



# RMIT UNIVERSITY STUDENT UNION INCORPORATED

2023 Annual Report (A0114140A)

**RUSU**  
RMIT UNIVERSITY STUDENT UNION

# A MESSAGE FROM THE 2024 RUSU PRESIDENT



Ella Byrne  
RUSU President

What a huge year 2023 was for RUSU! I am incredibly proud of what the RUSU team accomplished last year. Students faced significant challenges with high costs of living, placement poverty, food insecurity and mental health. RUSU was there to provide help and to advocate for students.



Dhweep Shah  
RUSU General Secretary

Helping students cope with high living costs was core to RUSU's activities. We provided over 70,000 free meals through our free lunches and breakfasts. Our Compass Drop In Centre had 4,040 student contacts, with over 2,500 of these being students accessing basic pantry staples from the Compass Cupboard. Our 'Period Poverty' campaign led to RMIT installing free sanitary vending machines in select locations on all campuses. We handed out 550 pairs of period underpants due to a generous sponsorship from U by Kotex.

RUSU provided free or very low costs parties, events, and entertainment- most of which included free food for students. We provided over \$100,000 in grants to our student clubs to enable them to run programs and events for students at a local level.

Our RUSU volunteers were so active and so awesome in 2023, contributing over 2600 volunteer hours. 126 student volunteers attended accredited training, such as Food Handling, Youth Mental Health First Aid and Responsible Service of Alcohol – helping them in their volunteer roles and boosting their confidence and employability.

A lot of the advocacy and campaign work done at RUSU goes unseen. 2023 was a really big year for RUSU achieving our RUSU Priorities'. I'd like to celebrate a few important campaign wins:

- RUSU successfully advocated for compulsory consent training at RMIT and for student access to an RMIT OHS hazard and psychosocial risk reporting platform.
- Disability and accessibility is an important priority for RUSU. We continued our Neurodiverse Study Sessions. We secured a permanent sensory friendly study space in the city library and laid the ground work for the 2024 RUSU priority of more sensory friendly spaces across all campuses.
- RUSU once again advocated for extended library hours across the peak study period and were there in the library handing out fruit, study snacks and words of encouragement through our Welfare of Wheels program.
- RUSU and RMIT Student Life have collaborated on several art projects in recent years. The 2021/2022 Solidarity Art Project – the Journey of Mapiyal, which was sponsored by RMIT Student Life and RUSU, was a finalist in the 2023 Victorian Premiers Design Awards. In 2023 work commenced on the 2023/ 2024 collaboration, 'We Belong', which is a participatory arts project that amplifies deaf and disabled perspectives at RMIT.

In 2023 RUSU was working with significantly reduced budgets following cuts to our 2023 SSAF funding through RMIT. We were creative and innovative. We stretched our budgets as far as we could, actively chased new sponsorship opportunities, and built up our membership base. Our ever growing group of volunteers, student casuals, elected student reps and staff were absolute superstars. Thank you all for an incredible 2023. I'm looking forward to seeing what we can achieve in 2024.

**Ella Byrne**

President,  
RMIT University Student Union

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RMIT University Student Union acknowledges the people of the Woi wurrung and Boon wurrung language groups of the eastern Kulin Nations on whose unceded lands we conduct the business of the University. RMIT University respectfully acknowledges their Ancestors and Elders, past and present.

RMIT University Student Union also acknowledges the Traditional Custodians and their Ancestors of the lands and waters across Australia where it conducts its business.

# RUSU HIGHLIGHTS 2023

RUSU ACHIEVEMENTS 2023

## RUSU Events

**42,000+** at all RUSU Events – including free lunches & social events  
**ATTENDANCE**



**41**  
RUSU ticketed social & departmental events



**5,000+**  
ticketed attendees



### EVENT HIGHLIGHTS

Welcome Bash, Boat Cruise, End of Exams Parties, Mini-Golf Event, Volunteer Lawn Bowls, Women's & Queer Department Nightclub events.



### SPECIAL RUSU EVENTS

Multicultural Week, Indian Independence Day (collaboration with RMIT Indian Club), Pride Week, Let's Get Consensual, Save Your GPA, Compass Market Place and Oktoberfest.

### CAMPUS HIGHLIGHTS



#### Bundoora

Building 204 Pop Up Pub Events, Walert House Events, Bundoora Volunteers Movie Nights.



#### Brunswick

Brunswick Mixers & Brunswick Uni Mental Health Day.

