

Introduction

This is a submission against the *Education (Freedom of Association) Amendment Bill* on behalf of the VUWSA Women's Group.

The VUWSA Women's Group represents all self-identified women on campus and the aim of our organisation is to provide a safe space free from sexism where feminism can be discussed. We wish to give an oral submission.

Our activities with students include:

- Assisting the Women's Rights Officer run a successful annual Women's Fest.
- Running campaigns relevant to women such as Thursdays in Black and International No Diet Day.
- Campaigning against issues including but not limited to closure of the Gender and Women's Studies department and unsafe campuses.
- Undertaking a campus safety audit every few years and running services such as Campus Angels to walk students home if they are studying late at night.

General position

We oppose this Bill because as a VUWSA-affiliated representative group we add vibrancy to students University experience, and provide our members with additional opportunities for personal development. Without VUWSA's financial and administrative support I believe our group would be negatively impacted to a significant extent, which would affect my enjoyment of campus life.

We strongly oppose the *Education (Freedom of Association) Amendment Bill*.

Specific points

As a VUWSA-affiliated representative group, we enjoy the following benefits:

- More representation for Women on campus
- A safe space, in the form of a Women's Room for women to study in a friendly environment, breastfeed their babies and to use the phone
- Money from VUWSA to run campaigns relevant to women and to increasing knowledge of feminist ideas and causes
- Access to advocacy and welfare services
- Access to University administration
- Access to resources otherwise unavailable groups and people on campus.
- An annual Women's Issue of Salient, the student magazine

What would happen to your organisation if the Association was unable to provide the support it currently provides to on-campus organisations?

If the Bill is passed we are concerned at the ability of VUWSA to continue supporting our activities for our students.

If this bill were to pass, VUWSA would be unable to provide support to the Women's Group in both a financial and welfare sense. Women's group would not have money to run campaigns relevant to women as women's issues are often pushed to the sidelines. The annual Women's Issue of Salient is the perfect opportunity for feminist issues to be talked about and brought into the public eye. Women's Fest, which is a week of activities focussed on women and feminist issues would be unable to go ahead, because it does require even a minimal budget to function.

The Thursdays in Black campaign, which demands a world without rape and violence, would be unable to be funded by the National Union of Students' Associations (NZUSA). This campaign is one of the longest running and most successful for VUWSA and to lose this would be devastating.

What would happen to your members and students if the Association was unable to provide the services it currently provides to students?

Representation of women on campus would be lost. Given how hard the Women's Group have worked, along with the Women's Rights officer to maintain a safe space for women free from any sort of discrimination, it would seem in vain if this bill was to pass.

We encourage the Committee to think about the fun and exciting times they had in tertiary education and not to prevent people the many groups on campuses around the country from having the same experience. VUWSA has had a bad reputation in the past, but they never failed to deliver integral services, and for this VUWSA Women's Group has flourished and has been able to provide support for all women on campus.

Regards,

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