

20 21

ANNUAL REPORT National Union of Students



The National Union of Students acknowledges the traditional owners of the land, the Wurundjeri people. We recognise the Melbourne region, in which is where we hold our National Conference as land belonging to the Wurundjeri people, and acknowledge the ongoing spiritual and cultural importance of the land to the Traditional Owners today.

We pay our respects to Elders past and present, and extend our respects to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander First Nations Peoples.

We recognise that the interference into culture and the removal of land from Aboriginal people that is littered throughout Australian history has caused systematic dispossession and disadvantage. We must reflect on the privilege of many to now call Australia home, a privilege that has come at the expense of stolen land and the dispossession of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander First Nation cultures. It is our responsibility to never forget the past, and work together always remembering and learning to create a meaningful future.

Australia has always been, and always will be Aboriginal land. This we recognise.

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01

A Letter from the President

Dear Members,

2021 was a year like no other. When we started out, we were looking forward to getting back out to do what the union does best - getting out on the streets, meeting students, and taking the fight across the country.

Then COVID-19 struck us for the second year in a row. The global pandemic presents a crisis on a scale unlike what the student movement has experienced before. The toll it has taken on student life, education, and welfare are immeasurable - and it has forced us to challenge our conception of what the NUS means to students.

COVID-19 hit Australian universities to its full extent in March this year, just as orientation weeks began in full swing - rendering us only able to visit a fraction of our members this year. We were suddenly put in a position where we had to become reactive rather than proactive to the needs of our students in this critical time. This needed to be our top priority - making sure that students could survive this year.

From then on, our focus was squarely upon two things:

- Securing the position of the union for the long term as financially and structurally sustainable for a post-COVID world
- Helping the students hit hardest by the pandemic

I am proud to report that we achieved both.

We ran campaigns on access to Centrelink which capped off with a protest outside Parliament for Budget Week, we fought harder for international students locked out of the country and forgotten by this Government, and we brought the union back in the black, increasing accreditations so that we can fight back stronger in 2022 and beyond.

In solidarity



Zoe Ranganathan
NUS National President 2021



02

General Secretary

And just like that my term in the NUS is coming to an end. I started my term hoping that the worst of Coronavirus was behind us but 2021 had different plans. In the year where I was hoping to rekindle the smaller on ground presence of the NUS, lockdowns and restrictions proved to be quite a challenge. In spite of that however, the NUS put it's head down and kept it's focus on what's important: Students, and we had some great wins. Working with my fellow NUS office bearers has been amazing this year. I'm grateful to tremendously committed student leaders across the country who worked in tandem with the NUS to achieve better results for the student cohort as a whole.

Induction & Handover

As part of the induction this year, I organised the directors training with Justice Connect for all NUS Office bearers and board members to ensure that they are well equipped for the roles they've been elected into. I'm also working on finalizing the 2022 President's Summit to ensure that it can happen at an appropriate time for all member organisations.

Website

The one project I took up at the start of my term was to refresh the NUS website. As part of engagement with members throughout COVID, the NUS was required to establish a better online presence. The website refresh was done in house to save costs and ensure that NUS controls all of its online resources itself. The new website has been received positively and is now being used to host dedicated web pages for Conferences. The current website is a quite dynamic and is updated regularly with News from the NUS and organisational documents.

#Change the Age rally

The NUS Executives visited Canberra during the announcement of the Federal budget, in order to lobby ministers to consider the NUS's budget submission and #Changetheage campaign. As part of the campaign I helped organise a rally where representatives and students from member organisations were in attendance. The rally was quite successful with engagement from journalists and ministers.

Finance and Administration

One of my most important objectives was to have the NUS no longer lose money annually and dip into reserves. In order to be financially sustainable as an organisation the NUS needs to deliver a moderate surplus annually, and this year has been the first in a while where this has happened. In 2021, the NUS's financial position has taken a turn for the better in spite of losing a significant amount of revenue due to a lack of in person conferences.