### ORIENTATION

**1,800+**  
students attended  
RUSU (ticketed) Orientation / Welcome parties



**1,100**

students attended  
Welcome Bash



**21**

RUSU Club Orientation  
'Welcome Grants' awarded

### DEPARTMENTAL HIGHLIGHTS



#### VE

16 VE Smoko free lunch events delivered.  
130+ students attended 3 VE Social Events.



#### Women's / Welfare

Let's Get Consensual  
**Consent Weeks:** promoting safe sex and consent to students.  
**International Women's Day** event.



#### Queer

**Pride Week:** celebration at all campuses.  
Women's & Queer Department social events.



#### Sustainability

**Sustainability Week:** RUSU workshops and bike servicing. Edible Gardens & working bees (City campus).

#### Disabilities & Carers

Neurodiverse Study sessions- study spaces tailored to the needs of neurodiverse students (collaboration with RMIT Library and RMIT Equitable Learning Services).

#### Postgrads

131 students attended a Postgrad Mixer event  
5 Postgrad coffee catch up/morning tea event.

#### International Students

International Student **Board Games** event

#### Indigenous

Indigenous Student social event.

# RUSU HIGHLIGHTS 2023

RUSU ACHIEVEMENTS 2023

## Free Food



**70,000+** across all RUSU departments & events  
**FREE MEALS**

### FREE LUNCHES PROGRAM

**40,500+**  
SERVES



**97**

Events

**4**

Campuses

### FREE BREAKFAST

**29,200+**  
SERVES



**22**

Weeks

**4**

Campuses

### WELFARE ON WHEELS



**3,200** students reached  
across 17 events

### FRESH FRUIT PROGRAM

**14,000+**  
serves of fresh fruit

### COMPASS MATERIAL SUPPORT

**2,500+**

RUSU Compass Cupboard service accessed



**1,080**

students provided a free bags of fresh produce, groceries and a recipe card across **3 Compass Marketplace** events

### RUSU REALFOODS



RUSU Realfoods provided affordable, healthy and sustainable meals for students

# RUSU HIGHLIGHTS 2023

RUSU ACHIEVEMENTS 2023

## Advocacy, Representation & Welfare

**28** Elected RUSU Student Representatives

**13** RUSU SUC's (Board Meetings)

**31** Weekly Secretariate Executive Meetings

**22** RMIT Board/committee, executive level meetings sat on by RUSU representatives

**4,212** Students voted in the RUSU annual election

AGM held in person on campus  
**191 students attended**

**91% voted YES** to change the Constitution to include a **2nd Indigenous Officer**

## CAMPAIGN WINS



Compulsory **consent training** with pilot to roll out semester 1, 2024



Permanent **sensory friendly** study space

**Free menstrual products** in select bathrooms



**Extended library hours** at peak study period

Student access to hazard and psychosocial **risk reporting** platform

## RUSU INFO COUNTERS

In person advice and information provided to students across all campuses.



**15** student volunteers at RUSU Info Counter



**3,180** students supported through the service account



**260** bookings administered for RUSU Spaces

## STUDENT RIGHTS

**5** RUSU Student Rights Officers provided free and confidential advice, independent of RMIT.

**NEW** student rights cases supported **537**

RUSU Student Rights volunteers attended

**33** hearings

RUSU Student Liaison Officers supported

**1,842** students

## COMPASS



**3** Compass Drop in Centres open



**2** Compass Coordinator staff employed

**7,200+** STUDENTS REACHED

via **Compass Welfare Drop In Centre, Compass Cupboard and welfare outreach events**

**4,040**

students accessed Compass drop-in services (remote and on campus)

**2,518**

Compass Cupboard specific drop-ins

**3,000+**

students reached through Compass outreach events (Uni Mental Health Day, Stress Less Week, R U OK)

# RUSU HIGHLIGHTS 2023

RUSU ACHIEVEMENTS 2023

## Clubs & Societies

**79**  
**AFFILIATED CLUBS**



**4** Newly affiliated clubs

- RMIT Taiwanese Association
- RMIT Tamil Club
- Drawn In
- Roleplay & Tabletop Strategists

### CLUBS

**49** Academic  
**16** Cultural  
**6** Social  
**5** Political  
**3** Spiritual

### CLUB GRANTS

**216**  
specific grants  
awarded totalling

**\$103,014**

### CLUB MEMBERSHIP



**9,892** RUSU club members



**97.1%** RUSU club members are RMIT students

## Volunteers



**183** RUSU STUDENT VOLUNTEERS  
new and returning



**2,611** hours  
completed by volunteers

### VOLUNTEER AREAS

Compass, Realfoods Café, Events, Info Counters, Free Breakfast, Student Rights Hearings

