



RMIT UNIVERSITY STUDENT UNION INCORPORATED

2021 Annual Report (A0114140A)

RUSU
RMIT UNIVERSITY STUDENT UNION
FOR STUDENTS. BY STUDENTS.

A MESSAGE FROM THE 2022 RUSU PRESIDENT



Adam Steiner
RUSU President



Sheldon Gait
RUSU General Secretary

Welcome to the 2022 RUSU Incorporated Annual General Meeting (AGM) and the RUSU 2021 Annual Report.

After two years of holding our RUSU Annual General Meetings via Zoom, we are thrilled to be able to hold them on campus and enjoy sharing some food, drinks and conversation with students.

The 2022 Annual General Meeting is a very special one for RUSU. It is our first AGM as RMIT University Student Union Incorporated! While RUSU has been around representing students and bringing the fun to campus for 78 years, we only finally became incorporated in September 2021.

2021 was a frustrating and difficult year as RUSU's elected student reps and many student clubs planned and prepared for events and activities, only to have the plans derailed time and time again by lockdowns and various restrictions. However, when campus was open we certainly made the most of the opportunities to provide student events and our regular free lunch programs. We delivered 30+ social events/parties during semester one, attended by 1000+ students and 2,785 free lunches on campus. We also became very innovative in delivering programs and support to students remotely during lockdowns. Care packages delivered to student homes across Melbourne and our Realfoods free meals (delivered to student housing) were lockdown projects we are especially proud of.

RUSU is a diverse organisation and this annual report showcases the highlights from various departments. What really stood out for me in

reflecting on 2021 was the strength that RUSU has as a representative body and as a powerful voice for students. This was more important than ever, when we were all stuck at home during a global pandemic. RUSU delivered some important campaign wins for students including: No fails on transcripts, 7 day roll-over extensions and the International Student Bursary (10% fee discount).

We also took time in 2021 to reflect on how we could be a better, stronger and more representative organisation. This led to RUSU becoming an incorporated association, approving a new Constitution and creating a new Disabilities & Carers elected office bearer role and department.

RUSU operated at a surplus in 2021. Through agreement with RMIT we have been able to retain any unspent 2021 SSAF grants to provide support for student clubs and campus events in 2022. We are so excited to be back on campus in 2022 and as you will have seen we are putting these funds to great use bringing student life back to RMIT.

Our 2021 accomplishments would not have been possible without our elected student representatives, RUSU staff, student volunteers and RUSU club leaders. On behalf of RUSU I would like to thank them for all of their dedication, support and hard work in 2021.

Adam Steiner

President,
RMIT University Student Union

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 2021

RUSU Events

Semester 1: On campus events
1000+ attendance

30+ Including outdoor cinemas, trivia, members drinks, lawn bowls, games nights, coffee catch ups.
SOCIAL EVENTS

Semester 2:

40+ 
REMOTE EVENTS
approx 1,500 attendees

Including; Online trivia, Queer Dept. Trivia, Movie Watch Party, Queer Department Games Day, Women's Mindful Breakfast, International Food with Friends and Sit & Write Sessions, Festive Boxes

Theme weeks: Pride Week, Be a Better Human, RUSU Indigenous Week, Save your GPA



PRIDE WEEK

300

Queer Department Pride Week Wellness Mail Outs & Wear It Purple Trivia



INDIGENOUS WEEK

100 Indigenous Australia wellness mailout packs, Mabu Mabu meal boxes & cooking class online



INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS

Food With Friends delivered onsite then remotely
12 events
480 attendees

Free Food

9,995

HEALTHY BREAKFAST BAGS
for student housing-
plus approx 1000 free
Realfoods breakfasts



2,785

free lunches served
on campus

4,500

healthy Realfoods
meals delivered to
student housing

1,445

UBEREATS
meal vouchers
issued across
all programs



HOME DELIVERED MEAL & RECIPE BOXES

Compass Marketplace
700

Postgrad Marketplace
120

Mabu Mabu Cook-a-long with Zoom Class
20



941

Compass material support for students:
vouchers or grocery bags

Clubs & Societies

97    **Affiliated Clubs**

9 Newly affiliated clubs

- RMIT University Italian Club
- Mechatronics Student Association
- Entrepreneurship Student Club
- RMIT Data Intelligence Squad
- RMIT Chess Club
- HDR Bundoora Network
- RMIT Bundoora Arabic Club
- Space Science Students Association
- RMIT Croatian Student's Association

