GUPSA
ANNUAL REPORT 2014

GRIFFITH UNIVERSITY POSTGRADUATE STUDENTS ASSOCIATION

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A VIBRANT COMMUNITY

I'm proud to present you with GUPSA's second annual report. As a team, we have been working hard to ensure that our postgraduates enjoy the best possible student experience at Griffith University.

In this annual report, we not only look back but we also offer a glimpse into the future. Our achievements in 2014 have given us the confidence to embark on an ambitious agenda in the year ahead.

Four years ago, I joined Griffith University Postgraduate Student Association (GUPSA) as the Nathan Campus Coordinator. At the time, our association was largely in a state of suspended animation. A lack of funding meant we did not have the means to deliver services or organise activities. Our role was constrained to providing advocacy.

In my second year at GUPSA, I stepped up to the position of treasurer. Together with our then president Maggie May, I convinced the university executive to let GUPSA share in the revenues raised through the Student Services and Amenities Fee (SSAF). The university executive not only agreed to provide funding, but also allocated a full-time support officer and a brand new office. This enabled us to bring GUPSA back to life and lay the foundations of what would rapidly develop into a vital part of the university experience of nearly 5,000 Higher Degree Research (HDR) students across four campuses, including Logan, Mt Gravatt, Nathan and South Bank.

When I became the president in 2013, I had a very clear goal. I wanted GUPSA to make a meaningful contribution to the best possible postgraduate student experience. I also wanted ensure that my 16 team members and other volunteers who rolled up their sleeves to contribute to our success received the opportunity to deploy their skills and talents to the best of their abilities and to make a real difference. Together, we developed a strategic vision outlining our mission, our key objectives and top priorities. Receiving more than twice the amount of funding than in the previous year, we consolidated what we had already achieved and simultaneously developed new services and activities.

GUPSA is now a strong brand that seamlessly integrates with the Griffith University identity. Moreover, GUPSA has become a vibrant community. A growing number of HDR students participate in our activities. They rely on our services. And they know where to find us when they need help. They trust us. GUPSA is there for them. More importantly, they *are* GUPSA.

Niels Kraaier
GUPSA President
niels@gupsa.org.au

OUR MISSION

GUPSA is an independent association that proudly represents the postgraduate students enrolled at the Logan, Mt Gravatt, Nathan, and South Bank campuses.

