



National Union of Students Incorporated

2021 ANNUAL ELECTION

CANDIDATE STATEMENTS

Pursuant to National Union of Students By-Law 49.4, I hereby circulate the following candidate statements.

LUC VELEZ

Candidate for National Education Officer

Hi, I'm Luc (he/him), I study Law and Politics, Philosophy and Economics at UNSW.

Next year is a crucial year for education activism. It will be the year where we can return to mass protests on a national scale. It will be the year where staff at a number of universities can take industrial action. And it's the year of a federal election, meaning political engagement will be amped up, and our future and education will be brought into the spotlight. Student activists have a vital role in mounting a fight back against the continuous attacks on our universities and showing solidarity with staff. The National Education Officer must be prepared to zealously organise with campuses across Australia, must be independent of the Labor party and must be an experienced activist. I'm that candidate.

University management and successive governments have decimated the higher education sector. As the Education Officer, I will prioritise and platform a militant opposition to management. It's time to get back onto the streets, to protest, to occupy and to strike. Working closely with campus unions and education activists, I will fight against any further cuts, support our teachers and offer all practical and material resources in my power.

However, we can't be restricted to defence. We need a positive vision to fight for a better education. While Federal Labor is touting their lukewarm education policy, we must be a strong voice for free and fully-funded education. We need to emphasise the importance of learning which is liberatory and anticolonial, where radical ideas are platformed and course content isn't just there to make us 'Job-Ready'. As Education Officer, I will bring this positive vision of education to all my activism.

The biggest barrier to this is that our guilds, SRCs and student unions are disastrously dependent on university management. Without financial independence, our ability to fight

for student interests is systematically undermined. Under threat of reduced funding, we are told not to make trouble. Not to cause scenes. Not to antagonise the bosses. We are funnelled into board meetings, encouraged to consult more with management than students. SHAME. A national campaign for the return of Compulsory Student Unionism is long overdue, and that starts with changes to federal SSAF funding. These fees should go straight to our student bodies rather than passing through the meddling hands of the universities we're resisting.

We need a National Education Officer who is an experienced grassroots activist. Someone capable of engaging with different factions. Someone who can capitalise on the platform that a national position brings, without losing sight of the fact that our movement's power comes from local grassroots collectives and unions. I am that candidate.

DYLAN BOTICA

Candidate for National Disability Officer

Before this year I was the Accessibility Officer at Curtin University, during this time I've fought against ongoing attacks on disabled people and disabled students being excluded from activism. The NUS Disability Office has stood by and done nothing during this time. Its important that this office is always an active fighting force, recognising while individuals in this role are disabled students we all still hold an obligation to ensure the office is working collaboratively with member organisations to keep driving positive change for all students.

Dedicated disabled student activists are necessary for the National Union of Students to actually stand up and fight for better.

I understand the futility of my nomination when factionalism triumphs over driving real outcomes but feel free to spare a vote if you want.

DISHA ZUTSHI

Candidate for Victoria Branch Education Vice-President

Belonging to a community which has faced atrocities for years, I, my family and ancestors have fought oppression to make our voices heard. I am a woman of colour and an international student in so-called Australia passionate about representing marginalised communities and voices. It is from this experience, as well as my work as the Environment Officer in UMSU, that I am nominating as Victorian VPE.

I am nominating as education is a cause very close to me. In India, female access to education remains a massive social issue and as someone fortunate enough to gain an education despite social barriers, I know that it should be available to all and not just the privileged.

As VPE, I hope to use the platform to learn from activists across the state and nationally, campaigning for an inclusive and supportive university system for all. I also intend to centralise the voices of people of colour and other marginalised voices in the work done by

the NUS. Most importantly, as international students begin to return to Australia, I hope to advocate for their interests and make sure that their wellbeing is defended at every step, rather than being sacrificed for university profit.

Overall, my aim is to connect student unionists within and outside the NUS in Victoria with each other. I believe an organisation like the NUS can do so much more in combatting the injustice faced by students, and for that it needs a strong grassroots voice.