



NEW ZEALAND UNION OF STUDENTS' ASSOCIATIONS (INC.)

TE RŌPŪ ĀKONGA O NGĀ WHARE WĀNANGA O AOTEAROA

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## Press Release

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Attention: Education and Political reporters

# Don't close the gap with Australia

Students are warning the Government not to repeat the same mistakes from across the Tasman when it comes to student services and representation.

Carla Drakeford, President of the National Union of Students (NUS) in Australia, is the guest of the New Zealand Union of Students' Associations this week, here in New Zealand for to share information and discussion with student presidents on a variety of issues relating to tertiary education.

"NZUSA has a longstanding relationship with our sister organisation NUS, and it is our pleasure to host their President. Carla's visit is timely given the status of the Act Party's Education (Freedom of Association) Amendment Bill being considered by Parliament," says NZUSA co-President David Do.

"All the evidence shows that Australia's recent experience with similar legislation has been damaging and costly to students, tertiary institutions, and Government," says NUS President Carla Drakeford.

"Students who suffer the most from VSM are those whom may need the most support – those from lower socio-economic backgrounds, students who attend regional or rural institutions, and international students," says Drakeford.

"For example, Australia has had recent problems with Indian international students suffering discrimination, violence, and poor quality education. This was in part related to the demise of international student voice, representation and services due to VSM. International students were also adversely affected when institutions took over previously student-run services."

"Four years after VSM decimated student representation and services in Australia, many tertiary sector groups and the Government are seeking to roll back their legislation to revive campus life and services for students on campus," says NUS President Carla Drakeford.

"Voluntary membership has ruined students' experience and education across the Tasman. This is one area where the Government should not close the gap with Australia," concludes Do.

Carla Drakeford is in Wellington until noon Friday 19 November and is available for media interviews.

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

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