



## **Feminist Legal Clinic Inc.**

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CSW Communications Procedure  
Human Rights Section  
UN Women  
220 East 42nd Street, 17th Floor  
New York, NY 10017 USA

Friday 30 July 2021

By email: [cp-csw@unwomen.org](mailto:cp-csw@unwomen.org).

Dear Madam

### **Communication to the Commission on the Status of Women**

Feminist Legal Clinic Inc. is a not for profit community legal service based in Sydney that works to advance the human rights of women and girls. We provide legal assistance to women and girls suffering from poverty or distress, particularly resulting from domestic violence and discrimination.

We have assisted in coordinating a lengthy communication to CSW on behalf of members of the Women's Human Rights Campaign (WHRC) in Australia which has already been submitted. However, this additional communication is specifically on behalf of our own service and raises the recent violation of our rights as women human rights defenders to freedom of expression and assembly.

Feminist Legal Clinic Inc is a tenant under the City of Sydney Council's accommodation grants program. However, this year following our annual assessment we were singled out for a "C" rating, which is a precursor to terminating our lease. This unfair decision was not based on any actual failure in our performance, but on extraneous ideological considerations.

In February 2020 our service was involved in organising the launch of the Declaration on Women's Sex-Based Rights at the University of Sydney. The launch featured a panel of feminist women, including a young woman who had "detransitioned". That is, she had undergone medical interventions in efforts to change her sex to be a boy, but had come to regret her decision and the irreversible harm done to her body and wanted to warn others. This event was disrupted by aggressive protests with the microphone snatched from our speakers and the police having to be called. Following the event, trans activists made complaints to the City of Sydney Council, who then contacted us with their concerns.

On 24 July 2020 Council wrote advising us that we had received a “B” rating for our annual review due to our affiliation with the Women’s Sex-Based Rights Movement and for publishing material they regarded as having the potential to generate discrimination and negative attitudes towards transgender members of the community. To avoid termination of our lease we were asked to purge our website of unspecified material and cease participating in the women’s sex-based rights movement.

Feminist Legal Clinic posts a news digest of articles on a range of topics relevant to our casework and the human rights of women and girls generally, including the negative impact of aggressive trans activism. This is a topic not adequately reported in Australian media and that is of concern to many feminists and members of the trans community as well. The material posted consists of extracts from articles already published elsewhere in the world and is not discriminatory.

We have overwhelming support for our work protecting women’s sex-based rights. Dozens of letters were sent to Council staff and elected representatives in 2020 by a diverse range of our supporters from all political persuasions and walks of life from our local community, all over Australia and even overseas. However, Council ignored these communications.

Council staff responded that: “the City remains very supportive of the community legal work of the Feminist Legal Clinic, and we note many excellent case studies in your most recent Annual Report”, but indicated that concerns continued in relation to material on our website. Ultimately it was determined by Council that our tenancy should be terminated and we have now been issued with a Notice to Vacate by 19 August 2021. The correspondence in this matter can be accessed on our website or by searching “Save Feminist Legal Clinic”.

Aside from our own defunding, we are regularly contacted by women who have been sacked, threatened with sacking or professional deregistration, disciplined, censored and otherwise persecuted for speaking out, in any context, to question extreme gender ideology and its impact on the human rights of women and children. Women’s freedom of expression and assembly is under serious attack and our work as human rights defenders is becoming increasingly untenable. Please use your influence to put an end to these continuing violations of our freedom of speech and assembly.

Yours faithfully



Anna Kerr  
Principal Solicitor