



# The University of Western Australia Academic Staff Association

## MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING HELD ON OCTOBER 15<sup>TH</sup> 2020 AT 12.30PM IN THE ACORN ROOM, ABOVE THE GUILD SHOPS, UNIVERSITY OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA

**PRESENT:** N Kirkham (President and Chair), and members including D Judge, A McKinley, S Tarrant, E Brink, S Dobbs, S Maloney, B Montgomery, M Rizzi, R da Silva Rosa, M Ponsonnet, A Hughes-d'Aeth, K Glaskin, L O'Sullivan, T Harper, L Fernandes, H Jacomard, C Letheby, C Bourgault du Coudray, L Dales, M O'Brien, R Bucks, S Farrell, D Ireland, N O'Sullivan, A Bakker, L Wen, C Oldham, J Keelan, V Hayes and C Noske.

**APOLOGIES:** A Gardner, V Morgan, F McGaughey, D Oлару, J Elfving-Hwang, R Carroll, K Fuller and J Van Gent.

**PROXY VOTES REGISTERED BY:**  
A Gardner, K Fuller, J Elfving-Hwang, F McGaughey, D Oлару and G Koutsantonis.

**ATTENDING:** J Manvell (administrator)

### 1. WELCOME:

The President took the Chair and formally opened the meeting by acknowledging that the meeting takes place on the traditional lands of the Wadjuk Noongar people, recognising and respecting their continuing culture and the contribution they make to the life of this city and this region.

Members were welcomed, both current and honorary, to the 2020 AGM of the UWA Academic Staff Association and thanked for making the time to come along. Apologies and proxy votes were noted and the meeting declared quorate.

### 2. MINUTES:

R da Silva Rosa **PROPOSED** that the minutes of the Annual General Meeting held on 10<sup>th</sup> October 2019 are accepted. Seconded by S Maloney.

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

### 3. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES:

None

### 4. APPOINTMENT OF AUDITOR:

A McKinley **PROPOSED** that Caffarelli & Associates, Chartered Accountants, be appointed as Auditors for 2020-21. Seconded by D Judge.

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

### 5. APPOINTMENT OF RETURNING OFFICER:

S Tarrant **PROPOSED** that the WA Industrial Registrar be requested to arrange for the WA Electoral Commission to conduct the elections for 2021-22. Seconded by M Rizzi.

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

## 6. TREASURER'S REPORT by the Treasurer, Professor Allan McKinley

For the year ending 30 June 2020, the Association finished with a surplus of \$10,398 compared with a small deficit of \$890 in the previous accounting period.

This is almost entirely due to the Commonwealth Government Covid response which gave the Association a Cashflow boost of \$10,000. Membership income was relatively static from 2019 but declining numbers remain a concern, as do low returns on investments.

Our annual expenditure fluctuates as costs of hosting the biennial Philippa Maddern Award are incurred mainly in every second year, but other expenses remain relatively consistent. The honorarium payments to Committee members are also yet to be paid for the 2019-20 year, having been held back due to the uncertainty in the University finances.

The committee is still well served by Ms Joanna Manvell, as Admin Officer, and she has continued to keep all our accounts and documents in excellent order. We are also exceptionally fortunate to have benefited from the diligent and effective activities undertaken by our special project officer Ms Ali Hansen.

We encourage everyone here to talk about joining the Association with their colleagues so that we can remain a robust organisation representing academics at UWA, particularly in these turbulent times.

L Fernandes **PROPOSED** that the *Treasurer's Report* be accepted. Seconded by R da Silva Rosa.

The question was asked about spending more of the cash reserves (held in a term deposit). It was noted that these funds have accumulated over many years from membership fees and are traditionally held should litigation arise, although this is less likely since the NTEU and UWAASA now work as separate organisations. It was proposed that members be asked about the use of these funds, such as on projects that would benefit academics or for a membership campaign.

**CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY**

## 7. PRESIDENT'S REPORT by the President, Dr Nin Kirkham

I have a habit of starting my thinking about this address by reading over those of previous years. It helps to remind me of the challenges that we have faced over time and how they have changed. I noted last year that the broader UWA context had been unsettled and, in some respects, hostile to our Association, but still we pushed on with our core activity—to represent the views, interests and concerns of the UWA Academic Staff—in good faith. As I am sure you appreciate, the challenges were of a completely different nature for much of this past year. Of course, the events of this week, present a whole range of new issues and challenges so I will keep my comments to a minimum in order to allow for some discussion prior to our talk on Governance at the Law Lecture Theatre.

Since the last AGM so much has happened. You might remember that in October last year, the VC resigned, probably the most widely acclaimed act of her tenure, and much to the chagrin of the staff of Auckland U. Around the same time, the erstwhile DVC Global Partnerships (a title, I am happy to say, we won't have to pronounce very often in the future) announced the closure of UWAP, and we discovered the contract of the then Director of the Berndt Museum would not be renewed. Those issues are still in flux and I think the UWA ASA should have a significant role in ensuring that we get the right outcomes under the proposed changes.