REPRESENTATION

RESEARCHING

LOBBYING

NETWORKING

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

SOCIAL AND CULTURAL ACTIVITIES

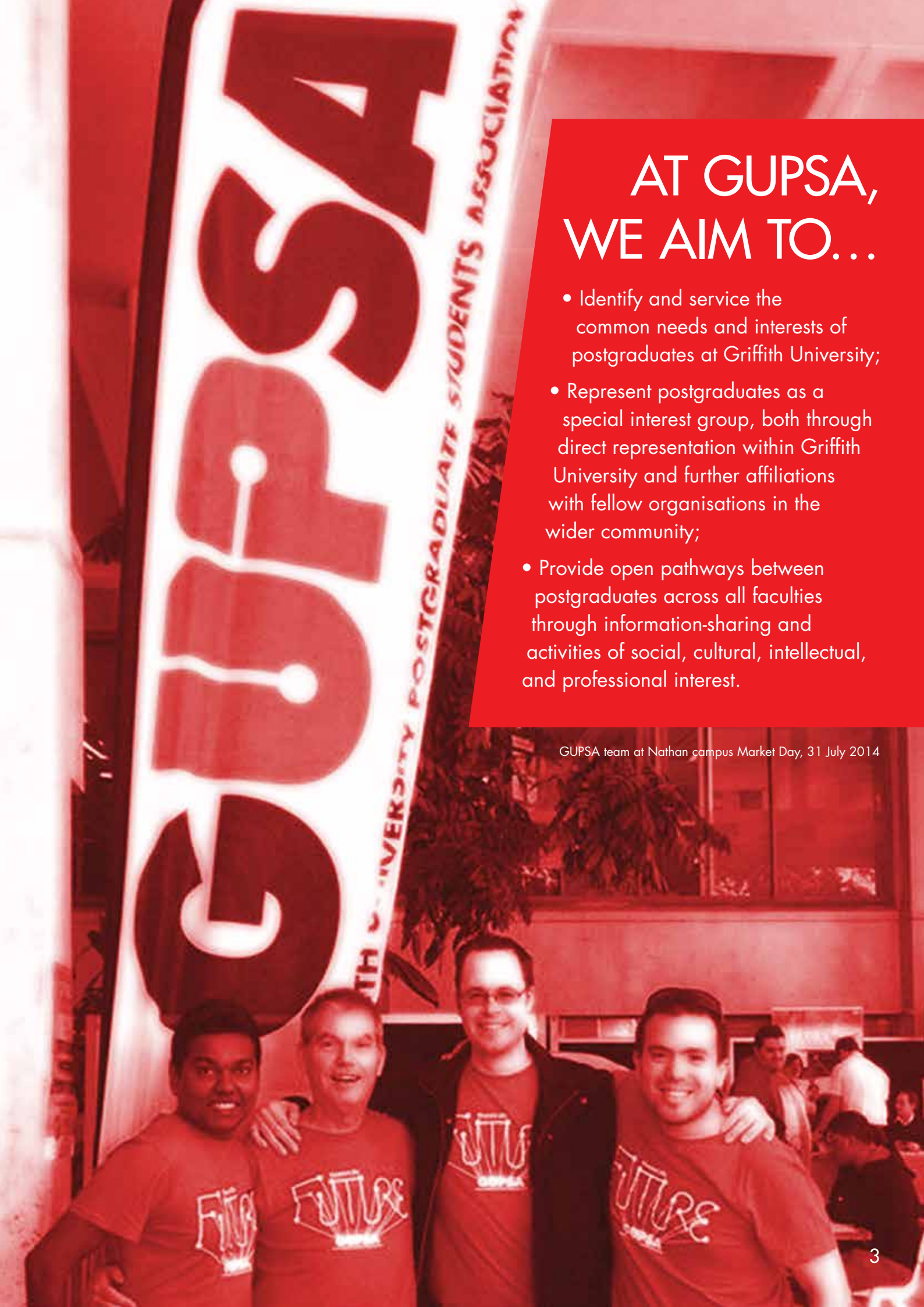
Through our foundational pillars of community, advocacy, and diplomacy, we strive to serve the interests of both HDR and Coursework participants, and are dedicated to creating the best possible experience for all postgraduate students.

We endeavour to build a strong postgraduate student community; we stand up for the interests of postgraduate students across campuses; and we aim to foster pleasant and constructive relationships with our stakeholders within and outside Griffith University.

GUPSA is funded by Griffith University through the student body, with monies raised by the Student Services and Amenities Fee (SSAF). We provide a range of services listed above.

AT GUPSA, WE AIM TO…

- Identify and service the common needs and interests of postgraduates at Griffith University;
- Represent postgraduates as a special interest group, both through direct representation within Griffith University and further affiliations with fellow organisations in the wider community;
- Provide open pathways between postgraduates across all faculties through information-sharing and activities of social, cultural, intellectual, and professional interest.



GUPSA team at Nathan campus Market Day, 31 July 2014

CLOSE COLLABORATION

As Griffith University's independent organisation for postgraduate students, GUPSA is the growing collective for HDR and Coursework participants enrolled at the Logan, Mt Gravatt, Nathan, and South Bank campuses.

Working in close liaison with the Gold Coast Association of Postgraduates (GCAP), whose president is ex officio as a non-voting member of the GUPSA committee, we endeavour to be the trusted voice for every Griffith Postgraduate Student.

