



NEW ZEALAND INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS' ASSOCIATION

MEDIA RELEASE

For Immediate Release

International Student reputation dragged through the mud

A recent article by TVNZ has unjustifiably undermined the hard work and dedication of over 125,000 international students studying in New Zealand and all those who have previously studied in New Zealand.

Issued by NZISA on May 17, 2019

The recently published article by TVNZ is yet another piece of over sensationalised journalism that drives a wedge into New Zealand society. International Students are an integral party of what makes New Zealand a diverse and unique country in the world. New Zealand prides itself on its diversity and inclusion; however, when the news cycle is slow, migrants, minority groups, and international students are often attacked in click bait news articles that have few sources and lack credibility. These articles do little to promote harmony in New Zealand nor the integrity of our media.

NZISA is disappointed in TVNZ for the lack of research, failure to reach out to student representatives, and understanding of the daily challenges international students face.

NZISA's Education Officer, Umi Asaka says she is disappointed in the portrayal of international students. She states, "it is so outrageous that they can call half of us cheaters not knowing all the hard work we put in and barriers that we have to jump through." Neyra Rong Nie, President of the New Zealand Chinese Student Association in Auckland agrees, "how can the voice of three students be counted as evidence for an alleged systemic problem" and that "there is no evidence that it is widespread in the Chinese Students' Association, NZCSA condemns all cheating behaviour." These thoughts have echoed through our student community over the last 24 hours. "Is one student who has admitted to cheating the best source of estimating how many people [cheat]?" comments Massey University Student

Association President Michael Salmon. The University of Auckland has commented about its concern about the “media resorting to unsubstantiated stories without sufficient background research or investigation to establish whether a problem even exists.”

NZISA is disappointed in the Hon Chris Hipkin’s response to the allegation. TVNZ reports the Minister stating “...these are very serious allegation...” and Universities NZ states “...they will do everything in their power to clamp down on any practice that would affect their and New Zealand’s reputation.” Does the Minister have no faith in the New Zealand education system, its staff members and student support workers, domestic or international students? A serious, lacking response from the government indicates a lack of empathy international students and the sector as a whole. Furthermore, the blame is immediately shifted to students and the narrative shifts to “New Zealand’s reputation”. Of course, the reputation is important, after all the Government would not dare risk the revenue that international students bring over actually caring about the wellbeing of current students. NZISA has contacted several other political parties to understand how they view international students, ACT Party Leader David Seymour states that “it's a real shame that all international students have been smeared this way. Our view in ACT is that international students bring a lot to New Zealand, not only by paying fees but by enriching our education institutions.” NZISA questions for the National Party and Green Party were left unanswered.

While TVNZ contemplates the reputation of New Zealand universities, they completely disregarded the integrity and the reputation of our international students. After all, international students are the primary stakeholders of the sector. All students who have and are currently studying hard in New Zealand have been attacked by this article. The article, and the response by the Minister, throw in questions all the hard work, dedication, and sacrifice made by international students in New Zealand, without serious statistical proof or evidence from any student association, academic staff member, or student support offices.

NZISA understands that contract cheating (a form of academic dishonesty in which students get others to complete their coursework for them) does exist in New Zealand, for all types of students. “Cheating in any form is completely unacceptable” says New Zealand Union of Students’ Association Vice President Caitlin Barlow; however “[t]hree students at two different universities is not a clear representation of what is happening. The actions of the minority should not ruin it for the majority. International students come to New Zealand for a world class education and live in a safe country, not to cheat.” To undermine the credibility of tens of thousands of international students is careless and unjustified. Any student knows that most courses and papers utilise invigilated assessment for final exams. Other types of papers require progress reports or a presentation following the submission of written work. In reality, there are few opportunities for students to obtain a whole degree through contract cheating or pass a course with unethically obtained essays.

Discussions with NZISA representatives revealed the reason why students may choose to utilize contract cheating. Most commonly it is the lack of student support services, clarity of instructions, or mental health related. This goes back to the problem that NZISA has been advocating for since its inception. More funding from the export education levy needs to be

funnelled into improving student service, cultural competencies of staff members, and mental health and wellbeing services. Massey University Student Association International Officer You Bo Guo states that “many students will consider the university offered services first before even thinking about contract cheating”. However, current academic writing services and help services are bottlenecked by funding and number of students seeking help. Limited mental health services and waiting times of over six weeks lead to students considering unethical behaviour. This is lack of student support is a sector wide problem, which must be addressed to ensure the safety of our students.

Moving forward, NZISA would welcome the opportunity to discuss this matter with the Minister, and to work together to promote a fair and accurate picture of the value that international students bring to New Zealand society. NZISA’s National President Lukas Kristen states that “the student voice of international students is vital in improving the sector and in ensuring that our reputation is upheld.”

About NZISA

NZISA is the peak international student body and advocate of all international students in New Zealand. We enhance communication and cooperation between the international student communities and the education sector in New Zealand. NZISA aims to explore new standards and to review existing best practice when accommodating, educating and advocating for international students in New Zealand. Stay connected with NZISA on our Facebook page @NZISA2018 and email us at info@nzisa.co.nz.

Media Contact

Lukas Kristen
National President
Lukas.kristen@nzisa.co.nz