. From a governance perspective, it would make sense for the education committee to function as a sub-committee of the EDC, ensuring better alignment and coordination between these bodies. As a sub-committee of the EDC the education committee would focus on operational activities, policy implementation, and advocacy, engaging directly with the student body to address specific educational concerns.

Connecting the insights and activities of the education committee to the EDC provides the EDC with a detailed, grassroots perspective on the immediate educational concerns and needs of the student body. This relationship ensures that the strategic decisions and policies formulated by the EDC are well-informed and grounded in the actual experiences and challenges faced by students. Additionally, it facilitates a seamless incorporation of operational feedback into strategic planning, enhancing the overall efficacy of academic governance within ANUSA.

To further support this structure, ANUSA could establish more effective communication channels to keep the student community informed about the EDC's role, activities, meeting agendas, and outcomes. Utilising social media, newsletters, and the ANUSA website for regular updates would also enhance transparency and engagement. While the website currently contains information about the activities of the education committee, it lacks any information about the EDC.

### *The Committees*

Overall, while the inclusion of committees in the constitution provides stability and ensures a clear mandate, the current state of several ANUSA committees suggests a need for a more flexible approach. The operational focus of most of the committees makes them more suited to detailed policies that can be updated as needed without the rigidity of constitutional amendments. Removing committees from the constitution could alleviate many of the issues observed and enhance ANUSA's ability to respond to changing needs and circumstances effectively.

One of the primary challenges for most of the committees is the lack of active members, which has led to several committees becoming non-functional. The financial review committee, for instance, currently has no members and in the past has suffered from members lacking the basic accounting knowledge to effectively oversee financial practices. This situation is particularly alarming because it means that unqualified individuals may be providing financial advice to the SRC.

Without the necessary expertise, there is a significant risk of mismanagement of funds, incorrect financial reporting, and poor financial decision-making. This not only undermines the financial integrity of ANUSA but also exposes the organisation to potential legal and financial liabilities. The absence of appropriately qualified oversight could result in severe financial repercussions, including the loss of funds, inability to meet financial obligations, and damage to ANUSA's reputation.

The disputes committee, was universally identified by interviewees as a non-functioning committee. It is perceived as ineffective, partly due to its rarely utilised role and the absence of active members. This has led to the committee being viewed as redundant, with many suggesting that its responsibilities could be better managed through a different dispute resolution process altogether, such as mediation or arbitration handled by an external party or a designated independent officer.

Many student interviewees indicated a lack of knowledge of what the appropriate channels and processes are for complaints and/or conflict resolution. Those that were aware of the disputes committee considered the processes time-consuming and ineffective. To date, ANUSA has been

fortunate in not being required to manage a significant dispute. However, if there were to be a need in the future, it is clear that the current arrangements are not fit for purpose.

The parents and carers committee also has no members at present. Students are "voting with their feet" in relation to these committees, showing a clear lack of interest and engagement. This disengagement highlights the perceived irrelevance of the committees and the critical need for restructuring. The administrative burden associated with amending the constitution to reflect changes in committee structures further complicates this issue.

When committees that are enshrined in the constitution become non-functional, it not only creates governance gaps but also poses significant challenges in terms of making necessary amendments, which require substantial time and effort. This makes it difficult to adapt to changing priorities and needs.

In contrast, if these operational committees were governed by flexible policies rather than being enshrined in the constitution, ANUSA could adapt more swiftly and efficiently to evolving demands. Such a structure would allow for more timely updates and restructuring as needed, ensuring that the committees remain relevant, functional, and capable of addressing the student needs and priorities effectively.

### **3.3.3 Leadership Roles and Responsibilities**

This section focuses on specific leadership roles within ANUSA that emerged as focal points in terms of clarity and transparency of roles and responsibilities during the review process. While all positions within ANUSA are valuable, the roles discussed here were highlighted due to particular concerns or feedback from review participants.

#### *President*

ANUSA's leadership structure features a unique arrangement where the president holds a full-time role that encompasses both the responsibilities of a chair and a CEO. This dual role is distinctive in the context of student unions and carries significant implications for the governance and operational effectiveness of the organisation.

As the CEO of ANUSA, the president is responsible for overseeing the day-to-day operations of the association, managing staff, and ensuring the implementation of policies and programs. This role requires a focus on the administrative and operational side of the organisation, including financial management, resource allocation, and service delivery. The president also provides strategic leadership and direction for ANUSA, representing the student body in discussions with university administration and external stakeholders, advocating for student interests, and ensuring that ANUSA's activities align with its goals.

The dual role centralises leadership within ANUSA, which can streamline decision-making processes and provide clear and consistent direction for the organisation. Having one individual at the helm can facilitate quicker responses to emerging issues and ensure cohesive strategy implementation. With the president serving as the key executive leader, accountability is concentrated in a single position, enhancing transparency as the president is directly answerable to the student body for both governance and operational outcomes.

As a full-time position, the president has the capacity to dedicate significant time and energy to the role. This enhances the leadership presence within ANUSA, allowing the president to be more engaged with student issues, more accessible to the student body, and deeply involved in the daily operations of the organisation. Interviewees noted that the demanding nature of the role means that individuals with prior experience in other ANUSA positions are more likely to be attracted to it. This increases the likelihood that those who step into the president's role are well-prepared, deeply invested in ANUSA's success, and motivated by the organisation's best interests rather than primarily self-interest or factional interest.

It is also important that ANUSA acknowledge and manage the risks inherent with the combination of these roles. The president must balance the governance oversight typically provided by the chair of a governing board with the executive actions required of a CEO, which can create situations where the President is effectively overseeing their own performance, complicating objective decision-making and accountability. Additionally, the president is responsible for supervising the members of the executive and the operational manager which also places significant pressure on the president to manage personnel issues that may require professional HR expertise.

Review participants strongly supported retaining the combined role for the president, and overall, they viewed the performance of both the current and immediate past presidents positively. However, concerns were raised about the necessity for the president to carefully balance their responsibilities as both chair and CEO. It is crucial that the president avoids becoming too involved in divisive political campaigns, as this can undermine their ability to effectively represent ANUSA as an inclusive organisation for all students. Balancing these aspects is crucial for ensuring that ANUSA is, and is seen to be, effective in supporting and representing all ANU students.

#### *Treasurer*

The constitution states that the ANUSA treasurer must oversee financial affairs, arrange audits, prepare and present financial reports, assist representatives with financial organisation, and manage sponsorships. ANUSA is committed to transparency through informative, comprehensible financial reporting. To support this commitment, the current Treasurer has developed a financial policy framework that underpins budgeting and financial management in ANUSA.

Being treasurer of a not-for-profit organisation is a great responsibility and undertaking this role could be a challenge for many students. However, to make the role more manageable for students, ANUSA could delineate more clearly in a position description, the treasurer's strategic responsibilities from the operational tasks handled by the financial controller. The treasurer could focus on high-level financial oversight, policy-making, and strategic decision-making, while the professional staff member handles detailed financial management. Providing comprehensive training and mentorship opportunities would further support the treasurer, ensuring they have the skills and knowledge needed to fulfill their duties effectively.

