



## **Student Guild of Curtin University**

### **Women's Department - Meeting #1/2017**

**To be held at 12pm on Wednesday 3<sup>rd</sup> of May 2017**

**In the Lance Twomey Lecture Theatre**

1. Acknowledgement of the Traditional Owners:

*"We wish to acknowledge the traditional custodians of the land we are meeting on, the Whadjuk people. We wish to acknowledge and respect their continuing culture and the contribution they make to the life of this university, city and this region"*

2. Attendance:

2.1. Members Present;

2.2. Others Present;

3. Women's Officer By-Election



## **Student Guild of Curtin University**

### **Women's Officer By-Election**

#### **List of Nominees**

**As of 29/04/17**

#### **Women's Officer (in ballot order)**

Gautami Sithambram  
Eliza Lyon  
Emma Williams  
Farah Abshir  
Elly Bijlsma  
Finlay Nolan  
Lara Rudd  
Nicola Gulvin  
Sonia Shekhar  
Brittany Reynolds  
Abby Haselhurst

## **Nominees Statements**

### **Gautami Sithambaram**

*No statement provided.*

### **Eliza Lyon**

Hi, my name is Eliza Lyon and I am a Bunbury girl. I have moved to Perth this year to complete a double degree in Law and Journalism at Curtin University.

I have held many leadership and organisational positions throughout high school. I was the co-leader and website curator for two years for a fundraiser to help Syrian refugees, called Run for Their Lives. I was a member from 2015-2016 of the Bunbury Youth Advisory Council where we held National Youth Week celebrations such as battle of the bands and movie nights. I was the member for Bunbury at the 2015 and 2016 YMCA Youth Parliament, where I spoke about mental health issues and drug issues in Bunbury and the plight of the asylum seekers on Nauru and Manus Island. From 2011-2016 I was on the Round Square Committee (Round Square is a worldwide network of innovative schools in 50 countries across six continents. Committed to volunteering and leadership) and in 2016 I was the chairperson. Also in 2016, I completed a six-week course at headspace, learning first aid in dealing with mental health (teaching us how to help others around us as well as yourself).

In 2015, I was a finalist in the Zonta Young Women in Public Affairs (YWPA) Award for Bunbury and in 2016 I was the recipient of the YWPA Award. Upon graduation at Bunbury Cathedral Grammar School I was the recipient of the volunteers award (2016).

If I was to receive this position I would aim to make women feel safe and comfortable at university and be an understanding and open representative. As I am a regional woman I would specifically aim to reach out to regional female students studying in Perth as I understand how lonely it can feel when moving away from home and how much it helps to reach out to others.

This position would be incredible for me. Since moving to Perth I have been a part of Newspeak and I would like to expand my involvement at university level. As over the years I have understood that you get as much out of these roles as you put into them.

Thank you for reading my statement, and I hope you consider me for this fantastic role.

### **Emma Williams**

Hello! I'm Emma and I would be honoured to represent women enrolled at Curtin University.

As an engineering student, an issue that resonates with me is the ongoing gender imbalances in the science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) courses at Curtin. In Australian universities 56% of enrolled undergraduate students are women, but only 14% of engineering students are women; statistics that are reflected at Curtin. This is further problematized by the fact that many female students who start a STEM course do not complete it. Many factors for this have been discussed including: lack of inclusiveness, due to traditional gender biases; lack of representation within academia, and the industry; and discouragement from teaching staff or fellow students.

As an officer for the Women's Department I would aim to collaborate with the organisations on campus to coordinate events and networks aimed at supporting women in STEM. These events could also be used to educate students of everyday sexism and how to manage this within the university, and society more broadly.

The Human Rights Commission report on sexual assault and harassment on university campuses gets released mid-year, and Curtin has agreed to release its related statistics. I will lobby the University to implement the report's recommendations to prevent sexual assault and harassment on Campus.

I will continue the work of previous officers to maintain the Women's Department as a safe and inclusive space where all students feel welcome.

I can bring unique ideas to this position, and I am prepared for the task of representing and supporting women at Curtin.

Thank you.

### **Farah Abshir**

I am Farah Abshir and I would like to take this opportunity to explain why I believe that I would make a great Women's Department officer, and the changes I believe I could bring.

I am studying Creative Writing and Communications and am also volunteering at a youth run publication called Colosoul. These opportunities have made me acutely aware of the importance of representation and the power of words. Especially as a queer, black, Muslim woman in our current social climate, I am fully aware of the need of representation that is done correctly, and also the need for a safe space on campus.

