



Victoria University of Wellington Students' Association
Te Ropu Tauira a te Kura Wananga o te Upoko o te Ika a Maui Inc.

To: President
From: Kassie Hartendorp
Position: Women's Rights Officer
Date: Mon 15 June 2009
Subject: Letter of Resignation

This is the last letter I write in my capacity as Women's Rights Officer. Despite the many positive experiences I have had and achievements I am at least partly responsible for, I do not feel I can justify continuing in my position.

I ran for WRO because I was passionate about advancing women's rights on campus, and promoting progressive causes in general. However, under the leadership of Jasmine Freemantle, VUWSA has become an organisation that hinders my efforts to attain these goals due to the current working environment.

Jasmine Freemantle ran for President on a platform of accountability and transparency, and has talked of a passion for building democratic structures. I personally helped with her campaign, and had extremely high hopes for VUWSA this year. However, I do not believe that Jasmine has been acting in a transparent or democratic fashion. As an executive member, I have felt kept in the dark where Jasmine appears to be acting of her own accord, instead of consulting, or even informing the executive of certain issues. I do not feel that the organisation can function democratically when the people elected to represent students have not been consulted, especially when it comes to the expenditure of students' money. I have also felt that Jasmine's authoritarian leadership style makes it difficult to function within the association. Jasmine demands control over everything, to the point where it inhibits basic democracy.

Furthermore, I feel that Jasmine has created an unhealthy environment that I object to working in. Jasmine acts in a bullying and intimidating manner and I consider this behaviour and the environment that it fosters to be completely unacceptable. There have been times when after suggesting something Jasmine has disagreed with, she tried to intimidate me in order to make me back down. This is not the way that a democratic organisation should operate, let alone how a person in a leadership role should behave. Jasmine's treatment of both the staff and the executive threatens the wellbeing of the association, when those involved feel completely unsupported, and oftentimes, under attack.

The basic reason for a students' association is to represent and defend its members. However after recent events, I do not see how VUWSA under Jasmine is fulfilling this duty. Many of you may be aware of the flag-burning that took place at a Student Representative

Council Meeting - an event held by VUWSA that was intended for political discussion and debate. The students involved were disenrolled, even though one of them was merely holding a camera. The University was making a political attack, which was aimed at stifling dissent - which VUWSA should care about if they want students to continue being involved in protests, or any radical action on campus. At an executive meeting, I put forward a motion to condemn the University's attack on the students who had been disenrolled, and to support the students' right to freedom of political expression without fear of reprisal. Four executive members voted in favour, and the vice-presidents and president voted against. The casting vote went to Jasmine, who immediately failed the motion. This shows that VUWSA, under Jasmine Freemantle, is neglecting its basic duty of a students' association.

Because of the reasons above, I have chosen to resign from VUWSA as I do not agree with how the association is currently being run. I intend to continue my work in advancing women's rights, but will do so outside of VUWSA. My resignation will be effective from Friday the 19th of June.

Kassie Hartendorp