#### *Welfare Officer and Education Officer*

Many interviewees raised concerns about the roles of the welfare officer and education officer. It was widely perceived that there had been too much focus on pro-Palestine campaigning over recent months, taking away from core education advocacy and student welfare issues. Additionally, there were observations that the responsibilities of the two roles were not clearly distinct, leading to both officers frequently engaging in similar activities.

This situation highlighted the following governance challenges:

- without clear delineation of roles and responsibilities, it becomes difficult to hold student representatives accountable for their performance in their roles;
- the absence of well-defined roles and responsibilities creates confusion and inefficiency - clear position descriptions are essential to ensure that each officer understands their specific duties and priorities.

Currently, there are no standalone position descriptions for the executive roles beyond the brief points outlined in the constitution. Comprehensive descriptions could include job title, purpose, duties, responsibilities, and key skills and attributes required. These components ensure that each officer understands their duties, responsibilities, and expectations, thereby improving accountability, enhancing performance, and contributing to more effective governance.

### *College Representatives*

ANUSA has a team of four representatives for each of the seven academic colleges at ANU. College representatives analyse academic issues relevant to their college and formulate strategies and campaigns to ensure that the academic interests of students are protected. Feedback from the review noted that these roles are highly specialised, and students with purely political ambitions often lack the skills, connections, and knowledge to perform these roles effectively. Conversely, those primarily interested in representing their academic college find the combative, political environment of the SRC off-putting. This is particularly relevant for postgraduate students, who overwhelmingly indicated a lack of interest in participating in SRC politics.

There was broad support for the idea of removing college representatives from the SRC, which would reduce its size from 60 to 32 members. College representatives could continue to be part of the EDC, where they would focus on sharing information, collaborating, engagement with postgraduate students, and advocating for the academic interests of students without being entangled in the political aspects of the SRC. This change would also provide an opportunity to review the terms of reference for the EDC to ensure it has a clear purpose and an effective mechanism for accessing the SRC and the executive on key issues of importance.

Examples of student feedback highlighting these issues include:

- *“College representatives have a critical importance in the advocacy function of the union. They are the eyes and ears of our advocacy in a characteristically decentralised and federated university.”*
- *“Removing the college representatives from the SRC will remove the incentive for these roles to be treated as easily won SRC votes for political purposes.”*
- *“College reps have their fingers on the pulse.”*
- *“College rep system is important.”*
- *“Need to reimagine the role of college representatives, recently had 6 resign – should they be entwined in the political discourse?”*

### *Department Officers*

The department officers play an important role in ANUSA by managing policy and advocacy for seven key areas: BIPOC, Disabilities, Environment, Indigenous, International Students, Queer\*, and Women. Each department officer is responsible for representing the interests and needs of their respective constituencies, ensuring that their voices are heard and their concerns addressed within the broader student community.

In addition to their advocacy roles, the department officers lead autonomous collectives. These collectives provide valuable insights and guidance, helping to shape the actions and initiatives of the departments. By working closely with their collectives, department officers can better understand the specific challenges and opportunities faced by their constituencies, enabling them to develop more effective strategies and policies.

The inclusion of the environment as a department raises questions about its fit within ANUSA's departmental structure. Unlike the BIPOC, Disabilities, Indigenous, International Students, Queer\*, and Women's groups, which represent minorities who have historically faced discrimination and lack of representation, the environment does not correspond to a specific student constituency that has experienced systemic marginalisation. While environmental issues are undeniably important, they do not align with the primary purpose of representing and advocating for marginalised student groups within ANUSA.

Given this distinction, the rationale for including an environment officer within ANUSA's department structure is difficult to justify. This function might be more appropriately situated within a club or society focused on environmental issues. This would allow the environment group to continue its important work on advocacy and campaigning on sustainability and ecological issues without being part of the special constituencies' advocacy structure. Reassessing the placement of the environment as a department could ensure that the focus remains on supporting and advocating for those student groups who need it most, while still promoting and campaigning on environment issues through a dedicated club or society. This approach would enhance the effectiveness and clarity of ANUSA's advocacy efforts, ensuring that resources are directed where they are most needed.

Many interviewees considered department officers as "separate" from ANUSA. The constitution creates this perception of separation by requiring departments "to be governed by their individual Constitutions and Regulations." This contributes to the false impression that the departments are separate entities from ANUSA, which is not the case. The legal liability for the actions of department officers and their collectives lies with the SRC and the executive.

This arrangement creates significant governance risks for ANUSA, as it must manage the actions and decisions of these departments without clear alignment or oversight. In addition to the perceived separation, many interviewees raised concerns about the accountability of department officers, particularly regarding some officers' compliance with timekeeping requirements. The lack of clarity and oversight in how department officers manage their time and responsibilities contributes to the perception of separation. While it is important to respect the autonomy of these departments, ensuring some level of oversight is crucial for maintaining accountability and coherence within ANUSA.

Rather than each department having its own constitution, they could develop a charter that sets out the objectives, authority, and processes of the department and serves as a guide for how the department operates. This approach would preserve autonomy for each department while ensuring they operate under the broader ANUSA constitution and regulations. By making this change, ANUSA can mitigate legal risks, enhance operational efficiency, and foster a more integrated and unified organisational structure.

Examples of student feedback highlighting these issues include:

- *"Departments don't see themselves as part of ANUSA."*
- *"Departments are separate from ANUSA."*
- *"Departments don't have a lot of regular interaction with ANUSA."*
- *"Departments only care about the collective they represent."*

- *“Nothing has motivated me to join ANUSA, I am motivated to join [my] department.”*
- *“Departments are marginalised groups and we understand each other.”*
- *“Departments trust departments – we trust each other.”*

### *General Representatives*

General representatives (gen reps) within ANUSA play a valuable role in representing a wide range of student concerns and serve as an entry point to the SRC, nurturing future leaders within ANUSA. However, the review revealed that many students perceive gen reps as having the lowest status within the ANUSA hierarchy, often viewing them as lacking accountability. Initially, many students dismissed the role of gen reps, seeing them as insignificant. Yet, when asked whether the positions should be abolished, they articulated the vital role gen reps play in providing diverse representation and fostering future leadership within ANUSA and strongly advocated for the roles to remain.

There is a buddy system for gen reps where members of the executive offer mentoring and guidance. In addition, ANUSA could consider offering gen reps a small honorarium for attendance at SRC meetings and targeted training and development opportunities for gen reps. Implementing clear accountability mechanisms would also be beneficial. These initiatives would help ensure that gen reps who wish to pursue future leadership roles within ANUSA are well-prepared and capable.