GUPSA closely collaborates with several other student associations to make optimal use of our resources and ensure the best possible postgraduate student experience for all. Together with the Student Representative Council (SRC), we provide a range of services, such as free legal advice for both postgraduate and undergraduate students. GUPSA also holds a close working relationship with Griffith Graduate Research School (GGRS), with 2014's collaborative efforts proving to be most rewarding. With the Student Welfare and Liaison Office, we were able to provide financial assistance in the form of vouchers and bursaries, while our alliance with the Student Leadership team sponsored two leadership conferences. Other Griffith University sectors that GUPSA is affiliated with include the Postgraduate International Student Advisors and Campus Life Student Associations and Clubs.

Beyond campus boundaries, GUPSA is a continuing member of the Council of Australian Postgraduate Associations (CAPA), the umbrella organisation for 33 of the nation's postgraduate associations, alongside the National Indigenous Postgraduate Association Aboriginal Corporation (NIPAAC).

GUPSA is also allied with the Council of International Students Australia (CISA), the national peak student representative body for international students studying at postgraduate, undergraduate, private college, TAFE, ELICOS, and foundation levels.

GUPSA is committed to improving the quality of service and representation of Griffith University postgraduate students. Across local, interstate, and national levels, through higher education student, staff, and representative bodies, we continue to strive for greater unity. Together, we will connect the future.

GUPSA delegates Jason McNeil and Yash Pandya at CAPA protest against university cuts, Parliament House, Canberra, 26 November 2014

OVERVIEW OF 2014

Looking back, 2012 was the year of GUPSA's revival, while 2013 was the year of our renewal; a careful unfurling of a newly ordered, funded, and cautiously optimistic organisation. Naturally, then, the watchword for 2014 was 'growth'.

The past 12 months have been filled with a bursting portfolio of services, activities, and events; another full committee of dedicated and skilled volunteers; new academic symposiums; diplomatic advancements; and social gatherings.

Without the support of each of our members—and, indeed, without the overwhelming encouragement and involvement from the postgraduate sector—GUPSA could not have flourished as we have in 2014.

However, 2014 was not without its sorrows, punctured with moments of deeply affecting sadness and struggle. On the evening of March 27, Sophie Collombet, a French international student studying a Masters of International Business, tragically lost her life while walking home to her inner-city apartment. An active member of the postgraduate student community at Griffith,

Sophie regularly attended social outings and events, and was an intelligent, effervescent young woman with her whole life ahead of her.

On April 10, a candle-lit vigil was held in her honour as a sign of mournful solidarity between the Brisbane community and students and staff from Queensland University of Technology, University of Queensland, and Griffith University.

Student safety is paramount to GUPSA, but the terrible circumstances that Sophie fell victim to require a different kind of consideration. GUPSA strongly supported community activist Natasha Lewis Honeyman in petitioning the Brisbane City Council for a safety audit and were pleased when $10.9 million was committed in their 2014–15 budget, funding an awareness campaign for Brisbane's international students. We are also working in further collaboration with CISA regarding safety for international students studying in the Brisbane area. In remembrance of Sophie, GUPSA will continue to provide resources, knowledge, and advice about safety and security services that are available to students, both within university grounds and the community agencies that can assist them off campus.

In May, our advocacy and diplomatic efforts surged again, with the proposed higher education reforms raising serious concerns about the continued availability and affordability of postgraduate study. Through collaboration with CAPA, it was possible to raise a formidable national voice in response to the legislation. GUPSA has actively supported CAPA in their endeavours to chart a course of action through such uncertain times. Fortunately, the proposed changes were voted down in the Senate in late December, offering a moment of respite

and a chance for reforming and strengthening the arguments against the more contentious elements of the new laws.

GUPSA is dedicated to standing up for the interests of postgraduate students,

any developments concerning the tertiary education sector are well within our radar. Through advocacy, we try to identify and assuage any obstacle that may cause difficulties for the postgraduate student sector and will always lobby to influence policymaking for the benefit of our stakeholders.

