

AUSA SEMESTER ONE REPORT 2015

SUMMARY

This report provides information on AUSA's activities during Semester One 2015. It focusses primarily on the areas of Representation, Advocacy and Welfare, as per the 2012 Deed of Settlement between AUSA and the University of Auckland.

REPRESENTATION, ADVOCACY, AND WELFARE OVERVIEW

- 1037 class representatives elected, trained and supported
- 534 students helped by the Student Advice Hub
- 181 students granted material welfare support (and many more accessing advice, guidance, support and information through the Welfare Office, Student Advice Hub, Queer Rights Officer and Women's Rights Officers)
- Two safe spaces maintained by students for students (Womenspace and Queerspace), as well as four common spaces for students to spend time
- Semester One 2015 saw significant growth in AUSA's core services of Advocacy and Welfare, and the Class Representative system continue to prosper.

We continue to see notable increases in the number of students seeking out Advocacy and Welfare support, apparently both due to better awareness amongst students of our services, and to an increase in the number of students under stress. This trend has been reflected over several years. The services continue to grow, with a wider range of welfare services on offer (such as the childcare grant, new this semester), and a larger number of volunteers working in the Student Advice Hub. However, both services will require increased investment if they continue to face such significant increases in demand.

REPRESENTATION

CLASS REPRESENTATION

Overview

The Class Representative system continues to function well, with a high rate of class representatives across the University, and high uptake of training and support. The programme is coordinated by an AUSA staff member, who provides student class representatives with training and support throughout the semester. At the end of the semester high performing class representatives are rewarded. She also provides support and resources for staff members, both administrative and academic, to ensure elections and the system runs smoothly.

This semester 1037 class representatives were elected, compared to 1128 in Semester One 2015. A large part of the drop is due to a decrease in the number of class reps from the Faculty of Education and Social Work. Steps have been taken by

both AUSA and the Faculty to solve this issue, and we expect to see improvement in these numbers in the second semester this year.

Number of Class Representatives

Faculty	S1, 2013	S1, 2014	S1, 2015
Business School	218	206	209
Faculty of Arts	398	440	378
Faculty of Education (Liberal Arts)	N/A	N/A	15
Faculty of Education and Social Work	27	63	4
Faculty of Engineering	0	2	25
Faculty of Law	29	49	35
Faculty of Medical & Health Sciences	87	82	68
Faculty of Science	182	217	252
National Institute of Creative Arts and Industries	61	69	51
Total	1002	1128	1037

Note: total of individual class reps was 934

Key Activities

As ever, key activities in the area of class representation include ongoing support and communication with class representatives. This includes circulating regular newsletters to class representatives, and responding to their enquiries.

There has also been increased support for new department contacts. The department coordinator guide has been updated. Course coordinator guidelines online continue to be updated to ensure GSAs are better supported by AUSA. These will be updated in time for Semester Two.

Class Representative Enquiries

Class Rep Enquiries	Number
Summer School CR certificates	24
Department enquiries	35
Class rep training enquiries	41
Rate my Course enquiries	11
Advocacy related enquiries – Problem with Lecturer	2
Advocacy related enquiries – Problem with Exam (referred to SAH)	1
Advocacy related enquiries – Problem with class rep responsibilities	1
Total	114

Training

Training for all class representatives was available at the beginning of semester as usual, to inform class representatives of expectations and useful contacts and policies. This was provided in Week 3 of Semester One. 57.3% of class representatives

AUSA SEMESTER ONE REPORT 2015

attended training. This is in line with a general trend of increasing attendance, up from 53.9% in Semester One 2014 (although in line with attendance in Semester 2 2014 (58%)).

An additional one-off training session was held for Graduate School of Management representatives following requests.

Faculty	Number
Business School – Graduate School of Management (one off training)	13
Business School	125
Faculty of Arts	197
Faculty of Education and Social Work	2
Faculty of Engineering	16
Faculty of Law	19
Faculty of Medical and Health Sciences	15
Faculty of Science	128
NICAI	20
Total	535

Awards

Semester One class representatives who have performed well are eligible for awards recognising their contribution. These awards are given out annually, and there will be a call for nominations towards the end of Semester Two.

