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Hello there,

Welcome to issue four of Tharunka and we’d just like to say thank you for taking time out of your doubtless hectic exam schedule to read our humble publication… (Although obviously it’s amazing and there’s always time for it.)

But it is a stressful time of year and there are a few stories in this issue which touch on the topic of mental health. It’s particularly important to take care of yourself in times of stress and if you feel under the pump you should take advantage of CAPS’ increased number of counsellors!

They aren’t just for people with a clinical illness, but for anyone who finds that everything has become a bit too much.

As Sam Moran writes in this issue, mental illnesses affect not only those who are suffering, but also those close to them. If you’re in that position you needn’t feel that you can’t get support for yourself either. As the articles in this issue, any stigma that still surrounds mental illness is horribly anachronistic and there are so many wonderful and supportive services out there if and when you need them.

Good luck for exams,
Ned and Lauren

If you need to talk to someone:

UNSW CAPS: Level 2, East Wing, Quadrangle Building, Office Hours 9:00am - 5:00pm
Phone: 9385 5418
Email: counselling@unsw.edu.au

UNSW Here2Hear after hours (9pm-7am) counselling service
http://heretohear.arc.unsw.edu.au/
Phone: 9385 4832

BeyondBlue
https://www.beyondblue.org.au
Phone: 1300 22 4636
The Agony Ibis is shrouded in mystery.

As I walk into the restaurant, I see him straight away; his radiant feathers catching my eye; he sits, poise.

I have to take a minute to catch my breathe; seeing him, there, in the flesh, is a little overwhelming, but the aura of confidence and kindness that he exudes settles me. This bird has guided me through many points in my life; the highs and lows, the awkward pubescent transitions, the existential crises of my twenties.

He cocks his head to the side and smiles, sipping from an espresso martini before settling it on the table with a carefully clipped wing.

Some people say you’re like the Conchita Wurst of birds. Have you been watching Eurovision?

Oh darling, many more say that Conchita Wurst is the Agony Ibis of people. And yes, I designed the costumes for Belgium using my own signature Ibis theme.

Who did you vote for in Eurovision?

I voted for Belgium, of course. In case you didn’t notice, they were actually Ibis-coloured to honour and commemorate the years of service I undertook in the Belgian army; of course, I’m from Austria immediately, but I truly believe that their 0 points was well deserved. Fuckers.

The Agony Ibis is shrouded in mystery.

Thoughts on the Mexican cartel drug wars? Are you pro legalisation?

It’s pretty hard to snort cocaine with a beak. Of course, the upside of that whole ‘bird’ thing is that I have a cloaca.

What brought you to Australia?

Much like Mary Poppins, I decided that you needed me (if you look carefully in photos, you’ll find me perched upon the shoulder of Frances Abbot whenever she’s having a bit of a cry about life- that is to say, frequently) and flew here with the assistance of a sassy umbrella. They’re the black friend of the avian world.

Best memories of France?

Plucking a cigarette from the hands of Ernest Hemingway as a young chick. Of course, I was peer pressured into it by the other Ibis chicks (you have no idea how cliquey they can be).

Do you think you’ll ever return to Berlin?

The Berlin Wall never affected birds. I know that’s not really relevant, but I just wanted to remind you that birds don’t have wars, and therefore are better than you.

How long will your dreidel be this year at Oktoberfest? How much of those slender legs will we get to see?

My beard is longer, German devotee. You’ll see all of my scaly, backwards bending knees and a fair bit of feather too.

As we close our interview, we take the time to discuss the finer points of historical romance fiction (he is hoping his crowd-funded novel will be published later this year) and walk to the door of the restaurant. We say our goodbyes and the agony ibis gracefully takes wing, presumably to his home in the largest waste disposal site in the state.

Dulce et decorum est pro patria mori, darling.
NEWS/
VC Releases Green Paper

New Vice-Chancellor Ian Jacobs has met with students to discuss their feedback on proposals included in the UNSW Green Paper, which outlines how the university will look in 2025. The Strategic Paper has objectives sorted into three categories: academic excellence, social engagement and global impact, the themes Professor Jacobs indicated earlier this year to Tharunka he was determined to focus on throughout his tenure.

The forum invited students to provide feedback on proposals such as introducing a more flexible academic year, utilising more online platforms, enhancing a sense of community amongst students and increasing opportunities for international exchange.

The Vice-Chancellor emphasised that the university took seriously the contribution of current students in shaping the future direction of UNSW. All current students have the opportunity to read the Green Paper and submit their own contributions through myUNSW. This can be accessed at https://student.unsw.edu.au/greenpaper.

UNSW Turns Attention to On-Campus Counselling

Last week saw the Office of Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Students) Wai Fong Chua and Deputy Vice-Chancellor Iain Martin respond to ongoing criticism and lobbying from student groups for more funding of the university’s counselling and psychological services (CAPS). Since the beginning of the year, the student and post-graduate representative councils along with Arc, the student organisation, have been lobbying the university to review and improve the service. Criticism of the CAPS program was first brought to university’s attention in 2013 with the student welfare collective continuously identifying the inadequacy of CAPS as a significant issue for students on campus.

Criticisms of the previous CAPS arrangements included students who are in acute need being turned away due to resource constraints. These include waiting times of two weeks for a basic consultation and little weight being given to those in acute need compared to those requiring ongoing treatment.

In response to complaints about CAPS ignoring urgent cases, there has been a triage system implemented.

It is understood that funding out of another portfolio has paid for the urgent services which comprise two full-time and one part-time counsellor to start permanently in June. Whilst acknowledging this will not resolve all issues with CAPS, SRC President Billy Bruffey said that these changes will mean an extra 120 hours per week of counselling support for all students, describing this increase in consultation hours as “substantial and long-overdue.” Earlier this year, the SRC gained $70,000 for funding for a psych service for UNSW-owned on-campus residents.
Remember last month when Federal Agricultural Minister, Barnaby Joyce, threatened to kill Johnny Depp’s dogs? In a series of escalations, the award-winning actor could face up to 10 years in prison, and Mr Joyce has called on the media watchdog to investigate shock-jock Kyle Sandilands.

Depp arrived in Australia mid-May to film the fifth instalment of Pirates of the Caribbean. Flying in on a private jet, he failed to submit proper documentation to bring pets into the country, and did not have the dogs quarantined. Customs officers did not see the dogs when they boarded the plane, and flight crew failed to declare their presence.

The situation had been referred to as, ‘the dog thing’, and social media coined it as ‘doggate’.

Mr Joyce launched straight into action, saying that not even a Hollywood actor is exempt from the rules, and that the dogs need to “bugger off”. Depp was given 50 hours to have the Yorkshire terriers, Pistol and Boo, removed from the country. Though the shock and horror came from Joyce’s ultimatum, remove the dogs, or they’ll be killed.

Killed. Not quarantined, not deported.

Though, thankfully the dogs made it out of the country before Joyce’s deadline. The Minister confirmed the departure with a tweet that simply stated, “Dogs gone”.

Newlywed Depp could be facing up to 10 years in prison for failing to apply for a permit, and not having the dogs quarantined for the 10-day requirement, by way of Australian biosecurity laws. Should the case go to court, the actor alternatively will be fined up to $340 000.

