

2024 ANNUAL REPORT

WORK TOGETHER WIN TOGETHER



FREE SPEECH UNION
KIA RANGONA TE KŌRERO

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OUR STORY

Free speech is our shared inheritance



A flourishing society is a free society, and a free society needs free speech. We can't move forward together without it.

Free speech is:

- a fundamental human right;
- needed for the preservation and exercise of other rights and freedoms;
- the cornerstone of a healthy liberal democracy;
- a protection against the abuse of power by both government and non-government actors;
- essential for the vigorous development and testing of ideas for our culture and our intellectual institutions.



OUR CHALLENGE

Our culture's
**belief
in free
speech**
is increasingly
under threat

Its not just the Government we need to worry about

Free speech is a right built and maintained not simply through laws, but culture. A nation where free thought may thrive requires a society willing to tolerate opposing views and ideas. Yet, the liberal democratic societies of the world are in the midst of a "free speech recession", driven not only by government action but a culture of "might makes right".

So-called 'culture wars' are now "won" when opponents are silenced, not convinced. The struggle for free speech takes place in a much wider social and cultural context, particularly in those areas where it matters most: our schools, universities, the arts, the entertainment industry and the media.

We're fighting on many fronts:

- Access to public venues is being denied on political grounds.
- Employees face mounting constraints on their free expression, even in their private lives.
- Professional bodies are increasingly willing to use their powers to impose ideological compliance, even on issues peripheral to their work.
- Academics are feeling less free to fulfil their role as "critic and conscience" of society.
- Fears mis- and dis-information is being used to restrict speech, especially online.
- Speech rights increasingly being overridden or watered down by government legislation.
- Media organisations are more willing to use their cultural influence to limit intellectual diversity.
- Police abuse of powers to limit speech rights and vindicate threats of violence against peaceful protest.

OUR VISION

We are your **champions** for free speech

We work towards a flourishing civil society where free speech is restored as a Kiwi value.

We protect and promote vigorous debate, diversity of ideas, and New Zealanders' rights to freedom of speech, conscience, and intellectual inquiry.

The Free Speech Union is here to rebuild a culture that values and protects free speech.

We were formed as a response to the rise of 'cancel culture' and antagonism to dissenting views, and the erosion of civil discourse and tolerance.

We've unionised because many contemporary free speech fights aren't only against government actors, but are also in the workplace where employers seek to prescribe the views of their employees, even off the clock.

We remain fiercely nonpartisan and take no position on any substantive political or cultural issues. We fight for the right to speak freely, without fear of unjust consequences, no matter your opinions.

As the challenge grows, so do we.

As the threats to a renewed free speech culture mount up, we've been growing our team and capability to match it.

Since incorporating as a union in 2021, we've gone from a supporter base of 4,000 and one full-time employee, to 100,000 supporters and six staff members.

FROM OUR CEO

We've had big wins, but our job is far from over

Earlier this month, I met with the Vice-Chancellor of a large university. I met with them, and their same staff, two years ago. That time, I went in alone and tried to make the case to them (off the back of research we conducted) that academics' free speech is of the utmost importance.

But this time was different. Instead of going in alone, I went with three incredibly prominent, well-respected academics. Confidently, we reminded them of their duties, both legal and ethical, and tore apart a policy they were proposing. As I sat at the table this time, I quietly smiled to myself.

That meeting represented so much of what, together, we have been able to achieve: a credible, principled, moderate movement for the speech of all Kiwis.

Three years ago, a small group of concerned Kiwis said they wouldn't sit by and see speech rights eroded any further; not without a fight, at least. So, we put a plan together, and we asked you to support us in achieving it.

And, well. A lot has happened since then.

Canada. The United Kingdom. Ireland. Australia; all countries we often compare ourselves to have either faced or are facing hate speech and online regulation laws. Here in New Zealand, we also faced this censorial overreach. But, unlike those other countries, we've managed to push these laws back.

That's because, together, we decided we wouldn't just sit by. We fight to defend free speech through four workstreams.

The four Cs:

- **Cases:** legal fights- led by our phenomenal legal team and volunteers;
- **Campaigns:** political fights- up against Parliament and bad law, but also major institutions like the media, universities, and the public service;
- **Content:** giving free speech advocates the facts and arguments they need, through podcasts, op-eds, reports, events, panel discussions, speaking tours etc.;
- **Coaching:** education, investing in a new generation of free speech advocates.

Together, they give us a strategic path to retaking ground lost to our would-be-censors. We need to fight in the court of law, but also in the court of public opinion. We need to equip every Kiwi with reasoned, thoughtful, evidence-based responses to why free speech is the foundation on which a liberal, prosperous, stable, peaceful society must be built.

Free speech has been used and abused by both the Left and the Right; our work isn't connected to either, and we have a lot to do regardless of who is in Government. We are working (and succeeding) to defend not only an abstract legal or philosophical point, but a heartfelt value that insists all individuals should be free to

think and express their beliefs.

Three years in, and things are just getting going; there's a lot of work to be done. But I am confident that together, New Zealand is capable of leading the world as a country that tolerates diversity of opinions, cherishes free speech, and sends our would-be-censors packing.

It has been one of the greatest privileges of my life to lead the work at the Free Speech Union over the past three years, and this is simply just the beginning.

It is all only possible because of your partnership and support. So simply, but from my heart, thank you.



Jonathan Ayling, CEO

FROM OUR BOARD

Letter from the Council

Three years ago, the Free Speech Union NZ set out on an audacious path to become the national leader in the fight to protect and expand the most radical of freedoms: the right to think according to your conscience, and express that belief. I wanted to put my money where my mouth has always been. A passionate debater in university, and a trained doctor and lawyer, free speech has always been the foundational freedom in my mind. But like so many others, it was clear to me we were losing ground; quickly.

So, along with 10,000 other Kiwis, I chipped into the fight to keep speech free. I was then asked to join the Council, subsequently elected Chairman. I believe it is some of the most important work I have ever done; and I'm pleased to pay for the privilege.

Tragically, we live in an era where the imperative to feel 'safe' from confronting words is more valued than the possible wisdom those confronting words could bring. It eats away at our civil life in a myriad of ways and undermines our ability to address the plethora of complex challenges our country faces.

The censorship virus infects public discourse in similar ways across the Anglosphere. Questions on race, gender, climate change, vaccination, colonialism, and other crucial questions go unanswered, or answered only in certain ways that silence dissenting and 'heretical' views.

Where we most need better understanding, we have the least freedom to pursue it. As we frequently see, jobs can be lost, Twitter accounts removed, venue bookings cancelled, criminal

charges laid, for no more than benign and sincere interest in promoting competing points of view.

Yet, despite it all, we are gaining ground back again. Thanks to our work together, there is solid case law that says council facilities can't be denied on a bureaucratic whim. Public servants are taking notice. Contentious meetings are going ahead. One council recently even had the grace to apologise for an unlawful cancellation.

Universities may even be coming in from the cold, albeit slowly. A flurry of new tertiary education free speech policies have been released; some were disappointing, but at least the need for such a policy has been considered. These are foundations we will keep building on.

We are pursuing cases in criminal courts and professional discipline tribunals for people who have exercised lawful speech rights. We have the wind at our backs and the law in our corner and new wins are in the offing. New wins will change attitudes in new places.

These are but a few examples.

There is much to be done, but a solid team to do it. I want to express my thanks to Jonathan and the team for their heroic work. With you, me, and them, all partnering together, along with one hundred thousand others, I have a feeling we're just getting started.



Dr Roderick Mulgan, FSU Council Chair



“Ultimately, we have to accept the implications of human creativity. Some of what people say will be wrong. Some of it will be hurtful. Some of it may even be harmful. But there are greater values at stake.