Examples of student feedback highlighting these issues include:

- *“Gen reps are the lowest in the pecking order.”*
- *“We could do better engaging Gen Reps”*
- *“Gen rep is a really valuable role, however very hard to find direction if not involved in a group.”*
- *“I like to specialise and get things done and Gen Reps are important for that - It’s a bit diminishing to say they are not important.”*
- *“Some gen reps come with a purpose and because of that, they find the role fulfilling”.*
- *“The entire gen reps are undergraduates and there is no motivation for post-grads.”*
- *“It’s difficult for gen reps to do anything meaningful – gen reps structure needs to be changed to increase accountability.”*

### *Parents and Carers Officer*

The parents and carers officer position, historically part of PARSAs, transitioned to ANUSA following the defunding of PARSAs. Initially established by PARSAs as a part-time role of 5 hours per week, this position was created to address the unique challenges faced by student parents and carers. The transition to ANUSA aimed to ensure that these students continue to receive the support and advocacy they need despite the organisational changes. However, despite the transition to ANUSA, the role remains an anomaly in the structure, as it reports directly to the president but is not part of the executive and is also not a department. Feedback through the review noted that the parents and carer role “has no specific definition at the moment”.

One approach to better integrate the parents and carers officer into ANUSA is to formalise it within the departmental structure, effectively conferring it with similar status as the other autonomous student-led groups. This integration would provide the role with greater visibility, resources, and formal support, ensuring that the needs of student parents and carers are consistently addressed. A parents and carers department could replace the environment department, so it would not incur any additional costs for ANUSA. Unfortunately, the university does not collect data from enrolled students about their parenting or caring responsibilities, making it difficult to assess the demand for a specific department for this group.

To make the role more manageable for post-graduate students (who are more likely to be a parent or carer), ANUSA could consider having a number of students share the responsibilities. This approach would distribute the workload and make it more feasible for students with limited time. Maintaining the role as a part-time position with a stipend is crucial, and additional support measures, such as administrative assistance or access to professional development resources, could further enhance the attractiveness of the role.

### 3.4 SRC and Executive effectiveness

The SRC and its executive have a key impact on whether ANUSA thrives – it sets the tone of organisation through its leadership, behaviour, culture and overall performance.

The conduct and organisation of SRC meetings is a critical part of the governance process. Effective SRC meetings are necessary for: decision making; reporting and accountability; reviewing and analysis; problem solving; and discussion. Running purposeful and participative SRC meetings can be challenging. Common experiences reported by interviewees include:

- long debates with no conclusion or decision;
- uneven participation; and
- uncertainty or an unwillingness to ask questions.

Feedback from students about SRC meetings highlights significant challenges:

- *“Very aggressive behaviour turns people off.”*
- *“SRC meetings are scary – but not only stupid things happen there, some good things happen there.”*
- *“Meetings are too long, have too many people and fail to foster a culture of discussion and exchange of ideas.”*
- *“My impression is that student politics can get really messy.”*
- *“By far the thing ANUSA does the worst is its meetings”*
- *“A big portion of the people cannot separate the personal from the political.”*
- *“The passion often leads to confrontational responses from those already involved.”*
- *“Having people being very aggressive towards you is not good.”*
- *“A lot of people are discouraged from getting involved.”*
- *“There is a lot of shouting – attacking people rather than their ideas.”*
- *“Too much focus on international politics.”*
- *“SRC is not really a place for conversations between students who don’t have a position.”*
- *“You are defined by how you vote in SRC.”*
- *“The thing ANUSA does worst is its meetings.”*
- *“Perception is that SRC is scary.”*
- *“It’s very difficult to be in the space, it’s very hostile.”*
- *“As soon as you say something people make a judgement on those statements.”*
- *“SRC just feels like a distraction – it is not a very productive space.”*
- *“When it gets down to student politics there is too much focus on international politics.”*
- *“SRC is a high intensity culture based on politics.”*

Section 1.4 of the standing orders in the ANUSA constitution refers to conduct at meetings. This section is very limited in scope as it focuses only on procedural aspects, such as when speakers may address the meeting, maintaining silence during speeches, conducting business through motions and amendments, and the chair’s responsibility to explain meeting procedures. These rules do not adequately address behavioural expectations to ensure meetings are productive, inclusive, and respectful. The standing orders need to be expanded to include specific behavioural guidelines and

outline procedures for addressing disruptive behaviour, including warnings and removal from meetings, to ensure meetings run smoothly and respectfully.

In addition, the ANUSA code of conduct outlines essential principles and behaviours expected from all employees, elected officials, club and society representatives, and individuals in a relationship with ANUSA. Key points include:

- behave honestly and with integrity;
- act with care and diligence;
- treat everyone with respect and without harassment;
- avoid discrimination based on irrelevant characteristics;
- comply with all relevant laws;
- follow reasonable directions from authorities;
- maintain confidentiality of sensitive information;
- disclose and avoid conflicts of interest;
- use resources appropriately;
- do not misuse inside information for personal gain; and
- maintain professional behaviour, avoiding illegal drugs, alcohol, fighting, and swearing in the workplace.

To enhance its effectiveness, the code of conduct should be reviewed and updated to include clear consequences for breaches, a robust enforcement mechanism, regular training, a supportive reporting environment, and continuous review. By adopting these elements, the code can foster a culture of respect, and integrity and contribute to creating a more inclusive, respectful, and productive SRC. The code of conduct should also form part of the induction for all new student representatives.

Both the broader community and the ANU student body are seeking honesty, integrity, and inclusivity from their elected representatives. Instead of mirroring the negative behaviours seen in mainstream politics, (as highlighted in *Set the Standard: Report on the Independent Review into Commonwealth Parliamentary Workplaces* by Kate Jenkins), ANUSA should strive to create a better political culture focusing on transparency, cooperation, and ethical conduct. This approach will help rebuild and maintain student trust and engagement. Addressing these challenges is crucial for making ANUSA more welcoming and effective for all students.

The review found that overall, the executive fostered a collaborative environment characterised by mutual respect, honesty, and openness. This approach enabled constructive debate and collective decision-making, guided by a shared purpose and strategic clarity. This effective collaboration allowed the executive to operate more efficiently and effectively, avoiding the tensions that plagued the SRC.

Most interviewees considered the executive to be accountable, consistently demonstrating transparency in their decision-making processes and outcomes:

- *“High degree of accountability within the executive”*
- *“Less accountability at the SRC level.”*
- *“The executive functions very well.”*
- *“Exec is quite effective – they work together”*
- *“So much is dependent on the culture of the exec”*
- *“When the exec deals with issues it is not personal.”*
- *“The exec reporting process is good.”*



## 3.5 Relationship between student representatives and staff

The review highlighted mutual respect between ANUSA student representatives and staff as a key governance strength, with both groups valuing each other's perspectives and contributions. The longstanding staff provide essential stability, offering a wealth of knowledge and experience that supports each new cohort of student representatives. This reciprocal relationship has fostered an environment where students actively listen to, and appreciate the guidance from staff, enhancing the organisation's overall effectiveness and cohesion.

While the annual turnover of student representatives presents challenges for maintaining the continuity of initiatives and institutional knowledge, the staff provide a wealth of knowledge and experience that supports each new cohort of student representatives.

