**Tara Shepherd**

**Welfare & Equity Representative, Otago University Students’ Association**

**4th Quarter Report – 3196 words**

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**PART ONE: Executive Officer Position Description Duties**

**10. Duties of the Welfare and Equity Representative**

**10.1. Assume all the powers and duties of the President in the absence of the President, the Administrative Vice-President, the Finance and Strategy Officer and the Academic Representative.**

There hasn’t been a need for me to assume powers and duties of the President during this quarter.

**10.2. Work to address issues affecting marginalised communities of students at the University of Otago, in areas including but not limited to:**

**10.2.1. Academic issues at the University of Otago; and;**

A promising third quarter I didn’t expect to top it, but it sure as came close. It is welcoming to attend the Pae Tata Plan to 2030 which was held outlining the key pillars the University shall focus on to reduce inequities. These policies and plans are more than just the objectives but when staff across the board embody this mahi, the way we cater for our studies will benefit in ten-fold.

**10.2.2. Social and welfare related issues within the University of Otago and the wider community.**

A couple 1-1 welfare encounters that due to their nature cannot be disclosed but I am happy to continually see that student’s are using our pathways to find support. There has been a wide variety of focus for me in this space, but more longevity planning this quarter as OUSA has yearly executives, the University has long-term plans which make it essential for consistent information sharing. I say this as I think next year may be instrumental for how social and welfare related issues are consulted on with our students as there is a need for review on the special examinations policy, grievance pathway and how the university is funded to be able to fund plans. I am really optimistic on the 2025 forecast for Ōtākou Whakaihu Waka with expansion of Auahi Ora, the maintenance of the link with all the plants and thus the opening of the wellbeing hub is really signally this.

**10.3. Be a member of appropriate internal committees of the Association, including, but not limited to:**

**10.3.1. Standing Committee of the Executive; and;**

Correct, any apologies I had sent was accepted and always made effort to catch-up and share input.

**10.3.2. Residential Committee.**

N/A, as mentioned in last report I was never invited to join, and we did not have a residential rep for the second half of 2024. We do have ex-sub-wardens on our executive, including myself, and I believe this staff / student dynamic had been considered across appropriate conversations.

**10.4. Where appropriate, brief the President on national and local tertiary sector welfare issues and representing the welfare interests of students on local body committees and boards.**

Thank you to Keegan for being a wonderful ear. I am really proud of OUSA Executive for passing a motion prior to the Prime Minister’s apology this month which followed the “Abuse in Care” report findings released in June. Such a substantial report which recognised almost 3,000 survivor’s story’s and especially those who did not have the chance to share their own.

*“OUSA wished to acknowledge this as it affects our community and students at the University of Otago and Otago Polytechnic.” “415/24 THAT OUSA acknowledges the survivors, deceased and families of those affected by the abuse in state care in Aotearoa New Zealand between 1950 and 1999.” – OUSA Meeting Minutes 31 October 2024.*

**10.5. Actively inform the student body of issues relating to their welfare, via publications, promotions and campaigns.**

I have been involved with being interviewed by Critic and even invited on to RADIO1 notably for Mental Health Awareness week which was an awesome campaigned more than seven days by our amazing Sophie Penn at OUSA Student Support. Recently commented on the result of how the continual increase in tertiary fee’s are affecting students’ not only now but years to come and it is more than just a financial issue, but a wellbeing one as we continue to see new-graduates having to move away or overseas to get-ahead leaving their families and friends <3

**10.6. Maintain a good working relationship with relevant Association staff, including the Student Support Centre Manager, Queer Support Coordinator and Advocates.**

Continual this mahi with special thanks to OUSA Staff for fostering a safe space for all students.

**10.6.1. Meet with the OUSA Student Support Centre Manager on a regular basis, where possible and liaise with them on relevant welfare issues as they arise.**

Continuing to meet with Sophie Penn, it was awesome to see the mental health week success 23rd September – 27th. As mentioned previously our roles go hand in hand and often, we bounce back ideas or anything across which we think are important for our mahi or our roles. The parent’s room is coming along nicely and to note there is a cool brochure coming out!!