Challenges

There were a few difficulties this semester primarily due to the new administrative structure in departments. Most of these problems seem to be teething problems (GSAs not knowing exactly what their class rep duties entail and AUSA not initially knowing about the changes) but once these problems are resolved, the new structure should make it easier for AUSA to liaise with departments.

One major issue has been in engagement with the Faculty of Education and Social Work. Most of the Faculty of Education and Social Work departments/school/programmes did not elect class reps this semester. AUSA has been in contact with the Faculty to discuss the issue, the Faculty's obligations under the University's Class Representation Policy, and ways to resolve the problem. Following discussion, four representatives from the School of Counselling, Human Services and Social Work were elected. This is an improvement although still well below expectations. Communication is ongoing and the Faculty have been working on this problem and should have their new class representative structure in place for Semester Two. We are pleased with the steps taken recently and look forward to a better result next semester.

We continue to aim for class representatives across all classes, but as always this is a challenge! However, there are no other trending difficulties in the class representation area.

Updates

Last year AUSA reported difficulties liaising with the Faculty of Engineering. This year engagement with the Faculty of Engineer-

ing has improved, and the number of class representatives from the Faculty has significantly increased from last year.

STUDENT REPRESENTATIVES

Committee Representation

AUSA continues to provide student representatives through appointment or election of students to University committees and bodies, including:

- Senate
- Education Committee
- Teaching and Learning Quality Committee
- Library Committee
- Equity Committee
- International Committee
- Schools Liaison Committee
- Academic Programmes Committee
- Human Ethics Committee
- Discipline Committee
- Student Consultative Group

Ongoing University and Student Relationships

As usual, we have kept up ongoing relationships with key staff members across faculties and service divisions. This has allowed us to give ongoing feedback across the year as we are made aware of issues through students who approach us with issues, through trends recognised through the Student Advice Hub, and through the experiences of the student executive. Consequently we have raised issues outside the committee setting with staff from the Faculty of Arts, the Business School, the Faculty of Education, the Equity Office, the Examinations Office, Health and Counselling, Campus Life, The Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic)'s Office, the Vice-Chancellor and the Director of Administration, among many others.

Currently we are working on a number of issues with staff members of the University, including around support for student parents with the Equity Office. We are also in discussions with staff from several different areas of the University around "blind" marking.

We also consult with students through surveys, social media engagement, student fora and face-to-face interaction, and email contact throughout the year. One example is our use of surveying to gauge student views on the changes to Council composition. A report was prepared from these responses and submitted to the University of Auckland Council regarding student views on the issue.

We also endeavour to represent student issues on a national

level. We have had personal meetings between AUSA Officers with representatives from several political parties so far this year to discuss issues ranging from voluntary student membership, to student debt, to council changes. Our engagement with NZUSA provides support and training to allow us to represent students on a national level. Furthermore, our membership of NZUSA supports the range of valuable advocacy that this organisation provides. In the past year, NZUSA has organised several workshops and summits that have promoted best practice in a range of areas in the tertiary sector, advocated for students in meetings with representatives of all major political parties, and continued to build relationships with key institutions in the sector. One such partnership - with Studylink - has been particularly successful, and as a result Studylink has significantly increased the quality and reliability of its service. Some valuable legislative changes to improve support for student parents transitioning between study and the welfare system also appear to be related to NZUSA's activity in this area.

AUSA has also made efforts to support clubs and other student groups with lobbying throughout the year. Recently we have been involved with both the New Zealand Medical Students' Association's campaign around removing the 7 EFTS cap for medical students, and have helped provide support or advice to clubs (such as the Cycling Club and Fossil Free UoA) to support their local or national efforts.

AUSA Executive

The elected AUSA Executive provides an invaluable way to engage with a wide range of students. Those elected onto the Executive have relationships with different clubs, faculties and groups of students across the University. This allows us to quickly access diverse feedback on relevant issues, and to disseminate information to different groups where required. We are constantly working on ways to ensure the Executive remains relevant and representative. To this end we worked to promote the by-elections for Treasurer and Women's Rights Officer in Semester One, and will do so again at the beginning of Semester Two for the upcoming elections. We are also proposing changes to the Executive to an upcoming Special General Meeting to consolidate some positions (National Affairs Officer and International Affairs Officer), remove others (Sports Officer), and change the eligibility criteria of others (International Students' Officer).

