



Thursday 4<sup>th</sup> July 2019

**Re. Victoria University Students want to see an end to the use of the Forced Swim Test**

Tēnā koutou Vice-Chancellor Professor Grant Guilford and Members of the Victoria University Animal Ethics Committee,

We are writing as a collective group of organisations and student representatives who wish to see an important change made at Victoria University. NZAVS, SAFE, several university clubs and hundreds of students currently studying at the University share this desire.

Students have become aware of a cruel and invalid animal test that has recently been conducted by affiliates of Victoria University – **The Forced Swim Test**. Shock and disappointment have been felt by many students. There is deep concern among the student body that such an outdated and irrelevant test is being conducted at their institute.

The Forced Swim Test is used to **try** to test potential psychological treatments such as antidepressants. A small animal, usually a mouse or rat, is given an experimental treatment and then placed into a beaker partially filled with water. Unable to escape, the animal will paddle desperately until they give up and float. The amount of time that the animal spends struggling versus floating is measured, and the misguided assumption is made that an animal who gives up sooner is more depressed.

Not only is this test cruel, but it **does not model human depression**.<sup>1</sup> In fact, [an analysis](#) conducted by Dr Emily Trunnell looked at data from four major pharmaceutical companies and found that the Forced Swim Test was less predictive than chance at determining if a compound would have antidepressant efficacy in humans.

This means that Victoria University is wasting resources, including time and money, each time this test is conducted.

**We are urging you to consider ending the use of this cruel and outdated test method on ethical, scientific and financial grounds.**

We want Victoria University to be seen as a progressive institute, and this type of commitment would highlight to the rest of Aotearoa and the world that we are capable of evaluating and updating test methods to improve the way we do research. **We hope that in your roles as the Vice-Chancellor and members of the Animal Ethics Committee that you will hear our concerns and make the right decision.**

Nāku noa, nā,



Tara Jackson  
Executive Director  
**On behalf of the New Zealand Anti-Vivisection Society**



Debra Ashton  
Director  
**On behalf of Save Animals From Exploitation**





Laura Goulden  
President  
**On behalf of the Victoria Students' Psychology Society**



Jesil Cajes  
Executive Member  
**On behalf of the Victoria University Filipino Students Association**



Jahla Lawrence  
Co-President  
**On behalf of the Victoria University Feminist Organisation**



Aleisha Amohia  
President  
**On behalf of the Victoria University of Wellington Women in Tech Club**



Emma  
President  
**On behalf of the Victoria University Latin American & Spanish Club**



Micky O'Brien  
Chairman  
**On behalf of the Victoria University Hunters Rugby League Club**



Kate Aschoff and Annabel McCarthy  
Co-Convenors  
**On behalf of the Greens at Victoria University Club**



Alexandra M. Kenny.  
Team Captain  
**On behalf of the Victoria University's Cheer-leading Club**



Monty Sansom and Jaime Matthews  
Executive Members  
**On behalf of the Victoria University Theatre Society**



Leilani Dave-Ekepati  
President  
**On behalf of the Victoria University Cultural Cuisine Club**



VUW New Zealand Sign Language Club Executive  
**On behalf of the Victoria Sign Language Club**



VUW Plastic Diet Club Executive  
**On behalf of the Victoria University Plastic Diet Club**



Te Rangi Walker, Tara O Suilleabhain and Rebecca Ralph  
President, Secretary and Treasurer  
**VegVUW – Vegan and Vegetarians at Victoria University of Wellington**

<sup>i</sup> Commons, K. G., Cholanians, A. B., Babb, J. A., & Ehlinger, D. G. (2017). The rodent forced swim test measures stress-coping strategy, not depression-like behavior. *ACS chemical neuroscience*, 8(5), 955-960.