We cannot have truth without accommodating error and tolerating the challenge to received ideas. We cannot live together in society without allowing people to say things that other people regard as foolish, hurtful or untrue. It is the price that we pay for allowing human civilisation to advance and flourish. It is worth fighting for.”

Lord Sumption, FSU Tour Speaker

OUR THEORY OF CHANGE

Working across arenas & divides

Our free speech culture is increasingly under threat in these areas:

	Legal	Political	Cultural	
Context	New Zealand's law already contains many protections for free speech, but it still takes effort to ensure they are upheld.	There are gaps in New Zealand's laws regarding free speech protections, and we must fend off attempts to roll back these protections further.	For the principles of free speech to flourish long-term, all New Zealanders need to understand its importance.	
Problems	Workers are censored and risk losing their jobs. People and organisations being persecuted by government actors for their views.	Censorial legislation and policies being introduced. Holes in New Zealand's free speech protections to plug.	Important public debates are halted and suppressed. Few credible voices advocating for free speech in the public square.	A lack of 'free speech champions' to pick up the baton for free speech.

OUR THEORY OF CHANGE

How we are restoring our free speech culture

Long Term Impact

Medium Term Outcomes

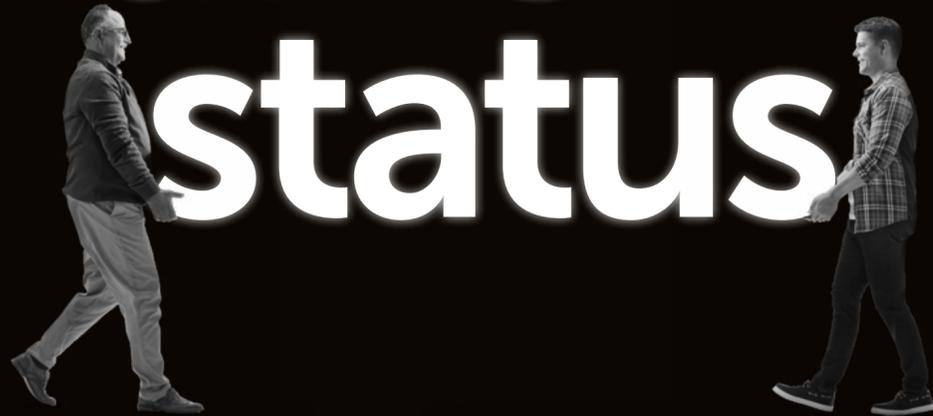
Short Term Outcomes

Activities

	Legal	Political	Cultural	
Activities	<p>Fight Cases</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cases Advocacy Public communication <p>Represent and fight for members in dispute</p> <p>Provide personal advocacy for supporters</p> <p>Develop Professional Memberships</p>	<p>Drive Campaigns</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Campaigns Submissions <p>Mobilise New Zealanders</p> <p>Lobby political leaders</p> <p>Draft submissions and legislation</p>	<p>Create Content</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tours & Events Traditional Media Social Media <p>Promote free-speech arguments through traditional and social media</p> <p>Host events and tours</p> <p>Reassure and empower people concerned about free speech</p>	<p>Develop Coaching</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> University clubs Educational programmes Internship Programme <p>Run and sponsor programmes in schools and universities</p> <p>Offer formational internship opportunities</p> <p>Get university clubs running</p>
Short Term Outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> New Zealanders are protected Supporters know someone's got their back Professionals can take collective action 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> New Zealanders are engaged and protesting Political leaders are aware and motivated Political leaders are equipped with information 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Free speech arguments at the heart of debate New perspectives and people brought together New Zealanders feel confident to speak freely 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Equip students with critical thinking and free speech spirit Develop future free speech champions Free speech presence on campus
Medium Term Outcomes	<p>Our laws and judiciary consistently protecting free speech</p>	<p>Our leaders eagerly championing free speech</p>	<p>Our culture boldly celebrates free speech</p>	<p>Our next generation deeply values free speech</p>
Long Term Impact	<p>Free speech is restored as a Kiwi value</p> <p>A flourishing New Zealand civil society that values and protects vigorous debate, dissenting ideas, and freedom of speech as cultural cornerstones.</p>			

OUR UNION STRUCTURE

Going big on our union status



From strength to strength

What is now the Free Speech Union was founded back in 2018 as the Free Speech Coalition, after a booking for an Auckland Council venue made by two speakers visiting New Zealand was cancelled on the basis of their political views (though ostensibly on health and safety grounds, an exercise of the "Heckler's veto"). The Coalition formed to bring Kiwis from across the political spectrum together to fight the politicisation of public-venue access, challenging the Auckland Council's decisions in the courts.

In 2021 the Free Speech Coalition reformed into the Free Speech Union, to challenge the government's attempt at implementing 'hate speech' legislation. Shortly after this time the Union incorporated as a registered trade union, to better pick up the fights of workers facing threats to their speech rights from their employers. Our status as a trade union has been intensely valuable, allowing us special representation rights and rights of access to workplaces (which we have also used on occasion with university campuses).

Introducing Professional Memberships

Our experience has shown us that specific professions and sectors face particular threats to their speech rights at various levels (societal, institutional, regulatory). We also know that, for all our wins, changes within specific professions need the support and organisation of the members themselves.

Often, when assisting someone in a specific profession, they ask, "Am I the only one? Are there others who care about this like me?"

And every time, there are.

That is why the Free Speech Union has begun launching our professional memberships, to better connect and organise advocacy for specific sectors of the New Zealand workforce. So far, we have launched our membership specifically for academics and legal professionals, and future groups will include healthcare professionals, public servants, teachers, media, writers and artists, and religious leaders.



Academic



Legal



Healthcare
Professionals



Public
Servants



Teachers



Media



Writers
& Artists



Religious
Leaders

Launched:

Coming soon:

PROFESSIONAL MEMBERSHIPS

Ending the culture of fear on our campuses

Challenging the status quo for us all

Following 20 years as a secondary school English teacher and a member of the group which founded kura Kaupapa Maori, I embarked on an even longer university career. When 2,000 academics turned on my colleagues and me for daring to co-author the famed Listener 7 letter three years ago, I realised that my prior experience as a scholarly critic of revisionist Treaty politics was a rehearsal for the sustained attacks of 2021 and following. But there is a huge difference

between the sustained attacks from the 1990s and the post-2021 years. It is the Free Speech Union. I now have many colleagues also committed to academic freedom and a real union fighting our case.

Earlier this year, I was pleased to accept the invitation to co-chair the Free Speech Union's Inter-University Council on Academic Freedom (IUCAF) along with Professor Paul Moon.

The role of the university is to foster an environment that enables academics to be both the 'critic and conscience' of society. But this is not possible if academics aren't free to speak their minds. Yet, this is the sorry story I'm seeing over and over.

Today, I believe we have less academic freedom than we've had at any point in my career. I'm convinced more than ever that the work of the Free Speech Union is crucial.

I'm proud to support FSU as we fight for universities to restore a culture of critical thinking and robust debate where the next generation will be free to challenge the status quo for the benefit of us all.



Professor Elizabeth Rata, Co-Chairperson
Inter-University Council
on Academic Freedom

TESTIMONIAL

“If anyone can save our universities from themselves, it is the Free Speech Union.”

As crucibles of new ideas and the venues for the critique of existing ones, universities arguably have a greater duty than any other public institution to defend and promote free speech. In recent years, though, universities have, in many ways become ground zero for attacks on free speech. When academics have been cancelled, vilified and sometimes harassed for expressing their ideas, other academics and the university itself have been insufficiently ready to defend them. In some cases, academics have even led the charge against their colleagues.