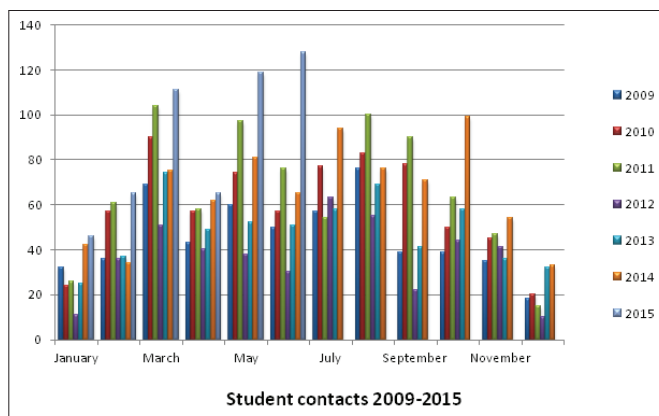
ADVOCACY - THE STUDENT ADVICE HUB

OVERVIEW

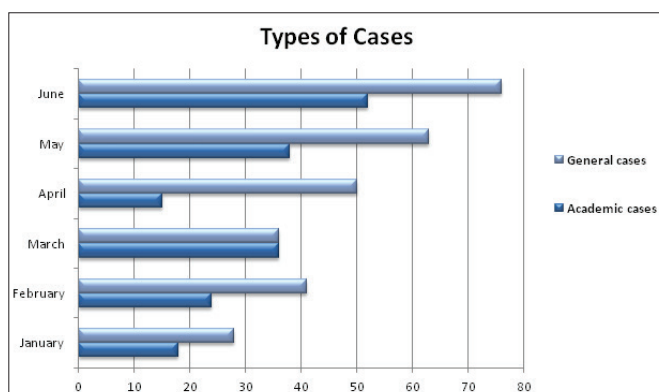
The Auckland University Students' Association runs the Student Advice Hub which provides a confidential service for students to seek advice about any issue they may face during their time at the University of Auckland. The Hub covers various different kinds of disputes, but the focus is always on guidance to those students who have a conflict within the University.

The Student Advice Hub is run by Denise Lazelle, alongside two Senior Advocates Allannah Colley and Michael Wah. They are supported by a strong team of 20 student advocates, who are volunteer law students trained in advocacy. During Semester One, the Hub has dealt with a wide range of topics. Advice and guidance has been given on academic issues including academic disputes, academic dishonesty, discrimination, grade appeals, student conduct, scholarships, tuition and fees, and on general issues such as employment rights, benefits, debts and funding, housing problems and academic integrity.

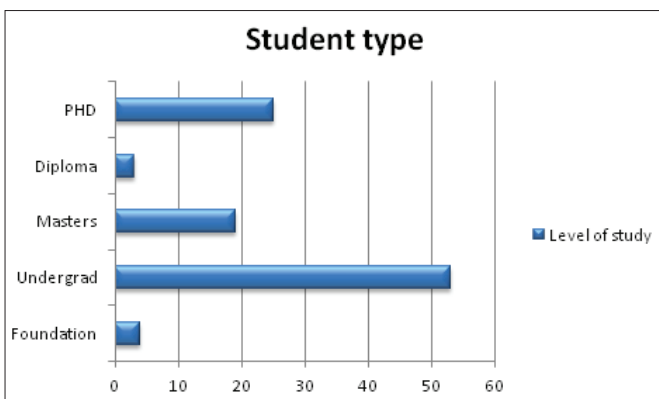
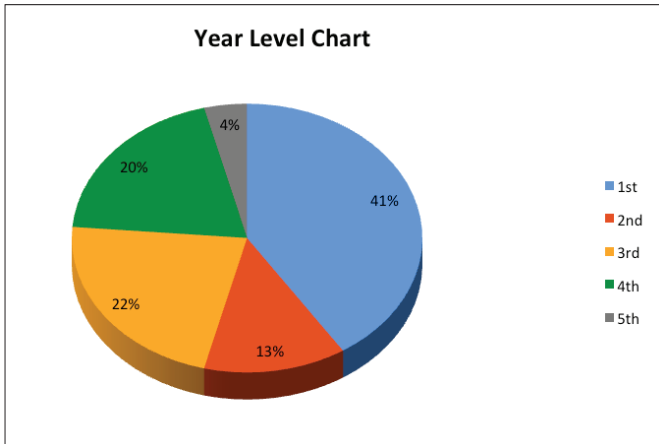
DEMOGRAPHICS



This semester the Hub has dealt with 534 cases, a 188% increase compared to the same period in 2014. There has also been an increase in the cases each month compared to 2014.