02

General Secretary

A part of the General Secretary's is to oversee staffing and this year was a lot more adventurous in that regard than I expected. Due to a changeover in Administration staff this year, I was required to fill in the role for a month which included all administrative and financial obligations of the organisation. Throughout this period I was also required to run an intensive hiring process to find the new Administration Staff of the NUS.

As part of my role I have also created the NUS 2022 Budget which is reflecting a small surplus that can be improved upon by the following General Secretary. I have also started the process of registering the NUS as a charity with the ACNC and the preliminary preparation to begin EBA negotiations with NUS staff.

Affiliations

Affiliations are the main source of revenue for the NUS which is quite reflective of the of it's by the students and for the students structure. This was even more so important this year due to the lack of revenue from in-person conferences and the President's summit. Following the upheaval of the affiliations process last year by the preceding General Secretary, the NUS's affiliation model has drastically improved. By continuing the policies and practices established this year, I've significantly managed to improve the affiliations revenue to the NUS which has helped provide the surplus.

In order to ensure that a maximum number of member organisations are able to affiliate and accredit successfully, I provide them with timely reminders, guidelines and direct contact where needed. This approach has paid dividends handsomely for the NUS.

International Student Representation

Some of my foremost successes this year have been in International representation. At the start of this year, I worked with the NUS International Officer to provide a submission to an inquiry done by a Joint Committee of the government on the future of Skilled migration in Australia. As part of this submission, the NUS provided multiple recommendations to the Joint Committee. The final report not only adopted some of the NUS's recommendations but a major recommendation around extending Graduate Visas to students who suffered due to COVID has also already been implemented by the Government.

As part of my NUS role I was also directly engaging with the Victorian Myanmar Youth around supporting students being targeted due to their views on the military coup in Myanmar. This presented the NUS opportunity to directly interact with students going through life-changing experiences and helping in their hour of need.

02

General Secretary

Another major milestone for me this year was starting the formation of a new peak International student body being founded by the NUS, which will work in tandem with our organisation in the future to ensure that International students are appropriately represented following discriminatory behaviour towards them by the federal government.

Conferences

The Education Conference was delivered in a blended model this year which included delivery online and in person in select state hubs. As a National Office bearer in Victoria, I coordinated with member organisations to host a successful Victorian Hub which saw engagement improve from attendees.

The National Conference however is being delivered fully online due to logistical constraints around voting, but there is scope for attendees to attend through state hubs set up by members.

As part of Natcon obligations, I've organised the submitted policies and worked with the business committee to set the conference agenda. This year has seen an increase in submission compared to 2020, as of now there are 120+ policy amendments up for consideration and 30+ urgency motions. The new structure of setting up the conference is a boon as it's quite effective and efficient compared to the previous model.

Acknowledgments

I would like to express my thanks to my fellow office-bearer team for the hard work they put in throughout this year. I'd like to shout out Arabella Wauchope, Georgette Mouawad, Varun Kale, Zoe Ranganathan and Chris Hall for putting up with me this year, it's been great to work with you all. The NUS is at a precipice and as long as motivated individuals keep faith in the NUS and keep putting their sweat and blood into it, NUS will keep thriving and growing. I wish the future NUS team the best of luck and I'm looking forward to applauding the National Union of Students' work next year.

In Unity.

Param Mahal

03

Education

My year as education officer has been nothing short of tumultuous. Coming off what we expected to be the back end of a global pandemic, ended up bringing further lockdowns and border requirements, this unfortunately meant that almost all of my year, I was unable to travel, so, I was stationed out of Western Australia, a state which has been previously quite neglected by the NUS. An unexpected but beneficial circumstance which saw me closests to one of the most alarming onslaught of cuts at the University of Western Australia. Delivered from yet another Vice-Chancellor who is hellbent on cutting its workforce and education. While many universities started to build their way back from a year of laying off staff, in 2021, the NUS worked with student unions to ramp up our voice and say “we have had enough with these cuts” as more inevitably came our way.

Education Action

This year I feel proud to have rolled out two national weeks of action on education and to have participated in a number of actions from around Australia in the fight against university cuts and the growing neo-liberalisation of our federal government.

