

Media Release



Curtin Student Guild President condemns insidious changes to New Zealanders and Permanent Residents under higher education reforms

4 May 2017

Curtin Student Guild President, Liam O'Neill reaffirmed the Guild's opposition to the Federal Government's higher education changes, particularly those relating to the removal of Commonwealth Supported Places for Permanent Residents and New Zealand Citizens.

"The most underhand and damaging changes in the Government's higher education reforms are those that will affect many New Zealanders and Permanent Residents," said Liam O'Neill.

"New Zealanders and Permanent Residents are taxpayers who contribute significantly to our society and economy. Now they will find themselves saddled with a mountain of debt if they choose to enrol in university, making them second-class taxpayers."

Liam, a New Zealander who moved to Australia in 2007, said he empathised with those affected by the reforms.

"I was lucky enough to have my father pay for my first year of university under the current arrangements which was an investment of more than \$7,000 at the time," noted Mr O'Neill.

"If my family was in a position to do the same under the new arrangements they could pay well over \$20,000 a year or I would be burdened with a massive debt."

"New Zealanders and Permanent Residents will now pay or owe in a single year the same amount that most Australian students will pay for an entire degree," he said.

Liam noted that there were more than 2,000 New Zealanders and Permanent Residents at Curtin University who would find themselves struggling to deal with massive fee hikes in 2018.

"With the Australian Government making the pathway to Australian Citizenship harder, this change will force many migrants to avoid Australia's higher education system or take on a substantial debt," he said.

"Increasing fees from around \$30,000 to more than \$80,000 for a course like nursing is a sneaky way for the Federal Government to diminish its responsibility to provide equal access to higher education and is unacceptable."

Liam O'Neill has written to Bill English, Prime Minister of New Zealand and Andrew Little, New Zealand's Opposition Leader, requesting their support to put pressure on the Australian Government to drop the changes.

"I urge Curtin University to stop pretending that the reforms are reasonable and treat these proposals as an attack on students and the sector as a whole," he said.

Liam has spoken with Radio New Zealand about the changes.

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