

**THARUNKA**

*Tharunka acknowledges  
the traditional custodians  
of this land, the Gadigal  
and Bedegal people of the  
Eora nation, on which our  
university now stands.*

**Jayden Kitchener-Waters, SRC  
Indigenous Officer**

**Yaama Ganuu**

Ngaya Jayden Kitchener-Waters.  
Ngaya Gomeroi Mari Ngemba,  
wallabanay dhawan Tamworth.

The past few months have been extremely emotional, challenging and often tiring for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. The groundswell of support that we've seen across this nation from our non-Indigenous brothers and sisters has been nothing short of inspiring. However, our mob is concerned that this support will only be a short-lived experience. 'Black Lives Matter' is far more than a trend. It's far more than a hashtag and it's far more than a blacked out cover page. 'Black Lives Matter' is about human lives. My life! And if we don't fight on the right side of history, it's likely to be our children's lives as well. This is a fight that we must continue every single day. We can only approach this fight with the same humility, love and unity of our Old People. Winanga-li-ga marran walaaybaa-ga dhuwi ngaarr ganungu. Embrace this change and embrace the fight. I'll see you at the next protest and I'll see you at Yabun.

Yaluu

**006. Australiana - An Open Ended Question**  
*Arleen Wilcox*

**008. Rethinking Class Participation**  
*Nicole Sung*

**012. Skin Colour is Not a Reasonable Suspicion**  
*Damla Dropleta Hatipoglu*

**013. Sticks and Stones and Words**  
*Shajara Khan*

**014. Open Letter: I Don't Participate, I Barely Exist**  
*Anonymous*

**016. COVIDsafe app: Should You Download It?**  
*Juwariya Malik*

**018. Jacinda Ardern Isn't Who You Think She Is**  
*Abhranil Hazra*

**021. How Covid-19 Exacerbated Inequality Amongst Students**  
*Micah Emma Chan*

**023. Bigger Democracy is Better: The Case for Kids**  
*Chris Shaw*

**025. My Son Used to Have a Mother**  
*Daisy Skerritt*

**027. Don't Forget Us**  
*CJ Tulong*

**028. First Fleet**  
*Ava Lagoon-Robinson*

**030. Breathing Parody**  
*Vedanshi Bhalodia*

**034. The Rules of the Game are Four of a Kind**  
*Rosie Bogumil*

**035. Participant H.Zoo**  
*Atia Fatimah*

**037. Writing Challenge Winners**

**038. First Place**

**040. Second Place**

**042. Third Place**

**044. Meet the Illustrators**

**045. SRC President Report**



## DEAR READER,

In this issue, our writers reflect on the power of participation - whether at university, in civic life, or outright critiquing what it means to belong in modern Australia. On one hand, participation is the highest aspiration of a democracy. On the other hand, it seems to carry the connotation of a consolation prize.

Our writers don't shy away from tackling these big questions. These issues take on a new importance in light of the protests against Aboriginal deaths in custody which have justifiably mobilised so many university students in recent weeks. I wholeheartedly defer to our SRC Indigenous Officer, Jayden Kitchener-Waters, for his commentary on this front.

Sometimes we don't realise what's holding us back from fully taking part in the communities around us. Socio-economic inequality and Pierre Bourdieu's idea of cultural capital are among numerous factors that militate against full participation in society. It takes confidence to speak out and make your voice heard, especially when the odds are stacked against you. For that, each and every one of our contributors should be commended.

Thank you for playing a vital part in the UNSW community through your readership of Participation.



**AXEL**  
*Creatives Sub-Editor*

Gothicism arose out of great societal upheaval; social structures, science, and identity were all changing rapidly. The Gothic expressed the tumult held just below the surface, the dark that goes unspoken largely because there are no adequate words for it. Over time, it morphed into a genre that allowed articulation not just of prevailing social concerns or thinly-veiled bigotry, but genuine and open expression of pain, fear, absurdism, forbidden joys, and all that goes unarticulated. Participation's creative works reflect this legacy superbly. Ava Lagoon-Robinson's 'First Fleet' is a heart-wrenching portrayal of the intergenerational violence of colonisation; Vedanshi Bhalodia's 'Breathing Parody' is an exquisite exploration of childhood trauma; Daisy Skerritt's 'My Son Used to Have a Mother' both casually and intimately voices the discord and tragedy of substance dependence; Rosie Bogumil's immensely tender 'The Rules of the Game' flirts with the magical; and Atia Fatimah's 'Participant: H. Zoo' is an all too familiar portrayal of the impact of mandatory standardised testing on a teen psyche.

**JO**  
*Online Sub-Editor*



I have enjoyed working with our Tharunka writers this month to help bring Participation to life. Arleen Wilcox's essay *Australiana: An Open-Ended Question*, is a moving reflection about the exclusionary nature of Australian identity from the perspective of a woman of colour, and serves as an excellent companion piece to Anoushka Anupindi's *Memoirs of an Expat Childhood*, which I edited for our first edition, *Movement*. Meanwhile, Shajara Khan's *Sticks and Stones and Words* offers a thoughtful take on cyberbullying in the age of internet fandom. We have also had some thought-provoking words on the impact of the coronavirus pandemic on students. Micah Emma Chan's *How COVID-19 Exacerbated Inequality Amongst Students* is a crucial bit of political reporting, drawing attention to the financial inequality amongst UNSW students that working from home policies have only made worse. Offering a different perspective is the fierce anonymous contribution: *Open Letter: I Don't Participate, I Barely Exist*, which sheds light on how difficult student life can be for commuters, and argues for the benefits of online, more accessible learning. Our writers don't always agree, but isn't that what makes reading Tharunka so exciting? Enjoy Participation!



**JACK**  
*Features Sub-Editor*

Just when the world couldn't seem to get anymore turned upside down, our contributors for Participation haven't stopped challenging the status quo, questioning our institutions, and asking why. Chris Shaw has penned an essay arguing for bringing the age to vote down a few years. He brings some strong points to the table and it's going to be one of those ideas that flies in the face of everyday convention. Jurwariya Malik gives a startling reminder about the real problems of the COVIDSafe app especially regarding our privacy and personal data, something that's getting more important (and more dangerous) in the digital age. Abhranil Hazra takes the progressive darling Jacinda Ardern to task, questioning her neo-liberal agenda and highlighting some of the major socio-economic problems facing New Zealand. For something closer to home, Nicole Sung asks why we at UNSW can't improve our class participation experience - compared to how they do things at Singaporean universities, the difference is night and day. I want to commend all the contributors for this issue, for persevering through trying times and for maintaining that sharp, critical eye on the world that we've come to expect at Tharunka. And without you, the reader, whose abiding interest in the important issues we rely on, we would not be able to get through this difficult time.

**SAAFIYAH**  
*Graphic Designer*



Welcome to Participation, a collection of quarantined works from all around UNSW. This issue we have some beautiful artworks from both CJ and Damla, who have both beautifully illustrated the current social climate we live in. Its chaotic but 100% necessary and I am so glad these two artists have captured that. As I feel we have all found a common purpose with these recent events,

Damla has illustrated this in her piece *Skin Colour is not a Reasonable Suspicion*. It highlights the sense of desperation and outrage collectively felt by all persons and simultaneously acts as a reminder that we should not stop supporting such a powerful movement. CJ's *Don't Forget Us* reiterates this message but specifically for Australia, where so many believe racism is not alive. The colours chosen for this magazine is inspired by the First Nations of

Australia, where the colour palettes are derived from earth. Then we have Sandra, Aditya and CJ who have brought life to 100 words of creative writing and have quite literally created artistic pieces which tell 100(0) words. I could not have asked for a better illustration because these blew my mind. Hope you also enjoy reading this as much I enjoyed designing it.

# AUSTRALIANA - AN OPEN ENDED QUESTION

*By Arleen Wilcox*

I come home from a friend's birthday dinner and collapse on the couch. Socialising can be exhausting as it is, but the nights when every interaction with a stranger starts with a "So, where are you from?" hit harder. This question might not sound like much of a big deal and it's not like I'm ashamed or too lazy to share the story behind it. But after almost ten years of living in Australia, you learn how this conversation usually goes down. And unsurprisingly, all the good friends I've met here didn't ask me this question the first time we spoke.

I am Australian in every political and legal sense of the word despite not being born here, sharing a native accent or liking Vegemite. I travel with an Australian passport, tick it off as my nationality, and head down to the voting polls every single election. Yet, when people ask me where I'm from I hesitate to give an answer right away. I have become defensive, hostile and grow instantly suspicious of the intentions of whoever asks that question. And I don't like it.

It wasn't always like this, though. The first few years of living here my life revolved around this question. In fact, I would be the one bringing it up despite no one asking or caring. I would find the courage to participate in class discussions after ten minutes of mentally practising what I wanted to say, and immediately begin with a "Well, I am from Mexico so..." In my mind, it was vital that people were aware of this crucial part of my life. It was vital that they understood it, so they could forgive my sloppy English, my strange opinions, and my general presence in the room.

In a way, I secretly hoped this would make me more interesting in their eyes. That after finding out I came from a distant land they would talk to me and we could start a beautiful multicultural friendship, like those pictured in school brochures. Needless to say, this never really happened. I was able to make a handful of friends and acquaintances with a lot of effort and help from year coordinators but for one reason or another, I could never really connect with most of them. I tried joining different groups, different extra-curricular activities, placing emphasis on different aspects of my personality. But the fast-paced Australian accents, the inside jokes that flew over my head, and frankly the cultural differences I hadn't adjusted to yet as a 17-year-old made it nearly impossible to find my social footing.

Many social failures later, I began realising that the attention that came with being from a different country, wasn't exactly the 'multicultural-friendship maker' I was hoping for. Signalling the elephant in the room, made the elephant bigger, not smaller. I started becoming frustrated and resentful of the comments that were said both to my face and behind my back. So, I decided to store my cultural roots away to protect them and instead attempt to embrace 'Australian-ness'. After all, people can't make racially specific comments about your country if they don't know what country you're from.

Having an Australian Citizenship might transform you into an 'Australian' in the eyes of the law but let me tell you, in the battleground of daily life, it doesn't account for much. It's like the real citizenship test is not the one you sit in a migration office but instead, the one you encounter every time someone asks you "How long have you been here?" And the winning factor is to give just the right amount of information, so you appear as one of the 'good migrants' and not an agent of cultural destruction. Because that's exactly what all those conversations feel like, a test.

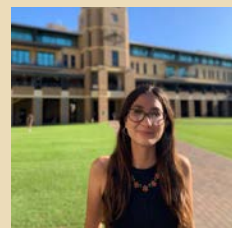
Although to the naked eye they might pass as small talk, there is something behind every question that makes it feel more like a government interrogation than a genuine attempt at friendliness. Now, don't get me wrong, there are plenty of times that these interactions have been sincere and led to great conversations, but after dancing the waltz so many times it is easy to tell who has well-meaning intentions and who doesn't. And anyone that asks, "Why are you here?" before even learning to pronounce your name properly has at best voyeuristic tendencies and at worst a concerning grasp of the concept of migration.