Budget Week.

I travelled to Canberra to meet with the NUS executive team, our research officer and women's officer to take over parliament house and demand that young people and education become a priority of the federal budget. I want to congratulate the whole team on working through a week of many unknowns, and for a very successful demonstration at the front of parliament house for the Change the Age campaign. Overall, the budget was a disappointment, with no significant changes to youth payments and a significant impact to universities with a 10% cut every year to higher education. The full NUS Budget Release can be seen here: <https://shorturl.at/sADSU>

Humanities are Important!

From August to September I worked with Humanities Representative, Madison Ainsworth, from the Curtin Student Guild, and fellow organisers, April (UWA ED) and Monash Student Association on a Humanities Campaign. The campaign stresses the importance of the Humanities with the end goal of improving the learning environment and quality of education. The campaign is ongoing and aims to shift the culture of universities cutting humanities first, as well as upskilling representatives around the country in delivering direct action and negotiations when it comes to fighting against these cuts.

03

Education

Open the doors to our Universities!

The Education Department launched a campaign with the presidents of our member universities, calling on our institutions to “open up the doors” and resume face to face learning. The recent rise of forced online learning and the obvious shift to push international education online has raised concerns among university unions and students around the country, as they become more eager to return to the ‘way things were’. The campaign developed scorecards from campuses to compare universities in each state to help members lobby their own institutions. The primary topics of this campaign were:

Bringing back face to face learning, Bringing back in person lectures, Equipping students for safe access of campus, Bringing back 24/7 Library Access.

National Weeks of Action!

With the move to unauthentic learning styles and measures that remove the autonomy and choice of how students want to learn, it has never been a worse time to be a university student. We will no longer stand for this. Voluntary redundancies threaten the diversity and inclusivity of our university environment, they disproportionately affect women, people with disabilities, queer people and First Nations people. Students, staff and the quality of our education is always on the line when it comes to universities cutting costs. These areas should not face the consequences of the sector's poor financial management and exploitation of international students who cannot return to Australia.

The NUS Education Department called upon universities in protest to prioritise teaching, learning, research and to:

- Cease all cuts to their workforce and students;
- End the use of recycled content and fund their academics to produce new content for students;
- Resume face to face teaching where COVID appropriate and;
- Stop the implementation of forced online learning and teaching models that strip down the quality of our education.

The NUS Education Department, along with a number of activist collectives and student unions called for a second National Week of Action (NWA) from the 11-18th of August. The NWA is focused more on campus based and state based grassroots community action against the corporatisation and cuts that our Universities are facing. Below are some of the actions we are endorsing among many others that are being organised across the country.

- No Cuts At Adelaide Uni
- No Menzies Institute Campaign Meeting
- Save Social Science at UWA.
- Fight for our Tuition Free Weeks at Curtin University

03

Education

Education Conference 2021

The conference theme this year was “Equipping Students to Fight for a Better Future”. I feel that all attendees walked away with skills that not only approved their own approach to student unionism, activism, lobbying etc. but also benefited our unions across the country in organising students to participate in the fights for their future. The online conference saw 24 workshops and 4 major plenaries as well as a state breakout session. I was pleased to have a range of researchers, activists and union officials attend as special guests as well as all of the amazing students who presented. I look forward to next year's Education Conference, let's hope it is in person! Public presentations can be found here: <https://bit.ly/3DzM2eV>

President Roundtables

This year I ran 4 President round table sessions on behalf of the NUS. I found this to be a great way for us to connect with campuses, especially ones that aren't members of the NUS. This way we were able to have a strong line of updates and communication with Australian Student Unions and our campaigns and conferences. I am pleased to see that these meetings will become more frequent in 2023 and focus on each NUS portfolio interchangeably through the year.

Climate Action

At the August NX, a motion was passed to support the School Strike for Climate national day of action on October 15 with the following demands:

- 100% Renewables by 2030.
- Just transitions for workers and industry.
- Sustainable pathways for university students.
- Resourcing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander-led solutions that guarantee land rights.

