



NEW ZEALAND UNION OF STUDENTS' ASSOCIATIONS (INC.)

TE RŌPŪ ĀKONGA O NGĀ WHARE WĀNANGA O AOTEAROA

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## Press Release

30 November 2010 - For Immediate Release  
Attention: Education and Political reporters

# Public poll reveals overwhelming majority opposed to Act Party bill

The New Zealand public has again overwhelmingly declared that students themselves should determine the method of students' association membership, a week out from the committee stage of a Bill that attempts to remove this choice.

"Students are best placed to make their own decisions about the membership of their local students' associations, and this public poll shows there is no appetite for Government involvement in such processes," says NZUSA co-President David Do.

An independent public opinion poll revealed 77% of respondents felt that students should decide the structure of membership of their associations, compared with just 17% that believed it was the Government's decision, and 6% who were unsure.

"These results follow an overwhelming response at Select Committee where 98% of the 4800 submissions were against the Bill and in support of the status quo. With students, the public, and tertiary institutions opposing the Bill and warning of its' negative consequences, why would the Government support such an unpopular and unworkable Bill?" says NZUSA co-President Pene Delaney.

Events are planned in a number of centres this week continuing to warn of the loss of services the Bill would bring, the negative impact on quality education, and the silencing of the student voice.

The current law, passed by National in 1998, already allows students choice in determining what sort of membership model they want via referenda, and also enables students to individually opt out of membership through conscientious objection and financial hardship.

The Act Party's Education (Freedom of Association) Amendment Bill seeks to replace the status quo by imposing voluntary membership on all associations, hence removing students' choice and putting important student services, representation, and welfare at risk.

"The current law works well, and makes sense. The Government should listen to the strong public feeling against this Bill, and consider its detrimental impacts on students and student services. We call on the Government to vote down this Bill at Third Reading," concludes Delaney.

NZUSA is the national representative body for tertiary students and has been advocating on student issues since 1929.

ENDS

NOTE: Poll results are based upon questions asked in the UMR Research nation-wide omnibus survey. This is a telephone survey of a nationally representative sample of 750 New Zealanders 18 years of age and over. Fieldwork was conducted from the 19th to 24th November 2010 at UMR Research's national interview facility in Auckland. The margin of error for a sample size of 750 for a 50% figure at the '95% confidence level' is  $\pm 3.6\%$ .

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## EVENTS THIS WEEK

**Wellington** – Wednesday 1st December @ 12 outside Heather Roy's office, 15 Cambridge Terrace, Wellington. This will be a silent event with students and members of the public wearing gags (not a rally) to represent the silencing of students under VSM, and the government not listening to the majority of the public's voices on this issue – particularly given the results of this poll.

Also at 9pm that night there will be a debate on VSM on the TVNZ7 'Backbenches' show at the Backbenchers pub in Wellington.

**Nelson** – Wednesday 1st December @ 5.30pm Students presenting National MP Nick Smith with a student-signed banner voicing opposition to the VSM Bill . Nick Smiths office, 544 Waimea Road, Annesbrook, Nelson.

**Auckland** – Wednesday 1st December @ 12 outside Nikki Kaye's office, 82 College Hill, Freemans Bay, Auckland. This will be a silent event with students and members of the public wearing gags (not a rally) to represent the silencing of students under VSM, and the government not listening to the majority of the public's voices on this issue – particularly given the results of this poll.

**Christchurch** – Wednesday 1st December @ 12 outside Nicky Wagners office, 222 Bealey Street, Christchurch. This will be a silent event with students and members of the public wearing gags (not a rally) to represent the silencing of students under VSM , and the government not listening to the majority of the public's voices on this issue – particularly given the results of this poll.