The Free Speech Union has been there at every turn to do the job that universities have all too often failed to do themselves. They have widely publicised these attacks on academic freedom and forthrightly advocated for those attacked. With its new academic wing – the Inter-university Council on Academic Freedom – the Free Speech Union is poised to take the fight for academic freedom to the next level.

If anyone can save our universities from themselves, it is the Free Speech Union.



Dr Michael Johnston

LEGAL

Fighting for your right to speak freely

We've got your back

As a registered trade union, we regularly represent members in employment disputes and provide representation and advocacy for supporters in many other contexts.

We've been in this game for a while, and have the resources, networks, and expertise to provide credible, effective advocacy for any Kiwi having their speech rights unlawfully infringed. More than just defending individuals in our case work, these efforts regularly set strong precedent to ensure that we don't have to fight these battles time and again in future.

Cases

Cases

Personal Advocacy

Public Communication

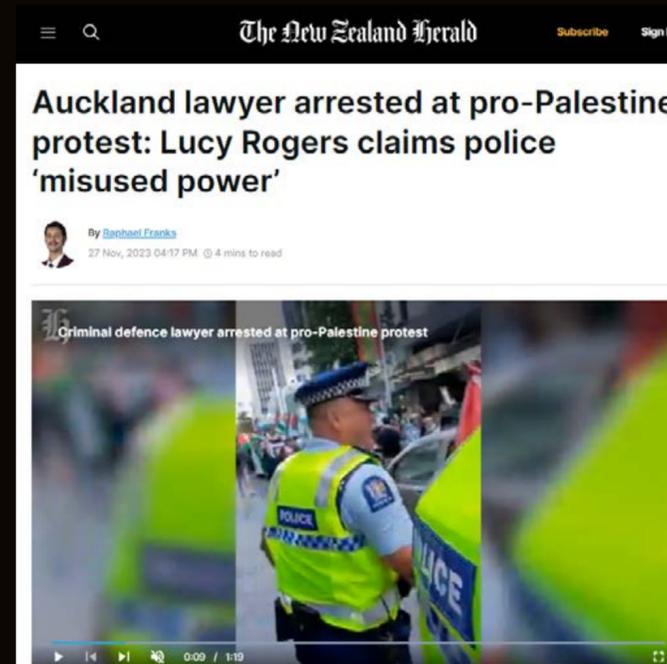
CASES

As a registered trade union, we regularly represent members in employment disputes and provide representation and advocacy for supporters in many other contexts.

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Lucy Rogers

The first of several cases where the Free Speech Union became aware of the Police abusing their 'breach of the peace' powers, Lucy was arrested for a peaceful counter-protest at a rally for Palestine. Lucy was simply holding a sign saying "selective condemnation of genocide is evil", and was threatened with arrest for a 'breach of the peace', not because she was doing anything unlawful, but because others might unlawfully attack her for it.



Allowing the risk of a violent response to silence peaceful protest is the stuff of banana republics, not liberal democracies. The Free Speech Union is helping Lucy take the Police to court to vindicate her right to free expression and set important precedent to ensure that the Police not abuse their powers to suppress peaceful protest.

Daniel Maxwell

Shortly after the Free Speech Union announced Lucy Roger's case to the public, Daniel got in touch with us to

bring his own case to our attention- being arrested and charged with obstruction after having peacefully protested with an Israeli flag, also at a rally for Palestine.

Unlike our case with Lucy Rogers, Daniel was facing criminal charges for his lawful, peaceful protests. The Free Speech Union assisted Daniel to see these charges dropped.



Rotorua District Council submission policy

Following a tip-off from a supporter, the Free Speech Union became aware of a policy being passed by the Rotorua District Council that raised the possibility

of submissions from the public on council consultations being redacted from consideration on arbitrary grounds, such as being offensive or misinformed.

The Free Speech Union threatened the Council with legal action should the policy be abused, and in response the policy was amended to clarify that all public submissions would still be considered by the Council.

Suzanne Smith

Few regulatory organisations are as harsh on their members' speech rights as the Nursing Council. Suzanne Smith left the nursing profession and her role as a Nurse Educator following the introduction of the COVID vaccine mandates, but after participating in a protest against the mandates she is facing fines of up to \$14,000 for "bringing her profession into disrepute". The Free Speech Union has been providing her with representation before the Health Practitioners Disciplinary Tribunal.

CASES



Marlborough District Council

A 'classic' case for the Free Speech Union: when the gender-critical group "Let Kids Be Kids" made a booking for a Marlborough District Council venue, it was refused as the group was not 'inclusive'. Thankfully, the Free Speech Union has fought, and won, this kind of fight many times before, and with court precedent in hand, we informed the Council they were on the wrong end of a slam-dunk Bill of Rights Act case.

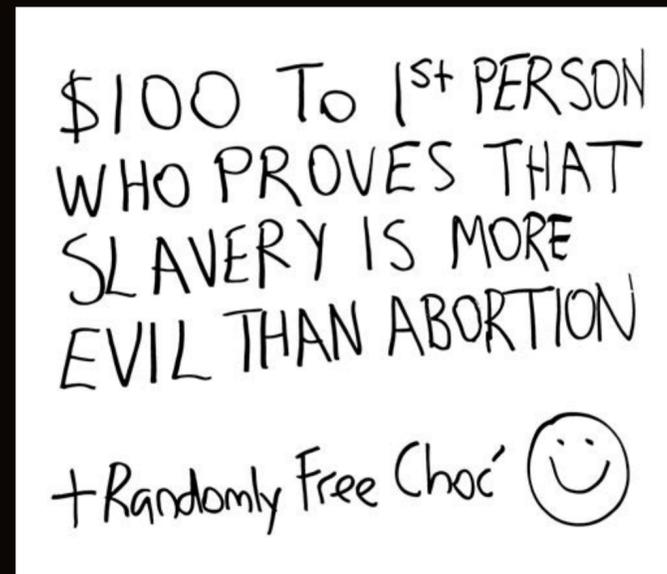
Following a meeting with the Council, they agreed not only to allow the booking, but also issue a public apology, allow the Free Speech Union to host a seminar for council staff on free speech principles and law, and review their policies on the use of council facilities.

Its fights like these where the hard slogs to get good precedent become so important.

Paul Burns

Paul is a regular sight on the streets of Wellington, an anti-abortion activist who offers \$100 to anyone who can change his mind. At one of these exercises a group who found his views offensive called the Police, who not only arrested him but have charged him with disorderly conduct. His case is another in a long string of Police abusing their powers of arrest to oblige those who try to silence rather than convince.

The Free Speech Union is providing representation for Paul to challenge the charges and are hopeful that the case will set further precedent protecting Kiwis against police suppression of lawful protest.



Christine Massof

Following an innocuous comment on an IRD women's network forum about the introduction of period products to men's and women's bathrooms, Christine was hauled before HR and threatened with disciplinary action if she didn't keep her gender critical views to herself.

Employees shouldn't have to put up with bullying from their management simply because of their views, and neither should Christine. The Free Speech Union is currently helping her bring a personal grievance action against the IRD in the Employment Relations Authority.

PERSONAL ADVOCACY

Not all 'cases' that come before us require legal representation. Plenty of our battles are outside the courtroom, but are still just as important for upholding speech rights for the nation and those who we support.

Momo St. John

In a prime example of modern-day censorship not only coming from government but through 'cancel culture' avenues, the Free Speech Union caught wind of a news article about to be published seeking to expose an anonymous Twitter account run by a health professional, that would challenge their continued employment over their political views.

