

Monash Student Council

Minutes

Meeting 05c/09 of the Monash Student Council held at 10:50am on Tuesday the 24th of March 2009 in Short Courses Studio 2.

Meeting opened at 11:14.

1. Attendance:

President:	Julian Campbell	
Secretary:	Ephiny Gale	(minutes)
Treasurer:	Sarah Cousins	(chair)
Education (Academic):	Hayley Svenson	(proxy for Lauren O'Dwyer)
Education (Public):	Gemma Buckley	
Welfare:	Lucy Hotchin	
Environment:	Imogen Jackson	
Women's:	Madeline Schultz	
Activities:	Chris Salmon	

C&S:	Alastair Thomas
MAPS:	Clinton Cook

General Representative:	Robbie Philpott	
General Representative:	Dominic Guanine	(proxy for Adam Taranto)
General Representative:	Lisa Dalla Torre	
General Representative:	Steph Hall	

Apologies: Lauren O'Dwyer

Absent: Naja McFadden
Daniel Evelyn
E-Thing Gee

Greig Friday

Observers: Omar Hassan
Maig Ransom
David Elliot
Ben Convey
Mark Baker
Colleen Berger
Sarah Garnham

2. Acknowledgment of traditional owners of land

This MSC acknowledges and pays respect to the people of the Kulin nations as the original and ongoing owners and custodians of this land. The MSA commits itself to actively fight alongside Indigenous peoples for reconciliation and justice for all Indigenous Australians.

3. Omar Hassan Complaints

The following paragraphs are copies of what was requested be added to the agenda. What was actually discussed in the meeting starts directly after the first set of motions.

Omar Hassan's behavior as an officebearer has now drawn negative comment upon the MSA from many students. Despite the definitive vote on January 9 against the MSA taking any side in the Arab-Israeli conflict, Omar has continued to use his position and role to support the Students for Palestine campaign, a campaign of no relevance to his position as Education (Public Affairs).

Mr Hassan knows this is an illegitimate use of his position. He has denied using his position for this purpose when confronted by fellow officebearers for his behavior, arguing that, when he has mentioned his position while lecture bashing for Students for Palestine, that he was simply identifying himself when mentioning his position, and not associating the MSA with the campaign. He has said such incidents were several weeks ago, in further attempts to avoid sanction.

Mr Hassan's defense has changed when confronted with evidence of his behavior. He now argues that this is a legitimate campaign of the Education (Public Affairs) department. This was never discussed with his co-officebearer.

What was discussed was the National Day of Action. Mr Hassan's responsibility was to coordinate the National Day of Action. Instead this has been left to his co-officebearer, while he spends his officebearer hours running the Students for Palestine campaign. He proudly states that "more students are coming to these [Students for Palestine] events that the fucking NDA," while accepting no responsibility for this fact.

MSC should recognise that Mr Hassan is in a difficult position. Across the country, Socialist Alternative officebearers have been working against the NDA, which at times Mr Hassan has resisted. Unfortunately, for all of us, our first servants are the students who elect us, not the factions who organise our campaigns, and Mr Hassan's admission that he takes MSA money to run a campaign entirely outside of his portfolio must be sanctioned.

This adds to a litany of other transgressions. He has consistently identified the Education Office with the Students for Palestine campaign in messages online, despite requests not to. He has printed hundreds of flyers for Students for Palestine, as recently as in the past couple of weeks, off the MSA printer. He has violated the MSA's privacy policy, and failed to apologise for doing so despite a direct request to do so. Despite requests not to, when campaigning for the Culture Card at enrolments with Host Scheme, he has used the Gaza campaign as a (rather unsuccessful) means of convincing students to buy the card.

All other means of convincing Mr Hassan to complete his duties have failed. From his obligations to other students, to his fellow officebearers, in particular his co-officebearer, no attempts at reason have convinced Mr Hassan of his duty, within his MSA hours, to put MSA campaigns first. It is now appropriate that a sanction be imposed.

This is done with a great degree of reticence. Such motions are not pleasant, but are necessary to ensure the goals of the MSA, and basic officebearer accountability, are maintained. In addition, while Mr Hassan has been alerting potential followers on Facebook of a sanction against the Students for Palestine campaign, this is simply in line with it not fitting under the constitutional duties of the MSA, and passes no comment on the worth or otherwise of the cause.

It should also be noted that in discussions with Mr Hassan, he has noted the size of Students for Palestine, and that students will hold myself and Go! accountable for this decision. Council members should not balk at such threats, but rather undertake their primary duty of upholding the constitution and seeking to meet the aims of the Monash Student Association.

