

To my fellow Young Liberals,

The last five years have been an important time in Young Liberals' history. We have established ourselves in policy, both internally and on the national and international stage, we have learned better how to both co-operate and make our voices heard by the federal party, and we have continued to professionalise our organisation. I pay tribute to the executives of this time period, and especially Chairs Jack Worrall, Callum Robertson, Tara Copeland, Eleanor Kelly, Fergus Ustianowski, Janey Little and Harvey Jones, for the impressive work they have made towards these goals.

However, there is still work to be done. Some have told me they feel like the Executive is still too distant from the membership. Granted, the situation is not as bad as it was a few years ago, when I remember complaints about the executive staying in their room separate from the membership at Conferences, but there is still work to do. Friends, executive members are not and should not be a class away from the ordinary membership, and more work needs to be done to ensure a balance between recognising the hard work they put in as volunteers and ensuring the Executive remains accessible and accountable to the membership.

Another problem is how male-dominated we still are as an organisation. The majority of positions on the Executive and Committees are still filled by men, and this seems unlikely to change this year. I do appreciate the irony of myself, a man, commenting on this, but I genuinely think we lose something by not having a proper diversity of opinion and experience in senior positions. Last year the election discussed the issue of misogyny; I would like to think the situation has improved, though I am aware in many ways it hasn't. I would like to work with the new Women's Rep and others to identify why women aren't standing and engaging and figure out how to encourage them to do so.

I also think we need to get better at how we handle internal debate. As young individuals involved in politics, it is inevitable we will be passionate about politics and making our views heard. However, there have been more and more instances in the Young Liberals recently of mocking and attacking the person rather than engaging with the points themselves in a sympathetic and constructive way. In short, too often debates over relatively small matters can become far too heated. This is by far the hardest issue I have raised to solve, since one cannot simply demand a culture be changed. However, I hope to lead by example and see what progress can be made during my term.

With regards to my experience, I have chaired two local parties in the past five years, so I have experience there. I also have ample campaigning experience, and have made a number of important contributions to YL in the past five years. In my personal life, I am in my final year of a PhD in Musicology. I hope if I am elected I can make a positive difference to YL's culture, especially in the areas I have identified.

I hope I get your first preference.

With regards,  
Christopher Johnson