Journalists should have no place hunting for 'scalps' among everyday Kiwis with Twitter accounts. The Free Speech Union rallied its supporters to call on the journalist and their editor not to run the story- the article was dropped.

Family First newspaper advertisement

When conservative advocacy group Family First sought to run newspaper advertisements for their 'What is a Woman' documentary screenings, several national newspapers agreed together to decline to run the ads out of opposition to its messaging. While press freedom ensures that the option to decline an ad is and should remain open to them, turning down good money on ideological grounds limits New Zealand's political diversity, and opens the newspapers to further attack when any other potentially controversial ads may be run.

Following widespread outcry, the Free Speech Union was able to meet with some of the media companies' executives to warn them against creating a rod for their own back by caving to censorship.



Anonymous professionals

Not all our work gets published as we complete it. We are regularly approached by Kiwis who don't need legal representation, or significant public advocacy, but simple a word of advice and assurance of their rights.

Some of these cases have involved professionals facing baseless complaints made to their regulatory authorities on the grounds of a belief or opinion expressed online. Their responses to these complaints they draft themselves, but with a little guidance from the Free Speech Union. In each of these cases, the complaints were promptly dropped.

PUBLIC COMMUNICATION

Where an issue or a case arises, often the first course of action for us is to simply write a letter. Much can be achieved by simply letting people know that their actions and decisions are being scrutinised by the likes of the Free Speech Union.

July - August 2023

To Tauranga City Council: *Imposition of security requirement for "What is a Woman" screening gives legitimacy to thug's veto*

To Prof. Jan Thomas: *Non-destructive student protest must be respected*

To Chris Hipkins: *Prime Minister must take stand to uphold NZ's liberal democratic values*

To Andrew Little: *Upcoming Posie Parker visit a chance to turn new leaf on tolerance and free expression in New Zealand*

To the Public Service Commissioner: *Local Government Review taking apparent 'vibes based' approach to moderation of public consultation submissions*

To Petone Central School Board of Trustees: *Concerns over cancellation of booking for school hall for candidates event*

To VUW Vice-Chancellor: *Student Posters Removal*

To Tasman District Council: *Hall Hire guidance in apparent contravention of New Zealand Bill of Rights Act protections of free expression*

September - October 2023

To Hutt City Council: *Hutt City must not give into protest and create rod for its own back*

To Mellons Bay School Principal: *Alleged compelled speech of students at Mellons Bay Primary*

To Andrew Slater: *Te Whatu Ora must stand by employees' rights to freedom of thought and speech*

To Auckland Police District Commander: *Allegation of arrest for filming public protest*

To University of Auckland Vice-Chancellor: *Concerns over Mātauranga Engagement Programme prohibiting the expression of dissenting views*

To University of Auckland's Council: *Letter to Auckland University Council on leaked survey results*

To the Ministry of Education: *Concerns regarding Aotearoa New Zealand Principal Eligibility Criteria*

To VUW Vice-Chancellor: *'Students against cuts' posters taken down at University's instruction*

To Clutha District Council: *Council must respect speech rights and allow billboards*

To Eventbrite General Counsel: *Spurious Eventbrite cancellations pushing away business and creating rod for company's own back*

November - December 2023

To ACT Party Leader David Seymour: *ACT Party must affirm its principles and oppose National Party's gang patch policy*

To the Prime Minister-elect: *Policy to expand ban on gang patches and limit gang communication a violation of free expression rights*

To the Public Service Commissioner: *Local Government Review moderation*

To the AUT Vice Chancellor: *Cancellation of Sikh National Assembly by AUT on spurious grounds sets a poor precedent*

To the Berhampore School Principal and Board of Trustees Chair: *Berhampore School must foster intellectual diversity and consult in good faith on relationships and sexuality curriculum*

To the Secretary for Education: *Freedom of conscience and speech must be upheld in the teaching of the RSE curriculum*

To Police Acting District Commander: *Woman arrested for silently holding sign in counter-protest to pro-Palestinian rally*

To the IPCA: *Complaint regarding unlawful arrest breaching free expression rights*

To Queenstown Lakes District Council: *Embrace of all backgrounds and perspectives in QLDC DEI statement welcome but caution advised on statement's application*

To the Māori King: *We applaud the Kingitanga Hui - Free speech is necessary for both expressing our differences and resolving them*

January - February 2024

To the Public Service Commissioner: *IRD must respect employees' rights to voice disagreement and dissent*

To New World Owner-Operator: *Concerns regarding alleged removal from store for opinions expressed on t-shirt*

To the Minister for Police and Attorney-General: *Concerning pattern of abuse of speech and protest rights by New Zealand Police*

To the Minister of Justice: *Electoral Review*

To the Prime Minister: *The Christchurch Call has become a threat to free speech. The censorial mission creep must stop.*

To Wellington Rape Crisis: *Concerns regarding cancellation of crisis services*

To Chlöe Swarbrick: *"From the River to the Sea" and Hate Speech*

Letter to CEO of Oranga Tamariki

To University of Auckland Vice-Chancellor: *Princeton Principles to protect Academic Freedom?*

To WOMAD: *re Ziggy Marley Petition*

To ACC Chief Executive: *ACC's "Transitioning Gender at Work" policy includes Compelled Speech*

To VUW Vice-Chancellor: *Proposals to amend "free speech" at university*

To the Secretary for Justice: *Ministry of Justice only consulting selected non-government agencies on proposed changes to the Official Information Act*

PUBLIC COMMUNICATION

March - April 2023

To the Deputy PM and other Ministers: *Free Speech Union Work on Academic freedom in New Zealand Universities*

To Jo Miller: *Hutt City Council censors work of revered and respected Māori leader*

To Simeon Brown: *Hutt City Council censors work of revered and respected Māori leader*

To Chris Bishop: *Parliament in urgency – the 100 Day Action Plan and potential effects on free speech*

To Taituarā: *Taituarā's President censors work of revered and respected Māori leader*

To Rotorua Lakes Council: *Rotorua Library Rainbow Storytime event*

To Rotorua Police: *Cancelled Rotorua Library Rainbow Storytime event*

To Hastings Police: *Cancelled Hastings Library Rainbow Storytime and teen events*

To Hastings District Council: *Hastings Library Rainbow Storytime and teen events*

To Abdur Razzaq: *FIANZ questions why hate speech law reforms abandoned*

To Paul Goldsmith and Dr Amokura Kawharu: *Hate is subjective, whether hate crimes or hate speech*

To Vic Uni Council: *Union to hold panel discussion on free speech if University won't*

May - June 2024

To RNZ: *Incorrect characterisation of Free Speech Union as 'Libertarian'*

To Brooke van Velden: *Internal Affairs stops work on online regulatory reforms*

To Takina Events: *Wellington City Councillor tries to cancel event at Tākina*

To VUW Vice-Chancellor: *Feedback on 'The role of Universities in supporting freedom of speech'*

To Marlborough District Council Chief Executive: *Alleged breach of Bill of Rights Act by Marlborough District Libraries*

To LGNZ President: *Indiscriminate access to public venues for all ratepayers*

To University of Auckland Vice-Chancellor Dawn Freshwater: *Ambiguity in University's Draft Freedom of Expression and Academic Freedom Policy*

To University of Auckland advisory group: *Five points to save academic freedom at Kiwi universities*

To Marlborough District Council: *Alleged breach of Bill of Rights Act by Marlborough District Libraries*

To Citizens Advice Bureau: *Alleged breach of Bill of Rights Act by Citizens Advice Bureau*

July – August 2024

To Massey University Vice-Chancellor: *Academic Freedom at Massey University looks bleak following proposed curriculum changes*

