Media release – National Union of Students slams draconian changes to Victorian university council laws – Media release

The National Union of Students (NUS) condemns changes to the laws governing university councils that passed through the Victorian Parliament today. The new laws removed elected student and staff members from university councils across the state, and come into effect in January.

“The Baillieu Government has perpetrated a coup by overturning the democratic choices of students at all Victorian universities. Students have already elected people to sit on university councils across the state and those people are now being thrown off councils by this Government,” said NUS President Donherra Walmsley.

The new laws allow for universities to appoint student and staff members with the ‘appropriate skills and expertise’, however any university appointments must be accompanied by an additional government appointee. This gives government an unprecedented and inappropriate level of control over university governance.

“Universities are not businesses being run for a profit, they are public institutions and should be run in the interests of both students and staff,” said NUS President Donherra Walmsley.

“Elected student and staff members bring invaluable experiences and perspectives to university councils that cannot be replaced by businesspeople with no background in higher education,” Ms Walmsley said.

“It is particularly disappointing to see the Liberal Government stifling the student voice just when student representation is being revived across the country as a result of the introduction of the Student Services and Amenities Fee,” said Ms Walmsley. “This legislation is not in anyone’s interests, it is just another Liberal attack on student representation.”

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