



Australian National University Students' Association (ANUSA)

Level 2, Di Riddell Student Centre, University Avenue
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(02) 6125 2444
26/02/2025

Dear ANU Students,

My name is Will, last year I was elected as President of the ANU Students Association alongside 48 other students. I ran on a platform of making our student union more representative, more transparent, more focused on supporting students and achieving real wins and improvements. Those of you who experienced O-Week this year, or are accessing our services, will already know the great work the ANUSA team does.

The Environment Department, commonly referred to the Environment Collective, is a non-autonomous ANUSA Department that sits alongside six other autonomous Departments representing specific student groups.

Last year, the previous ANUSA President engaged an independent consultant to conduct a review of the Environment Department's activities and expenditure in 2023 and 2024 due to concerns that the Department had used its funding in ways that did not align with the Departments constitution, the ANUSA constitution, and the Student Services and Amenities Fees (SSAF) guidelines.

I am releasing this letter to students together with the report to inform students of steps that the ANUSA Executive will be taking. I urge students to read the report for themselves. You are entitled to know how your money has been spent. The report, in my view, shows that reform of ANUSA's environment work is absolutely essential.

ANUSA is a member organization. One of our most important responsibilities as student leaders is to ensure that student money is only ever spent in ways that are constitutional, SSAF compliant and proper so that students can continue to have confidence that their union is acting in their interests, using their money on areas that students want. Beyond letting down our members in an unacceptable way, the consequences of failing to do so can be serious, and under no circumstances will the Executive that I lead put at risk the services, events, advocacy, grants and supports that ANUSA provides.

The report finds that the Environment Department's spending has not been aligned with its constitutional purpose and that it has strayed from its core purpose of doing environment work. It identifies problems with how money was spent by the Department.

Three transactions have been identified as warranting further investigation. They are.

- \$3,000 budgeted for a Marxism Conference 2023, with actual expenditure amounting to \$3,447.
- \$3,000 budgeted for Keep Left 2023, with actual expenditure totaling \$295.10.
- \$4,000 budgeted for Land Forces Expo in 2024, with actual expenditure totaling \$2,449.



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None of these expenditures aligned with the purpose in the department's constitution. They were not SSAF compliant. There is no evidence that conflicts of interest were managed. I have not been provided with any satisfactory explanation for these expenditures that would align with proper financial management and reasonable expectations of students.

Given the situation, and the previous recommendation of the ANUSA Governance Review to abolish the Environment Department, at OGM 1 on the 26th of March, the ANUSA executive will be proposing constitutional amendments that (as part of a larger package of reform measures), will transition the Environment Department to an Environment Committee. The committee will be led by an Environment Officer and will enable them to pursue real environmental actions while ensuring we cannot have a repeat of the behavior identified in this review. This is a commonsense approach to how our union should be engaging in environmental activism and activities and I believe aligns with what students should expect of their union: a dedicated environmental focus with good financial management.

The Executive would much rather be focused on increasing our array of grants and services, on organising more fantastic events like we saw during O-week and responding to and supporting students through the significant changes happening in the University. However, we have a responsibility and an obligation to respond to this review and address the issues it identifies.

Our team was elected on a platform of reform and a focus on the welfare and interests of students. We are focussed on delivering for students.

If you have any questions or concerns, please don't hesitate to get into contact with ANUSA at sa.admin@anu.edu.au.

Will Burfoot
2025 ANUSA President