To Nursing Council Deputy Registrar: *Nursing Council policing private social media engagement*

To Minister for Local Government: *Councillors kept in the dark and forced to self-censor by its own staff*

To Matamata-Piako District Council Chief Executive: *Matamata-Piako District Council's new Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Strategy*

To Citizens Advice Bureau: *Alleged breach of Bill of Rights Act by Citizens Advice Bureau*

To Citizens Advice Bureau Chief Executive: *Alleged breach of Bill of Rights Act by Citizens Advice Bureau*

To Wellington City Mayor and Councillors: *Wellington City Councillors seek venue guidelines but not to uphold free speech*

To University of Otago Council: *University of Otago Statement on Free Speech*

To Minister of Police and Police Commissioner: *Police roll out new 'hate crime' and 'hate speech' training*

To Minister of Police and Minister of Justice: *Police training and collection of data illegal, and out of step with Parliament*

To New Plymouth Boys' High School: *NPBHS bans student speech*

To Chief Censor: *Chief Censor incorrectly characterises free speech as an American concept*

To South Wairarapa District Council: *Council silences local farmer*



POLITICAL

Freedom
for the people
by the people



Our campaigns are at the heart of what we do

As a political action group, we regularly bring our expertise, networks, and supporter base of 100,000 New Zealanders to coordinate democratic engagement and participation to push back against censorship.

We live in a democracy where ideas can be challenged and protested.

At the Free Speech Union, we're unashamedly prepared to stand up for our freedom of speech, for the silenced, censored, and ostracised. We've already had many big wins through people power.

Campaigns

Campaigns

Submissions

Petitions

CAMPAIGNS

Online Regulation

In June 2023 the Department of Internal Affairs published a discussion document for its Safer Online Services and Media Platforms reforms. These reforms were billed as a modernisation of New Zealand’s internet and press regulation, but in fact represented New Zealand’s greatest threat to the free press and free internet in a generation.



The reforms proposed an unelected, unaccountable regulator to require the implementation of “codes” which would apply across whole internet and media sectors, even if members of those sectors wanted nothing to do with them. From the discussion document, it was clear that these codes would in effect be ‘hate speech’ laws for the internet, and used to restrict political speech, capitalising on fears of mis- and disinformation.

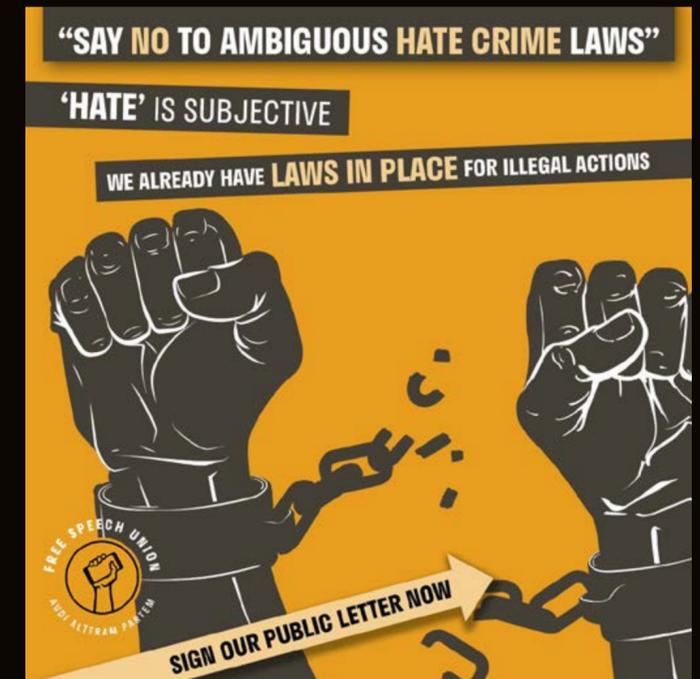
The Free Speech Union was leaked a copy of these proposals shortly before they were published, and got in ahead of the DIA’s finely-orchestrated launch. From the outset of the proposal’s consultation period, the conversation was centered squarely on its potential for online censorship. Of the 20,000 submissions on the reforms, nearly 19,000 came from supporters of the FSU. It was clear Kiwis wanted to keep their internet free.

In 2024, the government announced that the DIA’s online regulation reforms would not be going ahead.

Hate Crime Legislation

While the efforts at ‘hate speech’ legislation has been firmly put to bed, the Law Commission is still exploring the potential for ‘hate crime’ legislation to be passed. As with ‘hate speech’, the line of where a crime becomes a ‘hate crime’, is too fuzzy, and experience tells us it would be used to punish specific viewpoints while letting others off the hook.

We have been making the case, including with an appearance on the 6 o’clock news, that alleged hate crimes should be treated for what they are, crimes, with extreme caution on bringing “wrongthink” into the mix.



CAMPAIGNS

Challenging the heckler's veto

Since the Free Speech Union's original inception in 2018, our constant fight has been against the 'heckler's veto': threatening violence to get lawful events cancelled simply because someone doesn't like what they have to say. All too often public venues cancel controversial speakers, citing bogus health and safety concerns, even when planned counter-protesters insist they will be strictly peaceful.

While the Free Speech Union continues to provide advocacy and legal representation for victims of the heckler's veto, we have this year gone on the offensive. While our cases have set some important Supreme Court precedent on free speech rights and access to public venues, the heckler's veto has been left open as a loophole for our would-be censors.

In response, the Free Speech Union has drafted a bill for Parliament to implement to correct this issue. It has been endorsed by all three governing parties and is currently sitting in the 'biscuit tin' of Members Bills.

Royal Commission COVID Inquiry

The government response to the COVID 19 pandemic impacted free speech rights in a variety of ways, from protest rights to online speech, particularly in the context of the wave of fears around mis/disinformation. When the Government announced a review into the response to the pandemic, the Free Speech Union rallied its supporters to submit to the consultation on its terms of reference, to investigate the impact of the pandemic response on speech rights, and to make sure that in future crises free speech rights would not be unjustly laid to the wayside.



Mis/Dis-information and Censorship

With the fight over 'hate speech' legislation safely won (for now), our would-be censors have turned to a new species of blasphemy- mis- or dis-information. Various commentators, groups, and government actors have raised falsehoods, particularly online, as the new great threat that requires censorship to protect people from themselves. What's more is the hundreds of thousands of taxpayer dollars that have been thrown at those hyping up the threat of disinformation to bang the drum for censorship against their political foes.

The Free Speech Union has worked to challenge groups such as the Disinformation Project to make the case that bad information is beaten by good information, not censorship. Through advocacy in the media and even a crack at a \$400,000 government tender on insight into the disinformation landscape, we have been showing the disinformation fad for what it is: naked opportunism seeking to build a case for censorship.



CAMPAIGNS

Police response to protest action

The New Zealand Police are entrusted with the role of upholding the law and the rights of New Zealanders, including the right to free speech and free assembly. Alas, time and again the Police have appeared unable or unwilling to uphold these rights, at times failing to protect free expression from violent counter-protest, and at times even using their powers of arrest against those exercising their speech rights rather than those willing to employ violence to silence them.

The Free Speech Union has been providing legal representation to several Kiwis who have faced unlawful arrests for their speech rights, but we have also been raising these issues with Police leadership ourselves, including getting invited by the Police Commissioner to brief the Police Leadership forum on managing protests and speech rights.

Briefing to Incoming Government

A change in government means a change in legislative direction. When the current government came into power the Free Speech Union took the chance to push for speech-maximising policies, as opposed to simply holding back the tide of bad legislation.