Another student-initiated change in 2014 was also academically oriented. From late 2013 onwards, GUPSA received increasing signs that HDR students were experiencing a variety of difficulties regarding their continuing supervised studies. As burgeoning scholars, postgraduate students are privileged with greater independence than undergraduates. However, the relationship between student and mentor still involves guidance and assistance, and, while many supervisors are brilliant intellectuals, some misconceptions about what their role as individual mentors entails still exist. GUPSA believed that by creating awareness regarding these issues and increasing communicative pathways between staff and students, the likeliness of postgraduate students having a fulfilling, positive experience and feeling both personally and professionally mandated through their working relationship with their supervisor would increase.

Therefore, in collaboration with GGRS, which had observed and recorded similar grievances, an Excellence in Supervision forum and workshop were held. The panel discussion, featuring the four 2014 recipients of the Vice Chancellor's Excellence in Supervision awards and facilitated by Professor Rod Barrett, provided a space for the winners to impart their experience, knowledge and strategies concerning their own supervisory relationships. The workshop—overseen by Dr Eliza Howard (née Matthews), the Graduate Education Officer for GGRS, whose efforts have been imperative to this campaign—gave the HDR community an opportunity to deliver feedback about current HDR practices at Griffith. These seminars were supplemented by online resources hosted by GGRS, with GUPSA helping to fund a series of educational videos related to improving the student to mentor relationship. GUPSA has received promising responses from the experience and, while consistency, time, and realistic expectations are crucial components to avoiding a relapse, there is cause to believe that positive change is already underway.

GUPSA also supported the joint initiative between GGRS and the Queensland State Government in trialling a PhD Employment Experience Program, as we have been lobbying for such a scheme for quite some time. Over the course of 2014, GUPSA's association with GGRS continued to strengthen, and, once again, we must specifically thank Dr Howard who has greatly contributed to this development. Other professional opportunities instigated through GUPSA's sponsorship include the tours of the Gold Coast Hospital, which allowed students to have direct experience and input in the field as well as to the postgraduate coursework program at the South Bank campus. Finally, the free editing service, currently run by editor-in-residence Evie Franzidis (or Maureen Butler in Evie's absence), has been a tremendous success, and we encourage all of our members to take advantage of this academic, and subsequently professional, assistance tool.

For 2014, GUPSA also renewed our focus on student socialising and networking. An Honours student afternoon tea proved to be most rewarding, while regular monthly lunches at Logan and Thank God It's Friday parties hosted at the Nathan campus Unibar provided the perfect opportunity for many of our members to leave their desks and paperwork behind, even for just a few hours. In September, GUPSA also sponsored a group of more than 20 students—a weekly running group that met at Mt Gravatt—who participated in the annual Bridge to Brisbane long-distance fun run. Alongside physical and emotional wellbeing, GUPSA and the SRC ran the RUOK? Day postcard competition in recognition of the importance of mental health.

In 2014, GUPSA has endeavoured to uphold our commitment to the postgraduate community at Griffith University. Whether Honours student, Coursework participants, HDR members, or PhD affiliates, whether domestically or internationally connected, GUPSA recognises that postgraduates come from all walks of life.

At GUPSA, we feel our role in supporting this unity in diversity is paramount to building the kind of engaging, thriving postgraduate culture that Griffith deserves.

While it is important to remember our mistakes and misfortunes, lest we repeat our grievances, so too must we meet the rising of the new year with all the strength and success of our past.