Every act of participation (or lack thereof) in those conversations and society in general, often holds a much bigger weight and symbolic meaning for us migrants. Not just for the amount of emotional work it puts us through, but because of the extra scrutiny layer we are under. We are not given the luxury of 'bad days'. Often being non-confrontational has become part of being a 'nice migrant' and playing our part in the cohesive multiculturalism scheme we hear so much of. It's how many of us have overcompensated to show those born here that we too deserve a space in this country, and that we are not the scary creatures we are made out to be by those who oppose us.

All migrants I have ever spoken with know this feeling very well. No matter where we're from, we all have strategies to deal with these conversations. We share tactics and comeback ideas and laugh together about all the times people have been puzzled at finding out our background and the hilarious comments that always follow. "Ah, is that in like [insert complete wrong region of the world here]?" These tales work as an instant bonding experience capable of overcoming any animosity that ever existed between cultures, classes and sexes. The United Nations literally could never.

Yet no matter how much you genuinely or forcibly try to be nice and assimilate (whatever that might mean) sooner or later you will discover that it's never enough. This unfortunate epiphany came to me last year as I was technically another Australian student on exchange. Although teachers and other students didn't feel the need to dissect my accent and migration history, the story was different when talking to other Australians. It was all a bittersweet reminder that overcompensation is exactly that, trying to catch up to something you'll never quite reach.

If home is where the heart is, mine was divided in different places and sometimes nowhere at all. For many of us, these experiences have shaped us more than we care to admit, but here is me finally admitting it. Sharing made me vulnerable, assimilating made resentful, and not sharing anything at all made me feel lost. How long do you have to live in a place before you can call it home? That's the question I struggle the most with these days. And for the other ones, I'm not sure if they matter. I am more than a birthplace, a citizenship document or a reason for migrating. There are way more interesting questions to be asked, so let's talk about that.



+

Arleen Wilcox is a final year International Studies/Media student, who has transcended nationalism, gender and Scrabble rules. Or so she likes to think. As an emerging journalist, she is passionate about advocacy, foreign affairs and urban planning. Having lived in three continents, she hopes to push that number to five.

# RETHINKING CLASS PARTICIPATION

*Nicole Sung*

When participating in class discussions, some thrive, others don't. Some take it as a chance to banter with the lecturer. Others find it mortifying. According to UNSW, classroom participation is "an assessment strategy to encourage students to participate in class discussion, and to motivate students to do the background reading and preparation for a class session." Wishful thinking. The way we currently do class participation (CP) at UNSW isn't ideal because the classroom environment isn't always conducive to productive discussion. Teaching staff, especially inexperienced ones, are often ill-equipped to navigate the cacophony of ideas thrown about. With class sizes rising, lectures can turn into a disorientating mess of tangential points, with everyone throwing their two cents in just for the sake of satisfying CP requirements, leaving little to no time to actually synthesise what was discussed, let alone get through all the content. All of this compounded by the fact that as of Term 2 2020, classes are conducted entirely online.



You might be familiar with those lovely classmates who seem to think CP is a chance to present a Shakespearean-length monologue about something that could've easily been said in two sentences. Or are you one of those people typing away in awe while that girl in the front row eloquently summarises every reading while demonstrating independent thought? Or for you, perhaps it's another hour of silently rehearsing the start to your sentence ("I might be completely wrong, but..."), before you finally muster the courage to raise your hand, but alas! The lecturer abruptly moves on to the next topic, which you didn't do the readings on.

Let me tell you, it doesn't always have to be this way. During my Exchange to the National University of Singapore (NUS) in 2019, among many profound realisations, I realised just how incredible Singaporean learning environments were. Futuristic, state-of-the-art facilities pumping cool airconditioned air throughout the room while students, sat on chairs with wheels(!) with attached collapsible mini-desks, glided to and fro as we broke off into group work activities... but by far the most remarkable thing about my classes was that despite large class sizes, we were given plentiful opportunities to contribute, our tutor/lecturer striking the perfect balance between letting us air our thoughts, while constantly compelling us to support our opinions with evidence. No waffling or raising your hand for the sake of satisfying CP requirements, despite CP accounting for 25 or 30% of my final grade for every class I took at NUS.

I felt like my participation in the classroom really mattered. I loved when people shared personal stories in the Southeast Asian Politics tutorials, or when we did classroom debates in our International Organisations lecture. I loved when we challenged each other to probe deeper into complex philosophical questions during Modern Western Political Thought. I didn't even mind when my lecturer thought I was from New Zealand for the entire semester, continually asking me for my personal opinions from a Kiwi perspective. In every class I took in Singapore, CP was engaging, interesting, and dare I say: fun! I didn't want to miss out on the discussion, so I did all my readings in quite some detail (admittedly, I probably overdid it, given that I only had to pass my courses on Exchange). Maybe my classmates were especially polite, but I also noticed that the discussions always remained respectful, despite differences of opinion. Speaking over someone else? Unheard of.

Put simply, CP was done right. What has stuck with me the longest, and something I think about even a year on from my Exchange, is that perhaps for the first time, I felt like my contributions actually mattered. That sounds incredibly dramatic, so let me backtrack a little. Being

Asian, I think I blended in pretty well in the lecture halls. Wearing the iconic Singaporean campus outfit – a t-shirt, paired with shorts and flip flops, with my water bottle at the ready, topped off with a perennially glistening complexion due to the humidity – you could practically call me a local. But when I first raised my hand to answer the lecturer's open question, everyone's heads turned to me, trying to figure out the origins of my so-called accent. Despite this initial awkwardness, I experienced a steadily increasing sense of courage to raise my hand and participate in class discussions. I should say it's not that I suddenly felt like I had a lot of important things to say – it was rather that the learning environment was so conducive to interesting, insightful conversations – both in small groups, as well as more structured discussions so hats off to my classmates, my teachers and the Singaporean culture where they take education very seriously.

Now that I'm back at UNSW (more accurately, back in the comfort of my bedroom logging onto Blackboard Collaborate lectures), to my teachers, classmates, and myself (since I need to hear it again myself), let me say this: CP matters a lot.

I can see the eyerolls coming. What's the big deal? Who cares about CP anyway? We get it, you went on Exchange.

Participation in class matters for a number of reasons. It matters to me, and it should matter to our teachers, and for those who have no issues speaking up as well as those perennially on mute.

Of course, participating in class compels students to really engage with academic material, since, to participate well, you have to understand what you're talking about. This requires a lot more critical thinking compared to a quick skim of the readings five minutes before class. I also learnt that CP matters because it's a great way to practise presenting your ideas in front of others in a concise and articulate way. Maybe that's why I was so hesitant to speak up during the early semesters of my degree – I was scared of the possibility of my mind blanking mid-sentence. But the more you do it, the better you get at it, and gosh, would I be glad to be able to speak up articulately and confidently when it comes to matters of much greater importance in life.

And that's the same with listening to others, which I think is an equally important aspect of CP, though sadly often overlooked. It shouldn't take an unfamiliar accent for us to become active listeners towards our classmates. And learning to disagree with others eloquently yet politely is another reason why CP really matters.

If the classroom is a microcosm for the big bad world, it matters that we practise participating not only as vocal contributors, but also as receptive listeners and respectful dissenters. I'm sure we have all witnessed inklings of unfair power structures, dominating personalities, and perhaps even outright favouritism in one class or another, and to think that these hierarchies will likely transfer across to all sorts of real-life situations (say, from informal social settings to major boardroom decision-making processes), is reason enough to start radically rethinking the way we do CP at UNSW.

***Let me make some small, concrete suggestions that we could implement immediately:***

**01.** Teaching staff should proactively call for people who have not previously had a chance to speak during class: either by picking directly from the roll (though that does seem a bit like primary school), or perhaps, simply saying, 'Thanks Bobby, I might hear from someone else since you've already spoken.' I've heard this used quite skilfully this term, and it's been refreshingly splendid when teachers mediate the class discussion, enabling a fairer and more varied discussion.

**02.** Alternative activities for CP can be useful, especially if they are reserved for students who have not yet had the chance to contribute significantly to class discussions eg. assigning specific topics to particular students, so they're able to lead discussion before other students jump in and whisk the conversation away.

**03.** As students, let's be proactive in supporting others. Many students, including those with English as their second language, may find it difficult to articulate their thoughts, causing them to opt out of CP. But small group settings are a great way to proactively initiate discussions with those who rarely speak out. It can be as simple as encouraging them to report back to the class on the discussion points, rather than someone else (or yourself).

**04.** Do your readings! Yes, you! That means you can form your own opinions and share them with the class, contributing to the discussion. Trust me, your voice will be music to my ears in contrast to hearing the same four people on repeat. Since we're all in this together, let's all do the readings (procrastination, be gone), engage with the material, jotting down a few of our own thoughts and questions before class.



+

Nicole is currently in her fourth year of a Law/ Arts degree, majoring in Politics and IR. Outside of uni you can find her dreaming about future travel plans and/or trying to finish reading the ten books she has started since the start of quarantine.

If we want to contribute meaningfully to our communities and be able to speak out in the public sphere when we know something's wrong in the workplace, in our home, on the streets (and who doesn't want that?), we need to implement some changes to the format, marking and attitudes towards participation in class. Because it should never be a meaningless exercise of 'getting your CP in'.

The skill of listening to others, interacting with their ideas, and being able to reflect on our own ingrained assumptions before responding respectfully and productively – all honed through CP – that's surely of lifelong importance.



# STICKS AND STONES AND WORDS

*Shajara Khan*



Shajara is a Master of International Relations student and a Bachelor of Arts (Korean Studies) graduate. She spends most of her time keeping up with global events, especially the happenings in the Asia-Pacific region. When's she not doing that, you can find her playing Stardew Valley (with mods).

The internet has grown over the past thirty years from a network of digital information limited to certain users to the backbone of our society. Within the internet, the rise of social media has reshaped the way in which we communicate and form relationships.

However, social media has blurred the lines between those who have influence and those who don't. This is a phenomenon known as 'parasocial relationships', wherein individuals form relationships with those who cannot directly reciprocate, or have any knowledge that this relationship exists. In the current cultural landscape, parasocial relationships mainly reference celebrities and social media.

Sometimes these relationships result in individuals forming one-sided friendships, or romantic ties. Sometimes, people conflate the relationship they have formed into one where they feel comfortable enough to give advice, or to abandon their filter and hurl abuse at their target, simply because the barrier between celebrity and non-celebrity has been broken down to create a false sense of safety to send anonymous hate.

The death of professional wrestler and 'Terrace House' cast member, Hana Kimura has reignited the discussion regarding the prevalence of cyberbullying. Kimura, 22, is just one example of a trend where celebrities are bombarded with degrading comments on a daily basis. Such comments include allusions to her skin colour and a 'gorilla', her lack of femininity according to Japanese standards of beauty, and an outright escalation to death threats.