The majority of cases dealt with relate to academic issues rather than general issues. However, general issues and enquiries make up a significant proportion of the service.



A large proportion (41%) of the students who visit the Hub are first years, but a significant number of students are studying at postgraduate level. Often such students raise more complex academic issues.

MARKETING AND AWARENESS

The rebrand of the Student Advice Hub to a simpler, more easily understandable name and design appears to have been a contributing factor to the increase in caseload and student use. This year the Hub has increased its Facebook presence, continued to increase its presence on campus at events (such as Wellness Day at Law School) and posters, and contacted student groups and faculty associations to ensure students are aware of the Hub's support services.

TRENDS AND CHALLENGES

The Student Advice Hub continues to see students who face challenges beyond the scope of our services, whether financial or stress related. Often students visit the Hub feeling overwhelmed or stressed and unsure where to turn. The Hub refers on to the University's services such as counselling and workshops, but there is clear evidence of ongoing demand for such services, and confusion over how to access support. Mental health awareness continues to be a pressing issue, and students seek more pastoral care than they can find.

At the end of the first semester the Hub has seen a large number of students with issues regarding compassionate consideration or aegrotat applications. While often students have failed

to understand the requirements, many feel that they have not been made sufficiently aware of available options, or have been given misleading or incorrect information by their lecturers. AUSA will continue to follow this up.

The Hub has been working to increase Māori and Pasifika engagement across Semester One. Efforts have been made to engage relevant student associations and groups on campus. Our first Masters of Social Work intern is now working at the Hub, and part of their project is to work on engagement with equity groups.

There is no evidence that ongoing increase in demand is slowing. If this continues, additional resources for the Student Advice Hub will be required if the service is to continue to maintain response times and meet the demand from the university community. The service is heading towards the upper limits of capacity in terms of the number of staff available to meet the number of sessions and referrals. The Hub has continued to increase the number of volunteer advocates over past years (although the places available are still far outstripped by well-qualified applicants from the Law School). We have accordingly increased the number and depth of development sessions throughout the year to upskill the volunteer staff. We have also taken on a student on placement as part of the Masters of Social Work. However, increases in volunteers are not sufficient to deal with increased numbers of complex cases, and require management from more permanent staff members.

WELFARE

INTRODUCTION

AUSA welfare supports students in a range of ways, including the administration of food parcels, monetary grants for emergencies, optometry grants, childcare grants, and textbook grants. These support services have been in high demand this year which reflects the challenges and difficulties that current students face in an environment where state support does not match rising living costs in Auckland City. Financial support for living costs through the Student Loan Scheme has not increased beyond inflation in the last five years, despite median rents rising 23%. This has created a worrying trend in student hardship that means long term strategy in services and funding for the welfare services is crucial. It is a struggle, however, to offer meaningful help to students in need given these circumstances. More funding and support is vital for AUSA to continue to adequately support students.

AUSA provides a crucial safety net for students at the University of Auckland and is always looking at ways vulnerable groups can be supported. This year in particular there has been a greater focus on student parents. In conjunction with a staff giving-circle, AUSA has provided a childcare scholarship for four student parents in need. In addition, a coordinated effort between AUSA and the Equity Office has resulted in ongoing supervision of equity projects in this area.

The welfare office has also expanded its role this year by organ-

AUSA SEMESTER ONE REPORT 2015

ising events and activities in areas of general student welfare. This added dimension has allowed for wider student engagement and support on important issues.

FOOD PARCELS

Students may pick up to three food parcels per semester free of charge. Each food parcel contains cans of food, pasta, cereal, and other dry goods, contingent on available stock. 122 food parcels were collected in Semester One. This represents a 10% increase from Semester One 2014 (110 collected).