The illegal dog situation gained a lot of media attention due to Mr Joyce’s cut-throat attitude. Kiis FM’s Kyle Sandilands blasted Mr Joyce in an on-air interview, saying that Mr Joyce should have rephrased his statement to show decency. However, Kyle being Kyle also included some perhaps unprofessional name-calling which has Mr Joyce demanding the Australian Communications and Media Authority (Acma) investigate Sandilands.

Depp has left Australia and returned to the United States to be with his rebel Yorkies.
I’m a fifth year medical student, who started my proper clinical placements this year. Yesterday, I was in surgery, and was asked to scrub in so I could get close enough to see and participate. What happened was as follows:

When scrubbing I tried to remember what I had learned in my brief orientation over a year ago about how to do this correctly. I knew if I took too long I might miss the opportunity.

I tried to put on my gloves using the correct technique. Nope. Scolded by the scrub nurse. My gloves were no longer sterile and I was endangering the patient. She helped glove me correctly.

I approached the patient. Tried to be helpful when the surgeon was passing something. “That’s a sharp, don’t touch it”. Clearly I don’t know what I’m doing. I’m in the way.

I got asked to identify some of the structures in the body. Having never seen this surgery before (and possessing a leaky anatomy brain) I made a fool of myself again.

Then it was time to close. “Scott, you’re going to close one of the incisions”. Oh God.

Hands shaking, I start to do a type of suture I had taught myself on a piece of plastic the week before.

This is a real patient. This is a real scar he will have.

The term operating ‘theatre’ seems appropriate here. Five or six professionals watching. All paid a lot. All important.

I was slow. I was awkward. The anaesthetist suggested I keep my elbows closer because he could see my hands shaking. That definitely didn’t make them stop…

He asked the surgeon if they were close to getting done, commenting on another patient who was waiting. ‘Hurry up Scott’ rang in my ears.

I finally got it done. Incision closed. Surgeon happy enough.

Relief.

The thing about this experience was that it was actually almost the best version of these events I could have hoped for. The supervisors I worked with were kind, supportive and patient. They were happy to repeat my work if it wasn’t good enough. They encouraged me to push my boundaries. They said there was no rush and I shouldn’t feel pressured. The nurse was also kind and understanding, explained the instruments during the operation and then after the surgery helped show me how to glove correctly by myself. I couldn’t have asked for a better environment.

This is not always the case.

My story hopefully serves to illustrate how medical education works. It’s hard not to feel inadequate, disheartened and like a nuisance.

Fifth year students are thrown into a clinical environment disorientated and under-prepared. Our lives become an endless series of questions being thrown at us, “Do you know this piece of information?” or “Do you know how to do this skill that would make you useful?”
"No I don’t know where to find that on this ward. No I’m not confident putting in a cannula. No I don’t know how that drug works. Please take time out of your already busy day to be patient with me and show me. I know it will take longer. I know you would do it better and quicker yourself. And believe me, I know you are busy helping people. I know that, because the 18 months until I have to do the same are ticking away so damn fast. But I have to learn somehow and I don’t know what else to do. So I’m here being a nuisance.”

The other side of the fear-of-inadequacy coin is competitiveness. Competitiveness and medicine have always been closely linked. With less than 6% of applicants getting in to our UNSW Medical Doctorate program, we hold some of the most competitively sought after positions in any university program in the Southern Hemisphere. It doesn’t stop either, with the numbers of medical graduates far outweighing the number of specialist training places, competitiveness within medicine is necessary to specialise.

It is unsurprising we are anxious and depressed. Take this pressure and tack on a few emotional gut-punches from those patient stories that just get to you, along with some personal issues and we have a poor mental health/self-esteem cocktail. A Beyond Blue study found over 50% of us are emotionally exhausted or burnt out, and 20% have considered suicide. These numbers are for students, but the trend continues for junior doctors, who work longer hours, have more expected of them, have the fear of very real consequences, but are still subject to the same feelings of inadequacy and competition.

I explain all this to try and show how utterly imperative it is for us to be well supported, as I was in the operating theatre yesterday. But like I said:

This is not always the case.

Bullying always felt like a high school concept to me. I fundamentally believed that it was a problem that would go away with age, in the same way that when children grow up they no longer steal each other’s toys or wet the bed. Unfortunately, bullying is rife in the medical community, and it is undoubtedly a significant contributor to our cohort’s stress and poor mental health.

Given some of my experiences, I was not surprised when Four Corners reported (among other bullying issues) an abuse of the Socratic Method in the medical community, that students are shamed for their lack of knowledge, often in front of other doctors or students. I have been shouted at for asking for help in front of an office of hospital workers. I have been embarrassed in front of my peers and other health professionals. It has been made clear I’m a nuisance when I try to complete mandated the assessments.
I like to think I will be a pretty good doctor one day. So why am I being driven to the point that some days I go home wanting to quit, cry or just give up. And honestly, as a white male, I probably have it the easiest. Students and junior doctors who are women and of other ethnicities report a confronting blend of harassment, misogyny and discrimination. And when there aren’t adequate reporting structures in place, or previous whistle-blowers have lost jobs or been ridiculed as ‘overly-sensitive’, our ability to deal with such issues is limited.

How is it that a group of well-meaning, intelligent and kind students become the harsh, judgemental professionals we experience? Professionals we are terrified of crossing as they are the gatekeepers of the future we have worked for. I guess this environment proliferates because people do to others as was done to them. Doctors learn how to educate students and juniors doctors by how they were taught.

“I got through it, you can too.” “Just grow a thicker skin.” “You will be stressed in the job, might as well get used to it”

My question is: do we really want our future doctor’s to be forced to grow a thicker skin? To learn to care less about their colleagues, students and their calibre as a medical professional? Do we want to blunt empathy in a profession where it is so necessary?

People shouldn’t have to run the gauntlet to prove they can. Going through pain to show you are worthy is a Game of Thrones argument. Similarly, the fact that ‘it has always been this way’ doesn’t begin to justify why something should continue. It’s as lazy as saying the behaviour is acceptable because “everyone else does it”.

We won’t even begin to touch on the issues this has for the quality of patient care, arguably the most important consideration of this issue. But if junior doctors feel intimidated to call for help because they will be embarrassed or bullied then we have a broken system. If students do something they aren’t comfortable with because they are scared of not impressing their supervisor then we have a broken system.

Hopefully with the recent coverage, those who bully will reconsider before they admonish rather than support, rethink before they hold a student to an unreasonable standard. If our generation can have access to decent reporting structures for mistreatment, and can learn from our experiences to become better, kinder educators, then maybe we can stop the propagation of a truly outdated and unnecessary cycle of bullying.
It’s not rocket science: students will go wherever they can to get the best value deal. And although it’s optimistic to want to support local business, especially those on the UNSW grounds, it’s not always financially viable. In reality, the larger chains and off-campus retailers succeed in taking the university foodie demographic away on the intricate variances in their menu, and more specifically, the price of such.

