



NEW ZEALAND INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS' ASSOCIATION
MEDIA RELEASE
For Immediate Release

**Coronavirus: Government's hasty travel ban
causes international education crisis**

Recent travel bans on foreign nationals from or travelling through China have given rise to both a health and educational crisis. NZISA strongly affirms that any person on long-term visas must be given the option to return and self-quarantine.

Issued by NZISA on February 3rd, 2020

On Sunday February 2nd 2020, the New Zealand government issued a travel ban on Chinese nationals and any foreign nationals travelling through China. NZISA recognises the existing health crisis due to the current spread of coronavirus. However, the government has failed to consider the impacts on international students from or travelling through China. Due to the short notice of the ban, institutions have limited time to respond to or put in place procedures to support their international students affected by the ban – some of these institutions do not even have medical centres dedicated to their students.

Failure from government and institutions to respond to the overall crisis in a proactive manner has put international students at an immense disadvantage. The sudden decision to enforce a travel ban has given international students barely a single days' notice, on a Sunday no less, leaving little to no time for international students to make arrangements with their institutions, Immigration New Zealand and accommodation providers. Institutions will also have very little time to get their bearings and will be unable to support their international students immediately. Not only will this greatly impact international students, it will greatly affect the export education sector as a whole.

Despite being unable to travel back into the country, international students are financially at a loss and are still obligated to arrange payments for various services they cannot access. This includes:

- application fees for visas of the students affected which are not being refunded by Immigration New Zealand;

- international students who have signed contracts and leases with residential halls or landlords and will still have to fork out these costs;
- students missing out on classes, who may or may not be receiving advice or support from their institution, will still have to pay their exorbitant tuition fees; and
- international students looking to defer their course of study have still not been advised as to whether they would have to pay the application fee for another student visa.

It is largely questionable that Immigration New Zealand is allowed to retain roughly \$10 million in application fees when students are banned from entering the country.

The export education sector will greatly suffer due to this travel ban. As of 2018, over 36,000 international students are Chinese nationals, roughly 33% of the entire international student cohort, many of whom will be affected by this policy. Not only does the failure to adequately respond and provide support to international students destroy New Zealand's image as an international education destination, it highlights how international students are further being treated as cash cows and are expected to make payments despite the crisis being out of their control. In addition, it highlights how initiatives by government and institutions to raise international student numbers are severely hindered by the lack of support services available for these students, from both government and institutions alike.

Any lack of action on an institution's part would be a breach of the Education (Pastoral Care of International Students) Code of Practice – if institutions are serious with their commitments to the Code, they should respond to students' needs clearly and promptly, especially during this time of need. NZISA and the New Zealand Chinese Students' Association (NZCSA) strongly encourage institutions to reach out to their students affected by this travel ban and ensure they are being given support in any way possible, including, but not limited to:

- making changes to the academic calendar to accommodate international students affected by the travel ban, including making provisions to adjust the start of semester;
- ensuring staff and other students do not discriminate against or show malignity to Chinese students;
- providing them with sufficient academic support, such as access to lecture and tutorial recordings;
- providing clear and regular information pertaining to coronavirus;
- clearly and promptly advising international students of the existing procedures and protocols in place;
- providing a main point of contact for international students to ensure their concerns and queries are addressed; and
- providing appropriate support to and regularly checking up on any international students in isolation residing in university or other accommodation.

A prompt, appropriate response to the travel ban from education providers is crucial to ensure students are receiving the support they need, for New Zealand's export education sector to ensure it sets a precedent for other international study destinations, and to push the sector into the right direction with a more student-centric approach.

Where to find support

Healthline 0800 611 116

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