

**MEDIA  
RELEASE**

28 July 2009  
Attention: Education and Political  
reporters  
For Immediate Release

## **Drastic changes to Polytechnic governance alarming**

Student leaders are gravely concerned at the proposed changes to the governance of Institutes of Technology and Polytechnics and are calling on the Government to come clean about its' plans in the sector and immediately consult with all tertiary sector groups on the matter.

Leaked documents released to the media over the weekend show that the Minister of Tertiary Education, Anne Tolley, is planning to drastically reduce the size of Polytechnic councils to eight members by removing community group representation.

"Students strongly value the current representative governance model as it ensures that a wide range of opinions are represented when important decisions are made," said Sophia Blair, Co-President of the New Zealand Union of Students' Associations. "Institutes of Technology and Polytechnics, by being places of learning, are democratic institutions of our society and as a result, they should reflect this in their decision making processes. By contrast, the Minister's proposed changes seek to create less transparency, less accountability and shut out community voices," said Blair.

"The proposed changes to representative governance are completely at odds with the Government's previously stated agenda in tertiary education which demands the sector be responsive to the needs of its' communities, learners and industry," said Blair. "How does the Government expect to provide appropriate education and ensure robust decision making at the highest levels when it removes the very mechanism for ensuring this can happen?" added Blair.

"We are deeply concerned at the manner in which this proposal has been developed – it has been secretive, appears baseless in its recommendations, and is entirely without adequate consultation. For such significant changes, this is extremely poor process and totally unacceptable', said Blair.

"Of great concern is the dangerous precedent these changes create for the entire sector, and the government can expect strong opposition should they continue with this plan", concluded Blair.

ENDS

For further information, contact NZUSA Co-President:  
Sophia Blair, Mobile 027 486 8673