2020 began with the ASA and the NTEU working together to thwart an "academic Staff re-profiling project", that was intended to remove around 100 Academic staff on the basis of staff student ratios. This was followed closely by the arrival of Jane Den Hollander as Interim VC and, under her leadership, there was an immediate marked step change in attitude to and engagement with the ASA and the NTEU. Around this time, the committee sent round a rather inflammatory email about changes to the parking arrangements which, I like to think, was instrumental in the removal of the COO.

The lead up to Jane's arrival had felt to me, and many others, like an absolute battle. After my first conversation with her I recognised that here was a VC who was both competent and also truly cared about UWA—its people, its history and its place in the local community. I admit I felt a combination of exhaustion and relief when she took over. But I think it is also important to note that I felt somewhat compromised and at sea during that time. At sea, because up until then the UWA ASA strategy of engagement had been characterised by a kind of blunt combativeness, a public calling out of the worst excesses and oversights of the Executive and I personally wanted to give Jane a chance to do the necessary work of restoring a broken culture, re-establishing trust between staff and leadership. So, there were times where I was frustrated by her decisions and manner of interacting, but found it challenging to formulate a new way of engaging.

Then, of course, came the coronavirus and all of its complications, and the compromise was compounded with the JPF and the EAV. There were points where I was worried that I had been seduced into supporting the JPF and I had to think very deeply about whether it was the right way forward for the University. You may have noticed that I tried to explicitly act only in my capacity as VP of the NTEU with regard to the negotiations over the EAV, but also to represent the interests of the Academics in deciding on the manner in which the EAVs were applied. But it was challenging to occupy both roles, and while I think that it is, on balance, a good thing that there is a close connection between the UWA ASA and the NTEU Branch, there were moments when I kicked myself for thinking that I could serve the interests of both group in truly good faith. It was hard for everyone and I'm glad that we have, in some sense, come out the other side of that situation with a stronger UWA ASA committee. We might disagree about all manner of things, but we fundamentally agree on free and open discussion. I am grateful for the experience and for my colleagues, in getting us through.

All that aside, what have we actually done? Notwithstanding the challenges of COVID-19, we have undertaken two major projects. The first, is a financial analysis of the past 6 or so year of annual reports, by Alex Knott, an Honours student in the Discipline of Finance. We have had a presentation to the committee of the results but are awaiting Alex's final report. The second project is the development of an education package on UWA Governance by Deirdre de Souza, which will be presented for the first time today.

I'll conclude with some thanks. First, Debra Judge our VP, Stella Tarrant our Secretary, and Allan McKinley, our Treasurer for their hard work over the past year. Thanks to the dedicated members of the UWA Academic Staff Association committee for all their work (Stephen Dobbs, Ray Da Silva Rosa, Brett Montgomery, Marco Rizzi) and welcome new committee members for this year, Shane Maloney and Emily Brink. I also would like to take the opportunity to thank our outgoing committee member Jamie O'Shea for his years of dedicated service on the committee. Finally, thanks must go to Jo Manvell our administrative officer, without whom as they say none of this would be possible.

Again, thanks to you all for coming. Please feel free to ask me any question or raise any issues that you would like the ASA Committee to pursue in the coming year. I am sure everyone has a lot to discuss, so there might be a bit of time between now and the talk on Governance, but there will certainly be an opportunity over drinks at the Uniclub from 2pm.

M Rizzi **PROPOSED** that the *President's Report* be accepted. Seconded by L Fernandes.

**CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY**

## 8. OPEN DISCUSSION

- The Vice-Chancellor recently requested feedback on his paper UWA Structural Reform. UWAASA made a submission by the due date of 7 October. Just 6 days later, the Executive Deans had been removed with a week's notice, subject to Senate approval on Monday 19 October.

Clarification was requested at the meeting as no formal notification has been made to staff. A member heard that up to 600 staff are to be made redundant (mostly professional staff) and that both the NTEU and UWAASA had approved this. The giving of approval was strongly denied since there is no knowledge of this plan. It was confirmed that the Executive Deans have been removed and that Heads of School will report directly to the SDVC. An extraordinary meeting of the Academic Board has been called for Friday morning. Further announcements are expected from the V-C after the Senate meeting.

A concern was expressed that the Vice-Chancellor has acted before Senate approval and without making details available of the wider strategy. Regardless, there was agreement that full consultation, consideration and due process should be followed.

- S Maloney thanked the Committee for their work this year. He also requested that he endorsed the President's thanks for the service of J O'Shea (retired UWAASA Committee member and NTEU President) and asked that this be recorded in the minutes.

**At 1pm, the President and Chair thanked members for their attendance and adjourned the meeting to the Law Lecture Theatre for the presentation on Governance by Deirdre de Souza, with further informal discussion at the University Club from 2pm.**