



## EXECUTIVE HALF-YEAR REPORT

<b>NAME</b>	Parminder Kaur
<b>POSITION</b>	Equity Officer
<b>REPORT PERIOD</b>	1 <sup>st</sup> January 2020 – July 12 <sup>th</sup> 2020
<b>HOURS WORKED</b>	284
<b>HOURS REQUIRED</b>	280

### Constitutional Goals:

**Constitutional Goal 3:** Equity and Access

**Constitutional Goal 2:** Student Support

### Introduction:

Oh boiiii what a year of plot twists. To be honest, most of this year consisted of putting in a lot of time, effort and hard work to organize really cool events and market days, only to have to cancel them the day before they were meant to happen and having to adjust to different COVID-19 levels 😞 Nevertheless, we persisted. The year's challenges brought about new opportunities to advocate for equity issues that were being brought to the forefront of discussions. There's been some pretty cool things that have happened in the first trimester, and with more (hopefully) to come during the rest of the year, let's get to highlighting the year so far!

### NZUSA Conference:

The NZUSA was held at the beginning of the year and allowed us to meet and bond with some of our own VUWSA exec members, as well as executives from other student associations from universities across NZ. This event encouraged networking among execs and gave us an opportunity to discuss some of the issues we wanted to focus on and advocate for that were specific to our own students and regions. We also had a chance to discuss how we would approach elections campaigning since this was an election year, and we worked on figuring out ways to engage more students to vote.

### VUWSA Retreat:

Retreat was the first get-together for the exec members to get to know each other, discuss plans for the year, and start establishing goals within our little executive sub-groups. The first morning consisted of some extremely fun chats about VUWSA- what it is, what it does, who is VUWSA etc. We also met some of the staff and networks that we would be engaging with during the year. At retreat, we worked on team- building activities and discussions and got to learn more about each other and ourselves (this may or may not have involved tarot cards...). Michael (Welfare VP), Sophie (Wellbeing and Sustainability Officer) and I got to working on our goals for the year for our Welfare team to work on and planning for our first big event of the year; Sex Week!



### VUWSA Introductory Videos:

At the start of the year, we decided a great way to make VUWSA and its services more accessible to students would be by explaining what it is that we actually do. The exec worked together to film a three-part introductory series called VUWSA 101. Our first video introduced our exec and staff, our second video highlighted what VUWSA does, and our third video discussed how students could get involved with VUWSA.



### O Week:

What a great start to the year! We had our O Week events in the hub this year instead of the Hunter Lounge, which meant it was held in an accessible space and more people could attend! I was involved with helping out in the safe room as a driver, packing O Week bags throughout the week, and

attending various student orientations throughout the week, including the International student orientation.



### Sex Week:

For the Welfare team, this was the first major focus of the year! We had so much cool stuff planned, we even filmed a VUWSA Sex Tape (no not that kind) where students answered some spicy questions about sex. For this week, I worked with the advocates, Emma Mossman, and different cultural groups on campus to make sex week more inclusive for different communities by having spaces for culturally appropriate discussions and support. I also worked with other rep groups such as UniQ, Disabled Students Association, Women's Collective and Thursdays in Black to create and share resources for students and set up safe spaces for students. The Welfare team is also working on creating manuals for our big event weeks that can be passed on to future execs, with advice and tips based on our own experiences organizing these weeks.

### Elections:

For this, I worked with the absolutely amazing women of the VUWSA exec to bring about a great and engaging elections campaign. I helped with the referendum questions, working with rep groups to provide resources for people to educate themselves on the Euthanasia bill, and promoting the Yes2020 Campaign. The Disabled Students Association put together a really cool panel about the Euthanasia Bill.

### Student Equity and Diversity Committee:

The Student Equity and Diversity Committee was a great opportunity for all of our rep groups to come together. This year, we didn't end up having them too often, because of the lockdown and COVID alert levels. We switched to Zoom meetings for then, and then continued the rest of the trimester with a mix of Zoom and in person meetings to make it accessible to members. We had great engagement from our rep groups who were keen to have a discussion space where they could discuss collective issues and challenges they were facing, and work together in a supportive environment to come up with solutions. We had a lot of discussion on making learning accessible during lockdown, and also reviewing and amending the rep group sections in the constitution to be more relevant.

### **Rep Group Funding Policy/ Constitutional Amendments:**

After reviewing our constitution, which didn't really have any solid protocol on rep group funding, Ralph and I had discussions with Uni Recreation and VUWSA staff around making VUWSA rep group funding more accessible for rep groups. We worked collaboratively to create a Rep Group Funding Policy that clearly outlined what the groups were entitled to, and a simplified process for them to be able to access the funds. This was a big win for us as it meant we could finally clarify the funding processes for rep groups, ongoing VUWSA executives and Uni Rec, and clear up any misunderstandings around how the funds are administered.

### **Distribution of Menstrual Products on Campus:**

Had discussions with VUWSA advocate, Alice, and rep groups on how we could make the products more accessible to students who may not want to come to the VUWSA office for them. We had discussions with Ngai Taura and PSC about making products easily accessible in their spaces and also had discussions with Victoria University Feminist Organisation around distributing the products to accessible bathrooms around campuses to make them more easily accessible for students.