Given that a number of key staff members have been with ANUSA for many years, looking to the future, careful succession planning will be essential to maintain this positive culture. It is important to focus not only on developing new student leaders who uphold these values but also on ensuring that staff transitions are managed smoothly. By prioritising the development of both staff and student leaders, ANUSA can continue to thrive.

- *“ANUSA is almost unique in having a very positive and non-conflictual relationship between staff and representatives...This is essentially built on mutual respect and mutual trust.”*
- *“Culture is one of the most protective elements for ANUSA.”*

## 3.6 Training and Remuneration

### *Induction and Training*

There is a lot for new student representatives to learn including: the roles and responsibilities of student representatives, the SRC, and the executive; oversight and governance responsibilities, including understanding fiduciary duty and conflict of interest; the role of ANUSA staff members and key contacts; how ANUSA works organisationally; the complexities of SRC meeting rules, protocols and processes; and how to read financial statements and monitor budgets.

Most students interviewed thought that the induction and handover processes offered by ANUSA are relevant and well delivered. The constitution mandates that at the beginning of their term, each executive member meets with the president to ensure a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities. During this induction meeting, the president and the executive member identify and agree on key accountabilities and goals for the upcoming period, outline the necessary skills and attributes for success, and establish development actions to help the member achieve personal excellence and maximise their contribution to the association. These discussions are documented using the statement of expectations form from the career and professional development policy.

The roles of president and general secretary require specific skills including the ability to chair SRC meetings with impartiality and objectivity; moderating council meetings to ensure that they are constructive, efficient and respectful; planning; ability to prioritise; effective communication, assertiveness, diplomacy and the ability to professionally represent ANUSA. The ANU offers Australian Institute of Company Directors (AICD) training to senior student office holders across the university, providing them with a robust understanding of governance and leadership.

A number of students interviewed, particularly department officers, expressed concern that they had experienced a lack of support from the executive in facilitating training they had requested, such as Lifeline crisis support training. They highlighted that while initial induction was provided, specific ongoing training and development needs relevant to their roles were not adequately addressed. They reported that this lack of support has made it challenging for them to effectively fulfill their responsibilities, particularly in areas requiring specialised skills and knowledge. Ensuring that requested training opportunities are provided and accessible is crucial for empowering department officers to perform their duties effectively and support the student body.

### *Remuneration*

The ANUSA constitution outlines the following two types of payments for student representatives:

1. Stipends: provided as a form of compensation for the ongoing services rendered by elected representatives, such as the executive and department officers.
2. Honoraria: discretionary payments made in recognition of voluntary services that go beyond the basic duties of the office.

Many students interviewed expressed concerns about the significant number of hours they dedicated to ANUSA work, which far exceeded the remuneration they received. This can lead to feelings of underappreciation and burnout. A couple of interviewees noted that ANUSA lacks a strong culture of volunteerism, which influences perspectives on, and expectations around, remuneration. Moreover, the increasing cost of living places additional financial pressures on students, many of whom have part-time jobs alongside their student representative roles and university studies.

It is important to clarify that the stipend is not intended to reflect the number of hours worked. There needs to be an open discussion about the expectations of volunteer hours and what the stipend is meant to represent. The stipends are provided as a form of reasonable compensation for services rendered, acknowledging the contributions of elected students without establishing an employment relationship. This distinction is crucial to maintain the voluntary nature of student leadership roles within ANUSA.

There was one suggestion received during the review, that members of the executive should be considered employees of the association. Considering elected student representatives as staff members is not advisable for several reasons. Firstly, the primary role of elected student representatives is to advocate for, and represent their peers. This role is inherently different from that of staff members, who are employed to perform specific duties under the direction and supervision of their employer. Elected representatives need the independence to make decisions and advocate effectively, free from the constraints of an employer-employee relationship. This independence could be compromised if they were treated as staff, potentially creating conflicts of interest and limiting their ability to challenge institutional policies or practices.

Treating elected representatives as staff would also introduce legal and administrative complexities. Compliance with employment regulations would require significant administrative resources and could strain ANUSA's budget, reducing the resources available for other student services and initiatives. The flexibility and independence that come with volunteer roles are also crucial for the effectiveness of student representatives. Being classified as staff might impose rigid structures and expectations that could hinder their ability to perform effectively in dynamic and diverse representative functions.

Additionally, maintaining a degree of voluntary engagement is essential for preserving the ethos of student leadership. Financial incentives should not overshadow the motivation to serve peers. Ensuring that these roles remain fundamentally volunteer-based helps maintain the integrity and purpose of student governance. Furthermore, the complexities of employment law, including contracts, working hours, and entitlements such as leave and benefits, are not aligned with the nature of student governance, which is typically based on voluntary service supplemented by stipends for practical support.

To ensure that stipends and honoraria are equitable, defensible, and accountable, it is essential to establish clear publicly available guidelines and criteria for their allocation and annual information on the rates paid to each role entitled to a stipend. It should be a priority for the ANUSA leadership to ensure that the use of SSAF funds is, and is seen to be, reasonable, transparent and aligned with the principles of equity and accountability.

#### 4. TRANSITION TO REPRESENTATION OF POSTGRADUATE STUDENTS

To effectively represent postgraduate students within ANUSA, it is essential to address their distinct interests and priorities, which often differ from those of undergraduates. Postgraduate students typically focus more on their academic and professional development and show less interest in student politics. Replicating the undergraduate approach to representation and engagement will not effectively cater to postgraduate students.

There was strong acknowledgement among students interviewed that the current system of election to the SRC and executive disadvantages postgraduate students. Many postgraduate students are only on campus for short periods and are combining their university studies with full-time jobs and family commitments. This limits their capacity to building up sufficient support to be successfully elected to the SRC. Additionally, most postgraduate students interviewed stated that they are not interested in student politics and they reported a widely held perception that ANUSA is only interested in engaging with politically active students. Overcoming this requires targeted communication efforts that clearly convey the benefits and services ANUSA offers to postgraduates.

While a number of the postgraduate students interviewed for this review, believed ANUSA should consider establishing one or two dedicated identified postgraduate positions, the majority of students interviewed did not support this proposal. They argued that nothing prevents postgraduate students standing for election for any of the SRC roles. Given this resistance, ANUSA needs to consider alternative ways to ensure postgraduate students have a voice in decision-making processes, ANUSA should consider developing a comprehensive postgraduate engagement strategy in consultation with postgraduate coursework and HDR students. Tailored social events, networking opportunities, and professional development workshops could be integral components of this strategy.

The review found that ANUSA has taken steps to engage with post graduate students through a range of initiative including newsletters and specific targeted events. Postgraduate students interviewed as part of this review had a number of suggestions for how ANUSA can better engage and support them including:

- organising college-based events, as most postgraduates only attend campus for classes or activities based in their college;
- proactively contacting international postgraduate students before they arrive in Australia to introduce ANUSA and provide information about available services and support – this could

build strong, early connections with ANUSA and ensure that international postgraduates are well supported from the outset;

- developing a clear strategy for postgraduate consultation, including regular feedback sessions and representation on key committees and having this well-publicised to ensure postgraduate students are aware of these opportunities; and
- holding small HDR events, such as coffee catch ups.