In February of this year, British presenter Caroline Flack passed away after years of tabloid gossip about her adult relationship with Harry Styles (who was seventeen at the time), and speculation surrounding a separate court case where she was the victim of assault.

In November 2019, K-pop soloist and former member of KARA, Goo Hara ended her life after a video of her and her ex-boyfriend was uploaded online to be viewed by millions with internet access. The video, which depicts sexual activity between the two was secretly recorded by the ex-boyfriend, who showed no remorse when he was charged with assault and blackmail in August 2019.

In October 2019, Hara's friend and fellow K-pop soloist and former member of f(x), Sulli was driven to suicide after years of harassment for her unconventional style and flouting cultural norms set by Korean conservatism. At one point, Sulli was a co-host for a TV show in Korea called 'Night of Hate Comments', where each episode, celebrities would be invited on to discuss the hate comments they had received over the years.

While these four women are notable cases where online harassment has had devastating consequences, they are not isolated cases. Over the years, there has been an exponential increase in cases of targeted cyberbullying towards individuals.

A study was conducted by the National Institute of Health (NIH) in 2012 that investigated the correlation between social media and suicide. The study outlined that prolonged exposure to cyberbullying led to twice as many attempted suicides in the U.S. among adolescents in comparison to adolescents who did not have prolonged exposure.

A more recent study conducted by Comparitech, using data collected by the Pew Research Centre, found that 59 percent of all teenagers surveyed reported to be the victim of cyberbullying, with the most common form of cyberbullying to be name-calling.

Similarly, a corpus from the University of Maryland (2017) analysed 35,000 tweets and found that 15 percent of the tweets scanned for hateful speech were flagged as harassment.

These statistics, when examined together, paint a picture of online harassment becoming increasingly prevalent day by day, with the consequences growing more extreme, yet more common. Cyberbullying is the new price we seem to pay to be known online now.

So, what exactly are the legal ramifications?

The current law in NSW dictates that cyberbullying is treated as either a 'stalking' or 'intimidation' offence, with the maximum penalty carrying a five-year jail sentence. This was increased from three years after the suicide of 14-year old Amy "Dolly" Everett due to constant online harassment.

But this requires the victim to have enough of a support system to declare that they are facing harassment and it is beyond their control.

It also requires the perpetrator to recognise that their actions caused tangible harm to their target. But that is too easy to forget when your profile picture isn't you, you use a pseudonym, when you disguise your online persona to be nothing like your offline persona.

The concept of holding yourself accountable for actions that you don't perceive as particularly harmful to others is difficult to manage. The education around preventing online harassment is still rudimentary and needs several more drafts before we can establish a good methodology to combat it.

But there are still great strides forward being made to amplify the conversation around the accountability of online harassment. One famous example being Billie Eilish, who released a video calling out the people who criticised her for the decisions in her life that offended them, such as wearing baggy clothing, sexualised lyrics in her songs, to not smiling enough for her audience. The video, which has garnered over 20 million views in two weeks, reflects on the harassment she has received as she grows up within the court of public opinion.

There's that old saying: "Sticks and stones may break my bones, but words will never hurt me." It's what our parents taught us, and their parents taught them. It's the reason why people use words without considering the baggage they come with.

I think we need to propose a new saying: Words hurt, not in the way sticks and stones do, but they do hurt.



# OPEN LETTER: I DON'T PARTICIPATE, I BARELY EXIST

*Anonymous*

Dear everyone drinking the UNSW Kool-Aid,

I'm a dual degree student in their 5th year living at least 2 hours from UNSW.

Commuting isn't a 'hassle' for me. It's a way of life. My life is so scheduled that I literally block out free time a month or two in advance – the same way others would block out holidays. Except for me, it's a few hours where I get to exist as myself, not a student or worker, not a daytrip or weekend where I can relax or go somewhere else.

I am only home to sleep. I work a job that finishes at 2am. I get into pyjamas and am dead to the world for 8 hours. 8 hours is the bare minimum for me. Any less and I can't concentrate, contribute in class, or focus. When I wake, I roll out of bed and start driving to the next place I need to be. For someone who loves sleep more than anything, I don't seem to do it much. Sleep is the only time I feel safe from the world. It's the only time no one expects anything of me. Too often it is taken from me by the commute and compulsory existence at a location.

To leave the house when the sun is up is a luxury. Birds outside and my alarm goes off and I want to strangle them both, but I can't. I pull on clothes and get out the door while shoving food in my bag that I hope will stay cold next to ice blocks. I dress in layers because although my toes are frozen now, it can quickly reach 30 degrees later and how the hell do I dress for all that?

Driving to the station takes 40 minutes.

Walking from my car to the station takes 10 minutes.

Waiting for the train takes 10 minutes.

The train journey takes 20 minutes.

Walking to the bus takes 10 minutes.

The bus takes 30 minutes.

This is the average journey. 2 hours in transit. This is not accounting for delays, for lines at the stops, and is reliant on me finding a parking spot almost straight away. There is no way to make the journey faster. I change between 7 or more sets of temperatures. I am tired. I don't eat breakfast before I arrive at UNSW. There is no time. There was a semester where I had a significant leg injury. By the time I got to class I was in excruciating pain and crying. Back then it was a 3-hour commute.

On normal days, I get a cup of tea from the coffee cart. It's the cheapest thing on the menu. Here I exist in the UNSW community.

I can't afford to buy food or drink every day. I live below the poverty line. Let that sink in.

I work 3 jobs, pay board, all car expenses, transport, meals, and forgo anything new.

I EARN LESS THAN THE MINIMUM NEEDED TO LIVE. Why is this normalised?

I collect my hot tea and go to class.

I cram as many classes into as few days as possible. I will not travel 6 hours a day for a one-hour class. My backpack is 10kg on a good day. I don't have breaks in between classes.

I keep track of what I eat each day, otherwise I might accidentally skip a meal, or eat a whole lot of fast food. I honestly sometimes forget that I need to eat. I've lived so long on barely enough that it's just par for the course. Now, I meal plan like a pro. I've got containers full of roast and vegies ready to get shoved against freezer blocks. I've got snacks in every pocket.

As it turns out, constant exhaustion due to travel is not good for overall health. My immune system has more holes than swiss cheese. I'm a frequent visitor to my doctor who is thinking about giving me a loyalty card. The only time I can rest and recover is with a doctor's certificate. Emailing 'I'm too tired to trek in' has attendance repercussions. I catch illness simply by looking at a sick person. And do you know the prime place for catching illness? Public transport.

To go home from existing at UNSW is the same transport process in reverse, except now there are more people. The later it gets, the greater chance I will be mugged or assaulted. Places that are safe in daytime are not at night. I cannot attend Roundhouse parties or night events. I do not stay in places I do not feel safe. I don't get home before almost 9pm. I then prep for whatever the next day brings and go to sleep. I then get to wake up and do it all again for 5 years straight.

On-campus life isn't built for commuters. We travel a shittily long time to get the best education we can. On-campus accommodation isn't an option due to financial and support reasons. We don't have enough work to cover it or parents able to pay costs. My mother wept when I bought my first car because she couldn't help me pay for it. My first laptop was a birthday present from both sides of my family. I can't afford to rent closer to the city. If I did, I would have to work more than the 20+ hours I do now and I could fail classes.

Where I live keeps me tethered to my world. With the advent of mass online learning at UNSW, I have been able to have adequate meals, adequate sleep, to adequately dress, and adequately participate in UNSW life. Where in this half-life is there space to be involved? Should I pay for club events and skip meals? Should I do a sport and get attacked going home late? Do I volunteer and miss a paying shift?

Making friends at UNSW is difficult. I cannot and will not be in anyone's lives on campus enough to warrant more than the occasional wave as we see each other going in opposite directions on the Basser steps. It's crap, but that's the commuter reality.

Here's a look at what online learning has allowed me to participate in:

I arrive to class having eaten breakfast. I have a mug of hot chocolate. I sit at my own desk where I have everything that I need. I don't have to carry a 10kg backpack with laptops, cables, pens, books and lunchboxes. I can listen to recorded lectures and not panic if I miss something. I can pause and write notes at my own pace. I sit in a comfortable and ergonomic chair. I don't have to sit still. I make myself a hot lunch from food that has been stored at a correct temperature in the fridge. I can adjust the temperature in the room to suit me. I can participate in quizzes, in fitness and sport, in writing jams and I can volunteer an hour instead of carving out an entire day where I then lose working hours and gain stress. If I am ill, I won't make myself worse by going all the way to UNSW. I can attend class without compromising other students. I don't walk in fear.

During this unprecedented time, I finally get to read books again, watch TV shows. I get to go for walks and I get time to myself. I've now got a tether to UNSW life and I have made friends with people who won't leave me on 'SEEN' for just saying 'Hello'. I'm allowed to be a participating human.

My commute is 15 seconds.

Returning on-campus means that I will again be excluded, as I have been for most of my UNSW life. I don't look forward to the return of on campus life, and all that that entails.

Sincerely,

A Commuter Student.



# COVIDSAFE APP\_ SHOULD YOU DOWNLOAD IT?

*Juwariya Malik*

The COVIDSafe app was touted as 'essential'<sup>1</sup> to stopping the spread of COVID-19 and reopening Australia's social and economic activity. But despite its millions of downloads, was the app ever truly necessary or even helpful to reduce the spread of the virus? Further, during its operation, the app has been met with many critical privacy concerns, especially after its data storage contract was awarded to technology giant, Amazon.

## Operation

### Operation

The basic underlying function of the app is to help the government efficiently monitor the spread of COVID-19 by assisting health workers to notify individuals who have come in contact with coronavirus. Downloaded from the Apple App Store or Google Play, users are to insert personal details including their name, age range, mobile number and post code providing an encrypted, personalised reference for their app's operation. Utilising Bluetooth technology, the app uses a 'digital handshake' to log contact with other users, including the date, time and proximity of the contact. This data is stored for a rolling 21-day period to allow for the incubation period and time taken to confirm a positive test result, and then deleted from the user's phone. The information was stressed to be encrypted and confidential.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Bogle, Ariel. 'COVIDSafe has been downloaded by millions, but yet to identify contacts (and authorities say that's a good thing)'. ABC News. <https://www.abc.net.au/news/science/2020-06-11/coronavirus-contact-tracing-app-covid-safe-no-close-contacts/12342138>.

