

## **Parliament Affirms Right to Freedom of Association**

The final passage last night of the Education (Freedom of Association) Amendment Bill, which abolishes compulsory membership of student unions, was welcomed by Business Roundtable executive director Roger Kerr as an affirmation of the principles of a free society.

“The fundamental right to freedom of association entails the right not to be compelled to join a union, a principle recognised in many countries including the European Court of Human Rights”, Mr Kerr said.

“Compulsory unionism – whether in the workplace or on the campus – not only undermines the rights of workers and students, but is ultimately detrimental to the character and effectiveness of the unions themselves.

“As a Judge of the Canadian Supreme Court observed, forced association will stifle the individual's potential for self-fulfilment and realisation as surely as voluntary association will develop it. Recognition of the freedom of the individual to refrain from association is a necessary counterpart of meaningful association in keeping with democratic ideals.

“This Bill is the culmination of sustained pressure from many students for freedom of choice on campus. The Business Roundtable congratulates students on their success”, Mr Kerr said.

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