



New Zealand University
Students Association

ANNUAL REPORT
1999



NZUSA 1999 FEDERATION EXECUTIVE

Back Row (left to right)

Toby Malcolm (Jan - mid July LUSA), Darel Hall (UCSA), Maria Cavanagh (ASA), Sam Huggard (Vice President AUSA)

Front Row (left to right)

Kylie Martin (MUSA), Kerry Armstrong (mid July - Dec LUSA), Hamish Hopkinson (VUWSA), Tanja Schutz (Co President), Karen Skinner (Co President), Steven Day (OUSA)

Absent: Efeso Collins (AUSA)

Accountants: Curtis McLean

Lawyers: Russel McVeigh McKenzie, Bartlett & Co

Auditors: Horwarth & Horwarth

Bank: Bank of New Zealand

New Zealand University Students Association, Level 3, Lambton Quay, Wellington, PO BOX 10-191, The Terrace, Wellington, Tel (04) 498 2500, Fax (04) 473 2391

NZUSA Co Presidents foreword

Karen Skinner and Tanja Schutz



The New Zealand University Students Association (NZUSA) was formed in 1929, it evolved from its debating origins of the annual Easter sports tournament (commonly known as "tourney") of the University of New Zealand Colleges – Victoria, Lincoln, Massey, Auckland, Canterbury and Otago.

The Otago University Students Association president, Sidney de Cabot was the first national chairperson of NZUSA, an organisation that collectively represents the interest of students. The primary aims of NZUSA, which have not altered since its inception, are to look after the educational, social and welfare of University students. The fundamental principles have also remain status quo - barrier free, accessible, quality tertiary education.

Some critics comment that this shows political party preference - which is untrue - as these principles were developed before any such party policy was even conceived.

The work and direction of NZUSA, is fundamentally one that is based on a society that is built on the principles of social justice.

The general aim of an annual report is to give a brief overview of what NZUSA thought, did and hoped for in 1999. It also becomes another part of the historical puzzle of events for a national university student organisation and its continual struggle for a better future in terms of access, equity and participation for current and future students and their families.



NZUSA TEAM 1999

Back row: Tanja Schutz, Christina Rizsos (National Women's Co ordinator)
Front row: Rowena Tun (Administration Officer), Karen Skinner, David Choat (Researcher)

The White Paper – dies

At the beginning of the year the National Government announced that Max Bradford was to take on the new role of Minister of Tertiary Education, replacing Wyatt Creech. The government proposed changes to the tertiary sector in the Tertiary Education White paper, a policy red herring with huge implications for institutions, staff and students alike in terms of structure, capital charging, governance, funding, research and quality.

In 1998 NZUSA and APSU released our own Alternative White Paper prior to the release of the Government White paper. This was to be the most concise edition of NZUSA's vision for tertiary education in New Zealand.

In 1999, the Alternative White Paper was a very useful document for debating the issues of change within the Tertiary sector. The Government White paper gradually lost momentum and died in the wake of criticism from all corners of the sector.

Privatisation of tertiary education

The death of the White paper did not deter the Government, as it continued down its path of user pays policy and reform..

Tertiary fees rose steadily in the 1990s. The average university fee at the start of the decade was \$1250, and this rose to an average of \$3,331 in 1998. During this time access to living allowances has correspondingly been restricted, from around 82% of full time students being eligible for living allowances to around 36% by the end of the decade. The end result? Student debt reached over 3 billion by 1999.

Student Debt Monster

NZUSA/APSU research also consisted of a second debt casebook as follow up from 1996, which showed that situation for student loan borrowers was rapidly worsening.

These case studies gave some idea of the variety of ways in which student debt impacted on peoples lives after study.

The casebook began with an explanation of the questionnaire and how it was administered and gave information about the respondents. The second section looked at the attitudes towards the Student loan scheme and a special report on student loan interest, which emerged as the greatest single issue of concern. Other issues of concern were the effects on finance credit, retirement savings and the burden of repayment.

