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Word Count: 1000

Title: Spin Cycle

Subheading: Casually glancing, Reform may seem to be floundering. But the bigger picture is a different story.

Breakout Quotes: 1) In the two short months of the first semester, Reform has successfully held two general meetings of the 103rd Union Council. These are some of the few meetings within management of the Union where students are truly and democratically represented, and maintaining their integrity is vital.
2) In just two months, Reform has managed to accomplish things that Fresh couldn't in six years in power.

Post-election blues are nothing new. We saw it with Obama, we saw it with Rudd 2.0, and we're seeing it with Reform. Once the results are revealed, the celebrations cease and the offices are occupied, the reality of governance kicks in - There is no revolution, only red tape. The gleam in candidate's eyes is quickly replaced by blood vessels and dilated pupils from the rush of Red Bull, consumed to deal with the stacks upon stacks of documents to read and policy to write, with each pile of paper cleared only revealing only more piles to be worked through. Meanwhile, as passions but not promises are forgotten by those who voted them in, one broad question starts to emerge: "They broke their promise!"

Indeed, these four simple words have fell more elected bodies than could be reasonably counted.

Yet just like the crucial information hidden beneath stacks and stacks of financial jargon and technical details, it's sometimes the changes that can't be seen that matter the most. Change is slow, and outrage is quick, so focus on immediately satisfying and understandable criticisms in inevitable. But it shouldn't be the focus. Complaints about vegetarian collectives, perceived editorial bias and missing diaries are fleeting, with quickly dissipating effects on students at large - But they sure do get tempers fired up. And why not? Reform was supposed to improve things, and how can they be doing so if so many people are complaining?

Sometimes, however, it's the less obviously visible and less heavily advertised changes that bring the most benefit.

In 2012, the UQ Union organised five general meetings of the Union Council. Of these five, three meetings were found to be inquorate. This left just two meetings for the council managing many of the services and amenities for students on campus to democratically discuss matters such as budget, support services and the rights of students at UQ - Definitely not small issues. Once again, no budget was released by the Union - Following the trend that had persisted for the past five years. This is no small error - These are guidelines dealing with how the money of students is spent, including money earned from Union stores via student payment, money granted by the university via HECS payments, and money given directly by students via the SSAF.

In the two short months of the first semester, Reform has successfully held two general meetings of the 103rd Union Council. These are some of the few meetings within management of the Union where students are truly and democratically represented, and maintaining their integrity is vital. Additionally, breaking the trend from the past six years, the second meeting saw the release of a budget.

Unlike the state of finances under the 102nd Union Council last year, this budget was discussed, amended and voted on by students representing all corners of the political sphere - Not just stooges of the incumbents propped up under a hijacked ticket. While disagreements were had, compromise is key in politics, and the compromises made by Reform, Lift and Fresh during discussion on the budget have served to enable the Union to provide efficient, effective and transparent handling of student union finances.

On the note of the budget, however, it's quite ironic that Fresh would try to complain about money being spent on things like vegetarian collectives with many of the amendments to the budget proposed by their councillors. The ways in which Fresh and Lift have voted to use student money in some areas is, quite frankly, disgraceful. Take the amendment which called for the money allocated to colleges by the Union to be nearly doubled. This funding nowhere near forms the sum of the budget of the colleges themselves - The money is broadly used to organise events for college students. These are not networking or orientation events - These are parties, with exorbitant bar tabs and ridiculous venues often being paid for using student money. Not a single Reform councillor supported this amendment, but it was ultimately passed with support from councillors of Lift and Fresh.

This extra funding is not free. In order to support the amendment, Fresh and Lift subsequently voted to downgrade funding for future elections and referendums - This includes future polls regarding changes to the UQ Union constitution and accreditation with the National Union of Students. Maybe I just hate fun, but I'd chance to say that these matters are far more important than bar tabs and boat trips for a small percentage of UQ students.

While many students see the UQU as just an organisation with a mildly amusing logo and overpriced sushi, the Union is much more than that. The UQU offers support services to some of the most vulnerable students. The UQU entirely funds and organises clubs and societies. The UQ Union works for student rights. It's your UQU, and the work done by the Union should reflect that - Funds, services and facilities should be largely directed towards benefits for all students, not just some small group that are good mates with members of the Union.

Aside from broad administrative victories, under Reform, the UQU has introduced a free breakfast for students, ensured healthier food options, and increased the number of microwaves available to students. Reform has also improved student safety on campus by addressing concerns regarding safe areas on campus, such as the Green Bridge and routes to colleges. Much like Reform's aims with the budget, these policies have benefitted all students regardless of how they study, and help to address the issues that students typically face in their time at UQ.

Change is sometimes slow and hard to see, but when cutting out the intermediary period and focusing on the before and after, its effects become clear. In just two months, Reform has managed to accomplish things that Fresh couldn't in six years in power - And we're barely halfway through the first semester. It's a statement that's sometimes been used sarcastically, but looking at the facts, it's something that's worth seriously saying: Thanks, Reform.