231 CLUB GRANTS
TOTALLING
\$115,831 

147
IN PERSON
CLUB
EVENTS



Volunteers

121 RUSU
VOLUNTEERS

61
NEW RECRUITS
IN SEMESTER 2



STUDENT LIFE AWARDS

61 applications

28 student winners

14 categories

TRAINING ATTENDEES



31
FOOD
SAFETY
HANDLING



14
YMHFA
FOR
COMPASS



17
STUDENT
HEARING
TRAINING



31
UPCOMING
RSA
TRAINING

RUSU HIGHLIGHTS 2021

Advocacy, Representation & Welfare

471 HDR Program student engagements in events & outreach

4 Sit & Write Sessions: 104 attendees
120 Recipe boxes delivered
200 Uber Eats vouchers sent



Disabilities & Carers Officer role created

HAVE YOUR SAY DAY ONLINE

50 students registered
Key themes: community and connection, beyond the piece of paper and learning and teaching.



RUSU Student Rights appeal volunteers attended

71 hearings

Student Rights Officers attended
110 hearings to support/represent students

505

NEW student rights cases supported

RUSU REPS SAT ON:

16 university wide / executive level boards / committees

14 regular meetings with executive stakeholders



RUSU
BIG
WINS

International Student Tuition **Fee Bursary** (10% fee discount), 7 day **rollover extensions** and **No Fails** on Transcripts!



NEW CAMPAIGNS WEBSITE LAUNCHED



RUSU ANNUAL ELECTIONS

Held online,
67 candidates ran and **2,223** students voted



RUSU INCORPORATION

500+ students registered for and **331** attended SGM approving RUSU's incorporation and new constitution

RUSU INFO COUNTER REMOTE SERVICES

1,233 students triaged and supported



Student email queries addressed

693 (non-student rights)

581 students

received Compass support & advice (2,330 contacts)

849 students

received Compass material support (vouchers or grocery bags)

4,958 students



reached in Compass outreach events; Stress Less Week, Calm Zone, RUOK? Day, Women's Mindfulness Sessions, Sit & Write Meditations

RUSU HIGHLIGHTS 2021

Communication & Media

2,097

RUSU FINANCIAL MEMBERS

 **60** RUSU Member Newsletters

4,930 Instagram Followers

6,008 Newsletter Subscribers

24,905 Facebook Likes

79,498 Facebook Reach

4 CATALYST EDITIONS



APR • Infinite
JUN • Flicker
SEP • Rise
NOV • Glow



3

ELECTED EDITORS



5

SUB-EDITORS



40

CONTRIBUTORS

2,723 Facebook Likes

6,032 Facebook Reach

211,544 Website Visitors

1,255 Instagram Followers

495 RMITV MEMBERS

2,768 Facebook Likes

8,612 Website Visitors

673 Instagram Followers



RMITV PRODUCTIONS

- Mask Off
- The Leak Season 9
- 1000-2000 viewers (7 episodes)
- The Leak Season 10 (8 episodes)
- Offbeat Season 10 (10 episodes)
- Body & Soul (Animated short film)
- Cock & Bull (Animated short film)
- Uplift Season 2
- Fruit Salad (1 episode)



52 REVIEWS WRITTEN

70

people attended RMITV training, workshops, events

2021 RUSU GOVERNANCE UPDATE

After a summer of relaxed Covid restrictions, RUSU optimistically planned a 2021 which would involve a return to services and events on-campus and active in-person engagement with students. Unfortunately, recurrent Covid outbreaks and periods of lockdown significantly disrupted these plans and 2021 was a mix of in-person, remote and hybrids meetings, services and events.

The 2021 RUSU leadership team worked hard to ensure that RUSU was effectively and transparently governed despite the challenges of Covid lockdowns and the limitations on in-person events and meetings. We drew on the governance and administrative systems that were developed and implemented during the 2020 prolonged lockdowns in Victoria to enable us to function openly and democratically during 2021.

Key examples of this are:

- Student Union Council meetings were held online via Teams during lockdowns.
- Hybrid (in person and online) Student Union Council Meetings were held when in-person meetings were allowed by RMIT and the Victorian Government. This allowed elected SUC members stuck overseas to participate in discussion and decision making remotely.
- The 2021 Annual General meeting was delayed until August 2021 in the hope we would be back on campus and was then held online via Zoom. Active promotion of the event led to 78 students attending the online AGM.
- RUSU annual elections were held online and governed by temporary election regulations. 67 candidates ran in the election and 2,223 students voted. Given the circumstances this was a reasonable level of student engagement.

