

**MEDIA
RELEASE**

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Attention: Education and Political
reporters
For Immediate Release

Roger Douglas' Bill will put students at risk

Student leaders are today disappointed that Parliament has voted Roger Douglas' completely unnecessary Education (Freedom of Association) Amendment Bill through to Select Committee following its First Reading in the House, but are confident that MPs will, through the select committee process see sense and not support the Bill any further.

"Students' associations have a long and deep history in New Zealand and are a key part of the fabric of tertiary campuses. Universal membership has shown it works, is completely valid and is totally necessary for the wellbeing of students," said Sophia Blair, Co-President of the New Zealand Union of Students' Associations (NZUSA). "We will be fully utilising the Select Committee process to prove there is absolutely no need for change in this area and show that the current law already puts students in the driving seat and works very well," said Blair.

"Independent representation, advocacy and support, sporting and cultural clubs and social events such as Orientation would all be under threat in the unlikely event that this Bill succeeds, and all in the name of choice – which already exists!" said Blair. "We are strongly committed to ensuring that the importance and value to students of such services and facilities are at the forefront of discussion on this Bill, and believe that Members of Parliament will recognise this," said Blair.

New Zealand would do well to heed the lessons from the disaster that recently unfolded in Australia, which saw associations collapse nationwide under a voluntary system, only for universities and the Government to have to turn around and offer funds and practical support to get them back on their feet providing the essential services and facilities that these institutions, along with their students, highly value and greatly need.

"New Zealand's current legislation is National Government law, and was drafted purposefully to protect students' choice and freedom to choose their own form of membership. National have consistently stated they believe genuine choice continues to be provided by the status quo. The Bill is therefore redundant. Roger Douglas may well find himself a lone voice on this in the end", said Blair.

NZUSA vows to fight to keep students in the driving seat and interfering politicians out, and to win the battle to protect universal membership and retain quality advocacy and representation for New Zealand students. They deserve nothing less.

ENDS

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