By enhancing service provision, streamlining engagement methods, and improving communication, ANUSA can better support and represent its postgraduate constituency. ANUSA also needs to explore opportunities for non-political student representation to enable the voices of postgraduate students to be heard. This could be through a revitalised EDC with an expanded role with postgraduate students. This transition is essential for building a more inclusive and effective student association that truly serves the diverse needs of the ANU student community.

Feedback from postgraduate students and some undergraduate students included:

- *“Politics is a bit of a barrier for postgrads.”*
- *“I worry that ANUSA’s challenge of integrating postgrads is that the time commitment is a barrier.”*
- *“Postgrad interest is definitely on the service side.”*
- *“Postgrad events need improving.”*
- *“To ensure postgrad representation you need identified postgrad positions.”*
- *“The entire general reps are undergraduate and there is no motivation for postgrads.”*
- *“We are not able to get people to meetings.”*
- *“Everyone who comes here to do a Masters needs a job – at present it is too reputationally risky to include ANUSA on my resume.”*
- *“Undergraduate interests are not necessarily postgrad interests.”*
- *“Exec needs a post grad rep.”*
- *“ANUSA needs to continue to mature its support for students with diverse needs in fields that are lacking. Older students, students with caring needs, students from non-English speaking backgrounds and students of faith currently don’t have sufficient services that are available to them.”*

## 5. SUMMARY FINDINGS

Overall, the review found that ANUSA has a sound governance framework that has largely served it well to date. Historically, ANUSA has not been highly factionalised, which has facilitated effective governance, service delivery, student support, and collaborative student-staff relationships.

The expanded role of ANUSA in representing postgraduate students has introduced new challenges. Postgraduate students, often less interested in student politics, require tailored engagement strategies to meet their specific needs. Looking ahead, the potential for increased factionalism among student representatives may test ANUSA’s governance in the future. To address this, ANUSA’s governance must be robust and adaptable.

While politics is an inherent aspect of ANUSA, it should not overshadow the principles of good corporate governance and inclusion. As the peak representative body for all students at ANU, it is vital that both ANU students and the university have complete confidence in ANUSA’s governance. Importantly, the governance framework must uphold ANUSA’s identity as an independent, student-led organisation, preserving its unique nature and core values.

The review identified a number of strengths in ANUSA's governance, and also found a range of challenges and risks that, if addressed, could enhance its ability to represent and service the ANU student community more effectively:

***Governance Structures:***

- The ANUSA Constitution contains a contradiction between section 14(1) and section 10(1)(a). Section 14(1) designates the SRC as "the committee of management," while section 10(1)(a) assigns the responsibility to "manage the affairs of the association" to the executive. Section 14 grants the SRC specific powers that do not encompass managerial authority, such as adopting resolutions on policy. In contrast, section 10 vests numerous specific managerial powers in various members of the executive.
- This discrepancy creates confusion in the interpretation of the constitution. One interpretation is that the SRC holds 'symbolic' authority, whereas actual managerial responsibility is vested in the executive. This raises concerns about the clarity of overall governance responsibility within the organisation. Without a clear delineation of roles, the effectiveness and stability of ANUSA may be compromised.
- The ANUSA governance structure is a hybrid between a governing board and a student parliament. This arrangement combines roles that are inherently different. Members of boards have a fiduciary duty to act solely in the interests of the organisation which they govern, whereas members of parliament have no such duty - they can act in line with their sectional interests, without regard for the health of the institution itself.
- In a parliamentary political context, disagreement in which different policies are advocated can only be resolved ultimately by one side obtaining the power to make its viewpoint prevail over the other. In contrast, an effective governing board establishes a culture of mutual respect, honesty and openness that encourages constructive debate, takes collective responsibility for its decisions, and is shaped by a common purpose and a strategic clarity.
- The SRC primarily serves as a forum for political motions and debate, which limits its capacity to focus on the overall governance of ANUSA. Additionally, with 60 representatives, the SRC is too large to effectively govern.
- The review found that the ANUSA constitution is contradictory as to where governance responsibility sits and needs clarification. In practice, in line with the managerial responsibilities of the executive in the as outlined in the constitution, the executive acts as the governing board of the organisation. This arrangement facilitates better governance as decisions can be made in the best interests of ANUSA rather than in the interests of a particular faction or political ideology in the context of an adversarial SRC.
- The review found strong student support for formalising the executive's role in the constitution to reflect its actual function as the governing body of ANUSA.
- The current inconsistencies in the ANUSA constitution concerning the role of the executive introduce legal risk. Formalising the executive as the "committee of management" with clear governing responsibilities will remove potential uncertainty that could undermine the stability and sustainability of the organisation.

- Overall, while the inclusion of committees in the constitution provides stability and ensures a clear mandate, the review found that many of these committees are not functioning effectively, primarily due to a lack of clear purpose, poor engagement, and difficulties in attracting and retaining members. Many consistently struggle to achieve a quorum. This disengagement highlights the perceived irrelevance of the committees and the critical need for restructuring.
- When committees that are enshrined in the constitution become non-functional, it not only creates governance gaps but also poses significant challenges in terms of making necessary amendments, which require substantial time and effort. This makes it difficult to adapt to changing priorities and needs.
- The disputes committee, was universally identified by interviewees as a non-functioning committee. It is perceived as ineffective, partly due to its rarely utilised role and the absence of active members. This has led to the committee being viewed as redundant, with many suggesting that its responsibilities could be better managed through a different dispute resolution process altogether, such as mediation or arbitration handled by an external party or a designated independent officer. To date, ANUSA has been fortunate in not being required to manage a significant dispute. However, if there were to be a need in the future, it is clear that the current arrangements are not fit for purpose.
- A restructure of the SRC offers an opportunity to reinvigorate the Education Council (EDC) and to raise its profile within the student community. This renewal would transform the EDC into a more effective forum for discussing academic issues, formulating strategies to protect student interests, and influencing academic policy at the university level. Meetings could be chaired by the education officer and made more interactive and engaging through workshops, discussion groups, and brainstorming sessions, encouraging greater involvement and fostering a more collaborative and dynamic environment.
- The constitution is silent on the relationship between the education committee and the EDC. From a governance perspective, it would make sense for the education committee to function as a sub-committee of the EDC, ensuring better alignment and coordination between these bodies. As a sub-committee of the EDC, the education committee would focus on operational activities, policy implementation, and engaging directly with the student body to address specific educational concerns.

***Balancing Activism and Inclusion:***

- The review received universal praise for the range and quality of services ANUSA offers, including legal services, academic advocacy, the Brian Kenyon Student Space, clubs, societies, events, student assistance, and student meals. However, many students expressed concerns that ANUSA's political activism overshadows its advocacy and support services. Additionally, many students reported experiencing ANUSA as unwelcoming, alienating, and unsafe.
- Political activism is, and will always remain an important part of ANUSA's role. At the same time, ANUSA needs to take this feedback seriously and implement strategies to prevent its political activism from unintentionally creating barriers for students wishing to access its services.