KEY GOVERNANCE UPDATES

RUSU Incorporation and Student General Meeting

In 2021 RUSU embarked on a significant project to rewrite our constitution and become an incorporated association. This was a large investment of time and money and involved an extensive consultation and communication campaign. This was a core focus for the RUSU leadership team in 2021.

500+ students registered for and 331 students attended the Special General Meeting and voted overwhelmingly to support

RUSU becoming an incorporated association and to adopt the new RMIT University Student Union Incorporated Constitution. The minutes of the meeting are available at: bit.ly/SGM_minutes

The new RUSU Incorporated Constitution is available at: rusu.rmit.edu.au/constitution

New Disabilities & Carers Officer and department created

In 2021 RUSU successfully campaigned for additional funding to enable us to create an elected Disabilities & Carers Officer Bearer role and new RUSU department. This role was overwhelmingly supported at the RUSU SGM and included in the new RUSU Constitution. The first ever Disabilities & Carers Officer commenced in their role on 1 November 2021.

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 has updated our ACNC registration to reflect our new incorporated identity.

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 requirements of the funding Deed in 2021.

RUSU Student Union Council – By Students –For 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. Records of attendance at SUC meetings is available on the RUSU website at rusu.rmit.edu.au/sucattendance2020

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 2021.

RUSU FINANCIAL UPDATE

Your student fees at work @ RUSU

RMIT University charges students an annual Student Services and Amenities Fee (SSAF). 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.

In 2021 RUSU received a total of **\$3,817,235** in SSAF fees through RMIT.

The 2021 grant from RMIT was received as a lump sum payment in late December 2020 for the 2021 year ahead. This upfront payment enabled RUSU to maximise opportunities to generate additional income through strategic investments. RUSU continued to engage Advisers as investment advisors to assist with the management of our investments in accordance with the approved RUSU Financial Investment Strategy.

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

RUSU Funding & Income 2021

RUSU funding from RMIT (SSAF funds) for 2021 is made up of the following:

Base grant	\$3,002,235
SSAF Student Priority Grants	\$815,000
2021 TOTAL SSAF GRANT	\$3,817,235

Base Grant (SSAF Funded)

The RUSU base grant covers all of our core operations and the most RUSU staffing, student representative and administrative costs. Our base grant in 2021 was **\$3,002,235**. We spent \$2,974,837 of this 'base grant'. Therefore, we had an underspend of \$27,398. RMIT has allowed us to retain this funding for 2022 to spend on campus events and free food for students

Student Priority Grants (SSAF Funded)

\$815,000 of the 2021 funding was SSAF Committee 'Student Priority' grants to provide a wide range of services and events run by students, for students (e.g. free food and grocery vouchers, student events, Compass Welfare Services (outer campuses), RUSU volunteer program, and specialist support for vocational education and postgraduate students.) A further \$79,650 was retained from 2020 SSAF grants to fund the RMIT Flagship & Training Program and Strong Student Voices Program in 2021. In summary, in 2021 we received the following Student Priority Grants:

\$815,000 (Student Priority Grants) plus
\$79,650 (2020 carry over, student priority grants).
Total: \$894,650

In 2021 we spent: \$777,123 on these grant areas. Our underspend was \$117,527. RUSU had projected this underspend during the final quarter of 2021 as a result of being unable to deliver many of our on-campus programs and events during the lockdown impacted semester 2. RUSU and RMIT agreed to RUSU retaining the 2021 underspend of \$117,527 to fund a Clubs staff role for the outer campuses and to support club grants in 2022. Strategically this has allowed us to support the return of student clubs and student life in 2022.

RUSU Other Income

Additional sources of RUSU income include: investment income, 2021 RUSU financial memberships, Realfoods Cafe income and event ticket sales.

Finance Summary 2021

Total Revenue in 2021	\$4,050,775
Total Expenses in 2021	(\$3,717,863)
Surplus	\$332,912
Other comprehensive income for the year*	\$2,861
Total comprehensive income/(loss):	\$335,773

* This figure represents the (Loss)/gain on the revaluation of financial assets at fair value through other comprehensive income.

The financial audit for financial year 1 January to 31 December 2021 was conducted by independent auditors BDO and will be presented at the Annual General Meeting on 12 May 2022.

