

BY POSTGRADS FOR POSTGRADS



VU **p** **a**

VICTORIA UNIVERSITY

POSTGRADUATE ASSOCIATION

ANNUAL GENERAL REPORT

VUPA EXECUTIVE BOARD

30/10/2020

NON-RESTRICTED

ABN:55 662 362 625



Foreword – Jeremy Yap, Outgoing President

VUPA wishes to acknowledge the Ancestors, Elders and families of the Boonwurrung, Woiwurrung (Wurundjeri) and Wathaurun (Wadawurrung) on our campus's across Melbourne, and the Gadigal and Guring-gai people of the Eora Nation on our Sydney Campus. These groups are, and have been for centuries, the custodians of the University land on which we meet and operate our association's services on.

This year has been an incredibly challenging one for VUPA as 2020 was the first year that we have operated as an entirely independent organisation serving the needs of postgrads at VU. With the global pandemic that is COVID-19 all but shutting down life as we know it both as a student organization and as individuals, 2020 has seen the cancellation of almost all face to face meetings and events across Australia, with those of us in Victoria being particularly hard hit due to extended lockdowns and restrictions on the freedoms of movement that we have always enjoyed.

Despite the challenges that we have faced throughout 2020, VUPA have still managed to hold some events and advocate for the students at VU. Unfortunately, we were unable to hold an in person end of year event, so were not able to replicate the wonderful Cocktail evening that was held at the Adelphi's roof top bar in 2019.

These achievements would not have been possible without the dedication and commitment of the current VUPA Board. For thae board members who are leaving, we thank you for your invaluable service, good intentions to making VU better for postgrads and hope your time with VUPA stands you in good stead for your future opportunities.

VUPA would also like to acknowledge that our services are mostly funded by the Student Services Ammenities Fee (SSAF). These funds are distributed by the SSAF Committee and co-managed by the Victorian University Student Union. Without these contributions by all students, we would not be able to complete the work that we do, and for that we are thankful to all who contribute to the SSAF fund.



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About VUPA

Our mission, vision and values

Mission statement:

Victoria University Postgraduate Association (**VUPA**) strives to support, lead, advocate for and inspire current Victoria University (Melbourne, Australia) postgraduate students in order to build a more versatile and employable student alumni.

Vision and values:

VUPA, Victoria University's postgraduate student association - are run by postgrads, for postgrads. We look after postgraduate students interests exclusively and our criteria is simple – anything we do or are involved in must be for the benefit or betterment of VU's postgraduate students. Our vision is to make VU the place to be for postgraduate students. By following our mission statement, we strive to ensure VU is an inclusive, supportive, diverse and enjoyable environment for all postgraduate students, regardless of class, background, identity or enrolled postgraduate degree.

VUPA

All 4,064 postgraduate students at Victoria University in 2020 are members of **VUPA**. We are actively supported by over 1,000 engaged postgrads who attend our events, volunteer, raise issues, engage with us and follow us on social media.





We are here to





- help current and future postgraduate students connect into the broader and official VU community and culture,
- assist in creating and supporting a strong network between current and previous VU postgraduate students,
- provide both current and prospective students support in finding university services they require,
- lead by example through inclusion, diversity and respect
- advocate for issues that affect postgraduates in matters regarding inclusion, diversity and respect,
- represent postgraduates on a range of internal university boards and committees including SSAF and the Student Union,
- run and support social and networking events and campaigns for the benefit and betterment of postgraduate students at the university level,
- work closely with the Council of Australian Postgraduate Associations (CAPA) to communicate the interests and perspectives of VU postgraduate students, in alignment with our values, in order to influence the councils interaction with the Federal Government, Federal Opposition and minor parties, and higher education peak bodies.



Our People – 2020 Board

The 2020 Board Members are:

			
<i>Jeremy Yap</i> President	<i>Ruwangi Fernando*</i> VP - Research	<i>David Lopez*</i> VP - Coursework	<i>Pooja Ganger</i> Secretary

			
<i>Omella Jayasinghe</i> Treasurer	<i>Ajay Srinivasagan</i> Events Officer	<i>Carmelina Monea*</i> Equity & Diversity Officer	<i>Richa Senjalia</i> Equity & Diversity Officer

* denotes executive returning in 2021

The **VUPA** Board includes high levels of diversity in representing the broader post graduate community

- 63% female; 37% male; 0% non-binary/other/prefer not to say
- 63% international students; 37% local students
- 75% are fluent in a language other than English
- 0% identify with a disability
- 0% identify as Queer
- 87% are in postgraduate coursework; 13% are postgraduate researchers

Our 2020 board members come from 4 of the colleges and 3 campuses.



Not For Profit

This year has been the first full year that **VUPA** has operated as an independent student body at VU, alongside rather than as a subsidiary of the student union, VUSU. We are now recognised and registered with Consumer Affairs Victoria as a NFP organisation. This has also allowed us to also register our NFP status with Microsoft. As such, we now have the tools and frameworks in place to allow us to grow as an organisation.

The AGM and Annual Report are a requirement under our constitution.

The VUPA Board presents this Annual Report as a true and accurate representation of the 2019/2020 year.

Jeremy Yap

President



Presidents Report



2020 has been a year of challenges that none of us could have foreseen. Despite our continued working relationships with VU leadership and CAPA, 2020 has seen a previously unknown set of circumstances that curtailed almost all of our best laid plans for social and networking events during the year.

It has been difficult to say the least to not be able to run events that have become mainstays of our calendar over the past few years such as Karaoke nights, High Tea at Parliament House and the famous end of year Galas that we have become accustomed to that celebrate the continued progress of our postgraduate students from all colleges at VU.