Student Debt - Sexist

NZUSA/APSU research also proved that the student loan scheme was discriminatory. Figures released showed that it took a woman three times as long to pay back her student loan as a man. The calculations were done using the Iverson model and using both Ministry of Education figures and information from the last census, and found that that a woman with a \$20,000 student loan will take up to 51 years to pay it off compared with 17 years for a male with the same debt. (Note these figures have since changed due to government policy changes).

NZUSA believed the reasons for these underlined disparities were due to the fact that women earned 73.4% of men's weekly wage and took time out of the workforce for care giving and unpaid community work, coupled with cumulative interest on the loan scheme.

Little changes Big problems

It was indicative that the Government brought about change without thinking or listening to the probable consequences. The culmination of seemingly small and insignificant ministerial changes compounded into major problems for students.

Student loans were drip fed instead of paid in bulk, which meant that those about to live in hostels had difficulty paying their fees and bonds. The restriction on course related costs cut from \$1000 to \$500 meant that many students were not able to buy textbooks and course materials. This was especially difficult for those in high cost disciplines such as medicine, dentistry, architecture, fine arts and sciences whose costs well exceeded even the previous \$1000 threshold.

WINZ – What Income NZ?

In late 1998, WINZ (Work and Income NZ) took over the administration of the Community Wage Student (previously known as the Emergency Unemployment Benefit) and Student Allowances for the 1999 academic year.

In the later half of 1998, the National party restricted access to the Community Wage - Student (then EUB), so that only those eligible for an allowances during term time were eligible for the Community Wage - Student during summer. These restrictions prevented 10,000-13,000 students from receiving any public assistance whatsoever. For those students who couldn't find a summer job, had no other means of financial support (e.g. parental) and did not qualify for the Community Wage - Student, the options were to:

Starve/ resort to food bank

Give up studying and go on the ordinary Community wage

Apply for ordinary Community wage, and risk returning to varsity and having to pay it back (\$5,000 fine and/or jail).

Many students who had been declined the Community Wage Student had gone onto general Community wage benefit, where they had been forced not to continue their studies in order to get money to live on.

The results at the beginning of the 1999 term were nothing short of horrendous as many students nation wide did not receive financial assistance to pay basic necessities, i.e. food and rent.

WINZ Chief Executive Christine Rankin's half hearted apology during the select committee hearing was not acceptable to students. This followed numerous warnings and offers of advice to facilitate a smooth transition from campus processing to centralisation made by student associations.

Consequently, NZUSA did not believe that WINZ's track record in student allowance delivery reflected that they were capable of administrating the Student loan scheme later that year.

Income levels

In 1999, NZUSA/APSU Income and Expenditure (I/E) Survey was completed and publicly released. The I/E was commissioned from CM research has been conducted for the last twenty odd years, it is one of the only authoritative pieces of research conducted on student earning and spending patterns.

Student Job Search

It was a privilege to work with Lindsay Wright, National Director of Student Job Search and the regional managers. In my personal opinion, this has to be one of the most efficient and effective organisations in the social services area.

In terms of funding for SJS, it had been difficult with static government funding and student association interm levies, to maintain services in provincial centres during summer time, especially as the Department of work and Income wanted more cities.

Voluntary Vs Compulsory Student Membership

In many respects 1999 was one of the toughest years in terms of survival ever faced by NZUSA and its constituent student associations. What had previously been an ongoing background issue, finally became a reality.

National MP Tony Steel's private members bill was introduced to parliament in 1997. The bill was rewritten in 1998 by the then Minister of Education Wyatt Creech and Tau Henare (NZ First). The bill forced every institution to hold a referendum at its own expense before May 1999 to determine whether student association membership was to be voluntary or compulsory on that campus.

Student associations argued that the bill contained a number of provisions to try to ensure that a voluntary result ensued. The foremost of these was the insistence that the voluntary box be placed first on the ballot paper (contrary to normal democratic provisions of alphabetic listing). This was followed later in the year with another government change (in October) that prevented students from paying their student association membership levy through the student loan scheme. NZUSA argued that both of these were deliberately done to skew the results of the referenda. The legislation was finally passed on 10 August 1998.