2021 Financial Position

In 2021 RUSU ran at a surplus of **\$335,773**. This surplus was a result of the impacts of Covid 19 on how RUSU was able to deliver its programs and events with the frequent lockdowns and constant shifting between on-campus, hybrid, remote delivery models. RUSU's investments also performed better than expected.

**Table 1: RUSU SSAF Grant expenditure on Allowable Items, 1 Jan –31 Dec 2021
(Base and Competitive Grants – for Government Acquittal)**

Allowable Item	Item Description	Expenditure YTD
Promoting the health or welfare of students;	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Activities and events from advocacy and welfare departments: Queer, Women's, Postgraduate, Environment, Welfare, Education, Indigenous Campaigns, events, honorariums, programs, marketing All campuses Compass programs and staff 	\$441,112
Helping meet the specific needs of overseas students relating to their welfare, accommodation and employment;	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Activities and events from International Department & International Support SSAF grant 	\$30,425
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"> Induction programs/student representative professional development Volunteer program Student Engagement Officer Student Union Council elections Secretariat honorariums SSCC Grant Student Life Awards 	\$436,765
Supporting the production and dissemination to students of media whose content is provided by students;	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> RMITV operations, honorariums, special projects, productions, training, website RMIT Flagship Program (SSAF grant) Catalyst magazine operations, student honorariums, publication Communications/graphic design staff 	\$305,730
Providing food or drink to students on a campus of the higher education provider;	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Campus-specific events and marketing (all campuses) Healthy Breakfast SSAF grant Realfoods including remote program, cooking videos etc 	\$277,789
Supporting a sporting or other recreational activity by students;	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> RUSU events (on campus and online) and recreational activities and competitions Activities & Events department including administration, student honorariums, marketing and staff support 	\$266,007
Supporting the administration of a club most of whose members are students;	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Administration, grants, equipment and support to student run clubs and societies Clubs & Societies staff and other support 	\$347,337
Advising on matters arising under the higher education provider's rules (however described);	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Administration and support staff members: Administration, Governance, Human Resources and Finance 5 x information counter staff and operations (remote email/phone service during lockdown) 	\$936,480
Advocating students' interests in matters arising under the higher education provider's rules (however described);	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Student Rights Officers Student advocacy materials, campaigns, research and training for staff and student representatives on committees 	\$710,315
	YTD SSAF Expenditure	\$3,751,960
	2021 SSAF Funds Received	\$3,896,885*
	Amount of grant remaining	\$144,925**

Note:

* The actual amount of SSAF funding received in 2021 was \$3,817,235. A further \$79,650 was retained from 2020 to fund the RMIT Flagship & Training Program and Strong Student Voices Program in 2021.

** Of the \$144,925 underspend in 2021, \$117,527 is SSAF Priority grants Underspend (and was an anticipated underspend) and \$27,398 is an underspend of the base grant. RMIT agreed to RUSU retaining this funding for 2022 to use to support RUSU Club activities and campus free food and social activities.

**Table 2: 2021 SSAF Student Priorities Grant Financial Report
1 Jan –31 Dec 2021**

Program Title	Expenditure
RUSU Volunteer Program (includes training)	\$185,839
RMITV flagship production and RMITV training	\$48,055
RUSU International Student Support	\$13,179
Bundoora East Student Rights, Info Counter & Campus Boost	\$23,932
RUSU Free Healthy Breakfasts	\$57,055
Postgrad Support Program (inc SRO)	\$46,131
RUSU Campus Life / Free Food & events (all campuses & orientation)	\$131,692
Compass Bundoora & Brunswick	\$165,589
RUSU Clubs Grants (SPEG grants)	\$65,031
RUSU Student Voices (SSCC Support & Student Life Awards)	\$40,620
TOTAL	\$777,123
Total SSAF Student Priorities Funding 2021*	\$894,650
UNDERSPEND: \$117,527**	

Notes:

* This includes the \$79,650 in SSAF funding which was retained from 2020 to fund the RMIT Flagship & Training Program and Strong Student Voices Program in 2021.

** This underspend was due to the impact of COVID lockdowns on our ability to deliver in person events and services especially during semester 2, 2021.

RUSU and RMIT have agreed to RUSU retaining the 2021 underspend of \$117,527 to fund a Clubs staff role for the outer campuses and to support club grants in 2022

RUSU

RMIT UNIVERSITY STUDENT UNION

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