### TRAINING ATTENDEES

**144** students  
attended accredited trainings



**74**  
Food Safety Handling



**52**  
Responsible Service of Alcohol

### STUDENT CASUALS

**14** trained and employed RUSU / Realfoods student casuals

**18**  
YMHFA for Compass

**32**  
RUSU Student Hearing Training

# RUSU HIGHLIGHTS 2023

RUSU ACHIEVEMENTS 2023

## Communication & Media

# 5,140

## RUSU 2023

### FINANCIAL MEMBERS

48% International / 52% Local

### SOCIALS

**25,630** Facebook Followers

**8,695** Instagram Followers

### NEWSLETTER

 **4,893** Subscribers

**91** Newsletters Sent

# 12

 MEMBER-ONLY  
COMPETITIONS

# 1

Membership Major Prize  
(Nintendo Switch)



# 168

Movie tickets given  
away to 11 films

### CATALYST MAGAZINE

# 4

 CATALYST  
EDITIONS 

**Editions:** Pleasure,  
Afterlife, Controversy,  
Down the Rabbit Hole

# 2

 printed

# 2

 online  
only

# 3

elected student  
editors



# 8

sub  
editors



# 3

podcast  
hosts

+ a diverse team of student contributors

### RMITV

# 679

 RMITV  
MEMBERS

Volunteers across the year  
on 'in-person' productions

# 245



**10,600** Website Visitors

**1,964** Instagram Followers

### PRODUCTIONS

- In Pit Lane
- Wait... We're Live?! Season 2
- The Cutting Room: Talking Back
- Five Foot Step

# 4

Training  
workshops

# 106

reviews

# 22

in-review writers



# 2023 RUSU GOVERNANCE UPDATE

2023 was a challenging year for RUSU. After more than a decade of increased SSAF funding, RUSU experienced a significant cut in the amount of SSAF allocated to us by RMIT for 2023. These budget cuts coincided with a period of higher demand than ever for RUSU services, especially free food, welfare, and well-being based activities.

While we had to say goodbye to a few loved programs (such as the Student Life Awards and International Student Food with Friends) which did not receive SSAF funding grants, RUSU rose to the challenge of 'doing more with less' and delivered for RMIT students. This 2023 Annual Report showcases our accomplishments and activities across all areas of RUSU and all campuses.

## KEY 2023 GOVERNANCE UPDATES

### Referendum & Constitutional Change – RUSU Indigenous Officer

In 2023 the SUC sought to change the RUSU Constitution to create a second elected Indigenous Officer position at RUSU. RUSU held a referendum to change their Constitution to include this role. 91.07% of the 3,884 enrolled RMIT students who voted in the referendum voted yes. A General Meeting of RUSU members was called to formalise the result of the referendum and change the constitution. RMIT agreed to provide additional SSAF funding to RUSU for 2024 to fund the extra position. Minutes of the meeting can be viewed online at [www.rusu.rmit.edu.au/files/Reports/AGM/RUSU\\_GM\\_Minutes\\_2023.pdf](http://www.rusu.rmit.edu.au/files/Reports/AGM/RUSU_GM_Minutes_2023.pdf)

### RUSU Fair Funding – Minimum 30% SSAF Campaign

RUSU is required to negotiate for SSAF funding, both for our core operations (base funding), and for specific programs such as the volunteer program (student priority grant funding). Following the substantial cuts to RUSU's SSAF funding for 2023 (down to 27% of all SSAF), RUSU ran a high profile campaign calling for Fair Funding for RUSU and a minimum 30% SSAF. This campaign was extremely successful with 1,284 students signing the petition in a short time period. This helped RUSU successfully advocate for increased funding for 2024.

### RUSU Annual Elections

RUSU Annual elections were held in hybrid mode in 2023, with online voting (remote and on-campus) and on-campus campaigning. The elections were conducted by OGL Group. Big Pulse was engaged to provide the online voting platform. 4,212 students voted in the RUSU annual election, which was an impressive level of student engagement.

### RUSU Social Media Audit

In 2023 RUSU undertook an audit of all RUSU associated social media sites with a view to reduce our social media footprint, remove redundant sites, and focus our communications on several key RUSU and RUSU departmental sites.

