



NATIONAL UNION OF STUDENTS (WA BRANCH)
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NUS NATIONAL EXECUTIVE # 3 2009 – LUKE VILLIERS

NATIONAL UNION OF STUDENTS (WA BRANCH) PRESIDENT'S REPORT

1. Campus Engagement

Campus Engagement has progressed well this semester. To date, I have managed to visit every campus at least once, and speak at three of the four Guild Council/Senate Meetings. Increased campus engagement has also greatly facilitated an increased engagement and turn out at the various events that NUS West has run throughout the Semester. As mentioned at last National Executive, we had an increased turn out at the NDA, along with a solid turn out at the NUS West Student Poverty Supper.

In order to increase campus engagement in semester, I have requested a list of Council meetings for each of the four Guild's in WA. The plan is to attend at least two of these meetings per campus. Additionally, in the lead up to the NDA I am intending to undertake a series of lecture speaks on each campus, to assist the individual guild in building for the NDA.

2. Demand a Better Future campaign 2009

Since the NDA, NUS West has continued to build the campaign throughout the semester. In addition to the signing of petitions, and general engagement with students, NUS West also held a secondary event to further the 2009 Campaign. This second event, the NUS West Student Poverty Supper, was held instead of a sleep out as part of the National Campaign. As a result of various political factors in WA, most notably that a vigil for youth homelessness had been held only one month prior to the proposed date for the national sleep out, NUS West opted not to proceed with the sleep out proposal. NUS West, in conjunction with campuses, did ensure that a smaller on campus event was held on the Thursday, to coincide with the National Campaign. The following week, we then held a separate event, the Student Poverty Supper.

a) NUS West Student Poverty Supper

The NUS West Student Poverty Supper was a cross-campus event, held at the UWA on the 30th of April. It brought together students, university staff, NTEU members, and members of the broader community to discuss and debate ongoing issues of Student Poverty. The event featured a free supper, and was followed by a short debate, featuring speakers from UWA, Curtin,

Murdoch and NUS West. In order to increase NUS West's engagement with the community, NUS West donated all proceeds from the evening were donated to the Welfare Rights and Advocacy Service WA (WRASWA), a non-for-profit organisation, which assists people who are struggling with centrelink. We were fortunate enough to have the head of WRASWA and the national organisation, Kate Beaumont, address the 60 people in attendance. All in all, I thought the event was a big success and we are looking to run a similar thing next semester.

b) NGO Engagement

As noted above, NUS West was able to run a event in conjunction with, and for the benefit of, the WRASWA. I felt that this engagement with the broader community was incredibly positive. As NUS is usually student and campus focused, it does add some assistance to our cause.

c) Union Engagement

NUS West has been working hard this semester to try and build broader support for our cause and campaign in the wider Union community. I feel that our attempts to increase or union engagement have been quite successful with the CPSU/CSA, LHMU, and NTEU attending the NDA. Additionally, I have spoken at UnionsWA meetings so as to raise the profile of NUS West amongst the Union community.

i) May Day 2009

NUS West, as in past years, attended the 2009 May Day held at the Esplanade in Fremantle. The Day was huge success for the Union movement more generally. NUS West also succeeded in raising our profile, and engaging with the community so as to educate them about the campaign the plight of students.

ii) NTEU Fair Pay Campaign

I was asked by the NTEU at Murdoch to speak at their Fair Pay rally late in second semester. Again this was an excellent opportunity to engage with unions more generally. It was also successful to solidify cross-union support within the sector. It is obvious, that the underpayment and lack of permanency with the Higher Education sector dramatically affects the quality of tertiary students education. Accordingly, NUS West feels that it is essential to stand united where possible. We are also looking into the possibility of holding a dual event, most likely a rally, raising the issues of the need for Fair Pay for Staff and an increase in the quality of education.

d) Media

NUS West has attempted to maintain a high media profile in the wake of the NDA, an endeavour in which we have been quite successful. Following the NDA, we have given comment to both the West and the Sunday Times. Additionally, we have also had articles in the Western Independent and Grok, the Curtin Guild Publication, and the Pelican, the UWA Guild Publication.

Furthermore, I also did an interview in the lead up to the Student Poverty Supper with 720 ABC Perth. While this is not our usual media source, it was very positive for us as 720 has the highest ratings for morning radio. Additionally, it reaches of audience of 35+ which means that we have been able to reach a wider and more diverse audience to which we usually reach.

3. Federal Budget

The Federal Budget was obviously responded to extensively by NUS National. NUS West similarly gave comment to a few sources, welcoming some of the changes made by openly condemning the governments continued failure to raise the rate of Youth Allowance to assist in ending ongoing student poverty.

4. Student Accommodation

Several Universities in Perth, particularly Murdoch and ECU, are presently having extensive issues with on and off campus accommodation for students. The students of both universities have suffered extensively with the privatisation of the accommodation services. Presently there is a gap in the Residential Tenancies Act (WA) which exempts tertiary institutions from its ambit. Accordingly, there is no legal protection afforded to those students included within these on campuses accommodation services. The issues students have been facing have varied, with some extreme cases of students arriving in Perth, with no airport pick up service, and then being forced to turn up to the University and Guild with their suitcases, only to find that they have nowhere to live.

IN order to rectify these issues I am presently attempting to make contact with the respective Ministers for Housing in WA. On the Labour side the relevant minister is Mark McGowan, whereas on the Liberal side, the relevant minister is also the Treasurer, Troy Buswell. Given that Mr Buswell is the relevant Minister in charge, I am not particularly hopeful that we will such much progression on this issue, but perhaps Mr McGowan may be able to force the issue in Parliament. Regardless, this will be part of our activities in Semester 2.

Yours in solidarity,

LUKE VILLIERS

NUS WEST PRESIDENT 2009