For many a ravenous, bleary-eyed and cash-strapped youth of academia, the difference in a couple of dollars can mean the difference between money invested to the university and, to put it frankly, the money not. Loocl, a free app that launched in Sydney’s eastern suburbs four months ago is trying to change this dynamic – and it’s working. The name of the app is a derivative of the phrase ‘look local’, and works by allowing local business owners to offer instant deals to people close by.

This completely smartphone-based form of social commerce kicked off at UNSW a few weeks ago, boasting a heap of university sellers already on their bandwagon, and the results, as they say, are in. Students downloaded the app in droves and businesses’ suddenly found their cafes getting very busy.

Laz, the owner of Laz’s Poolside Café, a hearty “bit of everything” café on the lower end of campus has really struggled over the years with his image. “Perception has been hard for us,” he said. “Most people don’t see us as a café, because we’re right next to the pool. They see us as a tuck-shop. The app helped us change the perception of what we were.” According to Laz: “[It] brought in people who wouldn’t normally come all the way down to the pool. You know, there’s, what? 50,000, maybe more, students at this university and half of those are usually up at upper campus.

“We had a load of new faces come in for the deals and we now see them again and again.” Laz regularly puts out 50 percent off deals on items from his extensive menu and his café became so busy, so quickly, that it started to turn heads. Bec, the manager of the UNSW Fitness and Aquatic Centre right next door joined in on the app action after asking Laz why his café was suddenly so full of people. “She said she hadn’t seen it that busy in a long time!” he said. Shortly after, Bec was offering her own majorly discounted gym entry pass deal via Loocl, and is now starting to think of new things that she can offer the UNSW community, health and fitness wise.

It’s certainly not news that university seller’s have had it tough over the years. Lease issues and more external competition have meant that UNSW businesses have, at times, struggled to differentiate themselves from these challenges to the great market of hungry students walking the university halls. An easy-to-use platform that allowed them to
promote their great foodie fares to anyone within five kilometres merely looking at the app meant that the game was changed for them - and finally in their favour.

For manager Guy of Yummba, UNSW’s great Middle-Eastern eatery, Loocl works because it attracts people who had no idea that the place existed before; or simply just walked past. “Students who didn’t know the place before now come in, and Loocl’s got us a lot of new customers.

The second thing that’s amazing was the returning customers - they come back and try new things, because we put up new deals everyday. Loocl is a great idea, especially for the students. “I hope they keep growing because we’ll grow with them.”

Students get to feel great about staying localised whilst saving money and businesses get to see some extra gorgeous, yet somewhat haggard (...after all, it is Week 13) faces walk through their doors. Supporting our local on-campus businesses just got easier and cheaper - and we can revel in the fact that we’re the first university to do so. Eating and winning, eating and winning, eating and winning.
Last year’s federal budget was big news for all the wrong reasons. Commentators were using words like ‘cruel’ and ‘unfair’ to describe it. In comparison, coverage of this year’s budget has been muted. Skimming the newspapers gives you a sense of the main theme - this is a ‘political budget’.

To understand what this means, you have to understand the politics behind the budget and the motivations of the government. I think that if you want to do that effectively, it’s best to go back not just to last year’s budget but to the election campaign, when the current government was in opposition.

During that campaign, the Coalition assured voters that the main economic obstacle facing the nation was the profligate spending of the Labor Government. This was an election strategy that has been employed against progressive political parties around the world. It proved a winning strategy for David Cameron in 2010. As luck would have it, it also managed to see Tony Abbott elected in 2013. But in terms of the economic agenda, the problem for the government has always been that it over-promised in opposition.

Alongside the chief election commitment to ‘bring the budget back to surplus’ was also commitments not to raise taxes, and not to make cuts to pensions, education, health, or our national broadcasters. This of course was always pure spin, a return to surplus without any reduction in government spending and no new revenue is impossible – indeed the new government committed to forgo revenue by abolishing the Carbon Tax and the Minerals Resources Rent Tax, and increase expenditure through a Paid Parental Leave Scheme that no-one thought was fair or reasonable in the current economic climate.

Then along came budget 2014. At its centre were a number of fiscal tightening measures - cuts to social services, introduction of a six month waiting period for youth to access unemployment benefits, cuts to higher education to force fee deregulation, co-payments for GP visits and other medical services, and a raft of tax increases. Unsurprisingly it was called “unfair” because the majority of big ticket changes negatively affected the poor and downtrodden in the community.

But I think the real reason for the political devastation it caused was that the public was caught off-guard, it simply wasn’t what they had signed up for on election day.

The government entered budget season 2015 with a low-approval rating and many of its flagship reforms unable to pass the Senate. The idea that to improve its fortunes the government would have to do a 180 on the idea of surplus as the foundation for economic policy is why commentators have labelled this budget a ‘political’ one.

The six month waiting period for young people to access unemployment benefits, has now become a four week waiting period. The GP co-payment is now off the table. The measure the government was most eager to show off, however, was new tax arrangements for small business including a 1.5% cut in the company tax rate and a $20,000 asset write-down scheme.
For a Coalition government these sorts of measures are probably seen as stimulatory, but their only real benefit will be measured in how they appeal to middle Australia.

At this point it should be remembered that there are still cuts to social services on the table, foreign aid will also see significant cuts, and students will undoubtedly be dismayed that the government has doubled-down on its promise to deregulate university fees. But this got little traction in the news coverage - instead the focus has instead been on how the government has abandoned its ‘debt emergency’ rhetoric.

When all is said and done the government came into office touting its fiscal rectitude, and in this respect it has been an utter failure. It has failed on all of its key election promises in terms of its economic performance. Labor and The Greens have run strong campaigns calling out the government for ‘cruelty’ in its economic agenda, and this has quite effectively mobilised new supporters.

The question will be whether they can persuade the swinging voters that the government’s economic record is a shambles, even though there are some politically popular measures on the way. The result of the next election remains uncertain, however it must be said the opposition parties have been given a strong leg-up.
Why do straight cis people get to determine when “it’s time” for human rights for queer people? As I watched Tanya Plibersek repeat the phrase “I believe it’s time” at this weekend’s marriage equality rally in Sydney, the question kept playing through my mind.

Just 40 years ago, the Stonewall Riots in the US kicked off the campaign for queer rights during a time when sexuality and gender identity was heavily criminalised worldwide. Led by trans activists like Sylvia Rivera, these riots saw the brutalisation and arrest of many queer people, but it also revealed the power and resolve this minority possessed. It symbolised the start of a long but tireless and unstoppable resistance. For decades, equal marriage was but one of the demands placed upon society by these activists and the many after them, but apparently it was just never the “right time” to stop discriminating.

But in 2015, so many of these demands have been forgotten. Embarrassed by our country’s outdated and discriminatory laws, it seems we’ll finally see this long marriage equality battle end in victory. But it’s just one small battle with the illusion of a greater war. It constantly obscures the daily battles, lives lost and perpetuations of inequality. So society can think it’s time to celebrate, crack open the champagne and shout “omg we solved the queer problems YAY!” whilst doing absolutely nothing but giving heaps of money away to perform elaborate and unnecessary rituals and eat a lot of cake.