### ***Effectiveness of SRC and the Executive:***

- A significant number of students interviewed, spoke of poor behaviours at SRC meetings, using words such as “aggressive”, “scary”, “confrontational”, “attacking”, intimidating” and “unproductive”.
- Many student interviewees also expressed frustration about the effectiveness of SRC meetings including: overly long duration, lack of focus and discussions descending into personal attacks, which left them disillusioned and disengaged. It was acknowledged that there is a fine line between a legitimate politically driven debate and unreasonable political behaviour. However, on many occasions students described behaviours in SRC meetings that would never be tolerated in another setting.
- The existing ANUSA Standing Orders, particularly Section 1.4 on Conduct at Meetings, are limited in scope. They primarily focus on procedural aspects, such as when speakers may address the meeting, conducting business through motions and amendments, and the Chair’s responsibility to explain meeting procedures. However, these rules do not adequately address behavioural expectations to ensure meetings are productive, inclusive, and respectful.
- Both the broader community and the ANU student body are seeking honesty, integrity, and inclusivity from their elected representatives. Instead of mirroring the negative behaviours seen in mainstream politics, (as highlighted in *Set the Standard: Report on the Independent Review into Commonwealth Parliamentary Workplaces* by Kate Jenkins), ANUSA should look at the recommendations in this report and, where relevant, apply them to the operations of the SRC. Addressing these challenges is crucial for making ANUSA more welcoming and effective for all students.
- The review found that overall, the executive fostered a collaborative environment that was capable of overcoming factional barriers to work together in the best interests of ANUSA. This approach enabled constructive debate and collective decision-making, guided by a shared sense of purpose and strategic clarity. Informally, the executive has effectively taken on the role of the board, which highlights the need to formalise this within the constitution.
- Most interviewees considered the executive to be accountable, consistently demonstrating transparency in their decision-making processes and outcomes.

### ***Election Regulations:***

- Low voter turnout in university student unions, including ANUSA, is a common issue. Many students feel disconnected from ANUSA’s activities and believe their vote will not make a difference. Ignoring this problem would be detrimental, as low turnout perpetuates a cycle of apathy, leaving students feeling unheard and further disconnected from the ANUSA’s decisions. This issue is even more pronounced among postgraduate students, who have demanding schedules and different priorities.
- If ANUSA does nothing to address this, its reputation as an organisation primarily serving an activist political fringe will persist and become more entrenched. This perception alienates the broader student body, including postgraduates, who already feel ANUSA does not represent their interests.

- Increasing voter engagement fosters a sense of community and belonging, encouraging students to shape their university experience actively. Engaging postgraduate students is particularly important, as their perspectives are essential for comprehensive representation.

### ***Leadership Roles and Responsibilities:***

#### President

- ANUSA's leadership structure features a unique arrangement where the president holds a full-time role that encompasses both the responsibilities of a chair and a CEO. This dual role is distinctive in the context of student unions and carries significant implications for the governance and operational effectiveness of the organisation.
- As the CEO of ANUSA, the president is responsible for overseeing the day-to-day operations of the association, managing staff, and ensuring the implementation of policies and programs. This role requires a focus on administrative and operational aspects, including financial management, resource allocation, and service delivery.
- As the chair of ANUSA, the president also provides strategic leadership and direction for the organisation, and performs important representational roles, representing the student body in discussions with the university and external stakeholders, advocating for student interests, and ensuring that ANUSA's activities align with its goals.
- With the president serving as the key executive leader, accountability is concentrated in a single position. As such, the role requires balancing involvement with political activism that may be inconsistent with being widely perceived as a unifying figure, representing the collective interests of all ANU students and fostering a sense of unity and inclusiveness within the student community.
- As a full-time position, the president has the capacity to dedicate significant time and energy to the role. This enhances the leadership presence within ANUSA, allowing the president to be more engaged with student issues, more accessible to the student body, and deeply involved in the daily operations of the organisation.
- Review participants strongly supported retaining the combined role for the president, and overall, they viewed the performance of both the current and immediate past president positively. However, concerns were raised about the necessity for the president to carefully balance their responsibilities as both Chair and CEO.

#### Treasurer

- The constitution states that the ANUSA treasurer must oversee financial affairs, arrange audits, prepare and present financial reports, assist representatives with financial organisation, and manage sponsorships.
- Being treasurer of a not-for-profit organisation is a significant responsibility and can be challenging for students. To make the role more manageable, ANUSA could clearly delineate the treasurer's strategic responsibilities from the operational tasks handled by the staff financial controller.



### Welfare Officer and Education Officer

- Many interviewees raised concerns about the roles of the welfare officer and education officer. It was widely perceived that there had been too much focus on pro-Palestine campaigning over recent months, taking away from core education advocacy and student welfare issues. Additionally, the responsibilities of these roles are perceived as not clearly distinct, leading to overlapping activities and accountability issues.
- There are no standalone position descriptions for executive roles beyond brief role outlines in the constitution. Comprehensive descriptions could include job title, purpose, duties, responsibilities and key skills and attributes required.

### College Representatives

- ANUSA has four representatives for each of the seven academic colleges at ANU. Feedback noted these roles are highly specialised, and students with purely political ambitions often lack the skills and knowledge to perform them effectively. Conversely, those interested in representing their academic college find the SRC's political environment off-putting.
- There was broad support for removing college representatives from the SRC, reducing its size from 60 to 32 members. College representatives should remain part of the EDC, focusing on academic interests without political entanglement. This change would provide an opportunity to review the EDC's terms of reference to ensure a clear purpose and effective access to the SRC and the executive.

### Department Officers

- Department officers manage policy and advocacy for seven key areas: BIPOC, Disabilities, Environment, Indigenous, International Students, Queer\*, and Women. Each officer represents their constituency's interests, ensuring their voices are heard within the broader student community.
- The inclusion of the environment officer raises questions about its fit within ANUSA's departmental structure, as it does not represent a historically marginalised constituency.
- The constitution requires departments to develop their own individual constitutions and regulations, creating a perception that they are separate from ANUSA. This leads to the false impression that departments operate as independent entities. However, the SRC and the executive hold ultimate legal responsibility for the actions of department officers. This arrangement creates significant governance risks for ANUSA, as it must manage the actions and decisions of these departments without clear alignment or oversight.
- To replace individual constitutions and regulations, departments could develop a charter outlining objectives, authority, and processes, operating under the broader ANUSA constitution and regulations. These would not need to be enshrined in the constitution and would mitigate legal risks, enhance operational efficiency, and foster a unified organisational structure.
- Some concerns were raised about department officers' accountability, particularly regarding timekeeping and transparency. Ensuring oversight while respecting autonomy is crucial for maintaining accountability and coherence within ANUSA.

## General Representatives

- General representatives (gen reps) play a valuable role in representing diverse student concerns and nurturing future leaders within ANUSA. However, the review found that they are perceived as having the lowest status within the SRC and lack accountability.
- Despite initial dismissal of their role, student interviewees advocated for retaining gen reps due to their importance in providing diverse representation and fostering future leadership. ANUSA could enhance the role of gen reps by offering a small honorarium for attendance at SRC meetings, targeted training, development opportunities, and establishing clear accountability mechanisms.