<sup>2</sup> Australian government. 'COVIDSafe help'. <https://www.health.gov.au/resources/apps-and-tools/covidsafe-app/covidsafe-help#how-the-app-works>



## Necessity

### Necessity

The question is whether the app is or was ever truly necessary to stop the spread of the virus and promote an earlier easing of restrictions. While presently the spread has largely been contained within New South Wales, at the time of its introduction there was a greater risk posed by community transmission. Even though the app had reached its 40 per cent download rate desired by federal politicians in operation, it was likely only half of those individuals were using the app properly and at full functionality. According to Adam Dunn, the Head of Discipline for Biomedical Informatics and Digital Health at the University of Sydney, this means 'that there would only be a fewer than one in 20 chance that potential contacts would be captured by the app.'<sup>3</sup> In its operation, it has yet to provide much assistance to health authorities with its data accessed only 30 times since its launch, and only one person being reported to have been identified using that data.<sup>4</sup>

The dissemination of the COVIDSafe App was similar to Singapore's contact tracing app 'TraceTogether'. However, the latter still has not experienced success due to a low number of downloads for reasons including privacy concerns and public indifference to the app while the nation is under effective lockdown.<sup>5</sup>

## Privacy

### Privacy

Despite data encryption that will at most share your phone 'make' and model, which is not a large risk for most individuals, there is always a potential risk with any app that uses such digital handshake technology. Since Bluetooth technology opens a channel for two-way communication between devices, this can expose one's phone to vulnerabilities. Further, although Health Minister Greg Hunt has shown a determination to protect people's privacy and restrict access to app information to state or territory health authorities only for contact tracing purposes under the Biosecurity Act 2015 (Cth),<sup>6</sup> this can be amended or repealed at any time. Concerns have also been raised about the United States accessing the data by after the government has issued its data storage contract to technology giant Amazon. However, it was stressed by politicians that this would not extend to accessing specific contact tracing data of Australians obtained by the COVIDSafe app, and only pertain to issues such as technical concerns.<sup>7</sup>

Overall, the app will still remain a tool of assistance to be used in conjunction with other methods including social distancing and a staggered easing of restrictions. However, it is doubtful that the app will serve an 'essential' or integral purpose for lifting Australia out of the global pandemic, as was originally intended.



Hey there! I'm a third year Bachelor of Arts/Laws student, majoring in Politics and International Relations with a minor in Media, Culture and Technology. With that mouthful out of the way, I have a keen interest in social justice issues, especially how the law interacts with marginalised groups in society.

<sup>3</sup> Bogle Ariel. 'Can Australia's coronavirus contact tracing app COVIDSafe lift the country out of lockdown?'. ABC News. <https://www.abc.net.au/news/science/2020-05-06/coronavirus-contact-tracing-app-covid-safe-lockdown-lift/12217146>

<sup>4</sup> Taylor, Josh. 'How did the Coidsafe app go from being vital to almost irrelevant?'. The Guardian. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/may/24/how-did-the-covidsafe-app-go-from-being-vital-to-almost-irrelevant>

<sup>5</sup> Lin, Liza & Ping, Chong Koh. 'Singapore Built a Coronavirus App, but It Hasn't Worked So Far'. Dow Jones Institutional News. Accessed <http://search.proquest.com/docview/2393266722/>.

<sup>6</sup> Greg Hunt. 'Press conference about the COVID Safe app launch'. NSW Health. Accessed <https://www.health.gov.au/ministers/the-hon-greg-hunt-mp/media/press-conference-about-the-covidsafe-app-launch>.

<sup>7</sup> Besser, Linton & Welch, Dylan. 'Australia's coronavirus tracing app's data storage contract goes to offshore Amazon'. ABC News. <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2020-04-24/amazon-to-provide-cloud-services-for-coronavirus-tracing-app/122176682>

# JACINDA ARDERN ISN'T WHO YOU THINK SHE IS

*By Abhramil Hazra*

New Zealand is seen as a political paradise in comparison to Australia and the Western world, with its prime minister showered with accolades for her leadership and for being a young, female, progressive alternative. The truth couldn't be more different. Jacinda Ardern's government has continued in more or less the same direction as the previous National Party government, albeit with some progressive concessions. Granted, her conduct was magnificent following the horrible Christchurch massacre; the image of her wearing a hijab embracing a grieving woman after the horrific shooting was a symbol of hope in times of hate. However, while all leaders should aspire to her conduct, the key to success is policy. It's on policy where Jacinda Ardern sadly falls short and fails to deliver on her promise.

## The Trans-Pacific Partnership

Last year, the New Zealand government passed the controversial Trans-Pacific Partnership as a repackaged deal called the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP). To give an idea on what the Trans-Pacific Partnership looks like, it is an agreement made by major corporations like agricultural producers in USA, Japan and Europe. In this agreement, major corporations can sue governments if they decide to change any domestic policy or law which "harms" any of their interests.

For example, in Canada, the US-based shell company US Lone Pine sued the Quebec Provincial government for \$250 million for suspending shale and gas mining, largely due to an environmental study and community concerns over the mine. Essentially, the CPTPP could amount to a violation of national sovereignty, allowing major transnational corporations to write our laws.

If a company sues a government it can do so through Investor-State Dispute Settlement (ISDS), which takes place in a secret tribunal handled by three corporate lawyers who aren't even independent. The Australian Chief Justice along with legal experts have labelled this "not a fair legal system", as these judges and lawyers can be subjected to conflicts of interest. The majority of ISDS cases have been against minimum wage laws, health and environmental laws being enacted, so hardly a progressive reform.

Many would respond that the new ratified deal wouldn't be such a calamity as the ISDS clause has been removed. Many assume the threat of companies suing nations has been eliminated. The reality couldn't be further from the truth. Major corporations under the new ratified deal can still sue nations through domestic legal procedures.



Abhramil Hazra is a student studying International Studies and Media (Journalism) at UNSW. He was born and raised in Sydney and is interested in politics, music, reading and cricket. He is a foodie and enjoys procrastination.

### New Zealand's First Budget

The Ardern government's first budget still functions within the neoliberal framework of Roger Douglas, the controversial former Labour Finance Minister who introduced neoliberalism to New Zealand. It stresses fiscal conservatism and business-friendly policies. The Ardern government has followed the basic doctrines of neoliberalism by seeking to achieve a budget surplus of NZ\$7.3 billion.

In both the lead-up to the election and the delivery of the budget, both the Labour and Green Parties promised to focus on fiscal spending and planning to set up an independent body to keep them following these rules. They promised to keep spending within 30% of GDP and government debt below 20% as well to attain a surplus in every budget. This is despite the government promising to tackle climate change, homelessness and economic inequality, policy reforms which would necessitate budget deficits. Moreover, in a survey only an estimated 6% of New Zealanders cared about excessive government spending.



New Zealand Teachers' Strike in May 2019

Ardern's government has largely left out the potential costs of the public sector workforces: nurses, police force and teachers with catch up pay claims. Whilst the new government has promised new entrants a year a free tertiary education, real wages for teachers have not risen. The Health and Disability sectors have only received just enough funding to merely stay functioning. Moreover, the Child Poverty Action Group estimates that the government's family package will only help families "only marginally".

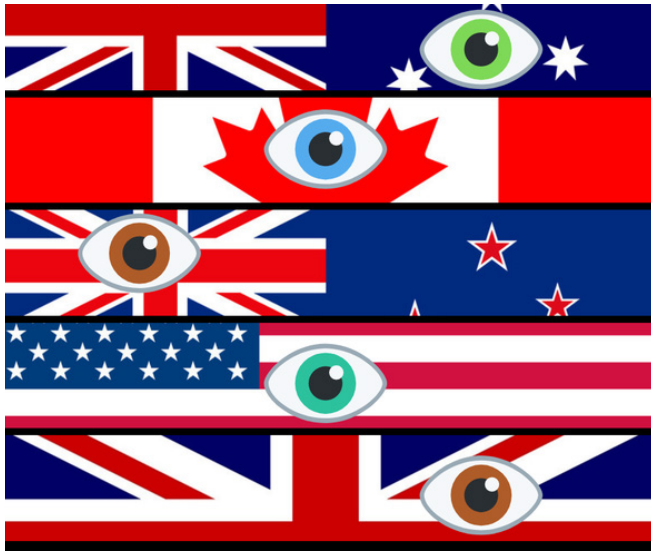
### Weak on Industrial Relations

The Labour Party has also chosen to support former Prime Minister John Keyes's controversial '90-day trial period', rather than disband it altogether. This law allows for employers to dismiss employees within a 90-day period after hiring them for no valid reason.

This aim of the law was originally to boost employment and help disadvantaged job seekers, but a report released by the New Zealand Government's Treasury Department found there has been no increase in the number of jobs being created or disadvantaged job seekers benefiting from the trial period. It's estimated that 27% of prospective employees have been sacked by their employers within that 90-day period.

### Civil Liberties and the Five Eyes Alliance

In terms of civil liberties, early signs aren't positive as the government of New Zealand has recently passed laws to allow border officials to demand travellers to unlock their private devices for a digital search and obtain their private data. If travellers refuse, they could either face a fine of NZ \$ 5,500 or face prosecution. This move has been slammed by civil rights groups, with the New Zealand Council for Civil Liberties (CCL) labelling it as "grave invasion of personal privacy".



Along with Canada, Australia, the UK and the US, New Zealand is a member of the Five Eyes Alliance

Furthermore, the government also passed the Intelligence and Security Act in 2017 and confirmed its membership of the Five Eyes Spy Network. According to a report published by Privacy International called The Right to Privacy in New Zealand, the law allows for the Government Communications Security Bureau (GCSB) to spy on both its citizens as well as foreigners living in the country. It labelled the spy agency as discriminatory and in violation of human rights law.

### Anti-Immigration

Jacinda Ardern and the New Zealand Labour Party have embraced anti-immigration rhetoric much to the dismay of their own supporters. The incoming Labour Party had promised an immigration cut and has often blamed immigration for unemployment, overcrowding, stagnant wages and unaffordable housing.

Furthermore, Jacinda and her Labour Party are in a coalition with New Zealand First, a far-right anti-immigration party who have a long history of making racist remarks, and advocates for anti-immigration policies. A recent controversy arose with the recent changes to the partnership visa policy, providing that married couples must have lived together for 5 years in order to get visas. Concerns from Indian community leaders were met with contempt and racist remarks by Shane Jones, a New Zealand First member of Cabinet. Winston Peters, the head of New Zealand First, took credit in a radio interview for hardening New Zealand's immigration policy.

### New Zealand....A Paradise?

New Zealand has seen a surge in poverty with an Amnesty International Report reporting that 1 in 3 New Zealand children are living below the poverty line.

In terms of health and mental health the picture isn't rosy either. The Emergency Department is reportedly under strain and a review into New Zealand's Mental Health Department found severe cracks in its systems, such as longer wait times and barriers to access for many New Zealanders. House prices are soaring with the average house in Auckland around \$1 million; Auckland is also suffering from underfunded, deteriorating and creaking infrastructure.

Despite how much of a paradise we want New Zealand to be, the country has its fair share of problems. Unfortunately, Jacinda Ardern's government has fallen short in addressing some serious problems.

# HOW COVID-19 EXACERBATED INEQUALITY AMONGST STUDENTS

*By Micah Emma Chan*

The COVID-19 pandemic continues to sweep across the globe causing catastrophic economic impacts and relentless strain on healthcare systems. The profound repercussions of the current situation have exposed the underlying injustices within our society.

