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Greenpeace loses charity status case

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Greenpeace New Zealand's political activities mean it cannot register as a charity, the High Court has decided. Greenpeace appealed against a 2010 ruling by the Charities Commission which found its promotion of

"disarmament and peace" was political rather than educational and while it did not directly advocate illegal acts, Greenpeace members had acted illegally.

In his judgment Justice Paul Heath found the commission was correct in its judgment and turned down the Greenpeace appeal.

"Non-violent, but potentially illegal activities (such as trespass), designed to put (in the eyes of Greenpeace) objectionable activities into the public spotlight were an independent object disqualifying it from registration as a charitable entity," the judge said.

Greenpeace's pleas for disarmament and peace could be seen as an independent purpose and its political activities were not necessary to educate members of the public on the key issues of Greenpeace, Justice Heath said.

Greenpeace's lawyer Davey Salmon argued all of the organisation's primary purposes were charitable and the engagement of charities in political advocacy was more acceptable now in 21st century New Zealand.

Justice Heath dismissed the appeal and made no order as to costs.

NZPA

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