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## Events at the University

I have taken part in a couple of political events at Otago University lately. OUSA invited me, David Clark, Hilary Calvert and Gareth Hughes along to take part in a political debate. It was great to start the election year debates off at the University and I look forward to many more to come.

I also was pleased to be the guest politician in the newly established "Vote Chat" forums, hosted by Dr Bryce Edwards of the University's Politics Department. This is a deeper examination of the candidates and I was asked about my background and political philosophy. I also addressed students taking the POLS 102 Introduction to New Zealand Politics paper. I hope to be able to get fellow National Party MPs down to the University to participate in these forums in the near future.

## Arthritis NZ Function in Parliament

At the end of June, I had the pleasure of hosting a function in Parliament to launch Arthritis New Zealand's new nationwide campaign, 'Arthritis; It could surprise you' featuring two television commercials.

*Arthritis; It could surprise you* is a campaign to encourage people with on-going back pain and other arthritic conditions to seek advice. It highlights the experience of one of New Zealand's promising young race car drivers, Matt Lockwood, who lives with ankylosing spondylitis (AS), a form of arthritis that affects the spine.



With the face of the new campaign, Matt Lockwood, and his racing car outside Parliament.

The function was a wonderful way to launch such a worthwhile campaign. It was a great success and we were fortunate to have attendance from a range of people including the Minister of Health Tony Ryall.



Hon Tony Ryall, Sandra Kirby and guests at the Arthritis NZ function in Parliament.

## Welfare reforms to start with young people

National is changing the government's approach to disengaged, vulnerable young people by giving them intensive support to get back on track.

We will ensure the Ministries of Education and Social Development share information so we know when teenagers leave education early. We will also fund support providers to mentor them and get them back into education or training.

For those teens receiving adult benefits, essential costs like rent will be paid directly for them. They will receive payment cards which can be used only for essentials, along with some spending money.

We will require them to be in education, training or work. There will be options for them: National is providing 7500 free training places under the Youth Guarantee next year, and Trades Academies will be offering 4500 places within two years.

The welfare system has been failing these young people. These changes will set them up with skills and training so they have more options in the future.



## Dunedin gets a visit from Ministers Joyce, Wilkinson and the Prime Minister

Dunedin has been fortunate to have a couple of Ministers visit the city in the past month or so. At the beginning of July, Minister of Transport Steven Joyce attended an opening to mark the completion of the \$24M State Highway 88 bypass in Dunedin.

Hon Kate Wilkinson, Minister of Conservation and Minister for Food Safety was in Dunedin at the end of July, during which time she made a visit to the Albatross Colony at Taiaroa Head, where we were able to get up close and personal with the wildlife.



With Hon Kate Wilkinson at the Albatross colony at Taiaroa Head.

I was also delighted to have the Prime Minister down in Dunedin at the beginning of this month. The Prime Minister arrived on Thursday afternoon and attended a constituent clinic at the East Otago Events Centre in Waikouaiti, followed by a fundraiser and campaign launch for the Dunedin North and South electorates later that evening at the Dunedin Club.



With Prime Minister John Key and children at a constituent clinic in Waikouaiti

A full day of events followed on the Friday. During the day he attended various events around Dunedin, including the official opening of both the

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Forsyth Barr Stadium and Otago University's newly refurbished Robertson Library.

## National improves safety of young drivers with zero blood-alcohol limit

Since 7 August 2011, drivers under 20 are unable to consume any alcohol before driving. Earlier this year we passed legislation introducing a zero blood-alcohol limit for young drivers.

Improving the safety of young drivers is a top road safety priority for the National-led Government.

Reducing the youth blood alcohol limit to zero is the second of three current measures to reduce the number of young people killed on our roads.

In early August the minimum driving age was increased from 15 to 16. Next year the restricted licence test will be strengthened to encourage young drivers to spend more time practising their skills with supervision.

None of these measures is a silver bullet on their own but together they will have a significant impact over time and help keep our young drivers safer.



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