Draft Motion #1:

"That this MSC suspends the pay of Omar Hassan for two weeks, in light of breaches of the MSA constitution, breaches of the MSA Privacy Policy, and failure to complete his duties."

Motion #1:

“That this MSC, for the sake of absolute clarity, does not recognise the task of coordinating campaigns regarding the Arab-Israeli conflict, as within the duties of the Education (Public Affairs) officers.”

Sarah would like to set a precedent that we moved these sorts of Office Bearer issues in camera.

Omar is happy to have this discussed out of camera.

Mark Baker and Colleen enter at 11:18

It is clarified that if this is in camera, non-voting members must leave the room.

Sarah Garnham enters at 11:20

Julian thinks the decision should rest with Omar.

Julian says that he thinks that this issue should be deferred as Omar would like more time to prepare.

Alistair asks why the MSC was called in the first place.

Julian says that he asked Ephiny to call the meeting. At the time he thought this was a good idea, but other Council members expressed that they didn't think there was enough time for Omar and he would rather err on the side of caution so that the issues can be properly discussed.

Madeline says that everyone could see this coming, especially since MSC 03 when similar issues were raised. He has been warned several times by Executive and others that this was coming and that there were serious issues. She does not think that this should be deferred because he has not had time to prepare adequate defense to any of these issues.

Gemma thinks that some of these issues are incredibly serious. There is no indication that Omar is going to stop this behavior and this deferred week only gives him another week to continue it. It is not our responsibility to give anyone more time than we are constitutionally bound to do.

Imogen asks whether we are deferring both motions or just one. Julian thinks that the 'absolute clarity' motion should still be moved today, but the punishment one should not.

Omar thinks that docking his pay for two weeks is a serious thing. The motion preamble is long, and going through it carefully takes time. Julian called me up on Friday in quite a calculated move. I thought that with the NDA we have more important things to do that discuss this. I need to consult legal advice as to whether this docking is constitutional. What's the harm in waiting a week?

Steph enters at 11:30

Colleen says that Omar has a right to get his own legal advice if he wishes to do so. She also thinks the allegations need to be fleshed out before they are properly discussed. It is very difficult to present this to Omar the day before the NDA.

David says that students that voted for Omar should be allowed to come along and have their say – thus the decision should be deferred until next week.

PROCEDURAL: That the punishment motion be deferred to next week.

For: 7

Against: 7

As chair, Sarah votes to defer.

Gemma leaves at 11:34

Discussion ensues as to when this shall be deferred to.

Next Tuesday at 11am is decided.

Motion #1 is moved by Julian and seconded by Madeline.

Julian has moved this because he wants to make absolutely certain that this issue is clear.

Madeline asks whether we can add, "and directs Omar Hassan to cease using MSA resources for this campaign."

Omar says that this is related to the motion that was deferred and can we not defer this as well?

Julian says that the motion is very simple and that we should vote on it now.

Sarah says that this is a clarification of something that we have discussed before.

Lucy doesn't feel that Madeline's addition is necessary – the motion is clear enough. She doesn't think this motion is a new argument – people in MSC 01 didn't feel comfortable voting the Gaza motion up, and although Omar can run Students for Palestine separately from the MSA, it is good to clarify that.

Sarah thinks that the motion in MSC 01 is different because Students for Palestine hasn't even started up that. There were no prescription on Omar's behavior during that meeting.

Julian says that this is a clarification of the constitution.

Julian leaves at 11:43

Hayley says we need to decide this now, because otherwise Omar is going to continue to promote Students for Palestine during lecture bashes today, and this campaign has taken him away from his Office Bearer work.

Julian enters at 11:47

Imogen says that we've already had countless meetings about this and that MSC has already decided that this campaign has nothing to do with Education Public Affairs. This motion is simple and it's been said countless times that this doesn't belong in Omar's officebearer report or hours.

Mark says that these campaigns should be run out of clubs, not out of Education Public where the main game is education issues.

Madeline says that this is already explicit in the constitution. Nothing in the constitution can be twisted to say otherwise. She says that this motion is irrelevant because it's already explicit in the constitution, but if we're going to vote it up we should be vote it up now.

PROCEDURAL: That the motion be put.

For: 11

Against: 0

Motion #1 is put

For: 10

Against: 0
Abstentions: 1
Alistair asks that his abstention be noted.

Hayley and Dom exit at 11:53

4. Next Meeting

The next meeting will be held at 2:30pm on Friday the 27th of March, 2009 in an unconfirmed location.

Meeting closed at 11:54.