

# Trio enjoy success on the debating floor

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**THREE** Wellington pupils are off to Qatar after dominating the national debating finals, with veteran Maria English at the helm of her third world-championship bid.

The New Zealand team of five was chosen at the National Schools Debating Championships in Wellington this week. Three Wellingtonians made the grade. Wellington's two teams in the competition took first and second place overall.

Samuel Marsden Collegiate School's Maria, 18, Chilton Saint James School's Jasmin Moran, 17, and Scots College's Nick Cross, 17, join two Auckland pupils. The trio said they owed part of their success to their coaches, a group of Victoria University law students who had prepared them by pitting them against law students.

"They were very intimidating... very impressive," Jasmin said. "We are talking about third, fourth year law students, and one of the [practice debates] we got was about judicial review," Nick said.

The final debate, staged in the legislative chamber of Parliament, tackled a topical issue: Should citizen-initiated referendums be binding on government?

Maria English, daughter of Deputy Prime Minister Bill English, was declared the competition's best speaker.

She attributed her accolade to her coaches and fellow team-mates, as well as a bit of luck.

"Debating is a really consummate team sport... my team was just awesome... I was really lucky to speak for a case that had been set up really well and [to be] supported by my third speaker."

She was in the winning affirmative team.

The national team will compete at the world champs against more than 40 countries, but they have history on their side.

Maria - who is the only team member who has been to the world championships before - was part of the second-placed New Zealand team last year and this year's winning team in Greece.

She said the team would be looking to repeat past successes. "In terms of the level that's required to step up it's very high, [but] we've got high expectations of ourselves."

Next year, Jasmin and Nick will study law at Victoria University. Maria is planning to study outside Wellington and has yet to decide on a degree.

All three are determined to debate their way through university.



**Qatar-bound:** New Zealand college debating team, from left, Jasmin Moran, Maria English and Nick Cross.  
Photo: MAARTEN HOLL