

COVID-19 Forum – TAG Senior Management 13.00, 26/03/20

Paul Clayton **(PC)** – QUT Guild

Lowan Sist **(LS)** – Monash Student Association

Tasmine Kose **(TK)** – Monash Student Association

Jennifer Gibson **(JG)** – Monash Student Association

Elizaveta Dilanyan **(ED)** – Monash Student Association

Sylvia Francesca **(SF)** – Monash Student Association

Daniel Randell **(DR)** – USASA

Matt Posetti **(MP)** – Swinburne Student Union

Aimee Gipper **(AG)** – Swinburne Student Union

Michael Maas **(MM)** – Yourimbah

Lorena Carrasco **(LC)** – CITSA

Helen Coleman **(HC)** – Southern Cross University

Penny Leonard **(PL)** – Southern Cross University

Terri Lamoree **(TL)** – Adelaide University Sport

Philippa Moore **(PM)** – Adelaide University Sport

Elise Redmond **(ER)** – MONSU Peninsula

Lisa Dwyer **(LD)** – ECU Guild

Ben Bible **(BBI)** – UNE Life

Chris O’Grady **(CO)** – FUSA

Evan Battalis **(EB)** – Murdoch Student Guild

Braden Broad **(BBR)** – Tasmania University Union

Elissa Khoury **(EK)** – La Trobe Student Union

General

MP All services closed, all staff working from home.

Swinburne is in virtual lockdown, with minimum services such as International Student Services still physically manned, otherwise all online.

PL Planning for online migration.

TK Off campus from 25/03/20 to 30/04/20.

Skeleton staff only for MSA.

ED Managing communications and migrating physical events online wherever possible.

TL Adelaide Uni students all online.

Skeleton university staff remaining on campus until further government directives are issued.

All sports on campus have ceased, except for some martial arts and gym programs, which have gone online.

LD Online classes still on campus are lab-based but even these are in doubt due to the difficulty of maintaining required personal distances.

Nursing and paramedic students are required to have 80% of their learning on campus. VC has released a statement that no students will be disadvantaged by any new arrangements put in place, but it is yet to be established how that might be achieved.

Commercial outlets at ECU are tenant-operated, and currently only offering take-away.

University services remain open, but on a rotating split-team roster, half on-site, half from home. University will not cease services until directive received by government.

PC QUT finally migrating students online this week.

Graduations cancelled until further notice, Guild bars and shops closed, so commercial impact is significant.

EB Tavern operating as takeaway, proving quite successful. Their library café has an external service window which ensures its ability to continue trading.

Guild is providing all services now that tenants have all closed, and this providing the opportunity to prove their value to the university community.

All outlets at Murdoch campus have had all rent and utility costs waived by the university.

ER University library remains open to support the 270 residential students.

CO Only essential staff at the university. FUSA front counter remains open at university request, until government directs otherwise.

BBI Have had to close their cinema, and sports centre.

Only one café now operating on campus.

College residents have been advised to return home.

EK Has suspended all membership sales as LTSU has moved all services online.

Only essential services allowed to remain on campus as of tomorrow.

Residential students will be encouraged to leave, with an offer of losing their places or incur penalty fees.

DR USASA President now working closely with the University Crisis Team, has managed to have a census date extension considered.

HC Campus remains open, but with classes migrated online this week, and library now closed.

SCU has a unique challenge in that their Gold Coast campus effectively straddles the border, but the boarder is closed, and their NSW students cannot access campus.

Many international students have returned home, but those remaining and who were in casual employment have since lost that employment. This is an area of concern and focus for SCU.

LS It is critical that all TAG members remain in communication with each other and share information and ideas.

MM It is imperative that we remain relevant to our students, and that we effectively communicate and demonstrate that to the universities.

TAG TAG, as part of a tertiary sector peak representative group, has approached the ATO with a proposal for GST relief for 2020 to mitigate the impact of the crisis. This has now been approved and available on the TAG website.

It is expected that assistance from the various universities may be muted as the financial impact of the crisis will be significant.

MP This GST relief will be worth between \$45-\$80K to SSU subject to some further clarity.

Further PAYG relief announced by the government on Sunday will be worth a further \$50-\$75K to SSU.

Is there any direct dialogue between TAG and the Fed Edu Min on the potential impact of SSAF removal across this significant employment sector?

EB It is important that we represent as a unified group to prevent a replication of VSU, where universities moved to dismantle student organisations.

TAG Unlike VSU where we were the target, in this current crisis we will be a casualty. Would like to believe that not many universities act maliciously towards our members this time around.

Certainly, next steps will be to approach other tertiary student services representative organisations to lobby the government for support.

LS Agreed. This time we are sharing the pain with the universities, and increasingly being asked to be partners in any responses or solutions.

SSAF

MP Currently no discussion at Swinburne regarding cancelling/refunding SSAF to students.

Looking at SSU agreement with the university to see whether clauses allowing the reduction of students being grounds for reducing or withholding SSAF exist.

SSAF represented less than 50% of their revenue, until commercial revenues disappeared due to the campus shut down. Depending on how long services are offline, SSAF could potentially grow to 70-80%.

TK SSAF funding currently being re-negotiated.