The day of action was very successful, especially for those states that were allowed to participate in physical demonstrations. We had student activists organise student contingents at 5 of our member institutions over 4 states. I would like to thank everyone who was involved in making this event very special.

The NUS at the September NX passed a motion to support the COP26 campaign. On November 6 the COP26 Coalition brought thousands of people onto the streets of Glasgow to demand urgent action on climate change. This was part of a global day of action with protests taking place across the world. Here in Australia, we had major mobilisations on the streets on Saturday, November 6. The NUS had its social media takeover to support the event, and I worked with local organisers at student unions to promote these events and again use the mobilisation of their university contingents to attend the COP26 rallies.

03

Education

Acknowledgments

I would like to acknowledge that all my work this year has been on land that was violently stolen from first nations people. The land of the Whadjuk Noongar people is my home and I will continue to work hard and support this community in the journey to decolonisation.

It has been a great opportunity being the NUS Education officer. I would like to thank the NUS executive for their collaboration and willingness to work with me this year. In particular I would like to thank Arabella continued support and great campaigns. As well as the amazing Bridge Truell, who has been my greatest support and sound board this year, it is always a pleasure working with you. I would like to give a shout out to Dylan Haywood for recruiting me and Jordan Piggott for proxying to me for my first natcon in exchange for a case of Emu Export.

Chris Hall

DEFEND OUR EDUCATION

SAY NO TO STAFF CUTS
COURSE CUTS
FACULTY RESTRUCTURES
FORCED ONLINE LEARNING

NUS

STAND WITH OVER
1,000,000
STUDENTS

NUS

FIGHT THE VCS
NO CUTS
NO CORPORATISATION
FIGHT FOR OUR EDUCATION

NATIONAL WEEK OF ACTION
11-18TH AUGUST

AUGUST 11
ADELAIDE UNI & UWA

AUGUST 12
UNIVERSITY OF SYDNEY

AUGUST 16
NATIONAL ONLINE COUNTER SUMMIT

AUGUST 18
UNI MELB & CURTIN UNI





04

Welfare

It has been a heartbreaking but important year in advocating for the welfare of students. With global challenges, increased poverty, and insecure work along with a struggling mental health care system it has never been harder to seek or complete tertiary education. The system as it currently stands is designed to discriminate and discourage higher study at a time when the world needs it the most. For this reason, a large amount of this year was dedicated to the initiation and building of the Change the Age campaign to combat the cruel Centrelink policy that only automatically recognises independence of young Australians when they turn 22 instead of 18.

#CHANGETHEAGE of Centrelink Independence

The Campaign is being run with assistance from the Megaphone Team at Trades Hall in Victoria and the Foundation for Young Australians (FYA). The campaign calls for reform to Centrelink and a review of how the system currently operates. The goal of independence at 18 encompasses demands that would ease the pain currently caused such as the use of statutory declarations to inform Centrelink of difficult family situations and recognition of independence once proof of living away from parents is received. These are the short term goals which will be fought for with the next federal election.

Dual petitions for the campaign were incredibly important to building a network of Australians passionate about this change and garnering national media attention. The megaphone petition launched the campaign and established an email network, which was then fed to the organising Facebook, featuring 12,703 signatures. The second petition launched to Parliament featured 13,360, a grand total of 26,000 signatures. Both petitions created momentum throughout the year and led to the establishment of the Change the Age Network, which boasts 160 members. Petition responses demonstrated the horrific conditions young people are placed under when not receiving government welfare.

SURVEY

In collaboration with the Foundation for Young Australians, a national survey has been developed as part of the campaign and is currently in the testing phase and will be launched imminently. Designed to capture the broad experience of young people interacting with Centrelink and the way this policy impacts diverse communities.

