

Alex rallies students to fight search plans

By DAVID COHEN

WA's proposed stop and search laws are a straightforward attack on civil liberties, according to Nedlands student Alex Cassie.

And the 22-year-old is organising a Parliament House rally next Tuesday to protect people against the new laws.

Ms Cassie also coordinated a submission to the Legislative Council committee investigating the proposed laws.

"My legal eagles wrote it – by that I mean third-year law students," she said. "Our submission is lengthy and one of the most detailed made."

Ms Cassie said the committee received 26 written submissions and only one – from the police union – was in favour of the proposed laws.

"The union sent a one-page letter but didn't say why it supported them," she said.

"I think the number of submissions shows the growing opposition to them. It shows people aren't willing to have their rights taken away so easily."

The marine biology and history student said the case of Cottesloe man Denys Martin showed that police already had extensive powers to stop and arrest people.

Mr Martin was wrongfully arrested in January after a beach swim and kept in the East Perth lockup for six hours after he refused to give Cottesloe police his name and address.

He later received \$10,000 in compensation.

"There is absolutely no need for further police powers," Ms Cassie said. "All they would do

is take away the legal defence someone like Mr Martin would have."

Despite Mr Martin's experience, Ms Cassie said she would probably cooperate with police if asked for her details.

"That's an argument against the legislation: most people cooperate anyway," she said.

"I would ask for the officer's name, and if I felt I'd been unnecessarily stopped I'd go to the youth legal service."

The Parliament House rally is on Tuesday, April 20, at 12.30pm.

The committee was due to report its findings last week but was granted an extension to Thursday, June 17.

A spokeswoman said: "Given the controversial nature of the Bill, this extension was sought to give the committee further time to adequately consider the large volume of evidence it has received."

RIGHT: Nedlands student Alex Cassie is leading a protest next week about proposed stop and search laws.