### **COVID-19 Response:**

As soon as lockdown was announced, it was clear there was going to be some major equity concerns with the rapid changes made to teaching and learning. With course expectations and formats being changed quickly, it was important to highlight some ways that lecturers and staff could support students. In discussion with Disability Services, I helped create an accessibility guide for lecturers on making online teaching inclusive for all students. Joanna made it into an amazing infographic that we shared with CAD to circulate to faculties. 😊

I also worked with the Disabled Students Association who worked collaboratively with the Wellbeing Hinengaro Collective group on campus to create some resources focused on mental health and wellbeing during the lockdown. We made a community Facebook page and invited students and people from the community to join, engage, and share some positivity and connect with others.

I also managed to have SEDC meetings over lockdown to check in with the rep groups and discuss how VUWSA could continue to support different communities during lockdown.



### Fast- Forward Campaign:

This campaign was brought about during lockdown when the university put in accessible measures for students to be able to continue their learning online. Since lectures were now being recorded or delivered online, and even transcribed and captioned by some lecturers, we wanted to ensure these measures were sustainable and would remain in place to support our students beyond just the lockdown or COVID-19 response. Sophie and I worked on creating the campaign demands to make sure that there would still be lecture recordings, online hand in options, non-mandatory attendance, transcriptions and readable content, and online resources available to equitably assist all the students at the university.



### Wellington Student Volunteer Army:

I was a volunteer for the WSVVA and spent a lot of my time during lockdown reaching out to different groups and communities and promoting this service to anyone who might have needed it at the time.

### Support Local Campaign:

This was a campaign that I worked on with an exec subcommittee focused on promoting local businesses after we came out of the Level 4 and 3 COVID-19 lockdowns. We planned it for the start of trimester 2 and invited some local, student friendly businesses to share their work on campus.

### Stress Free Study Week:

This was pretty chill, considering many people were still not on campus during this time, so a lot of our efforts were focused on providing and maintaining support for students adapting to online exams, and getting equitable access to learning despite COVID levels. I also helped out with the free breakfasts during the week.

### NCWNZ Student Scholarships:

Worked with Sonja Randhawa (NCWWlg Branch President) and Joanna to bring about a scholarship opportunity for students. The NCW offered 10 fully paid memberships in exchange for free use of accessible meeting spaces at the university. Due to COVID-19, the selection process for the scholarships this year ended up being discretionary, where VUWSA reached out to groups who were engaged with women's and equity issues and offered them scholarships. However, we considered an application process for a couple of the scholarships so students outside of these groups could still engage and take up the opportunity by applying for the scholarship position if they were interested. These scholarships would be reviewed by VUWSA. There is still work being done to sort out the finer details of this arrangement between NCW and VUWSA, but in the branch meetings so far, it has been great seeing the students engaging in discussions around making the organisation more accessible for all communities and building networks to encourage younger people to join the organization.



### Sustainability Week:

I helped Sophie and Michael plan for this week and organize some accessible ways to share content throughout the week. I had discussions with Disability Services and we decided that Live transcription would be a great way to make the Sustainability panel discussions more accessible. We also had the events livestreamed. Unfortunately, we ended up having to cancel the amazing market day we had planned, (and most of Sustainability Week) because of the sudden change in COVID alert levels again. Here's hoping the Welfare team can actually do a market day next year without it being sabotaged and cancelled due to unforeseen circumstances 😞

### Just Speak Workshop:

Attended the just Speak workshop on communication and campaigning and the importance of using a values based discussion model to have meaningful conversations with people that may disagree with your perspective or campaign. This was especially informative for our elections campaign and provided some great resources and ideas on how to get people to consider the controversial referendum questions for the election.

### VUWSA Re-Retreat:

Had a chance to plan out the rest of the year and organize our calendars and coordinate the rest of the weeks for the year that we had to organize. We discussed strategies for approaching the remainder of the year and did team bonding activities to understand our exec better. Very wholesome vibes <3 😊



### Rep Group Manual:

The Rep Group Manual was written by Tamatha Paul during her role as Equity Officer, and the unofficial document has been passed along to guide rep groups on SEDC since. This is an extremely useful resource for rep groups and for the Equity Officer role, as it helps to make the roles more easily understandable. While this extensive document already contained so much great information, I added sections on making events more accessible, and adapting to online engagement with communities. This has been reviewed by rep groups who have provided feedback, and we are working to make this manual an official document that can be handed out to rep groups at their AGM's or SEDC.

### Summary:

Intense year, but we do love a little bit of spontaneity to keep things ~spicy~ (within limit of course). I have had the absolute privilege to work alongside some passionate people who are deeply about coming up with the best outcomes for all students. It's great working with a team that is constantly supportive, resilient and adaptable. Despite the unexpected year, we have already accomplished some big wins and pulled off some amazing events. Here's hoping the rest of the year will allow us an opportunity to host at least one big market day without it having to be cancelled due to COVID-19 alert level changes 😊.