04

Welfare

PROTEST AND BUDGET WEEK

With over 100 student representatives in attendance, the NUS held a protest outside of Parliament House to demand the lowering of the age of independence to 18. Budget week was well spent lobbying and we were able to meet a fair few Advisers and Shadow Ministers to discuss the state of student welfare in Australia. From that week both myself and Chris Hall, Education Officer, had a promising discussion regarding the use of statutory declarations with Centrelink, so that parents will no longer be called to confirm family breakdown or young feel they need to contact the police just to provide adequate documentation. Meetings with different political parties demonstrated a potential that were the Greens or Labor to gain Government at the next election immediate changes would be made that would help those struggling because of the age. Those met with included Bill Shorten MP, Amanda Rishworth MP, the Office of Senator Anne Ruston, The Officer of Linda Burney, and the Office of Mehreen Faruqi which led to endorsement from the Greens for the Change the Age Campaign and Labor to consider pushing for the use of Statutory Declarations to prove independence. I also partnered with the FYA for a joint press release on the Budget particularly noting the meager increase to Centrelink and overall dismissal of higher education and young people.

MANNIFERA GRANT APPLICATION

A first round grant application for the Mannifera Grant was submitted, with second rounds beginning early next year. The grant offers \$100,000 towards campaigning activities and will be able to support Lived Experience workshops, advertising, paid campaign work and fund a FYA staff member to dedicate time to the campaign. The NUS has applied under the focus area of a fair and equitable tax system and social safety net.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I have loved being the Welfare Officer this year and wish all incoming Office Bearers and Student Representatives nationally all the best with their roles in the new year. A special thankyou to Param Mahal, Georgette Mouawad, Chris Hall and Zoe Ranganathan for their dedication and hard work this year. Thank you to everyone who put their trust in me to be their representative, it has been the greatest privilege.

Arabella Wauchope





05

Womens

As all would know, this year was the year of the National Student Safety Survey, which was where most of my attention and time was devoted. However, the NUS Women's Department continued to battle workplace discrimination, abortion access, gendered violence and single-parent student issues as ferociously as any other gendered struggle. Beyond the survey, Australia's very own #metoo movement was gaining momentum. A flood of feminist activists piled into traditional Australian institutions, Universities included, reminding us that the personal is political and the political is personal. This year could best be conceptualised as the year of stories. I learned of so many brave people in the gender space who have shared so much of themselves in a bid for change. I have never met so many people. I will never forget them and their stories.

SASH SURVEYS AND CAMPAIGNS

The NUS Women's Department has been in regular contact with SAGE and Universities Australia to capture authentic data on student survivors and ensure that organisations consult students. In the National Student Safety Survey, we successfully lobbied for improved consideration of COVID, geographic considerations, expansion of the types of sexual misconduct universities should be responsible for, and display of support services. I also met fortnightly with women officers to not only provide support and share ideas but to relay feedback for future surveys, including a concern for limited opportunity to demonstrate the effects of gender expression. The survey has yet to report. However, I have already collated several documents, graphic design materials and demands which will be used in an annual reoccurring campaign yet to be announced. Though confidential at this point, this campaign strategy is the product of several meetings and a two-day workshop the NUS Women's Department ran with women officers nationally.

Fortunately, there are numerous other organisations involved with Sexual Assault and Sexual Harassment (SASH), for which I have focused on improving relationships. I reaffiliated the NUS with AWAVA and ERA. Our relationship with AWAVA proved particularly fruitful when we collaborated to create the Young Women's Survey earlier this year. I would like to especially acknowledge EROC (End Rape on Campus) for their work in student SASH. In collaboration with Arabella, the Welfare Officer, EROC, and the NUS have teamed up to create the National Resource Website Project. The project sets out to create a national resource website for student survivors that is independent, comprehensive and localised. A lot of work has already been done to collate information. However, the project will require a website designed by EROC, funded by the NUS, and will be regularly monitored to ensure all information is up to date by NUS administration.



05

Womens

MEDIA AND RESEARCH

The NUS Women's Department has utilised media and research projects to direct attention towards women students. More specifically, I advocated for women's concerns for Madonna King's upcoming book on women student experiences amid COVID. I am also an advisor and co-investigator of an ongoing Western Sydney University research paper on student mothers. Media and data need to reflect recent experiences, and only through advocacy can we ensure that the varied experiences of women are captured. We have used data and previous research when advising universities and student union representatives on more specific university policy, such as advising on consent modules at RMIT.