**10.7. Maintain a good working relationship with community organisations and groups that may provide services to the benefit of student welfare.**

I am well connected in the disability community and have been able to champion welfare issues at Otago through these channels. I have numerous volunteer roles where I have been able to connect with a variety of providers both at a local and national level to hear advice, similar concerns or offers of help.

**10.8. Facilitate in conjunction with the relevant committee chair a variety of student representation across welfare and equity related University Committees and OUSA Sub-committees.**

I both have the interpersonal connection with relevant clubs or advocates but ensure to also set up e-introductions so they can tell their own story or raise relevant concerns to leadership within the University. I always ask executive who are in the ballpen relevant thoughts on issues or advice on potential allies or good channels to escalate issues with at the University.

**10.9. Maintain a good working relationship with the University, particularly with:**

**10.9.1. The Director of Student Services;**

I met with Claire Gallop regularly when available, she has been a real asset to my role throughout this year and would love to acknowledge her mahi for our student body here. It has been incredible to have such an ally who is willing to hear the good and bad while actively working towards creating a better Ōtākou Whakaihu Waka. Not only this, but her listening ear has been ever most appreciated to hash over propositions or debate when entering a room of university staff.

**10.9.2. Student Health Representative;**

Sitting on the Clinical Health Governance group where I meet with a range of people at the practice, but my main contact is Magaret Charles. Quarter 3 I went in hard and this 4th quarter was more fruits of my labour, having some ‘give’ or coming around to my feedback.

**10.9.3. Disability Information Services;**

Continually keeping up the communication with Melissa Lethaby, a solid advocate for our students and we have discussed a wide range of issues. It is awesome to see that DIS note takers will have an increase in compensation inline with national standards. I do hope the Disability Action Plan will ensure greater safety for students with disabilities and it gets the proper launch it was promised.

**10.9.4. UniQ;**

I have spoken with UniQ over email hearing key concerns and made a significant effort to share the gender-neutral bathroom, I have raised this appropriately with Claire and Jo, especially for the link.

**10.9.5. Te Whare Tāwharau;**

This quarter I haven’t met with TWT but I do meet with Thursday’s in Black which work closely together and often this has been a channel when discussing issues.

**10.9.6. Thursdays in Black;**

MASSIVE SHOUTOUT TO ELLA AND CAITLIN!! <3 Thank you for being wonderful co-presidents and working closely with me this year, I will miss you both dearly. It was awesome to feedback loop issues being raised and brainstorm harm-prevention opportunities. I am so excited to see what Thursday in Black achieves next year! It was incredible to attend their one-day event of “what I was wearing” it was truly a moving campaign and think this mahi is essential to our university community.

**10.9.7. Chaplaincy Board; and;**

Another highlight of my job, I have only put in one apology for the monthly board meeting I also attended their AGM. It’s great to see a collaboration between the Polytech and University in this space and really see value in chaplains for our students.

**10.9.8. Any other Welfare and Equity related organisations.**

There is a range of committees I sit on, more OUSA related I have been privileged to be part of constitutional conversations to help ratify ours while improving it where needed as we transition to modern challenges. I have outlined the committees I sit on below and have raised issues both there and back at OUSA when appropriate.

**10.10. Maintain a good working relationship with Clubs and Societies Representative to collaborate on welfare issues and opportunities regarding clubs.**

It’s been awesome to work with Emma this year and I think it has been successful!

**10.11. Be available via cell phone at all practical times.**

Yes.

**10.12. Perform the general duties of all Executive Officers.**

Yes.

**10.13. Where practical, work not less than twenty hours per week**

This has been the most challenging quarter numbers wise; this is purely due to how this is assessed overtop of final exam period and my own move away from Dunedin. As this was my final year I put in a lot of time of study for my finals and have had quite a bit of travel at the end, this isn’t also reflective of my quality of hours I have put in. Otherwise, my average is 18 hours this quarter and my overall across the year is close to 20.