I have had the very fortunate opportunity of having a piece written by myself published in the Women's Department Athena magazine. It was a piece of black girl sisterhood, something which is very personal to me and very dear to my heart. I remember the joy I felt after having read the email saying it was accepted into the magazine. There was a sense of validation for who I am and for people like me that I had felt reading that email. A feeling I hope to give to someone else. I would love to help Athena magazine grow and reach the potential I am sure it is capable of.

I am willing to put in the time and effort needed to see this dream become a reality.

I am also hoping, that should I be given to chance at being Women's officer, to see more collaboration between the departments. I come from a very large, but close knit culture and I know the importance of standing together and helping one another.

I hope to have event collaborations with the Queer department, as it was so very helpful for me during my first year of university. The International Students department – as I am a first generation Australian and understand, not directly but through my mothers experiences, the trials and tribulations what being an immigrant means in Australia. The Indigenous department, especially since I am not native to this country myself, but am a black Australian and would love to have stronger communities ties and make sure everyone is welcomed at the Women's department. I would love to collaborate with every department, if possible, because I do sincerely believe in unity and growth as a community.

I know that I may be dreaming a bit too big, although I do not believe in the concept myself, but I would love to make the Women's Department a place that is inclusive and welcoming to all kinds of women. A place that is for and created by women for the purpose of sisterhood and growth.

### **Elly Bijlsma**

*No statement provided.*

### **Finlay Nolan**

Hi! My name is Finlay Nolan, and I believe that feminism should be underpinned by intersectionality and building the self-esteem of all women. As Women's Officer, I will develop a Women's Department that is inclusive and welcoming to women of all walks of life.

If elected, I will endeavour to:

- Ensure that the Women's Department (both physically and in its online presence) is a safe and inclusive space. All material inside the room and on the Facebook page will be thoroughly checked to guarantee that it is not trans-exclusionary, ableist, culturally insensitive, or otherwise exclusionary of any women in any way.

- Regularly consult with other equity officers to devise methods of representing and engaging women from marginalised groups. I aim to put together a number of activities and materials in collaboration with other equity departments, which will celebrate women from diverse backgrounds and inform the student body about the issues faced by women who are disabled, indigenous, queer, or from other minority groups.
- Engage women across the faculties by promoting industry-specific events aimed at women, meeting with faculty representatives to discuss women who excel within their industries and sharing this information with the public, and ensuring that all women of Curtin are being properly served by their faculties and recognised for their achievements.
- Run activities and share material that promotes self-esteem, self-efficacy, and positive bonds between women; this will include skill-building workshops, study sessions, art and craft sessions, information about inspiring women from diverse backgrounds and disciplines, and mental and physical wellbeing information and activities.
- Develop an image for the Women's Department that is not threatening to women who are unsure about what it means to be a feminist. I believe that a lack of interest in feminism often stems from either being in a position of privilege where you are less likely to personally experience overt sexism, or a lack of privilege as a result of coming from a background where sexism is extremely normalised and leaves women without much exposure to feminist ideas and literature. I will aim to dispel myths about feminism, and present myself as an approachable and friendly individual who students can come to with questions about these issues.
- Frequently consulting with other Guildies and the student body to find out what the students would like to see next from the Women's Department; making sure we're delivering what the students actually want will develop greater engagement, and guarantee that time and resources are being used to achieve the best possible results for the Department, and the students it represents.

I have a vision for a Women's Department with increased engagement, productive relationships with other equity departments and areas of the Guild, and a reputation as a body that promotes positive relationships between women and other women, and women and themselves, through activities that are genuinely fun, enriching, and a memorable part of the university experience for women of Curtin. I would be honoured to be your Women's Officer for the remainder of 2017.

#### **Lara Rudd**

*No statement provided.*

#### **Nicola Gulvin**

My name is Nicola Gulvin, and I would like to represent the women at Curtin University by being the Women's Officer, 2017. I believe that I am a strong leader, and have the passion to stand up for other women, and my own rights.

In my short time at Curtin, I have come to appreciate what the Women's Department does for us, and how much they care about how women are treated equally in a learning and work environment. I would love to be a part of this, as the Women's Department is extremely important to me, and other women, as it provides strong women who are willing to fight for our rights, that we can depend on.