HIGHLIGHTS

FEBRUARY

Welcome Back Celebration at Nathan Unibar Function Room

MARCH

AGM, where all positions are again filled due to overwhelming interest

APRIL

Wenx begins her regular blogging for GUPSA's website / Vigil for Sophie

MAY

Excellence in Supervision forum and workshop held in collaboration with GGRS

JUNE

Brisbane Lord Mayor Graham Quirk commits $10.9 million for safety education campaign

GUPSA team Bridge to Brisbane, 14 September 2014

JUNE

Student-led inaugural symposium Music, Mayhem and Change, held at QCGU

AUGUST

First Aid and CPR course held in collaboration with SRC

SEPTEMBER

RUOK? Day postcard competition

OCTOBER

16 PhD candidates and three Honours students from Griffith compete in Three Minute Thesis

DECEMBER

GUPSA hosts their Christmas function at The Ship Inn

EXPENDITURES

UNIBAR SOCIAL EVENTS	$57,000
EDITING SERVICE	$18,286
CHRISTMAS PARTY	$15,510
STUDENT PRINTING CREDIT	$15,000
CAPA/CISA AFFILIATION	$10,593
EDUCATION COSTS BURSARY	$10,000
CONSERVATORIUM STUDENT SYMPOSIUM	$6,040
RUOK? DAY	$5,587
GUPSA T-SHIRTS	$4,625
EXCELLENCE IN SUPERVISION FORUM	$3,739
LEGAL SERVICES	$3,600
PRIZES AND PROMOTIONAL OFFERS	$3,400

EPS HDR Conference The Ship Inn, 29 October 2014

FIRST AID AND CPR COURSES	$2,704
MT GRAVATT EVENTS	$2,670
STUDENT INITIATED EVENTS	$1,719
INTERNATIONAL STUDENT FILM NIGHTS	$1,552
MT GRAVATT FREE FOOD DAYS	$1,443
HEALTH SERVICES MANAGEMENT FORUM AND FIELD TRIP	$1,255
BRIDGE TO BRISBANE SPONSORSHIP	$1,150
STUDENT LEADERSHIP CONFERENCE	$540
LOGAN CAMPUS LUNCHES	$539
SUSTAINABILITY MARKET DAY	$500
INTERNATIONAL HDR INDUCTION	$216

LOOKING AHEAD TO 2015

For GUPSA, 2015 will be the year of consolidation. We will focus on strengthening the positive and the productive outcomes that have been the result of the continued efforts in 2014.

Furthermore, we also recognise that through our expanding network of partnerships, not only has GUPSA become a more robust and resourceful organisation, but also the benefits for our members are directly observable.

As such, we will seek to improve our collaborative efforts with fellow organisations in order to provide the best possible postgraduate experience for every Griffith University student. However, new developments and initiatives will also hopefully be realised in order to meet the growing demand of some of our current services.

In collaboration with GGRS and the Student Leadership team, we hope to expand upon the professional development incentives, such as leadership conferences, supervisor forums, and workshops. We will also be looking at branching into a peer-mentoring service designed for Coursework postgraduate students.

In response to the overwhelming demand to our editing service, we are also hoping to provide editing and writing workshops to assist all postgraduate students in continuing to build and refine their skill sets. Furthermore, at the time of compiling this report, we are in the process of organising a writing retreat. While only a pilot project at this stage, if it proves to be a success, the potential to organise such an event once, or even twice, a year would be substantial.

For the welfare and wellbeing of the postgraduate sector, GUPSA will endeavour to further our working relationship with the SRC, and to extend our collective reach to all four Griffith campuses.

This will hopefully lead to wider engagement in social events, promoting greater awareness and opportunities regarding physical, emotional, and mental health.

GUPSA is determined to continue to provide a safe, positive environment for the postgraduate community, and we feel it is crucial to offer these social services for the benefit of everyone at Griffith University.

Outside of university affiliations, GUPSA will continue our involvement with CISA, NIPAAC, and CAPA. In particular, we will maintain our support of CAPA in their efforts to influence an improved higher education scheme as we firmly believe that tertiary education opportunities should be available to everyone, regardless of financial capability. Indeed, education is the key to a thriving economy and a vibrant, future-driven nation. While the reform has undergone changes since its rejection,

GUPSA will continue to advocate for positive policymaking and strive for the best possible outcome for postgraduate students throughout Australia.