But that is in ignorance of the 10 countries on this planet where homosexual, bisexual and/or transgender people face death simply for existing, on top of the 77 countries that carry a term of imprisonment. It is in ignorance of issues way closer to home as well. Issues like:

- Deportations of queer refugees to places that criminalise queerness,
- Queer youth homelessness, even at UNSW, where people are kicked out of their homes and forced to sleep on campus because there is nowhere safer for them to go (and international students threatened or forced to leave the country when parents discover their queerness)
- Overwhelmingly high rates of depression, anxiety, suicide and attempted suicide for queer people, especially trans people
- Higher rates of abuse and murder for trans women (especially trans women of colour)
- Overrepresentation in prison
- Rejection of employment
- Bullying, harassment, abuse and institutionalised ignorance or encouragement of homophobia in our schools and workplaces
- Little to no queer sex education, leading to issues with health and alienation
- Institutionalised gender binaries in the law, on documents, on bathroom doors and throughout society, causing harm for trans people and those outside the norms of “male” and “female.”

And this is just a small snapshot of the issues that affect queer people in this rich and developed country. Is marriage equality really more important than all of these? Should we celebrate this victory and silently continue to ignore the harm that is so constantly perpetuated and encouraged here?
Don’t get me wrong. Growing up queer at a rural school, the legalisation of discrimination within this country didn’t help the spiral of anxiety, self-loathing and depression I fell into coming to terms with who I was. Going to the city to march in marriage equality rallies felt like the most liberating experience for me, actually seeing people who supported me and who stood up to the state to prove it.

But coming to UNSW, joining the Queer Collective here and becoming a queer activist myself, I’ve been confronted time and again by the banality of that fight. Marriage itself is beautiful in an emotional sense, but it’s a middle-class performance of love, a fancy term for a lawfully-recognised relationship and not much more. It’s interesting how governments keep the downtrodden fighting for a middle-class prize for so many decades. But with the popularisation of marriage equality, it has become so easy for people to forget the real issues plaguing the queer community.

But, yes, after all this, it’s time. Time for an early election, and time for political parties to begin looking like they’re the least shitty again. Time for tricks like hastily-proposed marriage equality legislation, ignoring the others already waiting to be debated because they’re proposed by a different party so they don’t count. Time for point-scoring. Time for society to pat itself on the back and say “look, world, we did the thing!”

Time for people who have waited so long to finally have their moment, eyes glistening and smiles beaming, to have their love recognised. Time for queer youth to stop feeling like their lives don’t count and that their feelings don’t matter.

But it’s also time to look beyond marriage equality now. It’s time to look at what’s behind that long, dark shadow and shine the light on what we’ve been too afraid to see.
We all know that brown parents tend to run a strict household with cemented laws that one must abide by. Often these laws are backdated, but unlike the 'legal' world, they don’t get amended or striked out.

Mental illnesses are a serious issue that affects 1 out of every 5 Australians. That’s a significant proportion when you think about it. Individuals with mental illness find it increasingly difficult to talk about their emotions as it is, but this gets pressingly harder when your parents see it all as “a mind game”. For many brown kids, that’s often the case. Some brown parents have this preconceived misconception that only “mad people” to go psychologists or psychiatrists and that mental disorders such as depression and anxiety are all trick of the mind.

Often this absurd reasoning comes from imprinted ideals drilled into their brains from their backgrounds. It boggles my mind, trying to understand what possible reason people may have in talking about or acknowledging the fact that mental illnesses do exist and they affect more people around us than we think. I feel like in the eyes of brown parents having a mental illness becomes synonymous to being ‘abnormal’, ‘silly’ and to disturbing extents, ‘attention seeking’.

Even in urban India where Bollywood is showing more explicit material or ‘taboo’ material than a psychological disorder, the topic of mental illness and speaking about it out in the open is boycotted. The sad thing is that these ideas remain with many migrated parents as they try and enforce these same misleading concepts onto their children. I have seen and heard of many incidences where many brown kids were terrified to talk to their parents or any relatives for that matter about their mental illness or feelings in fear if getting shunned upon or taken the wrong way. There is something seriously wrong with this.

And so, if the topic of mental illness poses as such a threat to traditional thoughts and mindset, than the topic of homosexuality is basically banned. A topic that is covered under dirt all the time, imagining, hoping and praying that it doesn’t exist.

Homophobia or the blatant ignorance of believing that there is no such thing as homosexuality is sadly a very common phenomena exhibited around the world. For more conservative countries such behaviour is almost seen as a mental disorder. Completely devastating.

In 2008 the only royal lineage in modern India, Manvendra Singh Gohil, publically came out as gay. Hearing this his parents attempted to, however failed to, disinherit him and most of his friends stopped contacting him. Complete abandonment and isolation from family and close friends. If this is the fate of a royal, it’s scary to think what lay people like us have to face. Disownment is at the top of the list.

OPINION/

Brown parents’ take on “taboo” issues

By Srestha Mazumder
To many parents homosexuality is seen as something that can be “corrected” - and that it is all just in the mind, or a phase. These views are parallel to what they think of mental illnesses. However what they fail to realise is that both of these things are not a phase, and are not just something in the mind that can be fixed within a few hours. Homosexuality is natural, just like heterosexuality.

So many ignorant people fail to see this as such as in turn label these poor victimised people with crude and derogatory words.

Mental illness and homosexuality are two hot topics in today’s society. Much has changed in the understanding of these two “taboo” material in the western world. However, for some of the brown population, I feel that this understanding is still to a certain extent lacking. Of course, not all brown parents think in such way, which is a massive breath of fresh air.
VOLADORES DE PAPANTLA
Daniel Moctezuma-Baker
The “voladores” (Spanish for flyers) are an ancient ceremonial tradition from prehispanic Mexico, and it currently survives mostly through the Totonac people of the northern region of the state of Veracruz.

The flyers jump several times a day in the town of Papantla and in surrounding towns to keep the tradition alive, from what used to be a rite exclusively aimed at asking for rain during times of drought.

The ceremony has been recognized as Intangible Cultural Heritage by UNESCO since 2009.
1. We’re saving people from drowning at sea!

This “moral upper ground” argument doesn’t compute in a few ways, yet it is possibly the most persuasive of them all. Hell, I found myself reconsidering my position. But insisting that locking people in mandatory detention to save them from drowning at sea and is somehow for their benefit isn’t doing anything to remedy the situation which is forcing them to flee and disregards the crux of the problem.

The fact is that people will continue to take dangerous boat journeys if whatever they are fleeing from is worse. We have seen this. Boat arrivals are up. The fact that people are still undertaking the journey after having heard of so many deaths at sea proves the fact of their dire situations. If Australia is unable or unwilling to help overseas (which the consistent slashing of the foreign aid budget implies), the most moral course of action os to take refugees in.

2. They’re jumping the queue!

Again, it comes back to desperation. The UNHCR takes on average, 10 years to process a refugee, and you can’t claim asylum seeker status until you have left the country you are trying to flee. For those in desperate need and fearing for their family’s safety, this is far too long. Legal channels to Australia are only accessible with a visa. But embassies are watched, and walking into a government controlled area in a country where one’s entire ethnic group is

being persecuted just isn’t a viable option.