## Parents and Carers Officer

- The parents and carers officer position transitioned from PARSA to ANUSA after PARSA's defunding. Initially a part-time role of 5 hours per week, it addresses the unique challenges faced by student parents and carers. However, it remains an anomaly, reporting to the president but not part of the executive or a department.
- As the university does not collect data on students' parenting or caring responsibilities, it is difficult to assess demand for establishing a parents and carers department.
- To make the role more manageable for post-graduate students (who are more likely to be parents or carers), ANUSA could consider having several students share responsibilities, maintaining it as a part-time position with a stipend that reports to the executive, and providing additional support measures like administrative assistance and professional development.

## ***Relationship between student representatives and staff:***

- A key governance strength of ANUSA lies in the positive and collaborative relationships between student representatives and ANUSA staff. Longstanding staff provide essential stability and a wealth of knowledge, supporting each new cohort of student representatives. This continuity is crucial for sustaining initiatives and retaining institutional knowledge.
- Given that key senior staff have been with ANUSA for years, it is important to think about how to manage the transition of their eventual departure. Without proper succession planning, ANUSA risks losing the collaborative and positive culture fostered over many years.

## ***Induction and Training:***

- Most student interviewees reported that they found ANUSA's induction and handover processes relevant and well-delivered. In addition, ANU offers AICD training for senior student office holders to enhance their governance and leadership skills.
- The constitution requires each executive member to meet with the president at the start of their term to understand their roles, set goals, and outline development actions, documented in the statement of expectations form. It is important for the president to undertake this task each year.
- Some department officers reported a lack of support from the executive in facilitating ongoing training, such as Lifeline crisis support. They found initial induction adequate but noted that ongoing training needs were not addressed, impacting their ability to fulfill their responsibilities requiring specialised skills.

### ***Remuneration:***

- The ANUSA constitution outlines two payment types for student representatives: stipends, which compensate ongoing services by elected representatives; and honoraria, which are discretionary payments for voluntary services beyond basic duties.
- Many student representatives expressed concerns that the significant hours they dedicate to ANUSA work exceed their remuneration. However, stipends are not meant to reflect hours worked but to provide reasonable compensation while maintaining the voluntary nature of student leadership roles. An open discussion is needed about volunteer hour expectations and the stipend's purpose.
- There is no objective performance framework in place for department officers whose roles involve a high level of responsibility and workload. They are expected to complete time-sheets, but when this is not done, there are no clear consequences. Additionally, some department officers choose to share a portion of their stipend with their collective. However, there is no transparent framework for this, so it is determined by each individual department officer.
- Long hours and overwork can lead to stress and burnout. ANUSA needs to ensure that realistic workloads and boundaries are established for student representatives. This could include strategies such as: redistributing tasks and responsibilities; setting realistic goals and deadlines; maintaining open communication about workload and resources; and monitoring student representatives' workloads and well-being.

### ***Representation of postgraduate students:***

- To effectively represent postgraduate students within ANUSA, it is essential to address their distinct interests and priorities, which often differ from those of undergraduates. Postgraduate students typically focus more on their academic and professional development and show less interest in student politics. Replicating the undergraduate approach to representation and engagement will not effectively cater to postgraduate students.
- There was strong acknowledgement among students interviewed that the current system of election to the SRC and executive disadvantages postgraduate students. Many postgraduate students are only on campus for short periods and are combining their university studies with full-time jobs and family commitments. They have limited time to run an election campaign, attend lengthy meetings, and take on demanding roles
- Many postgraduate students reported a widely held perception that ANUSA is only interested in engaging with politically active students which creates a barrier to their engagement. The review found that ANUSA has taken steps to engage with post graduate students through a range of initiatives including newsletters and specific events. However, to address this perception, ANUSA may need to consider targeted communication strategies to convey the benefits and services ANUSA offers to postgraduates.
- While a number of the postgraduate students interviewed for this review, believed ANUSA should consider establishing one or two dedicated identified postgraduate positions, the majority of students interviewed did not support this proposal. They argued that nothing prevents postgraduate students standing for election for any of the SRC roles. Given this resistance, ANUSA needs to consider alternative ways to ensure postgraduate students have a voice in decision-making processes.

## 6. RECOMMENDATIONS

### Constitutional Amendments

1. Amend the constitution to formally designate the executive as the primary governing body of ANUSA with legal responsibility for key decisions, fiduciary duties, and overall governance. This shift would address several current risks associated with the SRC serving as the “committee of the association”. These risks include the current contradictions and ambiguity regarding the roles of the SRC and the executive contained in the constitution; the inefficiency and ineffectiveness of managing governance with such a large and diverse group; the potential for factionalism to undermine unified decision-making; and the challenges of maintaining fiduciary duties in an adversarial, highly contested political environment.
2. To ensure clarity and strengthen governance, section 10 of the constitution that relates to the role of the executive should explicitly state that the executive is collectively responsible for the strategic leadership of ANUSA and is required to:
  - act in the best Interests of ANUSA at all times;
  - make decisions with care, diligence, and honesty, ensuring all actions benefit the association;
  - avoid situations where personal interests could conflict with those of ANUSA and maintain transparency in their actions;
  - maintain confidentiality of sensitive information acquired through their role, ensuring it is not misused for personal or political gain; and
  - collectively ensure accountability within the governance structure.
3. Expand Section 1.4 of the ANUSA Standing Orders (Conduct at Meetings) to include behavioural rules that ensure all voices are heard, maintain respectful and constructive discussions, prohibit interruptions, bullying and personal attacks, and outline clear consequences for disruptive behaviour. This will foster a more inclusive and effective SRC environment. While the SRC is a forum for robust debate, it must also be safe and respectful.
4. Retain the current membership of the executive, along with the current structure with the president as both chair and CEO.
5. Amend Section 9 (Representatives) of the constitution to remove college representatives from the SRC and prioritise their roles to focus on the EDC, allowing them to concentrate on academic interests and advocacy without the distraction of broader political issues.
6. Amend Section 11 (Departments of the Association) of the constitution as follows:
  - Remove the requirement for departments to have their own constitutions and regulations. Instead, implement department charters that outline the purpose, objectives, authority, and reporting processes to the SRC and the executive. Department and committee charters do not need to be included in the constitution. Charters provide flexibility, ensure alignment with ANUSA's overall governance framework, and simplify oversight and accountability.
  - Remove the specific reference to the amount of payment (currently set at no less than \$5,000) from the constitution and establish a dynamic policy and procedure framework for determining the funding allocated to each department based on current needs and priorities.
  - Remove environment as a department to reinforce that the purpose of autonomous departments is to represent and advocate for historically marginalised student groups. If this cannot be agreed, consider making the environment officer a standalone specialist officer similar to the parents and carers officer.