- TL** No definitive word on SSAF funding, although she is aware that some conversations are happening.
- Would be a significant impact as Adelaide University Sports relies on SSAF for 90% of their funding.
- LD** Guild has been notified by university that SSAF will be impacted, as they decide whether to refund students and/or apply online SSAF charges only.
- ECU Guild is 100% SSAF funded, any cuts will really impact the organisation.
- Still no confirmation of what exactly what the university is planning, despite census date being 1st April.
- PC** Has not heard regarding SSAF, and although they receive very little SSAF from the university, but fully expects that this will occur. Losing even the little that they do receive will cause further pain.
- EB** Talk from the university about renegotiating or refunding SSAF or applying only online rates. Guild will resist if possible.
- S1 census date has passed.
- ER** Monash will be charging an online fee for S1. MONSU will receive a larger proportion of the fee percentage-wise, but this still represents a reduction in overall fee for MONSU.
- Have been told by the university that they will have to survive on their own reserves and not to expect extra support from the university.
- We are 99% funded by SSAF.
- SF** Monash is considering redistributing SSAF from the capital fund to the student associations to help. Hoping for an increase of 40% to 60%.
- MSA gets around 50% of operational budget through SSAF, the rest are from businesses area.
- BBi** Unlikely to lose SSAF, as it is integral to UNE Life's ability, as sole service provider on campus, to service and engage students.
- UNE charge SSAF on a unit basis, each unit earning 6 credit points at a rate of \$38.50/6 credit points.
- However, UNE Life is funded on a fee-for-service basis, ie for what events and services they provide. Given the impact of COVID, there are several pre-funded events that will not proceed, so they may have to return a couple of hundred thousand dollars to the university.
- EK** La Trobe has suspended S1 SSAF by 50%, and pushed census date to 15th April
- LTSU is 100% reliant on SSAF, so they will be impacted. University has said that they will have to play their part in absorbing some of that, but they have already had SSAF reduced by \$200K this year, so the challenge is critical.

All La Trobe student organisations will be amalgamated by 01/01/21, but the challenge now is how they will survive until then given the SSAF reduction.

DR SSAF representatives about 85% of our turnover now, which in turn represents about 30% of the total SSAF collected by the university. The other 15% comes from sponsorships and tickets sales, mostly for activities in the first half of the year so they are effectively 100% SSAF currently in the short term.

University stance is that all services funded by SSAF are considered critical and at this stage SSAF shouldn't be suspended.

BBr TUU had its SSAF cut in December, now only receives about 10% of total SSAF collected but it represents about 35% of income.

TUU is advocating that the withheld SSAF now be diverted to support students experiencing hardship.

HC University current stance is that SSAF collection will not change, but this is likely to evolve. Census date was Monday.

MM Yourimbah has been surviving off their cash reserves since 2010 and were one of the first organisation to be denied SSAF funding in 2013, so this feels like déjà vu.

TAG Historically, universities all start with different plans and approaches to any universal challenges but quickly gel into an almost singular approach. If this proves to be the case once again, then any members dependent on SSAF should be preparing for the challenge, despite communication currently otherwise from their university.

Staff

LC All staff working from home from next week.

MP Working from home proving quite successful for his team, with a daily "stand-up" each morning, where the team discuss issues, tasks and enjoy the camaraderie.

LD All guild staff trialing working from home to test capacities and capabilities.

PC All staff working from home.

EB Most Guild staff working from home, on a rotating basis. Expects all staff to work from home soon.

ER Only one staff member still on campus at the service desk.

BBI Up to now, only casual staff have been impacted, although this will change this week.

EK LTSU staff working from home from this week, with a twice-weekly meeting with EK, and daily departmental meetings.

Advocacy staff only holding Zoom meetings and experiencing a large spike in calls.

Staff have started a daily “working alone together” zoom meeting which is minimized to the corner of their screen, to help maintain a group community, sharing tea breaks online together.

BBr Most staff working from home.

JG Casuals have all been stood down but will be paid for unworked shifts from last week.

Rest of staff working from home.

Compiling a list of important and useful links to assist staff in seeking alternative employment:
<https://www.tertiaryaccessgroup.com.au/resources/public/Centrelink-information-regarding-COVID-19.pdf>

Student Support

CO Student Assist and advocacy is working remotely and is very busy. Providing interest-free loans and food vouchers to student.

EK University is implementing bursaries and scholarships for students in need. LTSU is developing their own.

DR USASA working very closely with the university student services department, who have this week allocated an extra \$10K to USASA to top up their Financial Counselling Program for students, who can apply for emergency \$500 grants, Foodbank food vouchers, access to e-vouchers from Save The Children op-shops.

PVC has invited USASA to direct students who need more than \$500 to discuss with PVC for grants up to \$1000.

Also working with the university for students to be able to apply for a loan lap-top or internet dongle with one-month access pre-paid. These will be delivered to the students by re-deployed gym staff.

BBr Looking to provide grocery e-vouchers to students who can prove they have lost their jobs.

Census date has passed, but students can withdraw by the last teaching date of the semester and retake the class next year at zero cost.

BBi At this stage every available dollar has gone into an emergency assistance fund for students, particularly international students unable to access government assistance. This is managed by the UNE Life Advocacy and Welfare team and has already receive around 40 applications in the 24 hours since being announced.