



30 August 2024

Dr Susan Jacobs, MNZM  
Chair- Creative Arts Napier/Nga Ringatoi Auaha op Ahuriri  
[sandcjacobs@gmail.com](mailto:sandcjacobs@gmail.com)

## Creative Arts Napier – Tania Wright

Good afternoon,

1. The Free Speech Union is a registered trade union with a mission to fight for, protect, and expand New Zealanders' rights to freedom of speech, conscience, and intellectual inquiry. We believe that freedom of speech is not only a legal principle, but a social good that allows for people in modern liberal democracies to peacefully, freely advocate for the causes they care about without risking unjust retribution.
2. We have been approached by one of Creative Arts Napier's managers, Ms Tania Wright, who received a letter from you yesterday regarding comments she made at our Napier town hall meeting on 23 August 2024.
3. For context, Ms Wright is a former Napier City Councillor and spoke at the meeting of her experience considering Māori wards that led to her abstaining from voting on the issue. She also encouraged people to speak up and use their voice to counter those they disagree with. No reference was made to Creative Arts Napier, and it was clear Ms Wright was making their comments in her personal capacity.
4. We appreciate the position you are in, and that you have duties to those who raise concerns regarding the conduct of staff. This is not a situation of your making. However, we believe a complaint of the nature described in your letter is vexatious. Further, we are mindful of the the way the Board (with you as Chair), approach this complaint, given the duties you have under employment law.
5. In that Ms Wright spoke in a private capacity regarding issues related to legitimate public debate without reference to her employer (in fact, with reference to her previous experience as an elected public representative), Creative Arts Napier has no right or interest in challenging Ms Wright's comments. Accordingly, we suggest you advise the complainant that Creative Arts Napier is required under employment law to respect the speech and conscience rights of all employees. Further, also, that as Mr Wright is entirely entitled to attend a meeting of this kind, and make comments such as she did, taking further action would be in breach of employment duties.
6. If we are able to support you in responding to this question further, or in articulating the responsibility Creative Arts Napier has to respect speech rights, we would be pleased do to so. We will continue to follow this case with interest.

Yours faithfully,

**Free Speech Union (New Zealand) Inc.**

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be 'J. Ayling', written over a horizontal line.

**Jonathan Ayling**

Chief Executive

jonathan@fsu.nz

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