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**Proposed contract cheating laws will jail note sharers at university**

[SYDNEY, NSW, 1 August 2019] - The Responsible Student Publishers Association has submitted concerns to parliament around the broad and vague phrasing of the new cheating laws and has launched the 'Right to Publish' campaign to defend the legal right students have to publish and earn money from their university work. Under the broad wording of 'providing any part of a piece of work or assignment', students can face up to two years' prison time and a \$210,000 fine for simply sharing their notes or research with a friend.

Over time, the association has observed several universities disregarding the legal right students have to publish their notes and past work and the proposed cheating laws look to take it further by inadvertently criminalising many regularly used collaborative study techniques such as note sharing, student publishing and the use of many digital study tools. These activities form part of Australia's broader \$1.7 billion edTech industry and the association believes any ambiguity in the proposed legislation will dampen investment and activity in this space.

The prohibition extends further than digital study tools and may criminalise something as simple as sharing class notes with a friend where 'part of' a set of notes (e.g. a diagram or citation) may form research for another student's assignment. Publishing something today may be lawful but become an offence tomorrow, should that material become relevant to an assignment.

Essentially, providing any research, information or learning support to a student completing an assignment may be captured under 'providing any part of a piece of work or assignment'. This may include anything as simple as: a parent proofreading a child's assignment, the availability of relevant information in a Wikipedia article, a tutor assisting a student in understanding a particular topic, an academic journal hosting research work or a textbook publisher providing exemplars. Basically, anyone that provides or hosts material relevant to an assignment may be captured under this broad law.

The association strongly supports the rights of student authors as publishers and believes that sharing of information is of central important to the development and maintenance of knowledge as it is often through the introduction of existing ideas that new ones are formed. The draft legislation should be narrowed to more concisely capture the act of contract cheating whilst not criminalising the legitimate study activities mentioned.

Any generally accepted definition of contract cheating, can be used as a basis for amending this Bill. The key element that needs to be incorporated into the Bill is **‘completes work for a student’** as this suggests a student actually gets someone else to do their assignment for them.

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The Responsible Student Publishers Association seeks to support the rights of students to publish work they create at university. Every year, thousands of Australian students choose to exploit copyright in the work they create during their studies and the association acts as a representative body for these students.