PROTESTS AND WORKSHOPS

As a member of a series of organisations, the NUS Women's Department was well placed to represent student women and gender diverse people at a series of workshops and roundtables. Workshops include the SAGE roundtable, Chantel Contos roundtable and AWAVA workshops. The NUS Women's Department also organised a session for the NOWSA conference focused on women's role in universities and the workplace. NOWSA is delegated by the Department annually to a different university. This year, I was pleased to appoint Deakin University Student Association as the NOWSA host. The team assembled a fantastic conference in touch with the contemporary experiences of women, empowering them to make decisions for tomorrow.

Georgette Mouawad

05

Queer / LGBTQIA+

Community building & networking

Connecting with campus Queer Representatives and promoting clearer lines of communication between the NUS Queer Portfolio and affiliated campus reps was something Emily and I both identified as areas of interest early in the year. We devised an updated contact list of queer reps at affiliated campuses and did a few email drops throughout the year with important campaigns or information. It's been difficult to maintain engagement across the board this year and I think there's a lot of work that can be done in this space, but the connections that we were able to make were highly valuable and I was able to help establish a cross campus queer network over Facebook and Discord within WA with queer representatives from all five WA universities.

My Record, My Rights: Advocating for accessible & inclusive student record processes

CW: brief discussion of institutional trans, intersex, non-binary & gender diverse erasure
When sitting down at the beginning of the year and reflecting on LGBTQIA+ initiatives that had been successful on a campus level that might be possible to investigate on a national level, I kept coming back to the widespread issues faced by many LGBTQIA+ students (particularly trans & gender diverse (TGD) students) when looking to update their student records at university. Students face a wide variety of barriers to updating their legal name, real/chosen name, gender marker, honorific, etc or updating student identification documents/learning management systems, etc to reflect these updates. While this is partially due to external legislation that governs the way student details are collected, stored, and cross-checked, there is a significant amount of work that can be done on an individual campus level to assist students in accessing these processes and ensuring they're carried out accessibly, inclusively and sensitively. To gauge the current state of student record processes at our affiliated campuses, I devised a survey and circulated it to our campus queer reps.

The results of this survey are currently being compiled into a singular document with best practice recommendations that will be circulated back to the queer reps and via our Facebook page, but a few key results include:

- The option of entering a chosen or "preferred" name is not available at all universities or by the Department of Education, Skills & Employment who oversees the collection of tertiary student data.

05

Queer / LGBTQIA+

- There are widespread issues with chosen or “preferred” names being adequately updated on a student’s record, including difficulty or separate processes for updating names on student Office subscriptions, email accounts, student identification, class rolls etc that can lead to public deadnaming, misgendering, and outing and even more significant issues when it comes to cross-checking with external bodies such as Services Australia (Centrelink), the Australian Taxation Office, and the Office of the Student Identifiers Registrar who oversee the Unique Student Identifier (USI) which can lead to students being cut off from Centrelink payments, receiving sanctions etc.
- Only 50% of the tertiary institutions represented in the survey results allow students to update the name on their student ID card without a legal name change.
- Accessible information for students on how to access these processes is often severely lacking and falls to student representatives.

I presented on this campaign at both the NUS Education Conference and Queer Collaborations this year.

Bridge Truell (they/he)



05

Queer / LGBTQIA+

2021 was not the year everyone was expecting. The constant COVID-19 lockdowns and changing border arrangements made many of my goals for 2021 change. However, the NUS Queer/LGBTI department has still been able to develop and enact a range of campaigns that fought hard for the rights of Queer people across the country. 2021 saw a queer people's rights challenged by both state and federal governments with the introduction of queerphobic bills that seek to remove protections anti-discrimination protections. The incoming debate about the Religious Discrimination Bill will continue into 2022. At a campus level many students still face transphobia and homophobia that make universities unsafe places for many students.