Closer to home, the pandemic has unveiled the growing and acutely underestimated social divides within our local community. University students have had to adjust and adapt to the 'new normal' that is learning from home, however the ability to achieve this has largely varied depending on the backgrounds and contexts of a diverse range of students.

The gravity of this problem has been grossly overlooked, not for lack of concern, but perhaps a sense of viewing the situation from a macro-lens that fails to account for the daily struggles of individuals across the community.

From international students being sent back home and having to adjust to the new reality of completing their studies from halfway across the globe, to domestic students struggling to gain a sense of routine and productivity in an overcrowded and chaotic household, the pandemic has had numerous implications on students' ability to complete their studies successfully.

Notwithstanding the significant hardships faced both locally and globally, most notably a 7.1% unemployment rate and the concerns of those most vulnerable to the virus, it is necessary to acknowledge the varying experiences and individualised implications of COVID-19 on the student community.

The pandemic has impacted everyone differently and to varying degrees, and it is important to reflect on the considerable ways that many students in our cohort have been affected.

Whilst some students may find studying from home an effortless and perhaps refreshing change—waking up five minutes before class and enjoying a nice warm cup of tea in pyjamas—this is far from the experience of many others. For them, online study means having to fight with siblings over the use of the one laptop in the house and struggling to engage in classes when the Wi-Fi signal continues to drop in and out.

Not to mention exam season, where the disparity is even more enhanced, with some students having to complete take-home exams amongst the distraction of other household members in what is far from a conducive study environment. Whilst on the other hand, another student may be lucky

enough to have peace and quiet in an entire section of the house to themselves.

In a new reality that is heavily reliant on virtual connection, the digital divide within our society has become clearer than ever, prompting the questioning of how to achieve equitable learning from home. The closure of public spaces such as libraries has further exacerbated this issue, disproportionately affecting those in need of free access to high-speed internet and a quiet place to study.

In addition to this, the pandemic has not only aggravated the digital divide in an educational context but also a social one. With the growing popularity in online social events including group movie nights, some students are being inadvertently excluded due to the inability to afford entertainment subscriptions such as Netflix and Stan.

The impact of the pandemic is highly personal and individualised — not everyone has been affected equally. It would be inaccurate to suggest that COVID-19 is the sole perpetrator of the social disparity that has become abundantly clear within recent months.

Rather, the pandemic has revealed the cracks in our society, as students grappled with these socio-economic issues long before social distancing and online study. However, the unique situation that COVID-19 has presented can only be described as an illuminating revelation of the social inequality prevalent even amongst our own peers.

This is an important conversation to be had within the public agenda, not only due to its pertinence to us as fellow students but also because, as described in Marie-Eve Desrosiers' recent Policy Options article "student bodies are a microcosm of broader society; they reflect society's divisions."

If the student cohort is a reflection of the wider community, it is crucial that we take into serious consideration how to approach this growing inequality specifically within an educational context.

The majority of students working a part-time job are typically involved in the retail and hospitality industries. Due to the closure of most cafes and retail stores, there is a large portion of students who are directly affected by the economic impacts of COVID-19. Students have therefore been hit by the academic stress of transitioning to online learning, coupled with the pressures of unemployment and possible loss of household incomes.

UNSW is providing financial aid for students affected by COVID-19. These schemes include emergency support payments and interest-free loans for those particularly impacted by the pandemic. For any questions regarding financial aid or assistance in transitioning to online learning, contact the Student Support Advisors to get in touch and receive more information.

Whilst many students should rightly be commended for the ease in which they have been able to adjust and perhaps even enjoy the flexibility of online university, it is crucial that we involve and support all students — especially those who are struggling in a chaotic and uncertain world.



Micah is a second year undergraduate student currently studying a Bachelor of Commerce (Business Economics) Bachelor of Arts (Advanced French).

She has a strong passion for raising awareness of social issues within the community, and believes that opportunities such as writing for the student newspaper are a great way to advocate for such causes

# BIGGER DEMOCRACY IS BETTER

## *The Case for Kids*

*By Chris Shaw*

Modern democracy is built on universal suffrage. The word democracy translates as “the strength of the people” (Greek: demos – “people,” kratos – “strength”). But what it means for suffrage to be universal has changed significantly over time.

Universal suffrage, as it was then known, swept across the western world in the 18th and 19th centuries. Today we know this movement as universal male suffrage, after the women's suffrage movement expanded our view of what universal suffrage means. With the benefit of a century's hindsight, it's safe to say that both of these movements have been positive influences on democracy as a system. And today, I believe we are in the early stages of a third great suffrage movement. This movement is for the only citizens who do not yet have the right to vote: children.

I should clarify here that I am referring to children aged between 16 and 17 years old. These are children who are defined as such in the eyes of the law. But they would roll their eyes if you used that term to describe them, and rightly so. Instead, I should be calling them young adults. Or, for the sake of those who may find this term disagreeable, I will settle for mature adolescents. These are people who are largely independent in all ways but financial, and many are taking the first steps on this path also. Most importantly, mature adolescents are independent in thought. Just ask any parent of a teenager and they will certainly agree with this!

Young people are more engaged in politics today than ever before. Social media has given them a brand new platform with which to engage. But the global climate strikes have seen young people engage in a more traditional manner too. Despite this, our ageing population means that young people have less influence on our politicians than ever. The median voting age in Australia is now 48 and rising. Young people demonstrating on the streets but not being heard at the ballot box. We ought to ask ourselves whether this is something that should change.

This is a debate which is already progressing in the UK. In 2017, Jeremy Corbyn announced the Labour party would adopt a policy to lower the voting age to 16. This sparked a frenzy of

Prof. David Runciman



debate. Prof. David Runciman, the former head of Department of Politics and International Studies at the Cambridge University, went so far as to seriously call for voting rights for children as young as six. But the essence of his main point was brilliantly elegant: "Why not?"

If universal suffrage is to be truly universal, we need to continually challenge the status quo. Opponents of change should be forced to lay their arguments on the table so that they can be examined. In previous suffrage movements, these arguments have boiled down to racism and misogyny, and rightfully done away with. I am confident that the same will be true

for mature adolescents within my lifetime.

The main argument against voting rights for mature adolescents has been similar to the one which was used to deny suffrage to women and minority racial groups. The argument is that these people are intellectually inferior. That they are incapable of assessing the policy platforms of candidates and hence the implications of their vote. These words are often unspoken, for the obvious reason of how appalling they are. But we can move past this. We already regard these arguments with horror when spoken about women or racial minorities. And I am confident that in a hundred years time, the same will be true for mature adolescents.

This leaves us with the unfortunate problem that, unlike gender or race, this argument actually holds some water when it comes to age. Personality is indeed a far more important factor than age when it comes to voter maturity. There are thousands of children in our primary schools who would leap at the opportunity to cast a carefully considered ballot. And there are thousands more adults who cast theirs on a whim. But unfortunately legislation cannot be made on personality. Even if it were possible, it would not be a good idea. And clearly babies voting straight out of the womb is absurd, and so a line must be drawn somewhere. So how do we decide where is the best place to draw it?

To answer this question, we need to ask ourselves, what qualities do we want in a voter? Ideally, each vote should reflect a complete consideration of the policies and personalities of all candidates. But this ideal is never achieved in reality. Most voters are only aware of the policies of two or maybe three parties. Many cast their vote based on a small subset of those policies, often just one. I would argue that most children are very capable of this, though some may need guidance. And this raises what is potentially the most important issue for our discussion. A vote should be a reflection of the analysis and will of the voter. It should not be an extra proxy vote for someone else, such as a parent.

This brings us back to my earlier description of mature adolescents. Teenagers have a reputation for being rowdy and rebellious. They disagree with their parents at every opportunity. We can argue at what age this generally begins, but it's safe to say that by 16 it is well and truly underway. Whether a 16 year old will cast a considered ballot has less to do with their age than it does with their interest in politics as an individual. But we can safely say that in most cases, this vote would be a manifestation of their own autonomy. Mature adolescents are past the stage of deferring to their parents for questions of value and politics.

Mature adolescents are making their voices heard on the internet and on the streets around the globe. We ought to be challenging the status quo and asking ourselves whether it is time to listen to them at the ballot box. And when the arguments against doing so are laid out in all their unsavoury detail, the answer is an unequivocal yes.



Chris is a research student studying the mathematics of sporting tournament structures. He has previously completed an honours in pure mathematics at USyd. He is keenly interested in politics and the areas where it intersects with his mathematical background, particularly taxation reform.



# MY SON USED TO HAVE A MOTHER

*Daisy Skerritt*

**Content warnings: imprisonment; drug administration and addiction; violence.**

Beyond the window of the rattling train  
Cattle grazed the thirsty hills  
In search of greenery  
Lost to the burning rural sun.

It was six hours into the silent journey  
When the weary eyed man  
Extended a calloused hand and a Mintie  
To the bright young woman, and began to speak

"My name is Charlie  
And my son used to have a mother.  
Well, he still does I guess.  
But she's not who she used to be.

Not since she got turned into a junkie  
By the bloke with eyes like blood-stained glass.  
He changed me too you know?  
Sent me to prison, 'e did.

Well, maybe I did that to myself.  
But he was the one who made me see red  
When one day I walk in me front door  
And he's sliding a needle into 'er arm.

Red mist and a white rage rose  
And I saw like my eyes were his eyes  
Red.  
Blood on me carpet, spilling from his eye.  
Me own bloody hand holdin' his needle  
right there in his stained-glass eye.

Me son and his mother  
watched me and cried.  
And I shouldn't say this.  
I know I shouldn't say this.  
But I don't regret it.  
And I would do it again.

~



"I spent twelve days in Silverwater.  
The prison, not the suburb.  
You ever been there?  
I was thereatwelve days.

I have BPD and ADHD.  
Prison's made to break people like me.  
Spent twenty-two hours a day in the hole;  
Two in the yard.

Caged all day,  
Bashing and bashing and screaming,  
becoming the animal  
You all think I am.

They throw people like me in the hole  
Then spit us out.  
Which is why I don't regret it.  
And I would do it again.

~

"When me grandparents found out  
That I was in Silverwater  
They hired me one of them lawyers  
Who can get you out of gaol  
Even if you stabbed a bloke with a needle  
in his stained-glass eye.

They spent all their money on her,  
Me grandparents did.  
'Self-defence' she told the judge  
And there I was standing out the front of Silverwater,  
Ticket in me hand to get me back home to them  
And to me son

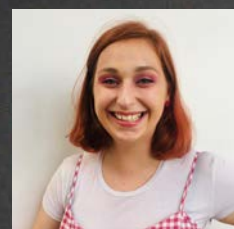
Who's spent twelve days  
Without a father  
And even longer  
Without a mother  
Because of the bloke with the stained-glass eyes  
And what I done to 'im."

Charlie falls quiet, chews on his Mintie.  
The hills appear browner  
The cattle are raw-boned and spent  
And egrets are stalking the crackling pasture.

