

**Statement from Patrick Massarani, Undergraduate Student Senate Fellow
2012-2014**

It has been an immense privilege to represent you on Senate these past two years.

Nowhere else does an opportunity exist for a young person to take on responsibility for a multi-billion dollar institution let alone one with as great and rich a history and intricate a tapestry of personalities and pursuits as The University of Sydney.

It is an opportunity for which I shall remain ever grateful.

Whilst I contested the recent election, polling second, I did so without the personal drive and fire I had at the outset of my time on Senate. I am determined that election must be held again. It was - it is - irreparably tainted.

I am equally determined that I will not be a candidate in that further election.

I'm hanging up the gown.

I hope then that you will permit me this short indulgence.

My campaign was fuelled only by a insiders knowledge of the gravity of the issues confronting Senate and a ardent conviction that a capable student was crucial to arriving at the right solutions.

Some may be aware that in the months leading up to the election I actively sought out capable and progressive candidates to run in my stead.

Had such a candidate arisen earlier I would have happily resiled. Then why now?

In the time since the recent election I have watched Annabel Osborn react to and fight against the injustice that it was. She has proved herself to be a principled, rigorous and effective operator.

In Annabel I am convinced that the voices of our 34 000 undergraduates won't be muffled by management or myopic talentless careerism. She is a talented, driven and progressive woman and I commend her to you.

In recent months I have keenly felt the toll of the workload the role creates.

As the lone student representative I have felt it my duty to attend not only full Senate meetings but also every committee and subcommittee meeting that I could. I will not miss the phonebooks of neatly bound papers couriered unrelentingly and their keeping me tucked in the warm bosom of colour-photocopied accounting until well into the early hours.

Nothing has taught me more at University and they are certainly the lessons to which I have paid the greatest attention.

Working with and - I hope - earning the respect of campus activists of all persuasions has been both rewarding and challenging. One of the most valuable aspects of the role is the ex-officio membership of the Student Representative Council.

I have made a point of attending each meeting and giving a detailed report. On five occasions the questions to the report have exceeded an hour and seldom has it been dispatched within half an hour.

To whomever succeeds me I cannot recommend it enough. Front up, know your stuff and be prepared to answer the questions for as long as your constituents can ask them.

I'm often not the most likeable chap but earning the respect of my detractors was among the goals I set myself two years ago. With a stupefyingly dull attention to detail and focused channelling of my inner policy wonk even wonderful friendships have blossomed where one there was salted, toxic political wasteland.

I am resolute in my belief that the recent elections must be held again.

Yesterday Honi reported that the outcome of the election will likely be decided in the Supreme Court. That is an entirely proper course. It is not however one to which I will be a party.

Taking the election outcome to court sounds like rather a bigger deal than it actually is. Unlike your garden variety SRC or USU election Senate elections are statutory elections pursuant to the University of Sydney Act.

Only the Supreme Court has jurisdiction to consider the outcome of the election or in this case the terms on which the election was conducted.

For some context, in 2011 the then Returning Officer and Secretary to Senate issued a series of guidelines for candidates in these elections. Senate subsequently resolves to endorse those guidelines giving them force of law as delegated legislation under the University of Sydney Act.

The guidelines were developed with the specific intention of outlawing practice of mobile polling booths i.e. candidates and their supporters harvesting votes with laptops.

At this election the Returning Officer made a ruling that he would no longer consider such conduct inherently incompatible with the statutes.

Placing the voting machinery in the hands of the candidates is on no reasonable interpretation consistent with the requirements of a secret ballot. It is and must be wholly inconsistent. It is akin to putting Dracula in charge of the blood bank.

For a University brimming with political philosophers and scholars of both democratic theory and praxis to settle anything less than best practice in our governance is to betray the inherent dignity of its academic purpose as an institution.

Even if you don't think we have a responsibility to practice what we preach, the scale of the University is such that it demands rigorous and incorruptible elections

We aren't some backwater bowling club. Our annual revenue of \$1.883billion (2013) puts us at at one and a half times the size of the Australian Broadcasting Corporation at \$1.22billion (and regrettably shrinking #prayforpeppa) and the CSIRO at \$1.246billion and substantially larger than a swathe of sovereign states not to mention the billions upon billions of funds under management, vast land holdings, enviable art collection and priceless heritage buildings and historical artefacts.

The moral and economic force of the University both demand a higher standard of electoral practice than is currently in place.

I will be writing to my colleagues in the days ahead with some overdue suggestions for reform.

The University of Sydney By-law gives the Returning Officer to delegate his authority to a third party. I am convinced now that it is essential that all Senate elections be conducted by Elections New South Wales or the AEC.

Whilst I feel, on balance that voting should remain online - subject to a bulletproof prohibition on 'mobile polling devices' - the University ought provide staffed voting kiosks for the length of the election period which itself ought be halved from an absurd four weeks to two at most.

The cost of postal ballots exceeds a quarter of a million dollars. So long as the Graduate Fellows election is conducted as such exorbitant cost the expenditure of a modest sum to staff a couple of tents for a week or two is inescapably reasonable.

Honi lamented the general lack of interest in these elections some weeks ago - they hit the nail on the head. Without disparaging the largely invaluable work of the USU or the SRC if a small fraction of the effort placed into their elections were diverted to a strongly contested Senate campaign not only would the future of both organisations be more secure but the day-to-day student experience of the University vastly improved. Nota bene comrades.

I will avoid sentimental thanks of my friends, Senate colleagues, vipers and enemies here but endeavour to thank you all personally in the weeks ahead.

I will however note I the deep respect and admiration for the staff of the University Secretariat. They have provided me with nothing but professional, impartial advice and administrative support without which I would hardly have been able to lob as many bombs and furrow as many management brows as I have.

I'm grateful that the opportunity to move on has coincided with great happiness in my personal life and exciting opportunities in my professional life. I will be taking a year in 2015 to graze in new, varied and perhaps greener pastures.

I wish each and every one of you all the best for the future and bid you farewell with the most heartfelt thanks.

Patrick Massarani
Fellow of Senate