I would like to be the Women's Officer, to help advance women's rights, and believe I would be a good addition as I have had previous experience in leadership roles, including being the chapel prefect of Frederick Irwin Anglican School in 2016. My student leadership experience from high school additionally includes being a peer support leader in 2015, a senior bandleader in 2015 and 2016, and I have also been to Myanmar on a school pilgrimage trip. In all of these roles, I have learnt how to respond to certain situations, to be sensitive, and to stand up for others who need help. I have also gained an understanding of how student leadership works, and how important being committed and reliable is. I understand that although we are very progressive with giving women more rights and equality than any other age, sexism in the workplace and community is still present, as is rape culture on campus. I want to fight to change the discrimination against women, and I know being the

Women's Officer will provide me with this opportunity. I pride myself in my loyalty, and will always be willing to give up my time for the Women's Department. I also pride myself in my ability to fundraise and organize events to support a cause, as I am a fun and confident individual.

The Women's Officer needs to be progressive and open minded, and I believe I have these qualities. I always try to think outside of the box, and think of not only myself, but others too, especially those who may need a helping hand.

I am excited to share my ideas for fundraising and awareness events, and I believe that I have a lot to give to this role, and would be honoured to be the Women's Officer for 2017.

Regards,

Nicola Gulvin

### **Sonia Shekhar**

My name is Sonia Shekhar and I am currently in my second semester studying a Master's by Coursework degree in Human Resource Management. Originally from India, I was born in the so-called 'Las Vegas' of the Middle-East, Dubai. After completion of high school, I went on to do my Bachelor's in Business Management from Christ University in Bangalore, India. In my final year, I decided to specialize in Human Resources. Oddly enough, I never imagined myself pursuing a career in Human Resources as I always pictured myself in a marketing role. This decision was influenced by my parents who told me about the nature of Human Resources and what it takes to be a good HR manager. I did not realize it then but my parents believed that I possessed certain qualities like being able to understand people, advising them, thinking objectively, that would prove useful if I was in an HR position.

After my graduation, I returned to Dubai where I worked for three years. One of the most important things I learned through my experience is organization and prioritization. I am a quick learner and as such my colleagues would constantly ask me to assist them with various job tasks. I worked as an HR assistant and was responsible for the administration of payroll for more than 100 employees, maintaining employee databases and generating data reports. An important part of my job was liaising between workers and management. It was at this point of time where I realized what my parents meant when they said I had the qualities of an HR person as dealing with people can be challenging. The decision to pursue my higher education on postgraduate studies came towards the end of 2015 as I always wished to complete my studies. By coming to Australia and joining Curtin University, my eyes have already been opened to the glaring differences regarding the treatment of women in Australia and in India.

Woman's health and safety have always posed an issue for society and has gained much publicity in the past few decades. Growing up in the U.A.E, it was a relatively safe country for women as they have strict laws for cases of harassment yet it is still a very male-dominated society. Similarly, hailing from a country which is so rich in diversity and culture, the roles and statuses of woman are constantly challenged. Woman's issues have always been an interest for me and I would be delighted to be a part of a team that could help improve the livelihood of women around the world. My interest was piqued when I became aware of the opening of the position of Woman's Officer published on the Guild website. Though my time as Curtin is limited, I seek to make the most out of it. Having already had many enriching experiences in this prestigious university, being given the opportunity to be able to join the woman's department would only add to my experience here.

### **Brittany Reynolds**

#### **WORKPLACE EQUALITY POLICY**

**Purpose:** The following policy aims to ensure that Curtin University is fulfilling its commitment to gender equality in the workplace/students and ensuring its awarding of the citation of Employer of Choice for Gender Equality for the fourth year in a row.

**Scope:** This policy aims to apply to all members of Curtin University.

Curtin University recognising as highlighted by the Work Place Gender Equality, that women in Australia are less likely to advance their careers as men. This reinforces the stereotype that women are not as smart as men and highlights the cultural and structural barriers that are still in place today in our University. Although members are responsible for their careers development the university recognises a responsibility to provide equal encouragement and presentation in the workforce.

It is in this policy of Curtin University to:

- Create an equal ratio of women to men in senior positions
- Increase support given to women in progression of their careers
- Increase support given all parents who are undertaking study or are in the workplace
- Assist in parental leave more effectively
- Provide equal leadership roles for men and women
- Elimination of stereotypes of responsibility for men and women
- Change university culture to embrace gender equality as a norm

Strategies:

- Hire an equal ratio of women to men in senior positions.
- Implementation of one compulsory career assistance session once every year of study/work placement
- Financial support I grant for mothers/fathers
- Review of policies regarding parental leave and question how to facilitate this process
- Challenge stereotypes by showing examples across university of women doing "men" activities
- Posters across university embracing gender equality

### **Abby Haselhurst**

I would like to enter my nomination for the Guild Women's Officer.

I am a psychology student undertaking an honours year. My thesis and dissertation centres around women and their experiences entering in male dominated spaces, and as such feel I would be qualified for the position.

Thank you for your time

Abby Haslehurst