**PART TWO: General Duties of all Executive Members**

**3.1. The appointed term for all OUSA Executive Officers shall commence from the 1st of January and will terminate on the 31st of December of that same year.**

This is correct.

**3.2. Where reasonable, all Executive Officers are expected to assist as volunteers for OUSA events and functions, including, but not limited to:**

**3.2.1. Assisting at the OUSA Tent City and other activities during Summer School, Orientation and Re-Orientation; and;**

I sat in for election tables, I partook in market day and also helped at our AGM.

**3.2.2. Assisting with elections and referenda where appropriate.**

As alluded to above, I was able to impartially advertise the OUSA Elections in my own personal channels and encouraged people to vote.

**3.3. It is expected that Executive Officers attend Executive meetings.**

I have attended majority of meetings but at times I was unable to be there in-person, all of my apologies accepted*.*

**3.4. Where reasonable, all Executive Officers are to be available for national conferences, national and local campaigns, Executive training sessions and Executive planning sessions.**

Yes, all discussed with Keegan where relevant. This is final quarter and thus final exams, so we did see a natural work load decline across these spaces.

**3.5. All Executive officers shall:**

**3.5.1. Keep up to date with the Finance and Strategy Officer's Executive budget, bringing to the Finance and Strategy Officer any spending proposals, keeping track of their spending and ensuring they do not exceed budgeted expenditure;**

I continue to ask questions and have enjoyed regular updates from Daniel and FESC.

**3.5.2. Educate themselves on needs and experiences relevant to historically marginalised demographic groups including intersectionality and promote and encourage all demographics to participate, where relevant, in clubs, societies, committees and OUSA events;**

As alluded to in previous quarters, I came to this role with prior experience in the student movement, my own advocacy journey and key contacts when suitable. As a disabled wāhine who originates from a rural background I am conscious I am bringing perspective of that intersectionality to this role. I have an ongoing commitment to be a life-long-learner, educating myself on important mahi or issues to highlight marginalised communities’ struggles. This semester I took Treaty Politics with Janine Hayward which was exceptionally educational and would recommend it to any student. I welcome students with lived experience to share their story and priority issues and how OUSA can best support them.

**3.5.3. Act in accordance with and uphold Te Tiriti o Waitangi while exercising their duties;**

Toitū Te Tiriti. I enjoy learning and using Te Reo in accordance with tikanga in everyday practice and having friends who are both Māori or learning is really motivating. It is also important to me I would never overshadow any advocate who whakapapa Māori and if there was ever a conversation had at a committee or board level, I would redirect them to our co-tumuaki Gemella and Distance.

**3.5.4. Where reasonable, attend events hosted by clubs related to historically marginalised demographic groups;**

This quarter I attended some events, even went and saw the Hypocritical’s at Pint Night. I would have loved to attend more events this year overall, but the timetable and schedule is large – Emma deserves the biggest kudos!

**3.5.5. Prioritise sustainability and minimization of environmental impacts in all aspects of their role and keep up to date with environmental issues;**

I live and breathe sustainability; it is almost suffocating. There is a new documentary coming to Netflix about over consumerism so if you want nightmares and a push in the right direction give it a watch. It is also really important to acknowledge not everyone has the ability to be environmentally conscious due to financial barriers or accessibility needs but that just recognises a current system in society regarding the need for a better policy for a circular economy to help aid sustainable choices.

Passionate about the environment and coming from a place being directly impacted by climate change now it is prevalent. There also needs to be a focus on emergency management and resilience planning that could be adapted into this role through connections with the university and local emergency management.

**3.5.6. Every quarter undertake five hours of voluntary service which contributes to the local community; and;**

I spend a lot of time volunteering at a national level across spaces but mainly the disabled person’s rights which continually trickles into our local communities such as Dunedin. Taking into account this, my mahi will whole-heartedly surpass ‘five-hours’ but also recognising the local community aspect, it is important to recognise my capacity both across the mahi, advocacy, study but also health that at this time was infeasible to add anything else to the plate.

