



Education and Science Select Committee

Education (Freedom of Association) Amendment Bill

This is a submission on behalf of the New Zealand Federation of Graduate Women (NZFGW). We wish to submit in opposition to this Bill because we believe it would adversely affect women students.

The NZFGW does not wish to make an oral submission

The NZFGW is a non-profit, charitable non-government organisation (NGO) working locally, nationally, and internationally to improve the status of women and girls, to promote lifelong education, and to enable graduate women to use their expertise to effect positive change. The organisation has established a strong record of active involvement in social, economic and educational issues at a national level.

Student Associations have long played a crucial role in advocating for the rights of female students on campus - - this was especially crucial and valued when women were only a small minority of tertiary students.

Student Associations have supported the participation of women in tertiary education through the lobbying of institutions to set up child care facilities on campuses, establishing rooms and facilities for women students on campuses and ensuring that women always have a voice on student executives (through the position of Women's Right's Officers) to advocate for the interests of female students.

Student Associations and the women's groups that they have supported have stood up against sexism on campus and advocated for women's content to be introduced into courses and for women to move on to post-graduate study and academic work. They have also worked on implementing effective sexual harassment policies on campuses and anti-violence campaigns.

Student associations have supported female student's involvement in democratic institutions like student associations themselves. The valuable leadership skills that female students receive develop as a result of this involvement are of great benefit to these women in their careers and later lives, and the workplaces and communities they contribute to.

Student associations have also supported fairer policies in education. NZ, USA and local associations effectively researched and disseminated the discriminatory effects of the student loan system on female graduates. Up until 2006, female students ended up paying more for their tertiary education than their male counterparts because of market interest rates on student loans, and the gender pay gap between male and female graduates.

This bill is likely to result in the collapse of some student associations, or at best a significant reduction in their activities particularly in the areas of advocacy. This will impact on female students, as many services (tangible and intangible) have been enormously beneficial in encouraging the participation and success of women in tertiary education.

We urge to committee to reject this bill as unnecessary and unhelpful, for students, for government and for Government. It will only have negative outcomes.

Yours sincerely,

Dorothy Page

President, NZFGW

Linda Robertson,

Public Affairs Convenor