### RUSU OHS Audit & Policy Updates

In the final quarter of 2023, RUSU engaged external consultants, Mazars to undertake an audit of OHS systems at RUSU and to assist RUSU with updating our OHS related policies and procedures.

### Annual General Meeting

RUSU held our second AGM as an incorporated association. This was held in-person and on campus on May 11, 2023. 191 students attended (155 RUSU financial members (with AGM voting rights) and 36 RMIT students (non-voting).

### RUSU Student Union Council – For Students. By Students.

RUSU is governed by a team of 28 annually elected student representatives, who form the RUSU Student Union Council (SUC). Induction and training was provided to the members of the SUC to ensure adequate financial literacy and an understanding of the legal responsibilities as members of the governing council.

The list of student representatives is included in the Financial Audit Report. Monthly Student Union Council Meetings were held in person and online. 13 Student Union Council meetings were held. Records of attendance at SUC meetings is available on the RUSU website at: [www.rusu.rmit.edu.au/suc2023](http://www.rusu.rmit.edu.au/suc2023)

### Australian Charities and Not for Profit Commission (ACNC)

RUSU is registered as a not-for-profit organisation with the ACNC. RUSU is required to report to the ACNC annually. This provides another layer of external accountability for RUSU's operations.

### RUSU and RMIT Deed Agreement

The bulk of RUSU funding is SSAF fees which are provided to RUSU through an Annual Funding Deed Agreement with RMIT. This Deed outlines governance and reporting requirements attached to the funding and RUSU's operations. RUSU complied with all of the requirement of the funding Deed in 2023.

### External Affiliations

RUSU continued to be affiliated to the National Union of Students (NUS) and the Council of Postgraduate Associations (CAPA). These peak student groups played an important role lobbying and advocating for students interests during 2023.

# RUSU FINANCIAL UPDATE

## Your student fees at work @ RUSU

RMIT University charges students an annual Student Services and Amenities Fee (SSAF) in accordance with the government SSAF legislation. This fee is collected by RMIT University to fund student services and amenities of a non-academic nature. Funding is distributed between a range of service areas and providers at the University, including RUSU. After more than a decade of increased SSAF funding, RUSU experienced a significant cut in the amount of SSAF allocated to RUSU by RMIT for 2023 due to the impacts of Covid on student numbers and total SSAF income at RMIT. For 2023, the percentage allocation of SSAF to RUSU was reduced to 27% of the SSAF collected by RMIT.

In 2023 RUSU received a total of **\$3,726,000** in SSAF fees through RMIT. This compares to **\$4,158,570** in SSAF income in 2022.

The 2023 grant from RMIT was received as a lump sum payment in late December 2022 for the 2023 year ahead. This upfront payment enabled RUSU to maximise opportunities to generate additional income through strategic investments. RUSU continued to engage Advisersure as investment advisors to assist with the management of our investments in accordance with the approved RUSU Financial Investment Strategy. RUSU investments performed very well in 2023 and above our budgeted projections for income. This assisted with addressing some of the impact of the cuts to our SSAF funding.

All RUSU SSAF funds were spent on the 19 areas permitted by the SSAF legislation (Allowable Items).

## RUSU Funding & Income 2023

RUSU funding from RMIT (SSAF funds) for 2023 is made up of the following:

Base grant	\$3,448,956
SSAF Student Priority Grants	\$277,044
<b>2023 TOTAL SSAF GRANT</b>	<b>\$3,726,000</b>

### Base Grant (SSAF Funded)

The RUSU base grant covers all of our core operations and most RUSU staffing, student representative and administrative costs. Our base grant in 2023- **\$3,448,956**. All of these base grant funds were spent in 2023 on SSAF allowable items.

### Student Priority Grants (SSAF Funded)

In 2023 RUSU received **\$277,044** in SSAF Committee 'Student Priority' grants, to provide a range of services and events run by students, for students. This compares to **\$927,000** received in 2022. The programs funded by Student Priority Grants were the most significantly impacted by the 2023 budget cuts. For 2023 these grants funded: free lunch programs, Compass Welfare Services (outer campuses), Club grants (special initiative grants) and the RUSU volunteer program.

## RUSU Other Income

Additional sources of RUSU income include; investment income, 2023 RUSU financial memberships, Realfoods Cafe income, event ticket sales and sponsorship. In 2023 RUSU developed a sponsorship package and dedicated time and energy to seeking sponsorship for our programs.

Interest from investments in 2023 was **\$333,812**. This compares to **\$229,551** in 2022.