Still chewing Charlie speaks again  
Of his son's mother.  
He says she's in some hospital.  
Cold turkey with the shakes.

"Me son might never have a mother  
At least not the one that he used to.  
But I s'pose it's not 'er fault  
and I s'pose it's not Red Eye's either.  
When ya got a monkey on your back like that  
It's sure damn hard to come back.

When I get home  
I'm never going back.  
And if I could be sure  
I'd never end up back in the hole,  
I would do it again.  
And again."



+

Daisy's high school English teacher described her as a talented and perceptive reader of fiction and an ambitious though mediocre writer of poetry and prose. Although she thoroughly enjoys her forays into creative writing, she feels most at home in the realms of analytical and non-fiction work and has a particular interest in criminal and immigration law, politics and literature and film review.

# DON'T FORGET US

NEW  
NORMAL  
2020

Sincerely,  
First Nations, migrants,  
and POC communities

@sleeplesspiecesart

# FIRST FLEET

*Ava Lagoon-Robinson*

**Content warnings: colonisation, violence, racism**

## Part 1: PATERNAL

HIStory

History folded into a schoolgirl's journal and locked with a key.

It started with white man's rabid hunger.

They were given a boat and a compass

and devoured the world.

Handed a gun,

they took a big bite.

"Terra Nullius"

What defines a man?

Is it the sting of a redback?

Is it holding a gun in their hands?

and asking a body not yet cold

to apologise for the bullet in their heart?

Is it a guiltless pleasure dripping from their fingers and lips?

Is it a man with a red thumb, not a green

who scatters crimson evening dew?

Is it one with a Grim Reaper's black book,

filled with buried names who wish to be in a land of the

Young                      and                      Free?

Ancestors I Try to Forget

The ink stain of '88 pricks like a thorn in my throat.

Blood from mosquitos who preyed upon flesh for their own sanctity,

entwined with my DNA.

I want to wash the touch of my forefathers from the landscape

Regain the undivided soil

I seize a pen and draw lines, reunite each person with their family,

erasing what history broke stole.

## Part 2: MATERNAL

Mumma  
Mumma,  
at four you journeyed to a land where grass howls at the moon,  
The ocean hugs the coast and kisses the sand,  
to remind the land that it rules.

Mumma,  
from your bedroom window, you propelled paper planes  
hoping they would reach your grandmother,  
before the Pacific Ocean engulfed them,  
and swept them to the sea floor,  
amongst all the letters filled with lingering words, too longing to make their way home.  
But the borders cut the line  
of your Milo tin can telephone.

Mumma,  
You watched honey drip out of your sister's mouth when she read you poetry.  
Colonial-minded teachers slapped her with dictionaries she had read at 10 years old,  
reverberating in her mind that her mother taught her wrong.  
She spoke the Queen's English, but her skin talked before her lips could even open.

212 Days

123 days of school, and counting.  
38 church services, and counting.  
4 haircuts, and counting.  
3 lost teeth, and counting.  
12 detentions, and counting.  
8 track ribbons, and counting.  
1 birthday, and counting.  
16 victorious handball matches, and counting.  
  
8 times school would not let daddy take me home  
because an oriental man could not birth a porcelain child, and counting.  
34 curries, and counting.  
1 new feline friend, and counting.  
5 new human friends, and counting.  
1 broken arm, and counting.  
32 trips to the beach, and counting.  
  
212 days without you, and counting.

Grandfather  
My grandfather gave me a name that commands the full use of tongue,  
Each syllable tells its own story.  
When spoken, it carries mountains.  
Runs like a river through my ancestral tree and nourishes its roots.  
Rolls off the tongue like sweet mango juice.  
It carries with it hick fragrant turmeric,  
It stains palm to palm at touch.  
It bites like a Bengal tiger, rolls like water off my back  
Without it, half of myself is lost.  
It will not allow me to trust anybody  
who does not appreciate each consonant.



Ava is a first year Bachelor of Fine Arts/Arts student, unable to accept her lactose intolerance due to her love for hot chocolate. She is excited to look further into curation and creative direction. Her writing and art centre around personal experiences and social justice issues. She is particularly passionate about LGBTQIA+ and Indigenous rights.



# BREATHING PARODY

*Vedanshi Bhalodia*



Content warnings: rape, child abuse, gore, PTSD, smoking.

This piece engages directly with the above content. If these issues bring up anything difficult for you, please take care, consider skipping this piece, and find support resources below.

Lifeline: 13 11 41

Beyond Blue: 1300 22 4636 | Beyond Blue Web Chat: <https://online.beyondblue.org.au/>

1800 Respect: 1800 737 732

Blue Knot Foundation: 1300 657 380 (Telephone counselling for adult survivors of childhood trauma)





+

Vedanshi is a first-year student of Bachelor of Arts (English Literature) and Bachelor of Science (Psychology). Ever since her childhood, her interests have comprised of writing, reading, learning languages, etc. Apart from Tim-Tams, burritos and beaches, she drowns herself in humanism, Optimistic Nihilism and minimalist art/writing. She is always up for writing offers, volunteering opportunities and friendly chit-chat!

My eyes were narrowed down to slits as I kept gazing at the ink stain on our couch. My father threw the ink pot across the hall. It bashed right into the wall and the splattered ink rolled down the couch in branches. The more I looked, the wider it seemed to spread. I was pulled back to reality as a bat - black sovereigns of the night, I had heard them called - soared right into my living room from a half-open window in the backyard. I remember looking up in awe as it stumbled across the ceiling. Is it even possible to stumble as one flies? How was I to fathom that when I was six? Nevertheless, as I grew up, I knew, no matter how high one is soaring, they stumble, they stumble hard. Sometimes, they even float down numbly like a feather, with no control over their fall.

The black creature kept circling around the living room. It was a hot summer evening and the fans were running fast. The creature was hitting the walls incessantly. It brushed over and over against my mother's red scarf hanging on the edge of the door. I liked the colour red. It was a fascinating colour. I took an uncanny comfort in knowing that my body was filled with that crimson red of the scarf. I have often seen my mother's fat lip lose a few precious beads. I imagined the bat's wings oozing blood. I imagined the blood dripping, getting soaked into the smoky grey carpet and glaring at me before losing itself in the cotton. I was just a child. Nevertheless, what child could hold such a fervent fascination for blood? Time divulged to me: a wrecked one.

Thud. I heard the bat hit the fan for a millisecond and watched it circle down and fall flat on the carpet. The little creature fluttered ceaselessly. Its black was so vivid in the light that it looked like a silhouette, flapping in desperation. I inched closer, clutching my sweaty palms onto my crumpled dress.

I was scared of the hideous little thing. It lay there trembling and writhing in pain. One of its wings seemed to have come undone, unhinged like a door half out of its frame. The poor brute looked like a lacerated Halloween mask, discarded once toyed around with, a shadow cut out. Abjectly unreal.

I could tell when humans were in pain. I had heard them scream in agony. I had heard them weep with despair. I did not trust that creature, though. If it was really hurt, then why couldn't I hear its screams? What if it was all a ruse to lure me into its trap, until it could unfurl its obscured colossal wings, velvety dark in the shimmer of daylight, and then devour me in one quick guzzle?

The image petrified me. I staggered across the hallway and went towards my mother's room. She was good at fixing things. She had an effortless way of slithering out of situations that failed to keep up to her expectations. She seemed to be sound asleep that day. Her left hand was limply hanging down the cot and the right one neatly folded over her chest. I couldn't see her face, as it was slightly tilted towards the wall. She was wearing her mother's worn out yellow floral dress with orange frills. My father despised that dress. My father hunted down a plethora of things to abhor. He loathed my captain doll, the brown stain on the carpet, slightly undercooked cooked rice, unaligned belts - the inventory was ceaseless. That morning I had heard him say some ungrateful things (as Mrs. Randall liked to call them), to my mother, about her taking some pills. I did not hear a squeak from her. Maybe my mum needed the medicine for her grief!



I used to find adults queer. It took me a long time to realize that what grown-ups in reality were the most fundamental figments of the myth of normalcy, and that all the preciousness one shelters is tarnished as they grow up.

I dragged my feet out of her room as I decided to let her rest. I went out only to see the creature lying in the same position. Whenever I was sick, my mother would give me a glass of warm milk. I ran into the kitchen on my tiny feet and came back rushing with my palms full of milk. The warmth of the milk started settling in my supple palms as the white camouflaged with my pale skin. Droplets of milk



carpeted the trail leading me to the little creature. Most of the milk had already slipped through my fingers, but I let all that remained splatter near the creature's mouth.

I kneeled down slowly to get a closer look at the little creature. Its face looked like crumpled black paper, wrinkled just in the right places to not be able to identify whether it was scrunching or not. It tried to inch forward, using its wings as if legs, but the unhinged wing slipped over the splattered milk and tore a little further. I gasped in horror and fell back on my bottom. The creature stretched its little mouth wide open, revealing tiny fangs nestled in the murky pit and craned its neck up and above as if releasing a scream but I couldn't hear a thing. It was as if it was calling for help, but all its pleas were falling on deaf ears. Such a poor little thing, I thought. I imagined its kind could understand its pain but, in my abode, it was alone.

It seemed as if the creature was slowly dwindling into thin air. It was physically just as solid but there was something inside the creature fading that somehow affected its appearance as well. I couldn't understand what had changed, but it looked hollower and a little less in pain. It wasn't vivid anymore. It was nothing but a vestige, like when whites of rushing water chase the tops of the shores and fade to blue. It is not that the whites disappear or that the blues become non-existent, they are there and not there at the same time.

It is how I used to feel when he used to take me from the back. I didn't have the knowledge to understand what was happening to me, but I knew that it got over quicker if I stopped kicking my arms and legs in vain. I'd rest my cheeks on the cold marble and tighten my fingers around the curve of the table until my knuckles went white. I had seen my mother do the same, nought but a whisper. She was a wise woman and I knew I just had to follow her lead.

"My lil' one," he would breathe out, "Just stay still. It won't hurt as much then." I would think of the blue ink spreading over my white bedsheet, starting with a dot and proliferating as each thread of cotton absorbed the blue, the circle bigger and bigger and bigger until he is done and I am sleeping in the damp blue pool, inhaling the ink.

The creature was craning and dipping as if it were a bobblehead. I didn't know what to do. Who ever knows what to do with a creature in pain? We seldom realise when someone needs help. I decided to just sit cross legged and quench my curiosity instead. I moved closer to look at the injury. I could see a chipped, white, branch-like structure peeking out of the velvet. It had pierced its way out, like my grandma's needles through quilts. I inched my crooked finger towards the white stick, shivering with fear, and snapped my hand back with a jolt as soon as the bone pricked my soft skin.

The creature looked defeated. I could have harmed it so easily, but it made no attempt to escape. Its eyes were just blank pools of darkness with nothing beyond them, no depth.

