



# TRANS RIGHTS

*are human rights*

This statement by the New Zealand Union of Students' Associations (NZUSA) with the support of Te Mana Ākonga (TMĀ) and the National Disabled Students' Association (NDSA), is in response to the events that transpired due to the New Zealand Government endorsing that Posie Parker enter the country, from the 24th to the 25th of March.

## Posie Parker's Arrival in Aotearoa

Posie Parker, real name Kellie-Jay Keen-Mishull, is a British anti-trans gender activist and founder of the organisation, Standing for Women. Immigration New Zealand endorsed that Parker enter Aotearoa New Zealand via visa waiver, despite neo-Nazis having attended her recent events in Australia. She was planning on holding two events: one in Pōneke Wellington and the other in Tāmaki Makaurau Auckland.

Parker's presence in Aotearoa was argued in an open letter by the Greens Party's LGBTQIA+ network, as "a significant risk and threat to public order and public interest - particularly with respect to preventing violence towards members of our takatāpui, transgender and gender-diverse communities". A coalition of rainbow communities including Gender Minorities Aotearoa, InsideOUT Kōaro, and Auckland Pride unsuccessfully challenged the judicial review for Parker's entrance to the country, at the High Court in Pōneke.

Rainbow community students across Aotearoa have been fearing for their safety with Parker in the country. Takatāpui, transgender and gender-diverse students already face significant stigma and discrimination in education, employment and healthcare across the world, and are often targets of violence due to their identity. These events have only increased the feelings of lack of safety and possibility of threat, to many vulnerable people.

Consequently, students have rallied in Albert Square and Civic Square across the two days when Parker's events were scheduled, to protest her being in Aotearoa.

## Trans Rights are Human Rights

NZUSA would like to take this opportunity to clearly state that **trans rights are human rights**. NZUSA condemns hate speech of all forms, in addition to the stigma, ableism and other forms of discrimination, systemic inequality, and violence that targets takatāpui, transgender and gender-diverse people.

These events only further the distressing reports that trans students in Aotearoa encounter higher levels of sexual violence, in addition to depression and suicidal thoughts. Calls have been made for some years to the Government to create better laws and policies to support trans people from discrimination and violence, with gender-affirming healthcare including mental health services, and welcoming educational spaces.

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For too long our society has been dominated by colonial, patriarchal and capitalistic sentiments. These sentiments have made trans people a “subject” whose human rights are “debated”, rather than identifying that **these are real people with real lives to whom all human rights** - including freedom from terror, acts of aggression and hate - **apply**. “Gender-critical” feminists in the UK have obscured conversations regarding trans poverty, homelessness, health needs, domestic violence, and other concerning issues.

NZUSA wants to identify that **real feminism is not hate speech. Empowered feminism does not accuse, belittle or undermine the identity of others**. Too often these events evidence that privileged upper middle-class cis-gender persons - to whom immediate dangers do not apply - believe that their self-regarding positions equate to feminism. The combination of this false feminism and the far right instead evidences the imposition of human rights for a few rather than for all, furthering division. In short, **this evidences that hate on the basis of someone’s identity is the root of violence**.

## An End to Hate

Our question is, why was more protection regarding Parker’s arrival in Aotearoa, not given to the trans community when they were calling for support? Why did so many of our political figures speak out against Parker’s event, when they did not speak directly to Immigration New Zealand?

Immigration Minister, Michael Wood, stated that Parker’s perspectives were “inflammatory, vile and incorrect world views”. Greens Party member, Ricardo Mendez-March, stated that: “I do think we should be considering whether her arrival to Aotearoa could pose a security risk for our communities and the repercussions that it could have when it comes to galvanising the far right”. Wellington Mayor, Tory Whanau, said that Parker’s “harmful narrative” was not welcome in Pōneke. Prime Minister, Chris Hipkins, was largely silent on the subject other than stating: “I condemn people who use their right to free speech in a way that seeks to deliberately create division.”

We need politicians to champion **that freedom of speech should NEVER be hate speech**. The rise of far right discourses that deny the human rights of others is disturbing. **Hate on the basis of someone’s identity is never a solution, nor does it show the empathy that is needed to help support our nation**.

And to Parker, NZUSA wants to say **women in New Zealand are not in danger. People who share fear instead of aroha, are our concern as they do not embody the values of our students. They prioritise fear where we wish to prioritise aroha, mana and peace**.

We ask our Government and our education institutions to act to consider the needs of takatāpui, transgender and gender-diverse students and the wider rainbow community, and to combat all forms of harmful hate speech.