Our Briefing to the Incoming Government, which we sent to various new ministers in portfolios relevant to our work, raised the various issues facing New Zealanders' speech rights, and laid out what the Government should do to rectify them.

Name Suppression

Time after time we have seen convicted criminals get name suppression, disallowing media and (more importantly) their victims from speaking publicly about the identities of criminal offenders. This is manifestly unjust, allowing offenders to escape public accountability and unjustly limiting the speech rights of their victims.

When these cases of name suppression have hit the airwaves, the Free Speech Union has repeatedly advocated for reforms to the laws enabling this injustice. As with other issues, we have also had a draft bill written up, ready to be presented to legislators, to change the laws around name suppression to uphold the principles of open justice and protect victims' speech rights.



Judith Hobson was violently assaulted in Albert Park at the Speak Up for Women event that was disrupted by protestors. Her assailant was released without a conviction and given name suppression. On the anniversary, we met with politicians so Judith could share her story.

SUBMISSIONS

Alongside our campaigns, the Free Speech Union frequently makes official comments on various government proposals. When a public body wants to hear the public's views on an issue that impacts speech rights, the Free Speech Union ensures that the case for speech-maximisation is made.

Gang Patch Legislation

Despite repeated speeches talking about the importance of free speech while in opposition, one of the first major pieces of legislation introduced by the new government disappointingly struck at free expressive rights. Censorship isn't okay even when targeted at those we don't like, including gangs, and the Free Speech Union took the principled stance to oppose the government's proposed gang patch ban.

The Free Speech Union submitted on the Bill, opposing its censorial clauses outright while also providing suggestions to blunt the potential for harm. The Attorney-General also recognised the



bill as an unjustified limit on the right to free expression under New Zealand Bill of Rights Act in her 'section 7' report to Parliament.

While the Bill remains before Parliament, the Justice Select Committee has made several recommendations that, while not removing the limits on free expression, would reduce the risk of the Bill grossly breaching free expressive rights.

University academic freedom policies

Under the Education and Training Act, New Zealand's universities are required to uphold academic freedom within their institutions. In practice however, these universities' policies often do not reflect this requirement, allowing for restrictions on speech on campus and for university staff and students.

With academic freedom in the spotlight (in large part thanks to the efforts of the Free Speech Union), several universities have been drafting and updating their academic freedom policies. The Free Speech Union has been submitting and commenting on these drafts (often by invitation from the University involved), scrutinising the draft policies to ensure they align with modern standards of academic freedom.

Fair Digital News Bargaining Bill

Closely tied to freedom of speech is the freedom of the press; the assurance that media organisations can publish and report as they see fit. This includes ensuring fair market competition in the media space, without the government 'tipping the scales' to favour certain views in the media landscape.

And yet, the Fair Digital News Bargaining Bill risks making independent media outlets commercially unviable by attaching a "professional standards condition" to the Bill's funding scheme for news media. The Free Speech Union submitted against this clause in the Bill, making the case that its requirement for news media to be beholden to editorial standards that meet the satisfaction of the government threatens the freedom of the press, particularly for independent media outlets that deliberately choose not to place themselves under such codes.

SUBMISSIONS

WorkSafe Psychosocial Harm Guidelines

All too many employers already overreach in how much they believe they can or must control their employees' speech, in or outside the workplace. They don't need laws telling them they should be restricting speech further. Yet, the proposed WorkSafe Psychosocial Harm Guidelines appeared to place obligations on employers to ensure employees would not be offended or psychologically 'harmed' by others' speech in the workplace – not simply out of respect but as a matter of serious health and safety law.

The Free Speech Union submitted on these proposals, calling for them to ensure that they not effectively become 'hate speech' laws for the workplace.

School Principal Eligibility Criteria

In another fight on the front against government regulation controlling what New Zealanders must say and believe

to keep their jobs, the proposed School Principal Eligibility Criteria risked requiring compliance with particular political views, such as on the Treaty of Waitangi. The Free Speech Union was asked to submit on the draft proposals and asserted that the government has no place enforcing ideological compliance among any profession.

Independent Electoral Review

There are a lot of rules and formalities for the conducting of New Zealand's elections, with some of these being a limit on Kiwis' speech rights. From rules around election advertising to whether people can take photos of their ballots, the Free Speech Union commented on the Independent Electoral review and called for speech-maximisation in our elections.

Further, this review also looked into the alleged risks of mis- and disinformation on the electoral landscape. Our submission on the review sought to ensure that political speech around election time not be limited by fears of bad information, where it can always be combatted by good information.



PETITIONS

For some issues a healthy dose of people power is required to get our message across, whether it is to show politicians that New Zealanders are behind taking a speech-maximising approach on an issue, or to make a widespread call to the public at large that the principles of free speech must prevail on particular issues. For these, the Free Speech Union regularly creates and organises petitions, getting thousands of Kiwis at a time to take a stand for free speech.

Some of these petitions include:

- Calling for the Government to bring the Christchurch Call back to its original intent.
- Calling for tolerance in the debates and discussions around the Israel-Gaza conflict.
- Asserting that hate is a subjective term, whether its for alleged hate-speech or hate-crimes.

CULTURE

Getting stuck in to change our culture



The battle for freedom of speech is not won through the courts or politics. Change must be at the cultural level.

As George Orwell famously noted, even where the law respects the right to freedom of speech, without a culture willing to tolerate opposing ideas, free speech rights are dead letter.

In order to foster a culture that values free speech, the Free Speech Union regularly engages with the media, writing op-eds and attending interviews, alongside hosting events, publishing podcasts, and organising nationwide tours with the foremost minds of the day in the free speech space.

Content

Tours

Events

Reports & polling

Fundraisers

Media

TOURS

The Free Speech Union regularly brings significant figures in the free speech space to New Zealand to meet with supporters, media, and key stakeholders to make the case that strong protections for speech rights are as important in New Zealand as anywhere in the world. These tours are effective at setting the agenda of national debate to focus on speech rights, and more often than not occur just at the opportune time for whatever is the free speech hot-topic of the day.

Lord Jonathan Sumption



One of Britain's foremost legal minds, and having served on the UK Supreme Court, few have greater insight into the legal profession than Lord Jonathan Sumption- including on the importance of the rule

of law, the right of the legal profession to speak freely, and its duty to uphold these rights for others.

Lord Sumption's tour involved numerous events with supporters (including a keynote speech at our Free Speech Conference and AGM), media interviews and, crucially, meetings with lawyers and university legal faculty, alongside government spokespersons and Ministers. The key message of all these events was the same: impressing upon Lord Sumption's audience the importance of the rule of law as it underpins our legal system and democracy, and the singular importance of the right to freedom of speech to protect its principles.

Graham Linehan

One of the great challenges to developing a robust culture of political debate is the hesitancy of people to stand up and have their say on contentious issues. It is of vital importance that the important debates of the time are not hushed by a fear of causing offence.

The antidote to this issue is courage- those willing to take 'cancel culture' head on and wander where others fear to tread. Gender-critical activist Graham Linehan is one such example, and his tour of New

Zealand involved prompting discussions around the consequences of cancel-culture- not so much for those like him with the means to withstand the mob, but for those that don't, for whom threats to their employment are a real and present danger to their livelihood.

Jonathan Rauch



With the debate on the limits and extent of academic freedom raging in New Zealand's universities, it was a particularly apt time for the Free Speech Union to host the journalist and academic Jonathan Rauch to New Zealand from the United States. Rauch is a senior fellow in the Governance Studies program at the Brookings Institute and author of eight books and many articles on LGBT rights, public policy, culture, and government.