Thanks to the mammoth efforts of the current and previous VUPA board in securing SSAF funding for 2020, VUPA was unsuccessful in securing any further grants despite applying for three of them. Areas that VUPA were able to support in 2020 included:

- STEM
- Research
- Cultural Diversity
- Block model consultation
- Online engagement via Zoom
- College of Exercise Science – Industry body re-accreditation (ABHE & AMEP)

I am delighted to formally announce the incoming VUPA President for 2021 is a long serving board member of VUPA and our current Vice President - Research, Ruwangi Fernando. I am sure Ruwangi will guide VUPA well with her strong leadership, operational knowledge of VUPA and many contacts throughout Victoria University.

We are keen to see if one of VU's alumni may be involved in developing a successful COVID-19 vaccine and eagerly look forward to a time when we can hold large, in person networking and social events again!

Jeremy Yap (President)



Vice President - Research Report



At VUPA we recognise the importance of diversity and inclusion among our Victoria university postgraduate students and to attracts, supports, and develops our diverse postgraduates. We believe all our students should be able to come to university and learn thoroughly, based on their broad range of experience and skill. To achieve this, the VUPA is committed to supporting all our postgraduates to succeed, regardless of their sex, age, race, disability, religion, or sexual orientation.

With the Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic evolving rapidly around the world, we were not able to continue with the plans we had for 2020. The COVID-19 pandemic has significantly interrupted educational activities in Australia and especially Victoria state. The speed and scale of COVID interruptions occurred cause negative psychological and economic consequences for university students. We commend the steps taken here in Victoria, Australia by federal and state governments, universities, and affiliated research institutions to aid students. However, the challenges graduate students face, especially for international students.

Despite the challengers as the Vice President of Research for 2020 I contributed by involving in the following initiates with a particular focus on masters and PhD research students.

- Participated in multiple networking events organised by VU Research Development that brought together the research students on different research matters and topics such as COVID impact on your research, APR Internship etc.
- VUPA organised International Women's day 2020 celebration and supported the event and shared my personal experience as a panellist.
- Continued to work as a Research Ambassador for Victoria University Library 2020 and attended ambassador coffee meetups to interact and share the experience with fellow research students.
- Speaker at the Future Founders Festival 2020 the first conference to focus on international students' employability and entrepreneurship in Victoria.
- VUPA Organised relaxed, fun social events called as VUPA Zoom Dine in.
- Very special thanks go to our President and all the board members supporting VUPA during these very challenging times. For 2020, I am stepping up into the Presidents role, and I am very much looking forward to working with all our new and current board members.



Equity Officers Report



At VUPA, we recognise the value that diversity and inclusion brings to enrich one's postgraduate experience. We believe that all postgraduate students, regardless of their sex, age, ethnicity, race, religion or sexual orientation, bring with them opportunities to create new social networks and increase human capital. In 2020, as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, the concept of inclusion has

never been more relevant. As Equity officers, we have witnessed the challenges faced by many members from our student cohort. Loneliness and financial insecurity being among the many issues. However, we have also witnessed community strength and resilience. VUPA has also collaborated with various university groups to ensure postgraduates receive equal access to academic and financial support, as well as, opportunities to remain engaged with the university. It is without doubt that COVID-19 has challenged VUPA's ability to provide the traditional events and services to our student cohort. However, the pandemic has created spaces for the development of innovative ideas, critical thinking, and above all, spaces for connectivity.

To build upon this, as the Equity officers for 2020 we have:

- Collaborated with VUSU's Women's Officers to present the International Women's Day Forum; 'Women Know Your Place'.
- VUPA's Vice President of Research (Ruwangi) contributed as a panel guest speaker
- Supported events that brought together the female postgraduate students and academic in the STEM at Victoria University; STEM Sisters initiative
- Joined the Student Reference Group for Gender Equality that advises the Respect and Responsibility Program
- Participated in Personal Development sessions on Leadership, Mental health support, work rights, social media and video
- Appointed as the Events and Training Officer for Cultural Diversity Student Network (CDSN)
- Joined Victoria University's Student as Partners Network
- Created a social group for Research Students to engage, Whinging, Wonderful Wednesdays.



Financial Report

In 2020, funding for **VUPA** came directly from Victoria University to complete our activities, events and operations. This funding is provided via the SSAF committee and is derived from the SSAF contributions made by all university students.

Our expenditure against this budget is detailed below. Many expenses were unable to be realised due to the social distancing requirements and movement restrictions in metropolitan Melbourne and the rest of Victoria due to the outbreak of COVID-19 in 2020.

The board of VUPA unanimously agreed to return \$25,000 to the SSAF fund to help with the COVID relief effort, \$17,500 was the sum that was redistributed, and the balance of the funds were allocated to VUPA as per the original funding agreement.

These funds may be requested to be returned to the University but we have not received any such request to date.

Account	Annual Budget	YTD - Actuals
Income		
Carried Over		\$4,118
VU SSAF grant	\$85,820	\$52,500
Ticket Sales	\$4,000	
Sub-total		\$56,618
Expenditure		
Website/email	\$500	
Internet domain hosting		\$84
Meeting catering	\$480	
IWD Catering		\$431
President's Stipend	\$10,000	\$10,000
Promotional Items	\$1,500	
Pop Sockets x 500 + delivery		\$718
Printing of flyers; int-orientation		\$108
CAPA affiliation	\$7,500	\$7,290
VUPA Dine in	\$4,800	\$1,675
Insurance AL & PPL	\$2,100	\$3,377
AGM costs	\$650	\$650
Sub-total	\$27,530	\$24,355
Total surplus		\$32,283