3. We’re successfully taking away the livelihoods of the evil people-smugglers!

Even if the Australian government believes that it will be able to deter people from undertaking sea journeys (which it will not, for reasons outlined above), why is “people-smuggling” necessarily bad? This is an example of rhetoric at work. The word “people-smuggler” sounds despicable, aligning them somewhat with the similarly hyphenated “human-trafficker”.

However the connotations inherent in the term “people-smuggler” necessarily involve illegality, which asylum-seeking is not by international standards. Essentially, these are people who are helping their countrymen flee from countries in which they face real danger. Without valorising them, it must be noted that Oskar Schindler could have been considered a people smuggler.

4. They are criminals and/or terrorists/will steal our jobs

All asylum seekers go through mandatory health, character and criminal record checks before arriving in the country. The overwhelming majority pass and are found to be genuine refugees. Any refugees have contributed to the success of Australia as a nation, including writer Anh Do, businessman Nathan Werdiger, and Westfield founder Frank Lowy.
5. They “country-shop” to get to Australia

Places asylum seekers “pass” before reaching Australia are not fit to take in asylum seekers. Malaysia has not signed the Refugee Convention (1951), which outlines the obligation to accept refugees and give them basic human rights. Refugees are similarly treated poorly in countries such as Indonesia and Cambodia, where they cannot work or get an education even if the unlikely situation that they are accepted as refugees. Escaping these countries therefore becomes a simple matter of survival.

6. Detention is for processing. They need to be processed somewhere.

Yes, but detention centres on Manus Island and Nauru have been found on numerous occasions to be relatively uninhabitable. The Moss Report showed serious allegations of sexual abuse, some towards young children. The living spaces are crowded, damp and adequate medical care is not received, such as in the case of Hamid Kehazaei who died from septicaemia after a cut on his foot.

Women are made to line up for each sanitary product and mental health is dangerously neglected, with reports of children and adults starving themselves and self-harming. This is partly because, in the words of Julian Burnside, “after about 12-18 months, people fall into despair and hopelessness”. Detention does not need to be mandatory and indefinite for asylum seekers, and the Australian government denying responsibility for its actions on such offshore detention centres only compounds the very real problem.

7. They’ll take all the Centrelink and bleed the country dry!!

Keeping offshore detention centres open cost Australia upwards of $1 billion from January-October 2014. Asylum seekers get the same Centrelink payments as any other adult, however most who have been resettled are employed in rural (and metropolitan) communities and aim to contribute to Australia as part of the workforce.

8. We can’t just let people in indeterminately/ indefinitely! The floodgates will be broken! The helpless people will arrive like the plague and then we will be overrun! (Runs off screaming hysterically).

It is hard to accurately determine how many people would attempt to seek asylum if Australia’s policies were half-way generous, because it’s been so long since they have been. However, Bruce Haigh notes that when the last generous asylum seeker policy was enacted (towards Vietnamese refugees under Malcolm Fraser), refugees still only constituted 0.1% of the population.

9. It was all Gillard’s fault!!

Um, what? Yeah, ok…

10. The deficit!!!!!!!

…. Right.
Glory of Ego: A Response
By Carla Zuniga

To say that I took issue to Adrian Pedic’s piece The Glory of the Male Ego, published in Tharunka Issue 3 would not only be an understatement, but an insult to my own understanding of music, ego and race.

The piece is an examination of the ego of musicians Kanye West and Kevin Parker. Pedic does this without any real examination on the individual personalities of these two figures, and without any real understanding of how their perspective egos impact their success. He also completely ignores the differing social, economic and racial backgrounds of the two artists and haphazardly attempts to compare two musicians with vastly different approaches to music making, and completely different styles of music overall, linking them only through their seemingly egotistical understandings of how to create music.

Pedic argues that these two artists are different, then tries to compare their similarities, which is confusing, by stating that contrary to how different these personalities may appear to be, the success of both artists hinges on their own ego. This may be a valid argument, if it were not for the fact that the only qualifier for this seems to be that they are both producing and creating exciting new styles of music, something which Pedic seems to believe is all due to ego and not the individual styles or ambitions, or even talent of West & Parker. Pedic also seemingly forgets that success as an artist is closely linked to marketing and publicity, both of which are fuelled by having a strong personality, and that the world of Hollywood is built on narcissism not just “ego”.

Pedic goes on to make a throwaway comment regarding West’s wife Kim Kardashian-West, stating of West, “being married to Kim Kardashian certainly doesn’t do him any favours,” something which changes the article from being merely confusing and seemingly pointless, to offensive. When pushed for an explanation regarding this statement on social media, Pedic admitted he “didn’t really know” anything about Kardashian-West, but that she doesn’t “have the best credibility” and was “underwhelming” as West’s wife. It would have been a far more interesting article if the author hadn’t simply stated his own perception of Kardashian-West, but rather had examined how West’s ego plays into the couples relationship, and how this relationship has impacted his success as a musician.
Pedic completely ignores the racial implications of West's supposed megalomania, and how he reacts to public perception of this, both as a person of colour and as a black artist. Pedic fails to examine this, even when comparing West to Billy Corgan, and seems not to understand the connection between power, ego and race. He has completely ignored issues of anti-blackness and instead used highly subjective media perceptions as fact, with no thorough examination or understanding.

I also particularly take offence to the writers stance throughout, asking the audience to simply abide by the male ego without actually examining the deeper impacts and influences of this to music and wider culture, stating “some of the greatest achievements in not only the arts, but human history, have been the result of men driven by their own belief in themselves.” I could draw up a multitude of examples in which this and similar statements have been used to qualify abuse, sexism and discrimination.

What could have been a piece dedicated to examining portrayals of the ego within music, focused on how race and gender are implicated, or similarly a successful piece focused on West's ego and its implication in his creation of music and success as an artist, is instead a piece that says nothing because it never seems to land on a key idea. There is one positive in the article. Attempting to enact his own self-fulfilling prophecy of egotism, Pedic claims, “everybody with a keyboard and half-baked opinion gets a voice.”
“Powerful and pervasive, stigma prevents people from acknowledging their own mental health problems, much less disclosing them to others” – US Surgeon General in 1999

I feel as if I am dancing on the edge of a chasm, which threatens every day to drag me down so my solution is to not look, to hide in ignominy and fear, to hope that the darkness passes by. Yet each day, I can feel the cold, it seeps into my bones and it draws colour from the world.

It would be easy to presume this is where I come out, declaring publicly that I have depression, or have been battling an anxiety disorder for years. It is not. My confession is simpler, yet it corrodes me, embarrasses me just to admit. My confession is that someone very close to me suffers from mental illness and I am terrified, every single day, that I will say something, or do something, or cause them to tip into an abyss where I cannot follow them. And yet upon reflection I also want to ask myself, how dare I? How dare I complain or try to compete with their suffering? I am not. But I think I am far from the only person; I think my reaction largely characterises much of how Australia treats mental illness.

