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### **Statement by Feminist Legal Clinic Inc. to City of Sydney Council**

*to be delivered by Anna Kerr, Principal Solicitor to the Cultural & Community Committee  
at Sydney Town Hall on Monday 21 June 2021*

Feminist Legal Clinic provides legal assistance to women and girls and particularly to survivors of domestic violence. Feminist Legal Clinic is the only tenant under the City of Sydney's accommodation grants program to have been singled out for a "C" rating, which is a precursor to terminating our lease. This is an unfair decision that is **not** based on our failure to meet the general performance criteria, but on extraneous ideological considerations. We challenge the report's recommendation, and ask the Committee to reinstate our previous "A" rating so that we can get on with our job.

In February 2020 our service was involved in 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 met by protests and afterwards complaints from unspecified persons were made to Council who raised concerns with us.

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 sex-based rights movement.

Feminist Legal Clinic posts news on a range of topics relevant to our casework and the human rights of women and girls generally, including articles on 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. This content is not discriminatory and 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 supporters of all political persuasions and walks of life from our local community, all over Australia and even overseas. We note there is no mention of this support included in the report to Council.

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. However, specific posts of concern were not identified and we have not been given an opportunity to discuss or defend their content or our activities. Again, we emphasise that these ill-defined concerns raised by Council staff do not relate to performance issues. Regarding performance, our **excellence** has been noted.

Around the globe people are being sacked, disciplined, defunded and prosecuted for speaking out about infringements of women and children's human rights caused by extreme gender ideology. It would be tragic to see an otherwise progressive local council like Sydney, stifling the voices of left-wing women, including many lesbian voices. We ask instead that you pay heed to overseas developments like the recent UK cases of Keira Bell and Maya Forstater, which recognise the need to listen to all voices and balance competing human rights. We seek your support in renewing our lease so we can get on with our work providing much needed legal support to women and girls.

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The correspondence with Council can be accessed by googling: ["Save Feminist Legal Clinic"](#).