Of course, the funding for each of these new proposals, and the continuation of last year's successes, will continue to be derived from the SSAF budget. It is a fee that you, the student body, pay for, and so GUPSA is eager to hear your feedback and ideas. Let us know what we can do to improve the quality and experiences of your postgraduate life here at Griffith University.

Together, we intend to sustain the positive and progressive community that has connected us in new and wonderful ways in 2014.

GUPSA team at Nathan campus Market Day, 31 July 2014

Gold Coast Hospital tour for HSM postgraduates, 21 November 2014

PLANNING

In the year ahead, GUPSA will be continuing to improve upon many of our 2014 projects, while eagerly anticipating the commencement of many new events and initiatives.

We welcome postgraduate student input from those enrolled at the Logan, Mt Gravatt, Nathan, and South Bank campuses, and are looking forward to increasing our presence and involvement across the Griffith University community. For more information, please contact our Support Officer Michael Carden (michael@gupsa.org.au).

Some of the activities, events, and services planned for 2015 are:

EVENTS:

Immigration seminars

Reception with Vice Chancellor

Student Conferences

Supervision Week

SERVICES:

Legal Advice Service

Printing Credit for Coursework Students

Scholarships and Awards

Writing and Editing Workshops

ACTIVITIES

Cultural Activities

Equity Activities

Funding Student-Initiated Activities

Health and Wellbeing Activities

Increased International Student Activities

More Campus-Based Activities

BUDGET ESTIMATE

Over the past two years, GUPSA's funding has doubled, allowing us greater freedom and power to provide a multifaceted, supportive, and enriching environment for Griffith University's postgraduate student cohort. GUPSA's primary aim is to strengthen and expand upon 2014's accomplishments, ensuring that a range of events, services, and seminars remain accessible to the postgraduate sector. The following breakdown reflects our projected expenditures for the upcoming year. Exact figures will be released in the 2015 budget.

GUPSA team Qld College of Art campus
RUOK? Market Day, 11 September 2014

GUPSA'S 2014 TEAM

President – Niels Kraaier

Vice President (Coursework) – Jason McNeil

Vice President (Research) – Mohammad Zahirul Islam

Treasurer – Mohammad Kadir

Honours Students Officer – Pandya Yash Jayeshkumar

International Students Officers – Nayeth Solórzano Alcívar and Katrine Sonnenschein

Indigenous Students Officer – Sylvia Nakachi

Postgraduate representatative on University Council – Satine Winter

Niels Kraaier

Mohammad Zahirul Islam

Satine Winter

Mohammad Kadir

Mahbuba Sani

Pandya Yash Jayeshkumar

Nayeth Solórzano Alcívar

Queer Students Officers – Samad Naushahi and John Heussler

Logan Campus Coordinator – Tanvir Ahmed

Mt Gravatt Campus Coordinator – Mahbuba Sani

Nathan Campus Coordinators – Eduardo Jordan Pérez and Shanuka Senarath

Queensland Conservatorium of Music Coordinators – Jo Ruksenas and Emma Di Marco

Queensland College of Art Coordinators – Darren Fisher and Nikesh Kumar

Support Officer – Michael Carden

Editor-in-residence – Evie Franzidis

Sylvia Nakachi

Eduardo Jordan Pérez

Shanuka Senarath

Jo Ruksenas

Tanvir Ahmed

Michael Carden

GUPSA: RUOK? day 2014

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THANKS

We acknowledge and thank all our committee members for their outstanding contribution throughout 2014. Without their ongoing support, GUPSA would not have been able to function in the capacity we have for the past year, nor would we hold such promising aspirations for the future.

GUPSA

GRIFFITH UNIVERSITY POSTGRADUATE STUDENTS ASSOCIATION

Connect the future