The beginning of the 1999 student year was dominated by the costly nation wide referendum to decide the membership status of student associations on campus, even though students could already easily decide this issue at a local campus level prior to the passing of legislation.

The end result was all university student associations retained compulsory membership with the exception of AUSA who switched to voluntary with a wafer thin majority of 98, and WSU, who retained voluntary membership, which students had voted for in 1996.

Student Membership Referendum Results

	Votes for Compulsory	Votes for Voluntary	% for Compulsory	Voter turnout
Otago	5650	1425	78.5	59%
Lincoln	684	218	74	29%
Victoria	4279	1704	72	47%
Massey	8870	5003	65	51%
Canterbury	2849	1108	72	42%
Auckland	5883	5981	49.36	52%
Waikato	561	1984	35	28.2%

Internal Issues

After the referendum result and in consideration of AUSA's voluntary status, meetings were held to assess the future viability of NZUSA.

In financial terms, NZUSA had lost 1/3 of its intended budget levy and difficulties arose as half the year had already passed.

At July conference in Albany, Federation Executive deliberated at great length (days and nights) as to what measures could be undertaken to reduce a potential sizeable deficit. It was agreed that due to the financial difficulties and pressures that AUSA was undergoing, the Federation would accept half of their levy as a full and final payment for 1999.

The general meeting to decide upon the different options, which ranged from winding the organisation up, put it in a holding pattern indefinitely or look for alternative funding.

In August, UCSA left NZUSA, 12 months after its notice of withdrawal. The issues cited for leaving were due to fundamental differences to the structure of the organisation. OUSA and LUSA also had notices of withdrawal from NZUSA, but these were rescinded by both campuses

This was a particularly difficult financial year, but as the accounts show the organisation's future has been reasonably secured.

On a personal note, I would like to thank all of 1999 Federation Executive for all of their hard work, time, commitment and effort to save national student representation.

The 1999 Budget

The release of National's tertiary policy going into the election - "Bright Futures" - was in short, nothing of the kind. It failed to address key education issues, including a fundamental one; the massive under funding of tertiary institutions. The glossy package tinkered at the sides of a sector that was in real need of direction, a direction that had been lacking from the National administration. It was also no surprise that there was no real change of focus on tackling student loan debt.

Election 1999

The election was a major issue for NZUSA, with the tertiary sector facing a crisis state through continual under funding. It was imperative that we had to have a change of Government, as they refused to take the situation seriously.

It was without a doubt that through the collective effort and activism of students and associations nation wide that Tertiary education became the number two election issue according to public opinion polls. Consequently, political party policy was upheld to extensive public scrutiny and was therefore a crucial decision-maker in terms of the voting public.

The New Zealand public voted in favour of a change of Government.

Te Mana Akonga

The relationship between Federation office and the national kaituhono, Mary Jane Simcock Reweti, was particularly productive in terms of student national bodies working together.

This could be attributed to a number of factors, by simply improving the standard of communication and building closer networks.

Nga mihi nui ki nga roopu taura o Te Mana Akonga. It has been a pleasure to work with you "from the other side"!

Queer issues

The Uni Q conference was hosted by LGBT at UCSA. It focussed on a wide range of issues and concluded with the launch of the National Day of Silence, a campaign that which protests the silence created by homophobia. This organised, visible silence proved very successful in raising awareness of Takatapui, lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) issues and to draw attention to those who have been silenced by hatred, oppression, and prejudice.

Acknowledgements

We would like to especially like to thank the following people:

Christina Rizsos, National Women's Co-ordinator for all the hard work and commitment that she has shown over the years to this organisation.

David Choat: (Researcher) and Rowena Tun, (Office administrator).

TMA, NZUSA Alumni, Steven Brokenshire from Curtis Mclean (accountant), Lindsay Wright (National Director SJS).

And of course, Karen Skinner, my Co President – (never a dull moment working with you, kotiro!)

Tanja Schutz
Co President NZUSA