This is compared with previous years :

Year	Parcels Collected
2015 Semester One	120
2014 Semester One	110
2013 Semester One	89
2012 Semester One	100
2011	164 (total)
2010	158 (total)
2009	98 (total)
2008	90 (total)

The semester breakdown is not available prior to 2012. Consequently 2008-2011 full year data is provided.

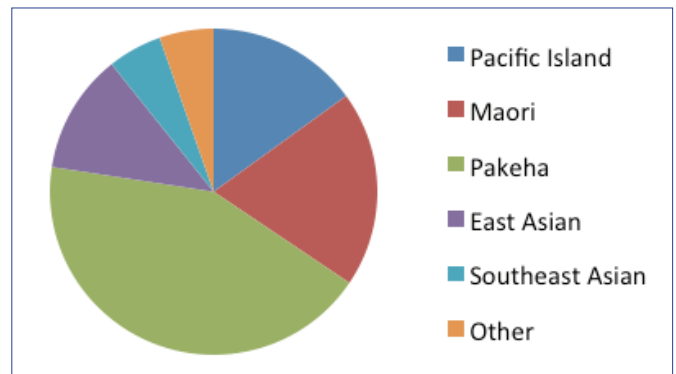
Of note is the strong relationship that has developed with the welfare officer of Epsom Tai Tokerau Students' Association this year which has allowed for increased distribution of parcels to students who study at the Epsom campus. In addition, this year we have recorded the number of "family sized" parcels for student parents. Of the 122 parcels distributed, 17 are large parcels for parents. This reflects the added financial challenges that student parents face during their time at University.

Stocking the food bank has been a difficult task this semester as targeted organisations are strained from similar organisations with similar requests. Therefore stocking the food bank will be a key focus in the upcoming weeks to ensure stock is at an adequate level for Semester Two. A major donor for the last two years, Watties, has indicated it will not provide a donation as it previously has. In addition, due to a restructure, the Campus Christian Movement still provides donations but on a smaller scale. This news raises major concerns for sustainability of relying on donations for the food bank.

We are however very grateful for the organisations that do kindly offer the food bank donations. In addition, we are grateful for a weekly donation of bread and fruit that we use to bolster our food parcels.

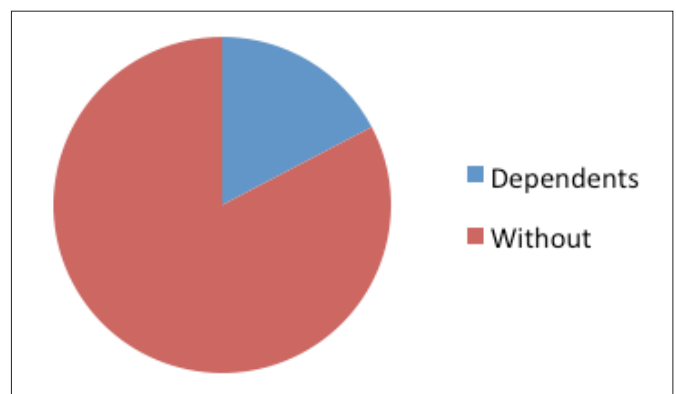
FOODBANK USER TRENDS

Ethnicity



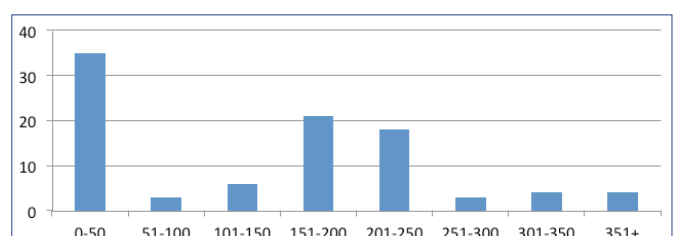
As is consistent with other semesters, a disproportionate number of Māori and Pasifika students access AUSA support service. This year, about a third of those who picked up food parcels self-identified with this category.