Almost one in five adults in Australia are diagnosed with a mental illness each year in Australia, the most common of which are anxiety disorders and depression. Even more concerning are the many that remain undiagnosed. Mental illness, even amongst those who have had to confront it, retains tremendously powerful stigmas relating to both the nature of the diseases and also those people who suffer from it. Consequently, there is a societal reticence to discuss the problems plaguing one fifth of our population.

Why is it misunderstood?

Treatment of mental illness is hindered almost as much, if not more so, by external pressures such as pejorative stereotypes, than the actual chemical and psychological factors that constitutes the disease. But this leads us to the question – why is it that mental illness is so misunderstood?

The answer to that is obviously a multiplicity of factors, each with their own nuances, which could take books to consider. Yet in short, there is a lack of understanding about the types of mental illness and the extent to which they are a choice or a chemical, physiological imbalance.

There is a terrifying practice amongst many people - presumably driven by a lack of understanding and probably a corresponding unwillingness to confront a stark, painful reality – to pretend that mental illness is a choice.
It is not uncommon for people suffering from depression to be told to “harden up”, people who are physiologically anxious are told to “calm down” and people who are anorexic are told to “eat more”. These statements, while often small or even phrased as jokes can devastating to the fragile psyche of individuals who deal with these traumas on a daily basis.

I find myself constantly struggling not to shout, “think about it”, “c’mon it’s not that bad” and even just “get a grip”. But you can’t. Not only because it is pointless, but because you risk alienating that person. You risk losing the trust you just built by spending an hour talking with them, or helping them to focus on the everyday tasks that now take that much more effort.

Mental illness is a society-wide problem, yet it disproportionately affects young people. A range of studies conducted has indicated that as a person’s age increases their risk of mental illness decreases. That is scary. It scares me to think about it because I wonder how many of my peers at school, who I dismissed as being not cut-out for hard work or for simply suffering the normal angst of puberty, struggle with mental illness. I say struggle not struggled because mental illness is not something you necessarily outgrow. Vestiges of it cling to you, like cobwebs in your mind, that no matter how carefully you clean will always slowly slip back into the darkest corners.

Not only do these statements demonstrate a cutting lack of compassion and understanding, but they also belie the fact that many victims of mental illness are aware of their problem but are unable – sometimes even when they are receiving help – to change the patterns of their behaviour. Further, the people who make these thoughtless comments are also often those closest to the victims, which further break down their ability to discuss their problems and enhances the common perceptions of isolation and defeatism.
Sane Australia reports that with proper, medical attention sufferers of mental illness can live a full, wholesome life, unencumbered by the cobwebs. But Sane estimates that less than half of people with mental illnesses receive proper treatment. The effects of this while wide ranging are perhaps most powerfully shown by considering the suicide rate, with up to 15% of those suffering from mental illness committing suicide – in contrast to approximately 1% of the entire population.

Obviously, more can be done to help people – but what can we, university students (particularly those not training to be medical professionals) do to help?

First, we have to stop pretending the problem does not exist or is only small. Australian lawyers experience depression at a rate of approximately 49% according to a survey of 125 professionals by Beaton Consulting in 2011. Similarly, a study conducted in 2010 found that dentists not only had one of the highest rates of depression, but also one of the highest rates of suicide.

Second, we have to know where to go to access information. Sometimes the information is for ourselves, and sometimes it is for those around us. It is our responsibility to be informed on issues that impact us one way or another. There are numerous sources, from the more public institutions of BeyondBlue and Sane Australia, to the Butterfly Foundation, there are also numerous helplines such as the National Eating Disorders Collaboration, ReachOut and HeadSpace. Those are just the tip of the iceberg – but we should all have a better understanding of what these problems are and who can help.

Finally, we can be patient. No matter how frustrating it is, no matter how trivial it is, no matter how bad your day is – remember your support is essential and sometimes you just have to wait it out. That does not mean that you should let your friend or family-member hide away in a room forever, but it means recognising when they need a break or when not to push too hard. These are all struggles – as I am learning, but they are worth it. Because when you keep at it, sometimes, just occasionally you see them laugh or smile or they do something that reminds you of who they are without the monolithic burden they are carrying and you realise why it is worth it. Life is precious, our thoughts are our most pure articulation of that – make sure we help everyone enjoy their own.
“Don’t worry, it’s all in your head.” This piece of advice is frequently proffered as though it may assist people suffering from a mental illness. Though what logical basis it rests upon I’m not at all sure, unless someone suffering from hemochromatosis could also take solace in the advice, “don’t worry, it’s all in your liver.” And even if we were to accept Descartes’ rather dubious mind/body distinction, he claims that the body is better known than the mind, so an illness of the mind is more rather than less frightening.

The stigma surrounding mental illness has lessened over the years, but there is still a prevalent attitude that as a disease, mental illness plays by different rules. Sadly, this thinking is perpetuated by the continued airing of views from people with no medical expertise. The demonisation of the psychiatric profession by cultural titans like Will Self and Jonathan Franzen has been published in places as wide-ranging as The Guardian, New Scientist and Harper’s Magazine. Their critique is a classic one: there is wide-spread use of anti-depressants and this is profiteering by Big Pharma of an epidemic that is not actually medical, but a sense of alienation and worthlessness created by the failure of capitalist economies to maintain a sense of society.

Fair enough, I suppose, but it’s not a particularly nuanced argument and it becomes downright dangerous when this critique suggests that anti-depressants are unhelpful or hazardous thereby preventing people who are suffering from receiving the support they need. Franzen and Self are both great novelists, but their musings on Western Civilization in crisis is not medical advice. And call me naïve, but I refuse to accept that increased usage of anti-depressants is prima facie evidence of a society in decline. Sure, misdiagnosis is a problem, but so is illness. We might as well argue that 100 years ago people didn’t bother getting treated at all for appendicitis, but now everyone demands expensive and invasive surgery. The wimps. Yes, there has always been depression, but now there are more avenues for people to feel better. Society may have many problems, but I fail to see this is one of them.
The amount of lycra it took to wrap him in white was extensive, but worth it.
Caressing his curves with the soft embrace of anonymity, he twisted a little beneath the silky fabric, revelling in the way it slipped across his skin. It twisted, it shifted, it danced. He felt at one with the fabric.
His suit lay stagnant on the floor.
On a whim, he turned and seized his briefcase. Emptied the contents into the air with a flourish; hips twisting, his arms locked, outstretched. The briefcase clattered in the corner as the contents rained down. Papers, fluttering, floating to the floor, he was lost in the flurry. In his white lycra. Phantom in the white lycra.
He seized the red paint from the bathroom, and mashed it into his head. He could feel it seeping down his scalp and sinking into his hair, behind his ears, down his neck.
His hands would have vermillion trapped beneath manicured nails for days. He would leave red imprints on his steering wheel.
He always felt wonderfully lonely, driving at night; the way the streets and buildings were lit up for the abstract idea of a person that wasn’t real in the sense of being actual, but still very much physical, was comforting, like stories of God to children. He was lonely, and he was alone, but it was like pressing on a bruise- there was pleasure, not with the pain, but because of it.
There was solace in the quiet. There was heart.
It was beneath the glaring lights of Parliament House, on the lawn wet with condensation from the frigid Canberra night, that he shed his cloak. Dropping it in a pool at his feet, he felt the cocoon of warm air rush away from him and he was connected to the air, suddenly, every hair on his svelte body standing on end. He was glowing. Glowing with the huge lights shining down on him, and the viridescent emerald of the grass soaking his unshod feet, and the night urging him to move. He could hear the wind; he couldn’t feel any, but he could hear it.
He began to dance. He began to stretch his body across the expanse, lengthening legs and arms and reaching to the sky before folding into himself. He was leaping and twirling and crawling and crying all at once, wordless expression of sorrow filling him with joy.
As the sun began to rise, he paused. There was sound now; yes, there were birds, and there were sprinklers, and there was the distant hum of a city beginning to wake, but loudest in his cold ears was his laboured breathing. He was tired. He had danced for hours.
Back in his charcoal grey, woollen suit and it felt like a prison. It did not yield. It did not shift or breathe or glow against the green benches he lived on, existed on, would become one day (few people knew that the house of representatives’ seats were made of the hide of past occupants).
He yelled and wrote and ordered and smoked, but there was calculation in his movements. Every smile was a nanosecond slow, like a computer that had too many windows open. He felt like that. Like a machine grinding to a halt beneath the weight of a million thoughts.
One thought was heavier than the others: I must again.