His tour pressed into free speech on campus, meeting with vice-chancellors and speaking on different university campuses nationwide, including giving a keynote talk at a university symposium hosted alongside the New Zealand Initiative in Wellington.

Toby Young



For the most recent Free Speech Union tour, we were delighted and honoured to host Toby Young, the founder of the Free Speech Union UK, and progenitor of the worldwide Free Speech Union movement.

This tour provided the Free Speech Union (New Zealand) the chance to show Toby the progress and growth our organisation has made, going from an underdog upstart staring down hate speech laws, to a potent force and watchdog protecting and enhancing free speech rights in New Zealand.

EVENTS

Outside our regular tours, the Free Speech Union hosts events connecting with our supporters across the country. Through these events we seek to energise our supporter base, educate Kiwis on our principles, and ensure the important discussions are had.

Debate Series

New Zealand's conflict-averse culture means the hard conversations are often left unsaid. To introduce more and more Kiwis to lively debate and ensure that the big questions of the day do not go unanswered, the Free Speech Union hosted a series of debates across the country, with a wide variety of participants including academics, journalists, politicians, and public servants.

At each event the audience was polled twice so that the victors would not simply be those with the most popular position at the end of the night, but those who had changed the most minds. Debate topics included the government response to climate change, co-governance, wealth distribution, and hate speech laws.



Nationwide 'town hall' meetings

In an effort to ensure that all the Free Speech Union's supporters get to hear from us directly- including those in the regions- the Free Speech Union has been going around the country meeting Kiwis, hearing their concerns around the state of free speech in New Zealand, and laying out our vision as to how we're going to improve it.

EVENTS



2023 Christchurch AGM

Another fine example of the Free Speech Union's annual Free Speech Conference and AGM, this event was keynoted by Lord Jonathan Sumption and hosted a variety of key figures in the contemporary free speech space in panels on subjects ranging from politics, to media, to academic freedom.

VUW Academic Freedom Panel Discussion

While not organised by the Free Speech Union itself, this event is no less worth mentioning owing to the participation of our Chief Executive Jonathan Ayling in the event, and also for the grand argument it made for the necessary shift in the culture of academic freedom in New Zealand's universities.

This event was initially postponed owing to an outcry within Victoria University due to opposition to the views of some of the panellists (including the FSU's), and only went ahead with after the panel could be 'stacked' with views hostile to academic freedom and free speech.

Parliament Screening of 'Last Words'

An addendum to our previous series showing our Last Words documentary on the tour of Danish free speech activist Jacob Mchangama, the Free Speech Union had a small showing of the documentary in the Beehive Theatre. This was attended by both Free Speech Union supporters, alongside a few Members of Parliament.



REPORTS AND POLLING

As they say, knowing is half the battle- and the Free Speech Union conducts regular polling and research to ensure we have a clear understanding of the barriers facing the exercise of free speech in New Zealand, and what needs to be done about it.

Election Report

During an election it is critical that free speech-supporting Kiwis understand where each party stands on the big issues of the day that effect expressive rights. While the Free Speech Union will never tell its supporters who they should vote for, we were more than happy to inform our voters on the policies and record of each party as they impact speech and allow supporters to form their own conclusions.

The report covered a range of policies, from banning gang patches to restraining censorial counterterrorism legislation, revealing a range of speech-maximising and speech-limiting policies across the political spectrum.

Academic Freedom Report

Academic freedom is one of the largest current fights of the Free Speech Union, and so it is important that we understand how free New Zealand's academics really are, and just where the 'taboos' are in our universities. This report was made by compiling quantitative surveys from each New Zealand university, alongside qualitative responses, showing that a growing proportion of New Zealand academics do not feel free within their institutions. Following its release the findings of this report was corroborated by internal surveys from within university faculties.

Polling

The Free Speech Union conducts regular polling to better understand Kiwi's views and understanding on various issues in the free speech space. Typically done in conjunction with our major campaigns, through these polls we have been able to see the measurable impact our work has on convincing New Zealanders to support speech-maximising policies.



Jonathan Ayling with Distinguished Prof. Gaven Martin, Prof. Elizabeth Rata, Dr. Michael Johnston

FUNDRAISERS

Liberty Blush Wine

Unfortunately, defending free speech isn't free, and our work is possible only through the generous contributions of thousands of New Zealanders who support our work financially. Sometimes though, we're able to give a little back directly for that support!

This year, thanks to a generous contribution from Jonathan and Grace Ayling's own vineyard, the Free Speech Union began selling bottles of Liberty Blush rosé. Adorned with the Free Speech Union logo and some quips about the product's influence on the tongue, Liberty Blush went on sale shortly before the Christmas season as a fantastic gift for free speech lovers nationwide and a great conversation starter across the dinner table.

Great minds drink alike!



MEDIA

All our efforts don't mean much if we're just shouting into the void. We work hard to ensure that our messaging and ideas get out in the open for New Zealanders.

Media Coverage

The Free Speech Union is a potent, recognisable force, and this can be seen in our presence across both mainstream and independent media outlets. We contribute regularly to television and radio interviews, news articles, and opinion pieces.

100+
appearances on radio

75+
references in news articles

20+
published opinion pieces

12
appearances on TV



Stuff
NZ NEWS / QUIZZES / SPORT / WORLD / LISTEN

Academics don't feel free to air controversial opinions, according to survey

Jonathan Ayling
May 26, 2023, - 05:00am

Only 46% of academics surveyed agreed they felt free to question received wisdom and state controversial and unpopular opinions.
SUPPLIED / NOT-FOR-SYNDICATION

Jonathan Ayling is chief executive of the Free Speech Union.



MEDIA

Social Media

No technology since perhaps the printing press has expanded human capacity for communication than the internet. In particular, social media allows the Free Speech Union to connect with tens of thousands of New Zealanders with posts ranging from warnings about the great threats to free speech of the day, to a few more light-hearted memes.

40+
podcast episodes by FSU or featuring FSU

35,000+
followers on Facebook

8,000+
followers on Twitter



Free Speech Union
25 Mar · 🌐

Tens of thousands of Kiwis insisted that th... See more

👍❤️ 7.7k 1.9k comments 407 shares

👍 Like 💬 Comment 📧 Send ➦ Share

Free Speech Union's Podcast
Another victory for free speech: DIA abandons proposals for online censorship

MAY 10, 2024 FREE SPEECH UNION

👍👏 1x More Info Share

Free Speech Union's Podcast
"A Liberal Democracy Operates Because Voices Are Heard!" Sir Peter Gluckman on Social Cohesion and Free Speech

AUGUST 28, 2023 FREE SPEECH UNION

👍👏 1x More Info Share

Free Speech Union @NZFreeSpeech · Jun 17

Did you see the @nzlistener cover story this week on the FSU's guest @jon_rauch. Well worth the read!

"The problem with hate speech is the hate, not the speech. Dealing with hate speech through law is like trying to deal with climate change by breaking all the thermometers."

🗨️ 3 🔄 10 ❤️ 47 📊 835

Free Speech Union @NZFreeSpeech

Fantastically strong statement on free speech from Otago University. This should be the new gold standard by which other universities will be judged. It includes:

"The University affirms that it will not restrict debate or deliberation simply because the ideas put forth are thought by some to be offensive, unwise, immoral, or wrong-headed. It is for the members of the University community – its students and staff – to make those judgments for themselves.

The University is not a place for safety from ideas – it is a place to engage in critical thought and debate in the pursuit of knowledge and understanding. Our students will not be prepared for a complex and challenging world unless they have experience negotiating conflict and disagreement."

5:05 pm · 9 Jul 2024 · 13.1K Views



Inspiring our next generation of freedom fighters

Winning Hearts and Minds

The Free Speech Union is playing the long game. Our efforts would all be in vain if the next generation of Kiwis don't appreciate their right to freedom of speech and the value of tolerance and intellectual diversity.