Dependents

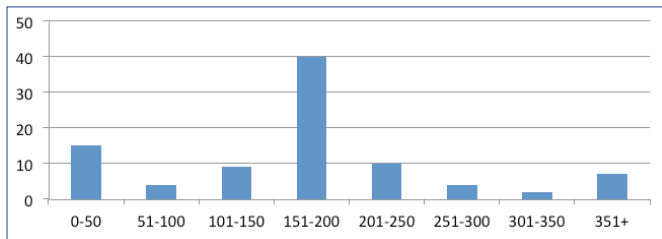


Another disproportionate group that access food parcels are student parents. These students often find it difficult to keep up with the weekly costs for them and their dependents and AUSA has made a concerted effort to provide such students with larger food parcels.

Weekly Income



Weekly Rent



The median student accessing food parcels pays between \$151 and \$200 in rent. This is reasonable, and a typical amount for rent for students a reasonable distance from the city. However compared to the income data it appears that the majority of user's income consists of their rent costs, leaving little for food and other amenities. There are also many users that have higher rent costs than they receive in weekly income which is a concern. It must also be noted that those who have higher income and pay higher rent are often those with dependents.

HARDSHIP GRANTS

Granted	24
Declined	31
Total	55

The 24 successful grants amounted to a total distribution of \$5982 to students in need. This money was distributed by bank deposit (or, in unusual cases cash) in amounts of up to \$250 for general applicants, or up to \$400 for applicants with dependents.

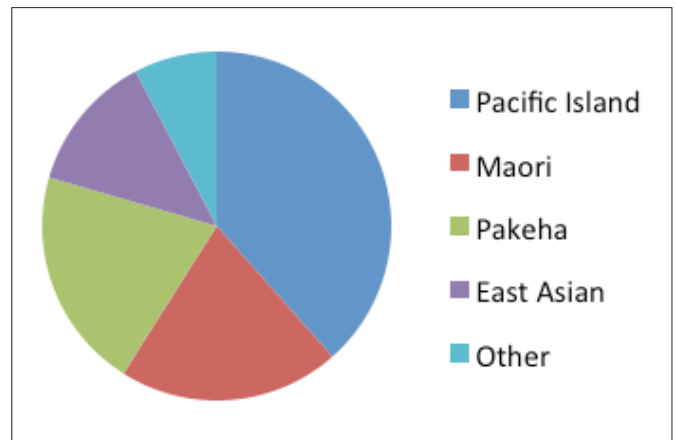
This semester has seen an unexpected increase in hardship grant applications, particularly in comparison to semester one 2014:

- 11 applications received in Semester One 2014
- 19 applications received in Semester One 2013
- 22 applications received in Semester One 2012

This dramatic increase is unexplained as there has been no exceptional promotional push in this area from AUSA outside our usual streams of communication. This is therefore likely to reflect the increasing difficulty of covering costs when living in Auckland; a continuing increase in awareness of our service amongst students; and an increased awareness of our service amongst University of Auckland staff which has resulted in more students being referred to us. Unfortunately this has meant that the standard for an application being accepted by the committee has also increased in order to make the grant affordable and sustainable for AUSA. A focus of the Welfare Vice-President for Semester Two will therefore be fundraising in order to sustain projects such as the hardship grant scheme. Without further funding, AUSA may not be able to satisfy the current demand into the future, let alone a further increase in applications.

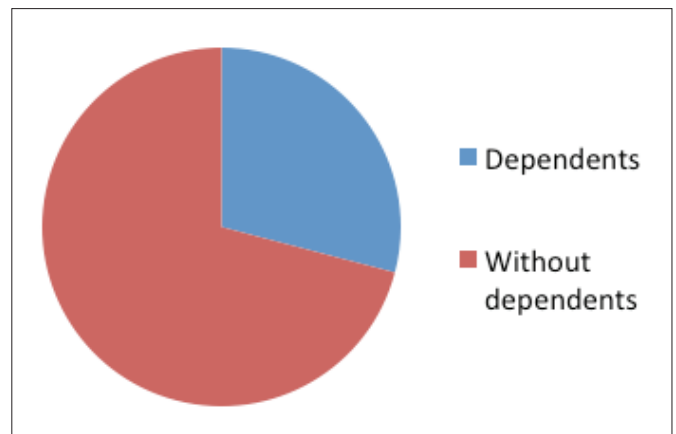
Hardship Grant User Trends

Ethnicity



Over half of those who apply for hardship grants identify as either Pasifika or Māori.