It was later, and he had returned, again and again. He was a spectre of red-tipped white in the night, tail trailing behind him. His movements were faster, more refined.
But he had also begun to hear murmurs, of the phantom dancing on the grass in the night. This time the thought was heavier: I must end.
He balled the lycra in one hand, stretched and oxidised from its frequent wear, and threw it into the fire.

Tony Jones turned to him, mirth in his eyes.
“Joe, is that a cigar in your pocket, or are you just happy to see me?”
He could just hold back the tears from the harmless question. No.
It wasn’t a cigar; it was a tampon.
And it was in his heart.
/Kamasi Washington- The Epic
10/10

A triple-length jazz album might sound like an anachronism in 2015, and as if taking that as a challenge, Kamasi Washington’s The Epic arrives, proving everybody wrong in the process. Washington, who contributed sax to To Pimp a Butterfly, has taken the work being done by Kendrick Lamar and Flying Lotus in recent years, and expanded it into an almost encyclopaedic entry in the jazz canon. He’s essentially made the jazz album that we’ve been threatened with for the last few years. Not only does Washington craft an interesting, three-dimensional record, but he also celebrates the history of the extremely important, and influential genre.

Touching base with Miles Davis, John Coltrane and everyone in-between, Washington delivers an album that is truly epic, in every sense of the word; long, free form passages are punctuated with an abrupt return to a refrain, crafted with the feeling of improvisation and skill that has become synonymous with jazz. Opener “Change of the Guard” becomes a mission statement throughout its 12 minute runtime, and the message is clear: Jazz didn’t have to come back; it never left. In doing so, Washington builds upon decades of musical history and delivers a work that truly deserves to stand alongside the masterpieces that made it possible; given how surprisingly accessible this album is, and the clear passion involved, we’d be wise not to ignore it.

/Torres- Sprinter
6/10

If there’s one thing that’s consistent across Torres’ new LP, Sprinter, it’s that she always sounds pissed off. From the opener, “Strange Hellos”, Mackenzie Scott moves forward with a sound that is often abrasive, and always furious. Even on a relatively slow song like “New Skin”, there’s still an unmistakable sense of discontent and frustration.

However, the songs themselves are lacking in their construction. Beyond this singular focus on Scott’s distress, many of the songs fail to move beyond this concept. Whereas “Strange Hello” is a well-made and dynamic song, the next three songs are simply moments of dreary contemplation with little to distinguish from each other. Similarly, “Sprinter” and “Cowboy Guilt” briefly pick up the pace at the album’s halfway point, before it falls into a similar pattern of wandering instrumentation and a gradual build-up.

The exception, though, would have to be album closer, “The Exchange”, which is a vocal-acoustic track that successfully finds the pain in Scott’s lyrics and vocals in a resoundingly effective and touching way. It strips away the narrative and intermediary personas through which Scott often delivers her thoughts; the song is so much the stronger for it. Despite some noteworthy and memorable high-points, Sprinter is also ultimately inconsistent. When she gives herself room to emote, as well as explore, Mackenzie Scott makes the most of her young talents. However, much of the album seems to just roll along, with little interest in whether or not anyone is listening.

By Adrian Pedic
Feeling Myself
10/10

What’s better than a three minute film with the same production values and celebrity cast of a Hollywood blockbuster? My answer, nothing. Which is why this review will be dedicated to Nicki Minaj and Beyonce Carter-Knowles, whose performances in recent release “Feeling Myself” are nothing short of Oscar/ Grammy/ life winning.

A search for the track on Google affords no less than 2,130,000 hits in 0.43 seconds, and aside from the trouble it takes to locate the video, which premiered exclusively on widely panned streaming service Tidal, the video has been widely covered in popular media outlets including Vice, Vanity Fair and The Guardian.

So, let me summarise in one paragraph what makes this video so amazing. Its pretty simple. Two women of colour not caring about what you think their music and the industry should be, and rather completely feeling and owning what they want it to be. Powerful women doing what they want, when they want, wearing whatever they want and pretty much making us all envious that we are not a part of this collaboration. They don’t need to sell us anything other than the inevitable FOMO that comes from watching. Feeling Myself offers a rare insider glance into what being friends with them would be like, they have allowed us to imagine a world in which we are as free to be ourselves. Empowerment comes in many forms and Minaj and Knowles have reminded us that sometimes we can find it by searching inside ourselves first.

The video speaks for itself. Watch it.

By Carla Zuniga
“Use your head, can’t you, use your head, you’re on earth, there’s no cure for that!”

On a good day, Hugo Weaving has no time for humanity. He’s either wiping the sweat from Morpheus’ gaping forehead, or firmly face palming his elven eyebrows. But on a bad day, well, on a day such as this, he has too much time. Samuel Beckett’s ‘Endgame’ is a darkly cynical, abruptly comic and overwhelmingly futile depiction of everything and nothing. You’ll either mark it down as an unusual evening or dive beneath the laughter, but either way Beckett has the better of you.

Weaving’s character Hamm is blind and incapable of standing, entirely dependent on Clov who, as it so happens, cannot sit down. Specks in the void, what follows is a series of interchanges so devoid of tangible meaning that to say that much is to say too much. To watch closely is to glimpse the familiar in this barren and sad arrangement, and perhaps find pity for the tired soul we all may become. The production is brilliant, if not enjoyable.

The play begins with Clov’s monotonous cycle, as prescribed by Beckett’s meticulous stage directions. He clambers up and down a ladder with rhythmic procession, so many times that one less rung would return a minute of my life. A stained cloth covers Weaving’s face, as the audience twitches for his awakening to terminate Clov’s maddening spiral.

Weaving is brilliant, subtly unfolding his character to reveal the broken core driving Hamm’s cynicism. His calls for pain medication repeat with comic futility until a threshold is crossed. Weaving’s tone quivers with the slightest hint of genuine concern, beyond which each successive query becomes more pressing, desperate even, pained. A joke that has been told too many times, the last of the medicine is gone, and Weaving’s sunken faced optimism is punctured with the knowing that even now the end will not come easily.