Whilst many protest actions have had to move online in 2021 Queer students are continuing to fight for their rights on campuses and the NUS Queer/LGBTI department has helped support campuses to fight back against management that continues to make campuses unsafe spaces.

End Transphobia on our Campuses

At the start of 2021 the NUS Queer/LGBTI Department joined with University of Melbourne Queer Department to fight against the transphobia occurring within gender studies programs. Transphobia within campuses around the country has been on the rise so tackling this within unions and student spaces was key this year. The campaign to end transphobia on our campuses involved a range of actions including protesting on campus and lobbying the university to act against staff that continue to push transphobic narratives. This campaign saw the University of Melbourne to introduce a Gender Affirmation advisor role. However, this role fails to address the key concerns of students and staff and the NUS Queer/LGBTI has been supporting the campus Queer representatives to fight for stronger action. There has also been limited change in the application of the Feminism unit that relies on transphobic rhetoric. This campaign must continue into 2022 to continue to fight to get TERFs off campus.

Whilst this campaign started at the University of Melbourne it allowed us to work to tackle transphobia on campuses across the country and linked with our efforts to stop Mark Latham's Transphobic education bill.

Kill Mark Latham's Transphobic Education Bill:

This year Mark Latham's amendment to the NSW Education Act Bill was discussed at a public committee hearing and debated within the Parliament. In February of 2021, I wrote and submitted a submission to the Joint committee on the Education Amendment Bill 2020. This submission provided concrete evidence as to why this bill would be damaging to the safety of young queer people. In the end two MP's official stated that this bill should be opposed because it is discriminatory.



05

Queer / LGBTQIA+

Throughout the committee process several protests occurred in Sydney which I helped organise contingents to from lockdown in Victoria. The protests have achieved a lot and got a large group of MPs to officially say they would vote against the legislation. More lobbying and protest are essential into 2022, however, to fully stop this bill and ensure that it does not pass parliament.

At the end of Semester 2, Bridge and I hosted a small online zoom speak out to discuss the issues with the bill and raise awareness to the proposed changes that would further deny Queer people a safe education environment. Due to the east coast lockdown at the time, there were very limited protests related to this issue and the recent developments. However, great work has been done this year to bring this issue to the forefront of people's minds and to pressure the parliamentarians to publicly make a stand against this horrific bill. This bill is of the utmost importance going into the new year as it could act as a catalyst for future federal discriminatory bills that reduce the ability for queer people to learn about sexuality and gender identity in schools and at universities.

Religious Discrimination Bill:

In late 2021 the Federal Government released their Religious Discrimination Bill. Thus, kicking off the start of our campaign to fight against the Religious Discrimination Bill. We supported and promoted a range of protest actions across the country as well as engaged with all the campus Queer officers about what they could do to engage their campuses. This campaign focused on engage campus Queer officers to help build momentum with the actions that had been planned across NSW and WA. Due to COVID-19 travelling from Victoria to attend was not an option for me so supporting these protests and engaging with campuses was the best way for us to call for action. We also have supported Equality Australia's petition and email drive to get people to directly engage with their representatives to call for them to vote against the bill.

The religious discrimination bill has been referred to a Parliamentary committee that will meet in January/February of 2022. Through this process means the committee is accepting submissions up until December and the final part of this action from me will be to submit a report as to why the NUS Queer/LGBTI department opposed the bill.

Emily Boyce (she/her)



05

Queer / LGBTQIA+

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Emily Boyce (she/her)

06

Disabilities

I think it safe to say that we are all sick of hearing about unprecedented times. But alas, 2021 was just that. As many states began to ease restrictions and 'get back to normal' we had high hopes of what we could achieve for disabled students across Australia. The pandemic showed us that the adjustments disabled people had been asking for were available at the touch of a button, and the fight would begin to keep them there for the people who needed them. Flights had been booked to travel and set up disability departments across Australia and refine disabled student representation that had often been considered a 'secondary issue' in the eyes of many.