Its eyes appeared to be meeting the huge portrait that adorned the wall. It was an oil painting of a dim spotlight shrouding my parents, everything around them pitch

black. The ends of the portrait bore vestiges of red. It was as if they were manoeuvring in the darkness of Lucifer's insides. My dad was in a crisp black suit with his arms etched firmly around my mother's slender waist. She was clad in a sapphire blue Victorian gown with one palm cupping his right shoulder and the other wrapped around his neck. It was motionless, but it seemed to show them slowly swinging in each other's arms, with the entire world taking humble seats in the audience.

My mother would tell me how it was one of their favourite memories from university. They met in a theatre course. "Our love used to reverberate in the auditorium," she would say. When my father was away for months at a time, she would picture the two of them swaying back and forth and all the thoughts that encumbered her would slowly sink into his imagined shoulder. They would keep oscillating in her mind's eye with Radiohead playing faintly in the background. I couldn't help but wonder why she always spoke about it as if she were reading out from a memoir; as if it was ephemeral, too good to be true even in that moment.

I directed my attention back to the creature. There was something about its vulnerability that drew me towards it. I felt powerful. I was bigger than it and I could have done whatever I deemed fit. I could have torn off the rest of the wing just to see some of those red droplets, or I could have prodded it with a fork to sense how supple and fuzzy its skin actually was.

I had always felt that everyone around me was enormous and that I was merely a shadow. To this day, I have been following them, and looking back. I know I haven't left any steps of my own, because they were covered by someone even smaller than me. I could make peace with it easily only if I was not reminded of it every breathing second of my life by those who shepherded me. The echo of the tiny footsteps in my secluded wooden house pulled me back to the present, to what I had become.

"Mother! Mother! Look what Mrs. G. gave me! Such a beautiful red scarf and she knit it herself!" My eyes caught the glimpse of the crimson in my daughter's hands and my vision started to give form to the past in the present.

"Oh, my lil' one that is amazing! Go have some bread from the table. I have to go, I've got some errands to run."

My arms were prickly and shivers ran down my spine. I pulled on a trench coat and rushed out of the house. I slammed the door behind me, but couldn't hear it over the loud pounding of my heart in my ears. It was a constant rhythm, with every beat, an image flashed in my head, like my very own scrapbook of shame. The stain on the carpet, the creature, the ink smudging into my skin, blue, blue and a little bit bluer. My vision started to blur. I leaned over the railing off the steps, hyperventilating.

I looked across the street. I needed to smoke. Just a drag to calm my anxious blood from gushing and mayhap bursting from my chest. I dragged my heavy feet, reminding myself with every breath that it will be over soon. I felt my memory corroding everything alive that breathed within me. I felt acid burn through my flesh, leaving behind hollows and releasing a pungence so strong it would magnetise the vultures to come and devour. Lumbering, I finally reached the convenience store.

As the salesman foraged through the wooden racks, desperation seeped through my lungs. I kept tugging at the



frills of my dress. My breathing was that of a raging beast. I was leering at the splashed ink branching out on the wall opposite to me. I blinked twice and saw the ink rolling down fiercely, aimlessly, 'til it ran itself dry. I started frantically wiping it clean. The stains refused to fade.

"Ma'am, ma'am, did you hear me? I said it would be forty two dollars," gushed the man behind the counter. I tapped my card, grabbed my only consolation, and tottered out of the store to the nearest bench. My fidgety fingers took ages to light the cigarette. A long, fiery puff and my thoughts went placid. A sense of relief coursed through my entire body as the nicotine washed through my bloodstream. Everything was going to be okay. I just had to be still. Soon the shivering stopped and my breathing plunged down to normal. My head was filled with fog. I rested my head on the wall behind me and floated back to the creature.

The white chipped stick was streaked in red. The bat's neck was resting on its uninjured folded wing like a child marvelling at the rain rolling down the window, with his chin resting on the back of his palm. I thought everyone had to go through their own grievances. There is not much others could do about it. I hated the thought of having bread every day for lunch and dinner. Nevertheless, I dealt with it on my own, did I not? The creature had to have some milk, heal, and beat the air on its own. Its silent whines began to tire me. I got up and left for my room.

I took the last drag and I wished that I hadn't just left it there. My nerves had attained peace by now. The memories did not daunt me anymore. They just felt like a nightmare. I remember every little thing from that day. There is only the paucity of this sense of time. It was just a few hours, but it somehow feels like my entire life has been wrapped and cocooned in that spit of time. It refuses to break no matter how hard I kick inside or no matter how hard I scratch my nails against it. I was stuck in a mirror maze, entrapped by ceaseless reflections at every end. What surprised me though was that every reflection was different from the other. If I take a left, I bump into a me that is encrusted in blood, and if I take a right, covered in threadbare filthy clothes. All the personalities vacillated between the pursuit of fantasy and the encumbering reality. I held the hand of the little me from that evening and pulled her into an embrace.

I crush the cigarette butt with my boots till it loses the last of its sparks. I stand up, more confident and poised than ever, and hike back towards my house. A fly kept buzzing in my ear and I swatted it away. It kept returning to plague me. I stuffed my ears with my ear buds, let Radiohead slowly murmur in the background and built my obliviousness to it. The fly had gone adrift. I am a strong mother. I am the stronger one.

I clicked the door open and saw my daughter biting into a sandwich, listlessness plastered on her face. I took a deep breath and walked over to the kitchen counter. "Baby, your scarf looks beautiful! Did we express our gratitude to Mrs. G.? Let's have something scrumptious today, shall we? Get yourself prepared for an appetising meal," I exclaimed.

The glimmer on her face was worth it all; it would always be; it should always be.

As I was lying on my cot that evening, the fan ferociously circling above, my thoughts kept retreating to that creature. If it needed help, why wasn't it louder? I thought of checking on my mother again.

She was still asleep. She had succumbed to a deep slumber. I was famished but it was seldom that she found peace when asleep - or awake, for that matter.



I dragged my feet out to the creature again. Its eyes were unmoving and aimed at the portrait. Its wings were flat against the carpet, as if they could never beat the air again. The poor creature looked like a ragged cloth growing grey mould over; used, unwanted, and pitiful. I mustered the courage to feel it. I dipped my cupped palms, scooping it in as I joined my palms. The creature nestled in the canopy and warmth of my palms. I blew some warm air into its fur, rustling its tiny hairs into chaos. "Just be still. It won't hurt as much then," I whispered into its ear. It twitched once, twice and thrice in my palms before going completely still. The creature fell deep into a slumber, just like my mother had. They both slept well that evening.



# THE RULES OF THE GAME ARE FOUR OF A KIND

*Rosie Bogumil*



+

Some time ago, Rosie Bogumil discovered the healing power of poetry. Since then, her unapologetically daring works exploring mental illness have appeared online and in print. When she's not writing or performing poetry, Rosie can normally be found studying for her degree in English and physiology at UNSW, or else on instagram @rosiebee. poetry

Content warning: NSFW

two teaspoons cradle one another  
 shifting to and fro to share  
 in the art of spooning  
 while wrapped in the mechanics  
 of steady breathing.  
 hers long and calming  
 mine short and gasping,  
 struck as i am by the music of life  
 in all its sensuous symphonies.  
 sensations of sight and sound collide:  
 the bright pastels of her bralette  
 as sharp as the luscious scrapings  
 of our tongues against our teeth.  
 i struggle to unlock the hinge  
 reprimanding the breadth of her breasts,  
 so she uses me as a model and  
 with subtle sweeps of her lips  
 she teaches me how to cuddle,  
 how to disguise the fumbling  
 that comes with undressing,  
 how to show another woman  
 that you know what you're doing.  
 pretending at professional  
 is far more pleasurable.  
 cackling cicadas serenade  
 the virginity from our bodies  
 while we roll over one another  
 like playful children  
 only with deeply adult thoughts  
 suspended between us.  
 once the heat of desire has cleared  
 i turn to face her silhouette.  
 whispered sorrys stir eddies  
 into a fog-cloud of warmth.  
 i missed my summer storm.  
 i reach out a languid arm  
 but beside me i find  
 only an empty imprint  
 embedded in the mattress  
 and the whisper of a memory  
 escaping through the window,  
 like a shadow returning home.



# PARTICIPANT H. ZOO

Atia Fatimah

Content Warning: reference to self harm

I delicately caress it. The flimsy piece of paper stares back at me as countless others are passed around.

*This certificate of participation is awarded to Hayden Zoo.*

My lips curl into a smile, a mixture of amusement and defeat. They couldn't even spell my name right. Just as well; the person who'd typed my name cared about it as much as I did. Everyone in the class shuffles their 'certificate' around, scrunching them, ripping them, or finding other ways to make their mis-achievements obsolete.

But someone breaks that silent tradition. Someone held the paper unironically, clutching it in disbelief. A royal blue certificate glimmers in Sarah's hands. "It was totally a fluke," she gushes to no one in particular. High Distinctions are not flukes, and it's clear that she knows this. I mean she had to, she was the one who had earned it.

A gush of envy floods me. It crept up, silently and unbeknownst to me. Had anyone asked me, I would accuse them of blasphemy. How dare I be jealous? Of Sarah? Of a coloured piece of paper? Guilt washes over me and subdues the envy for a minute. I did not have the right to be jealous, I rationalise to myself. I barely even tried for this test. This... I glance at the certificate in confusion... National Academic Excellence Test? I vaguely remember desks being separated and multiple choice grids being distributed for it. Had I a gun to my head, I would not be able to tell you what the test involved. Had the certificate not carried the ghost of my name, I would be convinced I'd never sat this test. Had I not attended it, life would not change.

Perhaps that's how I always was and always will be. A participant. Never at the centre stage and never really distinguished from the norm. A participant. Existing to allow the world to see who the outliers were. Who the distinguished really were. If I hadn't taken the test how would they know who had scored in the top percentile? How would they know who deserved to be put on the pedestal? How would they know who mattered without first realising that I didn't?

This certificate was proof. Proof that I had participated. An acknowledgement of my existence. Beyond that I was unnecessary. It had always felt strange, knowing that humans were a blip in the universe. It felt even more convoluted to imagine myself being a blip among those very humans. I eyed the black and white certificate before me. They couldn't even bother to print it in colour...

I am an extra in my own life. I am the one to blame. I am the casting director after all, and even I had come to terms with my own worthlessness. People always wonder what the theme song to their biopic would be. Mine would be those free, generic songs you hear in the 2010 YouTube videos that somehow *felt* happy but were in the end soulless and unoriginal. The biopic wouldn't even be about me though, no one would watch that. Not even me. It wouldn't be a triumphant coming of age film or a revolutionary dystopian one. I don't know what parts of my life are worth reliving for a two minute trailer let alone a whole film. A daunting fear seizes me. I'd lived for sixteen years, at least ten of them fully conscious, and I hadn't lived two minutes worth retelling. I had no story.