Our goal is simple: to put ourselves out of a job. We look forward to the day that the Free Speech Union will no longer be needed to protect Kiwis' speech rights, when we can hang up our hats and breathe the rich air of freedom.

Until then, we'll be facilitating critical thinking exercises in high schools, engaging with university students, and developing the skills of up-and-coming free speech champions.

Coaching

University clubs

Educational
programmes

Internship Programme

SCHOOLS PROGRAMME AND SPONSORSHIP

“Speak Up” Schools Programme

One of our major new workstreams this year, kicking off our ‘coaching’ category of work, has been our “Speak Up” schools programme, providing specific civics education on speech rights and political tolerance to Kiwi kids across a number of schools.

With so many voices clamouring to tell young people that they should not have to suffer themselves to hear differing opinions, or teaching them that “words are violence” and setting them up to believe opposing opinions make them ‘unsafe’, it is vital that there is a group like the Free Speech Union to instil democratic values into the next generation of voters.

Our “Speak Up” programme has been debuted in several schools in the North Island and we have already been invited back for more classes.



New Zealand Schools’ Debating Council sponsorship

There are few instances where the clash of ideas is so pronounced as in the form of a debate. This year the Free Speech Union had the opportunity to champion the work of the New Zealand Schools’ Debating Council as their 2024 named-sponsor. The NZSDC put on annual debate competitions, culminating in finals hosted in Parliament itself, to which we were more than happy to join our name with theirs in championing another generation of critical thinking, free speaking, debates.

AUT Mooting Competition

A debate of a slightly different form, the Free Speech Union also had the opportunity to sponsor a ‘moot’ (mock court scenario) for the AUT Mooting Society, putting together a scenario for young law students to grapple with, alongside providing the judges to determine which team argued their case best.

These moots serve as a good chance to tease out hypothetical scenarios around free speech issues, and interrogate the policy issues of the law as it currently applies. This year’s scenario got to explore the implications of the current Supreme Court precedent of the ‘hecklers veto’ and the growing issue of imposing ‘security charges’ as a form of censorship.



NEXT STEPS

Internship Programme

While most of the Free Speech Union's work takes a wide approach to educating Kiwis on free speech issues and raising awareness of the solutions, New Zealand also needs informed, experienced advocates to lead the charge building a culture of free speech.

The Free Speech Union will be taking on regular interns to assist the team in the day to day running of the organisation, and gain experience in political advocacy- particularly on issues of freedom of speech. Wherever these interns will end up in their careers, we trust their experience in the Free Speech Union will prove invaluable, as they will be in promoting cultures of tolerance in whatever workplace they join.

University Clubs

Academic freedom isn't only for the staff of universities but is for their students, too. It ensures their own work is graded according to its merits and not the political-correctness of their ideas, and that their own research not be unjustly limited.

The fight to uphold academic freedom therefore must not come only from university faculty, but also its student populace. The Free Speech Union intends to assist students in founding Free Speech Union 'clubs' across New Zealand's universities, to better organise young free speech champions and advocacy on campus.





"If large numbers of people are interested in freedom of speech, there will be freedom of speech, even if the law forbids it; if public opinion is sluggish, inconvenient minorities will be persecuted, even if laws exist to protect them."

George Orwell



OUR VALUES

The **FSU** way

We are immensely proud of the success and influence the Free Speech Union has managed to achieve for an organisation of our size and age. Our success has been driven and enabled by the values by which we carry out our work.

We are:

Credible

To be successful we don't need everyone to like us, but we do aim to be respected.

We follow through, and have a reputation for doing what we say.

Moderate

We are balanced, thoughtful, and nuanced.

We are educative and conciliatory when we can, and combative only when we need to be.

Principled

We believe in free speech for the sake of liberal democratic values, not political expediency.

We are not a gun for hire, we stand for free speech wherever such issues may arise.

OUR PEOPLE

We are active, proactive, and greater than the sum of our parts.



Jonathan Ayling
Chief Executive

Jonathan has worked in Wellington for 10 years across roles as a Beehive staffer, senior political advisor, and in the NGO sector. In addition to leading the work at the Free Speech Union, he and his wife own a vineyard in the Wairarapa (which is almost as stressful as politics).



Nadia Braddon-Parsons
Communications and Marketing Manager

With a Bachelor of Communication, Nadia has a passion for using words

constructively and meaningfully to defend Kiwis' rights. She coordinates our communication to our supporters, the public and media.



Nathan Seiuli
Outreach and Events Manager

Nathan has a background working with youth in community outreach, so is an ideal fit for our work of convincing another generation that free speech is worth defending. Nathan also oversees and executes our tours and events.



Hannah Clow
Senior Legal Counsel

With varied experience in civil litigation, employment, commercial, and private client matters, Hannah champions our legal cases. She also does an excellent job researching and preparing many of our letters, submissions, and reports.



Nick Hanne
Education Partnerships Manager

If free speech is to be cherished and maintained, we need the next generation to know about it. As an experienced high school teacher who is passionate advocate of civil liberties, Nick is the perfect fit to develop and present our Speak Up! program in and is often found crafting our op eds and assisting with campaigns.



Arian Tashakkori
Operations

If you've contacted us, you've probably received a message from Arian already. Studying toward his conjoint bachelor's degree in Commerce and Global Studies, Arian brings a knowledgeable perspective to the team and juggles our correspondence and processes.

Our governing council is made up of a group of New Zealanders from across the political spectrum who believe that free speech is a value worth defending.

The current council members are:

- Dr. David Cumin - Academic
- Dr. Melissa Derby - Academic
- Stephen Franks - Lawyer
- Ani O'Brien - Writer & Political Commentator
- Jordan Williams - Lawyer
- Dr Roderick Mulgan - Barrister & GP
- Steve O'Hagan - Information Management Specialist
- Dane Giraud - Screenwriter
- Prof. Geoff Plimmer - Academic
- Jillaine Heather - Lawyer
- Robin Van Ausdal - Public Servant
- Douglas Brown - Barrister

We also note the valuable contributions of Dr. Paula Martin, Adam Young, Grace Watling and Tomas O'Brien.

OUR SUPPORTERS

We're with you and nothing without you

Grass-roots, but growing fast

Unlike so many other NGOs (including many advocating for increased censorship), the Free Speech Union's work isn't government funded. Our lights are kept on by the generous donations of thousands of Kiwis like yourself who value the right to free speech as much as we do.

\$962,000

RAISED FROM

4,859
DONORS

(an average of just under \$200 per donor)

“There are many causes that matter; all of them need funding. But free speech is the most important, because without it, all the other causes are impossible. I believe the Free Speech Union is doing more than any other organisation to ensure we are able to speak out on every issue that matters. They are making an invaluable impact in our country and will continue to have my whole-hearted support. **”**

Wellington region-based donor.

“Free Speech Union continues to impress me with the impact it's having on the culture of New Zealand. I will most certainly continue to make financial donations... money very very well spent!”

Auckland-based donor

“Doing God's work.”

Auckland-based donor.

“The best investment I make each month.”

Christchurch-based donor.

We still need your help

We've had many wins so far, but there is still a lot of work to do before we can hang up our hats and call it a day. Until then, we need your support to keep functioning as one of the world's most successful free speech advocacy organisations.

A vibrant free speech culture isn't free.



FREE SPEECH UNION
KIA RANGONA TE KÖRERO

POLL & ASK QUESTIONS HERE!



POLL & ASK QUESTIONS HERE!



Working hard **for our future**