RUSU developed a focused and professional 'RUSU Partnership Package' for 2023 and actively pursued sponsorship opportunities. We were very successful in obtaining 'in-kind' sponsorship valued at over \$67,000 that we could provide to students (free food, drinks, period underwear, entertainment and events infrastructure).

## Finance Summary 2023

Total Revenue in 2023	\$4,253,369
Total Expenses in 2023	(\$4,188,020)
Surplus	\$65,349
*Other comprehensive income for the year	\$1,076
<b>Total comprehensive income:</b>	<b>\$66,425</b>

\* This figure represents *items that will not be reclassified subsequently to profit or loss* Gain/(Loss) on the revaluation of financial assets at fair value through other comprehensive income

The financial audit for financial year 1 January to 31 December 2023 was conducted by **independent auditors BDO** and will be presented at the Annual General Meeting on 23 May 2024.

## 2023 Financial Position

In 2023 RUSU ran at an operating surplus of **\$65,349**. However, after taking into account profit or losses on investments, the total comprehensive income for RUSU for the financial year was a surplus of **\$66,425**.

**Table 1: RUSU SSAF Grant expenditure on Allowable Items - 1 Jan –31 Dec 2023  
(Base and Student Priority Grants – for Government Acquittal)**

RUSU complied with the terms of our funding deed with RMIT and the SSAF legislation in 2023.

Allowable Item	Item Description	Expenditure 2023
Providing food or drink to students on a campus of the higher education provider;	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>RUSU Realfoods</li> <li>RUSU Free Breakfast Program</li> <li>RUSU Free Lunch (Chill N Grill/Winter Warmers)</li> </ul>	\$193,286
Supporting a sporting or other recreational activity by students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>RUSU events and recreational activities and competitions</li> <li>Activities &amp; Events department including administration, student honorariums, marketing and staff support</li> </ul>	\$425,567
Supporting the administration of a club most of whose members are students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Administration, support and grants for RUSU student clubs.</li> <li>Clubs department including administration, student honorariums, marketing and staff support</li> </ul>	\$385,599
Promoting the health or welfare of students;	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Activities and events from advocacy and welfare departments: Queer, Women’s, Welfare, Indigenous, Disabilities &amp; Carers.</li> <li>Campaigns, events, honorariums, programs, marketing</li> <li>All campuses Compass programs and staff</li> <li>RUSU Welfare on Wheels</li> </ul>	\$433,814
Helping students develop skills for study, by means other than undertaking courses of study in which they are enrolled;	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Induction programs/student representative professional development</li> <li>RUSU Volunteer program</li> <li>RUSU elected representative support and engagement</li> </ul>	\$352,029
Supporting the production and dissemination to students of media whose content is provided by students;	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>RMITV operations, production and training</li> <li>Catalyst magazine (online and print)</li> <li>RUSU Communication student engagement</li> </ul>	\$348,400
Advising on matters arising under the higher education provider’s rules (however described);	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>RUSU risk and financial governance, administration, HR and operations</li> <li>RUSU operations including information counters at all major campuses</li> </ul>	\$759,271
Advocating students’ interests in matters arising under the higher education provider’s rules (however described);	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>RUSU Student information and general enquiries service (in-person and online)</li> <li>Student rights advocacy and case management support</li> <li>Student advocacy campaigns</li> <li>Contribution to University decision-making and student policy development and review</li> <li>RUSU Department activities and campaigns for Education, Vocational Education, Sustainability &amp; Postgraduate</li> </ul>	\$804,178
Giving students information to help them in their orientation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>RUSU Orientation activities and events</li> </ul>	\$23,856
	<b>YTD SSAF Expenditure</b>	<b>\$3,726,000</b>
	<b>2023 SSAF Funds Received</b>	<b>\$3,726,000</b>

**Table 2 - SSAF Student Priority Grants Expenditure Report -  
1 January to 31 December 2023**

Project	2023 Expenditure
RUSU Club Grants (including Orientation Club Grants)	\$32,997
RUSU Compass - Outer Campuses Programs (not staff)	\$26,000
RUSU Free Food, Events, Campus Life (All campuses & including orientation activities)	\$136,593
RUSU Free Breakfasts	\$42,166
RUSU Volunteers	\$39,288
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>\$277,044</b>

**RUSU**  
RMIT UNIVERSITY STUDENT UNION

For students, by students.

[www.rusu.rmit.edu.au](http://www.rusu.rmit.edu.au)