Clov slides unknowingly back into his ladder circuit, slipping unannounced and falling hard. The audience is vitalised, tensing at the fall as the forgotten risk of his routine is realised. As Clov goes to leave and the banter between the pair dissipates, the weight of Hamm’s isolation becomes deafening. Hamm and the audience are far from comfortable with the ending they’ve been awaiting now that it is upon them. The stage darkens, everyone claps, a sigh of relief as Weaving stands, as though being immobile for so long may have rubbed off some permanence. But the performance has been draining, there’s still too much of his character in him. You walk away from a play that meant nothing feeling something.
By Michelle Ives

Many of us can admit now and then to craving the attention usually reserved for celebrities, and some are not averse to shedding out extra dollars every so often for a VIP package to ascertain it. On many an occasion, however, even the promise of ‘very important’ treatment struggles to muster up enough fervour for ‘semi-important’. Front rows seats are actually just near front row seats, and a red carpet entrance is a bloke standing on a door scanning tickets with a smile. You get the gist. Hijinks, to my surprise, was delightfully different...

The name, meaning a “boisterous celebration”, is a point to the purpose of the company – to provide “after hours” fun to 18+ people, at very popular (and often infantilised) venues. Basically, The Sydney Aquarium, which is a cesspool of innocence during the day turns into a sexy and sensual feast by night. I’m slightly exaggerating on the feast part, but it is a lot of fun and a really cool event idea.

My boyfriend and I are greeted by smiling faces at the front desk where they hand us a free drink token (bonus) and a brochure of the live acts for the night. We follow the corner past more smiling faces (a little unsettling – are they waxworks or people?) to a media pit, where we’re the celebs. Three staff, dressed like typical ‘50s journos with convincing New York accents thrust mics in our faces and persistently ask if the rumours are true.

Obviously, I confessed all of my sins (and got really into actually, I think they wanted me to move on after a while), loving the thought that went into that little aspect of the experience. Next up was a silly photo with a really enigmatic photographer, and my normally very reserved boyfriend at one stage put his leg up on the wall for a candid shot of his bum. Boy, Hijinks really brings out your sexy side.

We used our free tokens for a beer and a ginger-vodka concoction, respectively, which was not a bad little idea and a nice addition to get the creepy wax gasps started.

As we moved through the different rooms, we realised that the employees were the only smiling faces to be seen: all the celebrities have faces like slapped arses, and it makes the customer service experience from all of the staff that little bit more heightened. On the whole, the staff were fantastic and really invested in what they were doing, helping their guests to get the most out of it. Every few metres was a drink station and a taco stall, which was very appreciated given that I love tacos. Obviously that’s subjective, but whatever.

The live “Katy Perry” performance was a little disappointing, as the impersonator neither sang nor looked remotely like Katy Perry… although neither did Perry’s waxwork, so there you go. The free photo-booth near the Australian soap star wax-room (LOL) was such a great idea and contributed a real ‘value-added’ feeling to the experience, and each room had obviously been well thought-out in terms of design and what could be added by the company during their pop-up.

A mini-critique would be the lack of space, but this isn’t necessarily Hijinks fault. I would suggest that they allow in less people next time, which I know is never a businesses preferred method, but would certainly help to alleviate the congestion. It was packed in some areas, and there was no room to move around. Not a great place for claustrophobes or those who didn’t enjoy House of Wax, but for everyone else, the hijacking of Madame Tussaud’s
Ethno-cultural Officer - Michael Murdocca

Hi everyone! The Ethno-cultural Collective has been quite active over the past month- you should get involved! Our Collective partnered with the Indigenous Collective and an Aboriginal and Social Work class to run a National Sorry Day event which had a lot of people in attendance. We have also been skipping around to different officials around the university to lobby for accessible prayer spaces and an intercultural mural on campus. Also, we have a Language Partnership and Cultural Support or Exchange Program up and running and we hope to extend it to the rest of the community soon. We are also contributing to the organisation of an Ethno Gatho policy event to be run for all students from a culturally and linguistically diverse background within NSW. Some other stuff we’ve been doing include assisting the Nepal funding appeal, building connections with clubs and societies on campus and more! Come and join us on our trip to Vivid Sydney on the weekend of the end of Semester. Feel free to contact me at any time if you would like to get involved in the Collective or have any ideas to improve the university experience for all of us.

SRC President - Billy Bruffey

This has been an intense semester for the SRC, and we’ve got a lot to show for our efforts. We’ve led the charge for a more equitable enrolment system, increased funding for counselling, and more ambitious diversity and sustainability targets. This doesn’t happen by coincidence - it happens because people get involved and speak out. We’re installing student lockers and bubblers all over campus, and will be moving into the second stage of our education campaign against the Abbott government. And the loyal readers of Tharunka will be pleased to hear that momentous reform is on the horizon for this historic paper; reform that will see a more effective, relevant, and resourced editorial team. Fuck Honi Soit. Happy holidays.

Environment Officer: Bea Sherwood

What a great start its been to the year for the UNSW Enviro Collective. Together we’ve stood up against the University and pushed for divestment, started work on getting more bubblers, campaigned for the Great Barrier Reef, taken part in actions, held workshops and presentations and so much more! And it doesn’t stop there! Next semester we have even greater plans to push for divestment, renewable energy, create zines and movies and promote a sustainable university for future generations. So really, its the perfect time to get involved if you haven’t already, just email us at enviro@arc.unsw.edu.au!

Enviro Fact: If every newspaper was recycled, we would save about 250,000,000 trees every year and if we used renewable energy sources to provide for our daily energy we would reduce carbon dioxide emissions by 20,000 pounds a year, lets get to it!
Education Officer - Cara Egan

So the second NDA of the year is behind us and the quality survey by NUS is almost done BUT if you look at the fine print of the budget deregulation has been copied and pasted from last year. So it’s time for us to put the nail in the coffin where deregulation lies.

Ultimately the Education Collective has been planning and we think we have the solution to finish deregulation off for good. Let’s just say it’s going to involve bulk whistles, percussion instruments and a pair of really big lips. If you think you want in on this join the UNSW Education Collective group on Facebook and be in the know. All will be revealed soon. Bring on Semester 2.

International Officer - Vivian Zhu

SRC International Office never stop seeking to best serve the interests and needs of international students by providing a variety of services and activities. On the Wednesday 10th of June, we will be having an IELTS workshop, special guest speaker from the UNSW language center, which is aimed at helping international students with improving their language skills, especially important for those interested in immigration.

As part of the workshop, the speaker will cover everything you need to know about the IELTS test, including an overview, tips, the format of the exams and so on. Students will also get to interact with the speaker in the Q&A session to find solutions their personal problems regarding the test.

As one of the most successful and traditional event of UNSW SRC International for the past five years, it is definitely something you don’t want to miss out on and we are excited to see new faces coming along and saying hello!

If people want more information, or want to get involved, please don’t hesitate to contact us at international@arc.unsw.edu.au