

**Submission  
No 5**

## **VOLUNTEERING AND UNPAID WORK PLACEMENTS AMONG CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE IN NSW**

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Committee on Children and Young People  
Parliament House  
Macquarie St  
Sydney NSW 2000

30<sup>th</sup> January, 2014

To the Chair, NSW Parliamentary Committee on Children and Young People,

**SUBMISSION TO THE INQUIRY INTO VOLUNTEERING AND UNPAID  
WORKPLACEMENTS AMONG CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE IN NSW**

The Students' Representative Council (SRC) of The University of Sydney welcomes the opportunity to provide input to the inquiry into volunteering and unpaid work placements among children and young people in NSW by the NSW Parliament.

The SRC, run by students for students since 1929, is the peak representative body for undergraduate students at the University of Sydney. The SRC exists to defend and advance the interests of University of Sydney students.

In 2012, 5,905 students graduated from the University of Sydney with a Bachelor degree, and a further 1,521 graduated at an Honours level. Anecdotally, the SRC has heard multiple reports from students graduating the university whom experience hardship due to an implied obligation that they complete an unpaid internship prior to being eligible to enter the paid workforce in their chosen field. This is due to a requirement in many industries that an employee has both a degree level qualification and experience in the field before they are eligible for employment. This is prevalent in some industries more than others, and as an example, journalism, advertising and marketing students are often required to have a level of experience prior to gaining a paid entry-level position in addition to their degree qualification that exists outside the requirements for obtaining their degree.

Of concern to the SRC is the inequality that exists between those graduates who have the financial stability to participate in unpaid internships as opposed to those who are unable to cover the cost of living without a regular income. This inequality disadvantages those that are already disadvantaged, fostering a culture that promotes the progression of the socio-economically elite; rather than progression based on skill and dedication regardless of background.

Furthermore, the SRC is concerned that many interns are filling positions that would otherwise be held by paid employees, giving the employer a higher competitive advantage in their industry in addition to limiting the number of paid entry-level positions that are available, thus preventing university graduates from entering the paid workforce. By definition, an internship should be created with the key benefits directed toward the intern, not the organisation, and thus this growing trend is unjust and furthers inequality within Australian society.

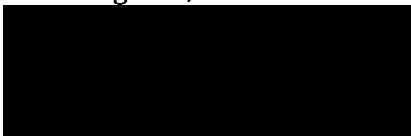
The SRC would like to note that unpaid volunteer positions, particularly within the Not-for-profit and Community sectors, that are designed to fulfill a volunteers altruistic needs whilst supporting disadvantaged communities are to be encouraged and as a general rule, have positive impacts for the volunteer and Australian society when these are well managed and fit for purpose.

In this submission, the SRC would like to draw attention to the submission drafted by *Interns Australia* and offer our full endorsement of their recommendations.

Further from this, it is important to note that much of the evidence that exists in regards to unpaid internships is anecdotal, and thus the SRC would like to highlight the recommendation made by *Interns Australia* that further research needs to be conducted in this area in order to adequately address the issues currently faced by unpaid interns.

The SRC would welcome the opportunity to further contribute to this inquiry through participating in a parliamentary hearing or providing further information to The Committee of Children and Young People.

Kind Regards,



Jennifer Light  
President, 86<sup>th</sup> SRC