



NEW ZEALAND INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS' ASSOCIATION

MEDIA RELEASE

International Students pay the increased costs once more.

New Zealand Visa Fees increase. When will it be enough?

Increase in Student Visa fees by 100% and Post-Study Work Visa by 139%

Desiring increased enrolments but disincentivising them

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Since the pandemic, the Government has aimed to restore student enrolments to pre-pandemic levels, with 69,135 students enrolled in 2023 and more expected in 2024.¹ NZISA is deeply concerned about the alarming and imminent surge in visa fees, set to take effect on October 1, 2024. Given this, we are baffled by the move to increase visa fees, which discourages enrolments while seeking to boost student numbers. This suggests the Government values international students for revenue rather than as part of the New Zealand community. Caterina Campese, International Representative at Lincoln University Students' Association (LUSA) and a member of NZISA's Representative Council noted, "New Zealand benefits from a diverse

¹[New Zealand hosted over 69,000 international students in 2023 \(ICEF Monitor. 3 July 2024\).](#)

community of international students who bring specialised knowledge.” She emphasised that the increased fees create additional barriers for both new and current students, harming our contributions to the community. These increases threaten to undermine our socio-cultural capital and further stigmatise international students as mere revenue sources.

From October 1 2024 onwards, the cost of a Student Visa will more than double, with an extraordinary 100% increase from NZD375 to NZD750. Simultaneously, the fee for Post-Study Work Visas (PSWV) will skyrocket by an unprecedented 139%, soaring from NZD700 to NZD1670, further deterring international students from pursuing work and life here in New Zealand.² Chris Beard, CEO of ISANA NZ (International Education Association), has expressed: “Our concern is that the sharp increase in visa processing costs has blindsided current international students, imposing an added expense they had no means of reasonably preparing for.” Reports received from students all across New Zealand reflect this sentiment; it affects all of us, and students will struggle even more to ensure we can continue our education and life in New Zealand. There is an incremental fee increase option – grandparenting - whereby current students would be initially exempt from the increase, allowing time to prepare for the increase at a later date. NZISA strongly urges the Government to consult with NZISA and other representative bodies who can share the voices of communities severely impacted by this drastic change.

NZISA has observed a lack of targeted support for our students compared to previous years, where initiatives aimed at our well-being were more readily available. For example, from 2017 to 2020, the International Student Wellbeing Strategy (ISWS) fund, which supported many organisations such as NZISA in delivering community-based support, has since been discontinued.³ Another member of our Representative Council, who has chosen to remain anonymous, shared that “additionally, it concerns us that the increased revenue to Immigration NZ from these fee hikes is forecasted to be more than four times the amount necessary to cover the deficit of Immigration New Zealand and make it fully self-funded.” We are left wondering where the surplus from the excess revenue is going, if not to cover the costs of supporting our communities. Earlier this year, we were consulted by MBIE on increasing the fees and levies, where we explicitly expressed our stance against any increase. The final figures were adjusted to be ‘lesser’ in consideration of our comments, to which our representative added that “the

² [New Zealand - Increases to Visa Lodgement Fee \(KPMG Australia, 14 August 2024\).](#)

³ [International Student Wellbeing Strategy 2019/20 funding \(Ministry of Education, 11 March 2024\).](#)

drastic size of these hikes is unjustified and represents short-sighted cost-covering measures rather than investments in the future of international education.” The refusal to be interviewed by the press about where this surplus will be allocated is deeply concerning for us, and we are left with the disconcerting impression that the provision of tailored support for international students is not a Government priority. We urge the Government to reconsider its approach and work with us to reinstate support initiatives that prioritise our communities and foster well-being once more.

Globally, New Zealand’s competitors (USA, UK, Australia) grant visas reflective of the student’s course duration.⁴ For instance, a 3-year Bachelor’s degree results in a 3-year visa. We are puzzled as to why New Zealand does not follow this practice. International students here must renew visas annually, a process made harder by the dissolution of the Provider Direct system. Minister of Immigration Erica Stanford’s statement that “the charges remain competitive” lacks context.⁵ The increased student visa fees (NZD 750) may cover 40% of Australia’s current fees (NZD 1,738), but this does not account for annual visa renewals, which have not been covered in any media.⁶ Using a 3-year program as an example, the actual total costs make New Zealand’s fee 29.5% (NZD 2,250) more than Australia’s. Considering most international students study here for 4 years or more, this could mean 72.7% (NZD 3,000) of Australia’s fee instead. This does not account for the pressure, stress, and frustration caused by having to renew every year. A visa that reflects the duration of a course could save a significant amount of resources and capacity needed to process visas and address the recent processing issues the Government has been facing. Furthermore, this would eliminate the need for in-country students to apply for a visa, allowing the Government to focus their efforts on prospective students instead, which is a more sustainable model in our view. If the Government truly wants to remain competitive and align with its objective of modernising the immigration system, we urge it to adopt the same visa benefits as its competitors and grant visas based on the duration of a student’s course.

In closing, while New Zealand is celebrated for its safety and friendly communities, recent changes are deeply troubling. We value New Zealand not for its policies but for its people’s Aroha (love) and Manaakitanga (hospitality). However, with ever-rising tuition fees, living costs,

⁴ [How long can I stay in the USA with the F-1 Visa?; Length of stay for Student visas; Student visa: Overview - GOV.UK](#)

⁵ [Creating a sustainable immigration system \(Stanford, 9 August 2024\)](#)

⁶ [New Zealand announces significant visa fee increases from October: student visas to get costlier too \(ET Online, 12 August 2024\)](#)

and now increased visa fees, we are left second-guessing if we made the right decision. This creates a paradox: the Government seeks more international students while imposing higher barriers and raises a critical question: is the Government's education policy merely focused on revenue? International students are more than numbers—they enrich New Zealand's cultural landscape and bring the world to these shores. The financial pressures and systemic challenges we face risk undermining our contributions and diminishing the sense of community that attracted many of us here. We urge the Government to reconsider these policies and engage with international student representatives. A supportive and sustainable approach is needed to recognise our true value and ensure we can continue contributing positively to New Zealand.

We are people, not just numbers, and our well-being should be a priority.

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