And then the Delta variant emerged. All our plans were cancelled or had to be significantly re-organised. None the less we persevered. We met online, collaborated digitally, and continued to do our best in spite of what may limit us. I believe that this year has highlighted the struggles that disabled students face. Instability, lack of access, and wide spread inequality. This year has also highlighted how interconnected our world can be, and how issues of bigotry and exclusion are intersection among marginalised communities. It was a privilege to be asked to speak at the NOWSA conference in early December to discuss the barriers women and non-binary people face when accessing tertiary education. Women, disabled people, people of colour, and LGBTQIA+ people face many of the same barriers, not only accessing education, but healthcare and employment too. We need to work together now more than ever.

NUS President Zoe Ranganathan and I worked together with the Centre for Disability Law in NSW to promote the legal rights of disabled students and access to legal information for those who need it. This included a very successful workshop at NUS EdCon by two solicitors to educate student leaders on universities legal obligation to disabled students.

This year I also had the pleasure of being asked to help establish the first Disability Officer position at RMIT Student Union (RUSU). It is fantastic to see spaces for disabled leadership being created. Our voices should never be a second thought in activist planning; We should be at the table, being heard when and where it matters.

I have not nearly achieved everything I would like to this year. And while my time as NUS Disabilities Officer may have come to an end, the fight will continue. Our priorities as a union and activist organisation should be broadening the diversity of voices in activism, equipping disabled people with the skills and resources to make our change where we see fit, and holding Tertiary education providers accountable for the actions and duties.

I wish all the best to whomever succeeds me. It will be tough, but I know few disabled people who do not have the strength to make anything possible. We will be heard and we are the change.

07

International

This year like every year was difficult for all the students and international students in particular. 2021 has been the year which had ups and downs with COVID continuing its damage.

Start of the year we saw how International Students are being treated at workplace just because they are an “International Student” who do not hold any right and can be mistreated and ripped off in any manner and by anyone. Workplace problems have been the biggest issue every year and this was the main issue I started working on how to get this in limelight. Victorian Government started this initiative where if you were ever misbehaved or underpaid at workplace just put in the details and the matters will be taken care of this has helped a lot of International Students who were a victim of this behavior. To add on, this year due to shortage of staff the cap of 20 hours of work restriction was removed for students who worked as a frontline worker.

In May I started working on developing a plan to help the offshore International Students which was focused on a secure and safe plan to bring back the International Students stuck in their home countries who are currently enrolled in the universities. Second thing in mind was to provide financial support to the onshore students who are still having troubles to make an earning. The final demand was to get assurance for the returning students to assure them jobs, housing and free quarantine facility.

The very next month the Federal Government issued a statement which assured that the International Students affected by COVID will be getting a payment of 750\$ or 450\$ respectively depending on the workhour reduction. Pilot plans started to roll out in which SA was the first state to get approval to bring back international students which was further delayed due to the Delta strain closing down the country again. As of today, the border will open up from 15 December, 2021 for all the International students and students on their Temporary Graduate Visa who hold a valid visa.

International Student representation has never been great In Australia. From the start of the year, I have been working on this big and important project to build an organisation who actually cares about representing International Students and not just work as a news channel. This organisation will be supported by National Union of Students who care for the members and students. This project is to be started from early next year and is in the final stage of completion.



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International

Furthermore, the biggest win this year was for the students who were stuck offshore. Early this year the Federal Government put up a committee who would take decision based on the submissions they receive from individuals or organizations for making changes in Subclass 500 and 485 visas. NUS was one of those organizations who put up a submission and got their 3 biggest points included in the changes in the report of the Federal Elected committee.

- 1) 485 Visa holders to get 1 year extra for those doing Master by coursework making a total of 3 years after their student Visa ends.
- 2) Those students who could not get here on time, and their visas got over can reapply for new visas.
- 3) Those students who spent the time studying offline can count that time to apply for a 485 Visa.

Overall, this year has seen ups and down but I have given my best to get things done, as an International Students Officer this year it was my pleasure to work for betterment of my International friends and will continue to help International Students in every way possible.

Varun Kale



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