**3.5.7. Regularly check and respond to all communications.**

For sure do! Going to miss the ballpen catchups everyday <3

**PART THREE: Attendance and Involvement in OUSA and University Committees**

The list of committees that I am involved in is set out at 10.13. I have enjoyed being involved in these committees with other board members being supportive. They are essential parts to the university system to allow for equitable progress across departments. Here is a list of the committees I sit on.

* Clinical Governance Group (Student Health)
* Equity Advisory Group
* Ethical Behaviour Committee
* Otago Tertiary Chaplaincy Trust Board
* Otago Tertiary Chaplaincy Consultative Body Meeting
* Constitution Committee
* Waste Management Governance
  + *Next year would be good to return this back to the residential rep position, I just had particular interest in this field.*
* Sophia Charter Implementation Working Group
* Library Group Committee
* OUSA Constitution Review Committee
* Te Kokeka Whakamua Implementation Advisory Group (Disability Action Plan)
  + *I have been appointed as an Alumni Otago University Student with disabilities as this has just been created so forecasting for next year, however, have added in the need of Welfare and Equity position to also be at the table next year.*

**PART FOUR: Goals and Your Progress**

Updates on my goals from this year;

1. *Lecture recording policy with Academic + International OUSA representatives that also reflect accessibility and universal design which includes closed captioning.*

I look forward to having passed the baton and see this eventuate next year with a high priority and need to ensure there is comprehensive support for closed captioning. The need of this service is essential to help all of our students, those bilinguals, living with disabilities and the access to transcript is a useful tool. It is also notable the need for student-note takers is also essential and should not be overlooked when discussing this policy as they offer an important resource.

1. *Run “look after your mates” which is collaborative with our clubs & socs.*

Completed and discussed in Quarter 3 Report.

1. *Review mental health support at Otago University and make recommendations for improvement through conversations with Student Support & Student Health*

This has been a continuous effort and often not the centre of conversation when discussing the care provided by Student Health. It has however been a success on repushing the need for dental-dam’s to be provided, currently the only funding solution is to allow informative posters on the wall on how-to with a free-condom provided. I do hope to see more of a funding focus in the future. Any student can offer feedback to any of our email addresses, and I highly recommend using your representation so please contact; contact [welfare@ousa.org.nz](mailto:welfare@ousa.org.nz) <3

1. *Working on the Disability Action Plan with relevant university staff to ensure a more accessible learning environment.*

Completed but hoping to see a more emphasised launch by the University in the coming months, there is a need for visibility on this plan.

1. *Effectively work in partnership with minority groups and uphold their mana and pressing issues and ensure.*

Continuous goal that I hold myself accountable to.

1. *I do hope to work closer with Political and Residential Representative focusing on the cost-of-living crisis that students face to help get relevant data on the state our community is made to live in.*

This focus has been taken into the next year’s executive and look forward to where they take it.

**PART FIVE: General**

I note that in my third quarter I commented on it being the most impactful, but this one may be by far my favourite. The amount of aroha that is in the OUSA building and the 2024 executive have really shone throughout this semester. Special mentions will always be Donna Jones, I truly have so much love for our wonderful secretary who is more than her position, a friend, a mother with the best listening ears and by far the best dressed! To the executive, thank you for making life fun in between the stress, I can never express the appreciation and adoration I have for each of you. May we meet on the other side of the world sometime soon! This is the first time I am leaving university at the end of the year truly on a high, so thank you for making it special.

Final special mentions go to all of the Otago Staff I have worked with, if they never see this report, know their students appreciate the mahi they do every day. On a personal note, I am leaving this quarter engaged \*wawaweewa\* happy and optimistic for what the student experience has to offer. Lots of love from Fonzie, officially signing out, Tara xo