7. Remove Section 18 (Committees of the Association) of the constitution and abolish the existing Education Committee; Disputes Committee; Financial Review Committee; Academic Management Committee; and Parents and Carers Committee.
8. Amend Section 15 (Education Council) of the constitution to give the education officer the responsibility for convening, chairing and organising the EDC with the vice president being the only other executive member represented on the council. Use this change as an opportunity to:
  - reinvigorate the EDC and transform it into a more effective forum for academic discussions, strategy formulation, policy influence and postgraduate engagement;
  - review the EDC's terms of reference to ensure a clear purpose and effective access to the SRC and the executive;
  - consider expanding membership to provide for a number of open merit-based positions to enable non-elected post graduate students the opportunity to participate along with the college and academic representatives.
9. Review the ongoing requirement for an education committee in addition to the EDC. If assessed as still having a useful purpose, from a governance perspective, the education committee can be established by regulation or policy and should function as a sub-committee of the EDC to ensure better alignment and coordination between these bodies. As a sub-committee of the EDC, the education committee could focus on operational activities, policy implementation, and engaging directly with the student body to address specific educational concerns.
10. Streamline the ANUSA constitution by removing detailed operational elements, including redundant roles and non-functioning committees, and replacing them with adaptable policies and procedures. This approach allows for quicker and more effective responses to changing student needs and priorities, providing the flexibility to adapt roles and committee functions as necessary.

### **Role Clarity and Accountability**

11. Review and update the ANUSA code of conduct that outlines behaviours expected from all employees, elected officials, club and society representatives, and individuals in a relationship with ANUSA. The updated code of conduct should include clear consequences for breaches and a robust enforcement mechanism. The code of conduct should also form part of the induction for all new student representatives and staff.
12. Once the executive is established as the governing body of ANUSA, every 3-5 years, the executive should engage in a strategic planning process that involves ANUSA student representatives, and ANUSA staff to develop a clear, well-researched, strategic plan that sets out broad goals and establishes high-level priorities for the organisation.
13. As chair and CEO of ANUSA, the President must weigh the extent of their involvement in divisive political campaigns to avoid undermining their ability to represent ANUSA as an inclusive organisation for all students. This dual role demands a careful balance between activism and impartiality to ensure effective support and representation for the entire ANU student body. This aspect of the role should be incorporated in the position description.

14. Ensure there is clear differentiation and accountability between the roles of education officer and welfare officer. Clarify the responsibilities and expectations for each position to avoid overlap and ensure both officers are accountable for delivering on their core responsibilities relating to education and student welfare.
15. Clearly define the role and responsibilities of the parents and carers officer within ANUSA's governance framework, ensuring it reports directly to the executive. Develop a detailed position description to outline the objectives, duties, and expected outcomes.
16. To complement key role summaries contained in the constitution, develop more detailed position descriptions for each student representative role that includes: the title and purpose of the role, key responsibilities and duties, any required skills (eg financial knowledge and skills for role of treasurer) and attributes, reporting relationships, and performance expectations. Regularly review and update these descriptions to reflect changing needs and responsibilities.
17. When committees are established, ensure they have a clear purpose and are regularly monitored to ensure their continued relevance and effectiveness. A committee charter should detail why the committee exists, what it needs to accomplish, and how it will go about its work.
18. Ensure that the constitutional requirement for each executive member to meet with the president at the start of their term is implemented each year. This meeting should focus on understanding their roles, setting goals, and outlining development actions, documented in the statement of expectations form. Establish a process for performance reviews and clear consequences for non-performance, ensuring that executive members who fail to meet their outlined responsibilities are held accountable.
19. Develop and publish transparent guidelines for setting and managing stipends and honoraria. This will promote fairness and accountability, ensuring all members are aware of how compensation decisions are made and the criteria used.

### **Student Engagement and Communication**

20. Develop a communication strategy that reassures the wider student community about the impartiality and inclusivity of ANUSA's services. This should involve regular updates, transparent decision-making processes, and feedback mechanisms to address student concerns promptly and inclusively.
21. Establish more effective communication channels to keep the student community informed about the EDC's role, activities, meeting agendas, and outcomes. Utilising social media, newsletters, and the ANUSA website for regular updates would also enhance transparency and engagement. While the website currently contains information about the activities of the education committee, it lacks any information about the EDC.
22. Collaborate with the university to collect data on enrolled students with parenting or caring responsibilities. This information will help assess the demand for specific support and resources, ensuring that the parents and carers officer can effectively address the needs of this student population.

## **Complaints and Dispute Resolution**

23. Develop a clear and well understood procedure to manage internal complaints and dispute resolution. Any process for dealing with disputes or misconduct will need to comply with the requirements of the *Associations Incorporations Act 1991 (ACT)*. The process should include provisions to:
- facilitate informal complaint resolution mechanisms where appropriate;
  - appoint an external independent person to deal with a complaint or dispute when needed;
  - incorporate processes for timely, reasonable and workable sanctions and consequences;
  - protect students and staff from being victimised because they have made a complaint;
  - protect students and staff from vexatious and malicious complaints; and
  - ensure appropriate confidential records are kept about complaints and that this information is stored and managed appropriately.

## **Training and Development**

24. Provide targeted training, mentorship, and a small honorarium for gen reps to enhance their effectiveness and engagement. This support will encourage their active participation, indicate that ANUSA values their contribution and support the development of potential future leaders.
25. Ensure continuous training opportunities for all roles, in particular, addressing specific needs and providing support for department officers. This training should be tailored to the unique challenges and responsibilities of each role and should include both initial induction and ongoing professional development.
26. Implement measures to establish realistic workloads and boundaries for student representatives. These measures could include strategies such as: redistributing tasks and responsibilities; managing role expectations; setting achievable goals and deadlines; maintaining open communication about workload and resources; and actively monitoring the workload and well-being of student representatives.

## **Postgraduate Engagement**

27. Establish merit-based, non-political roles specifically for postgraduate students to ensure their voices are heard. These roles could include advisory roles and representation on committees, or working groups with a focus on specific issues such as academic support, student welfare, and university policies. This approach may encourage greater participation from postgraduate students who may not be interested in political roles but are keen to take on a role within ANUSA.
28. Build on existing engagement strategies by consulting with postgraduate students to ensure initiatives and activities addresses their specific needs and priorities.
29. Proactively contact international postgraduate students before they arrive in Australia. Use this as an opportunity to introduce ANUSA, provide information about available services and support, and build strong, early connections to ensure these students are well-supported from the outset.

30. Since many postgraduates only attend campus for classes or college-based activities, organise events within individual colleges. This could incorporate involvement of EDC to initiate and support college-based activities, with the aim of making it easier for postgraduate students to participate and engage with ANUSA.
31. Promote the services and benefits ANUSA offers to postgraduate students to dispel the perception that ANUSA is only relevant to political activists. Implement targeted marketing campaigns, information sessions, and direct outreach to postgraduate student groups. Utilise platforms and strategies that resonate with the postgraduate community, highlighting success stories and testimonials to build trust and demonstrate ANUSA's commitment to all students.