Dependents



TEXTBOOK GRANTS

Granted	26
Declined	40
Total	66

The total available pool of \$2,500 was distributed among the 26 successful applicants.

The number of applications this semester matches the number from the Semester Two 2014. As that semester saw a dramatic increase, this is once again a healthy number of applications for the scheme. It is a huge increase from semester one 2014 which saw 32 applications. This has meant the administration for the grant has had to increase in efficiency to match demand and ensure that applications are finalised by the end of the second week of semester. Three of the total applications for this semester were from the Tai Tokerau Campus which shows the link made with the campus last year has followed through into this year.

CHILDCARE GRANTS

This semester AUSA was excited to be able to run a new childcare scholarship to assist a small number of students with childcare needs. This was done in conjunction with a generous group of University of Auckland Staff who set up a giving circle and allocated \$10,000 to the grant. Despite the short lead-in time for the grant due to the time taken to establish the grant at the beginning of the year, we received 26 applications. A decision was made between the donors and AUSA to support four students with this money. AUSA is extraordinarily grateful for this support from staff and we look forward to testing its potential into the future.

The number of applications received and the degree of hardship reflects an overwhelming need for childcare support for university student parents. Other universities have more robust systems for supporting student parents, such as AUT's child-care subsidy through the Childcare Subsidy Fund.¹ This grants \$50 per week during the academic year to students with children on a first-come, first-served basis. This project would indicate that there is demand and need for such a service on the University of Auckland campus.

CAMPUSPECS OPTOMETRY GRANTS

The Optometry Grants have been a successful addition to our support services since the collaboration with Campuspecs began in 2014. So far this year five applications have been awarded to students. This has contributed to AUSA's welfare focus over the past couple of years: to offer more support beyond the financial grant in order to target specific needs of students. We look forward to continuing this relationship.

PARENTSPACE

AUSA has worked with Campus Life and staff from the Early Childcare Education Centres to ensure the opening of a new Parentspace in Old Choral Hall. The space is regularly used, and almost 50 students have registered for an access card. AUSA has successfully monitored the space throughout the semester and administered access cards to those who have applied. The space is an important step forward in supporting student parents on campus and has been very well-received.

STUDENT WELFARE ACTIVITIES

The intention behind creating of the Welfare Vice-President position was to enhance and broaden AUSA's capacity to improve student welfare. This goes beyond our material support services. To this extent, AUSA ran an inaugural "SHAG Week" (sexual health awareness and guidance). The week offered a range of activities and events that promoted sexual health awareness and education. We worked with a range of outside organisations, and the schedule included Love Your Condom and Family Planning stalls in the quad; a talk about living with HIV/AIDS from Michael Stevens; A "Sex Quiz" in Shadows; free HIV testing; and the distribution of over 300 "Shag Bags"

(goody bags with information pamphlets and freebies regarding sexual health). Overall the week was a success and we look forward to making it even bigger and better next year.

EQUITY

In addition to the above aspects of the welfare role, AUSA is dedicated to increasing its focus on equity issues. This semester, AUSA has taken an active role in contributing to the domestic violence policy to be implemented by the University later this year. In addition, AUSA has approached the Equity Office with concerns regarding student parent support on campus. We have been very appreciative of the response from the Equity Office, and this has resulted in an ongoing project that we look forward to progressing across the year.

STUDENT EQUITY GROUPS

AUSA continues to provide targeted support for female and queer-identifying students through the Queer Rights Officer and the Women's Rights Officer, and their associated spaces. Semester One has featured a range of events for queer students, including the second annual AUSA Pride Week, and a range of events primarily in Queerspace, such as regular movie nights. These are well attended.

Unfortunately AUSA was without Women's Rights Officers for part of Semester One due to a resignation. However, Womenspace was maintained by other executive and staff members during that period with support from the Campus Feminist Collective. New and enthusiastic Women's Rights Officers have since been elected, who held events in Womenspace over the second half of the semester. Planning is well underway for Womensfest and Kate Magazine in Semester Two.

¹ <http://www.aut.ac.nz/study-at-aut/fees-scholarships-and-finance/student-financial-services/childcare-subsidy-for-students>