Perhaps it could be argued that participating mattered, but I am no Hayden Zoo and I am worth colour printing for. The slithering envy morphed into resignation and hatred. There was something haunting about competing against everyone and realising I was just like them. My cheeks are flush with rage and self-pity. I pity the foolishness I had. Somehow I had fooled myself into thinking I was special. Maybe it was being a Hi-5 junkie growing up that made me believe that my individuality was all that mattered. Nothing was unique about a sixteen year old boy who binged Netflix and 'participated' through life.

Was I more than a background character in this shitshow? I stare at the gateway to my personal hell etched on my wrist. Those telling scars that threaten to cripple me. No. I am no more than the poster boy for every teenage cliché. No more or less than anyone who had participated. I am definitely no Sarah and I didn't ever deserve to be.

A small tear escapes as I realise the class had long since moved past the anti-climactic award presentation and continued with our science lesson. My eyes failed to focus on the whiteboard. I couldn't help myself. No matter how much I thought about it, I felt disgusted. In myself. In what I had become. In who I would always be. The participant. Broken. Destroyed. Self-destructed.

The bell echoes in my hollow brain as everyone begins their excited departure. My feet weigh heavy as I trudge out of the class. I was on my way to do my typical participant things; go home, eat, binge some Netflix, lose my nightly battle to insomnia, eventually come back to school ready to copy someone's half-hearted homework before the bell inevitably rings. And repeat.

A ringing begins in my ears as the same thoughts flood my head. The thoughts I had shut out just last year. The ones I had beat to death before they had a chance to beat me. Why was loving me so hard? Why was loving this life so hard? Why was I like this? Something was wrong in my wiring. I was a malfunctioning participant, deluded to believe he was something more.

I was one participant among thousands. It didn't seem to bother anyone else that we'd been compacted into a small and indiscernible collective deemed unextraordinary. That these certificates were more telling that our birth and death certificates ever could be. This is the value we had in society, presently and forever. I had the crumpled certificate and scars to match. Both badges of my expendability.

Maybe I will never be more than this. Maybe I could never be a Sarah. Maybe I will never be worth the 90c to have my name printed in colour. But fuck it, I was worth the courtesy to have my name spelt right.

Before the unknown engulfed me whole, a fleeting hope kept me afloat.

**Screw it, I thought. I'm going to participate the fuck out of life.**



+

Atia Fatimah is currently doing her Honours in psychology and is a self-proclaimed workaholic. Thanks to COVID-19 she has been self-diagnosed as a social-dedication-game-junkie, has started a one-woman protest against having her video on during calls and had to postpone her exquisite travel plans indefinitely. Until a faux normalcy is achieved, she will continue to overthink current world injustices and wither in helplessness.

# WRITING CHALLENGE WINNERS





I'm sorry...

I stared into her hollow eyes, once filled with passion.

I love you when you're present. When you're unapologetically quirky and daringly honest. I love you when you're not afraid to make mistakes. Not afraid to feel. Not afraid of yourself.

I don't like you now, hell-bent on believing the world is against you. I don't like you all the time. I don't like you most of the time...

I watch as a single tear rolls down her cheek. I press my palm against the cool mirror, staring at the monster before me.

I don't like me now.

*By Atia Fatimah*











The buckle on my seatbelt is ice, and I flinch, a chill coursing through my veins as I touch it. Next to it lies my sketchbook, small and silent. Three hours in this car have not made me accustomed to the perpetual movement and waves of motion sickness. I exhale softly, watching my breath immediately form a small cloud, and vanish just as easily.

Sydney.

That's where I will be living now.

Sydney.

That's my name. My mother says we are bonded through our name, that is why the city will be kind to me. But names are just floats bobbing on the surface.

I hold my sketchbook close to my heart, turning over the page to a blank one.

*By Grisha Chawla*

# MEET THE ILLUSTRATORS



Damla is a second year industrial design student at UNSW. She is interested in sustainable living and artistic activism. In the future, she's planning on making products that help create social and environmental change. You can follow her creative journey on instagram @dh.creations



Sandra Gunniga Thomson is a third-year Media Arts student specializing in drawing and animation. She mostly enjoys illustrating the surreal and is very interested in moments that can be equally grotesque as they are endearing



Imagine doing Medical Science when you could be doing literally any other degree. Unfortunately for Aditya, this is reality. He is a self-proclaimed movie critic/enthusiast and the only things that can pull him out of his self-deprecating bubble are good movie castings, along with people who understand his nihilistic sense of self



A cat-loving postgraduate student in Communications and Journalism. CJ goes by she/they pronouns and her main interests are under the 4Ps: Politics, Pastries, Puns, and Postcolonialism. When she is not writing, you can find her illustrations showcased in her Instagram account @sleeplesspiecesart.

# PRESIDENT'S REPORT

*By Manu Risoldi*

Hey UNSW!

Welcome back to Term 2! It's been so wonderful to see so many students getting involved with Arc's online initiatives, and continuing to check in with the SRC Collectives! I wanted to take this time to first reflect on the various kinds of major activism happening around the world at the moment.

The Black Lives Matter movement has been a fixture of every news bulletin for the last month. We have seen protests take place across the world, including in Sydney. The Indigenous Lives Matter movement in Australia has continued to receive major support from university students across the country. Since 1991 there have been 432 Indigenous deaths in custody, which should be considered a national shame. Instead, our government tries to downplay racism in Australia. It was so encouraging to see so many familiar faces from campus being present at the Indigenous Lives Matter march in Sydney. The SRC will continue to attend the rallies, with hand sanitiser and masks available for those students who cannot bring their own.

There have been many discussions raised over the past few weeks about what being a good ally looks like. After comments made by a student running for University Council were made public, I think these discussions could not be more important than at this point in time. Racism, homophobia, and transphobia have no place at our university, and opinions such as these need to be called out and responded to quickly.

Now is the time for our community to reflect on these past actions and move forward with deliberate steps to overcome and educate away from these harmful and destructive opinions on race and sexuality. Doing nothing will lead to another instance like this occurring again, and we owe it to our students of colour and those who identify as being part of the LGBTQIA+ community to do better.

We cannot describe ourselves as being good allies and then deliberately choose to ignore a scenario where our voice and our support for those students most affected by these comments could make a world of difference. If you are keen to continue these discussions and be part of this activism I cannot encourage you enough to join the People of Colour Collective, our Queer Collective, or the Indigenous Students Association.

## RETURN TO CAMPUS

The SRC continues to play a role in shaping how our return to campus in T3 will look. As of right now, certain spaces in the library have been reopened to allow groups of students to utilise library resources. Gradually, as New South Wales opens up more broadly, UNSW will continue to welcome back students to different areas of the campus. We are excited for T3 and the potential for a return to campus.

We know that students are jumping at the opportunity to move back to a face-to-face university experience. We do need to also be committed to ensuring student safety and wellbeing as we return to campus. The struggles we face due to public transport to and from the university are a real concern. We know that students are most concerned about getting to campus, and this concern almost surpasses students' desire to return to campus.

The SRC is committed to a safe and well-planned return to campus and have been advocating for a flexible return. This means students can return when they want to but also means those students who cannot return for health reasons (or other reasons) can continue to work effectively online! This flexibility needs to remain because we still have close to 9000 students overseas who are enrolled and studying with UNSW.

The university will provide more information about our return to campus in Week 6.

## SURVEY RESULTS

---

Since the end of T1, the SRC has conducted a student satisfaction survey. The survey touched on several hot topics like exams, grading, communication of the university, overall class experience, and ability to access campus resources online. Thank you so much to the students who reached out and who freely gave such great feedback!

So what next? At the moment, we are compiling our recommendations to present to UNSW's Academic Board. Our recommendations focus on the flexibility of courses, the changing nature of exams, and students' obvious positive experiences with hand-in assessments and 24-hour exams. These recommendations are being made in an effort to continue to enhance students' academic experience on campus.

Another area that the survey data highlighted was the university's communication with students. It is a key area of improvement: students want clear and concise communications that highlight quickly what is currently changing about their university experience.

## FEE HIKES CAMPAIGN

---

The recent announcements made by Federal Education Minister Dan Tehan have created a lot of angst in the higher education space. The proposed changes to how the federal government funds higher education will mean less federal money is given to a plethora of degrees, so students will need to pay the increased difference. These changes fundamentally erode any notion that higher education should be accessible for as many young Australians as possible. More expensive degrees and less funding to the tertiary education sector as a whole is something that should concern current students even if these proposed changes do not directly impact us.

The proposed changes will be grandfathered, which means only future students will be paying the increased fees to degrees like Arts, Communication, and Law. However, I don't think this should deter current students from protesting (whether that be through in-person actions or online forums) against the proposed changes. We need to ensure higher education is well supported by the federal government and remains accessible to all young Australians.

UNSW has already come out and (somewhat) hinted at disagreeing with the proposed changes. In a lengthy email, our Vice-Chancellor reiterated his support for the Arts and highlighted how integral they are to our university. Other universities have been doing the same, notably ANU, which is known for its Arts and Law Faculties.

This is not to say that universities who are more well known for their Science and Engineering faculties, like UNSW, are necessarily warming to the proposed changes. These changes will not better fund STEM courses or create an environment where more places for STEM courses will be created. As I have highlighted in my previous comments about these course cost changes, it is not Arts and Social Sciences students against STEM Students. We all must come together.

If students want to get involved with the campaign they can sign the petition: <https://www.megaphone.org.au/petitions/stop-the-fee-hikes-dan>

But also follow the NUS and UNSW SRC on Facebook as we will be sharing and organising all the UNSW contingents and actions surrounding the protests. The first protest was last week, with a few hundred students from across NSW converging at Sydney Town Hall to call on Dan Tehan to scrap his fee hikes. The protests will always be live-streamed to our Facebook page. I understand many students are not yet comfortable to attend protests in person due to very sound concerns about their health.

## OUR COLLECTIVES

---

At the moment all collectives have moved their meetings online. Secure software has been purchased by the SRC to ensure all groups of diverse students can meet in a safe environment even with our shift to online meetings.

If you're wanting to be a part of the collective meetings you can reach out to any of the Facebook pages. From there the Office Bearers will be able to add you into meetings, Discord groups, and Zoom calls! Moreover, you can directly email our Office Bearers if you're needing further assistance. Emails can be kept confidential and all contact details can be found on our Arc page.

# WANT YOUR WORK PUBLISHED??

Tharunka is UNSW's spiciest political, social and cultural magazine.

If you are looking for an outlet for your creativity, look no further! We are looking for investigative journalism, feature essays, opinion pieces, short stories, poetry, satire, drawings, paintings, comics, reviews.

Send in your pitch now, to:



We're fully digital! Find us on:

[tharunka.arc.unsw.edu.au](http://tharunka.arc.unsw.edu.au)

 Tharunka Contributors 2020  @tharunkaunsw

Tharunka is published periodically by Arc @ UNSW. The views expressed herein are not necessarily the views of Arc, the Student Representative Council or the Tharunka editing team, unless expressly stated. Arc accepts no responsibility for the accuracy of any opinions or information contained within Tharunka. Any complaints should be made in writing to the Tharunka Managing Editor.

**Participation  
ISSUE 03.**