

## **MEDIA RELEASE**

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Attention: Education and Political  
reporters  
For Immediate Release

### **National plans fee hikes and increased student debt**

Students are alarmed by National Party leader John Key's announcement that his party plans to remove the Fee Maxima policy, effectively promoting fee hikes and increased student debt. The comments were made at a recent Auckland University of Technology "Breakfast Club".

"Not only do National plan to remove the only assurance students currently have over the cost of their education, but in doing so they propose giving institutions licence to continue to hit already financially stretched and debt-laden students in the pocket. It's outrageous", says Joey Randall, Co-President of the New Zealand Union of Students' Associations (NZUSA).

"These plans reek of the massive fee hikes students endured under National in the 1990's, and are a worrying yet timely reminder of what could happen in tertiary education under a National government" said Randall.

Tertiary tuition fees increased at alarming rates under the National government in the 1990's, in some cases as much as 100 percent in a year. This set the path for New Zealand students to now be paying some of the highest fees in the world. The result is a collective student debt that has now ballooned to over \$9 billion.

Currently, institutions can only increase course fees by 5 percent, or to the Fee Maxima, providing students with some guidance as to what to expect tuition fee levels to be over the course of their study.

"There is huge community concern over already high fees and the negative effects of student debt. New Zealand needs progressive policy that improves the sector and adequately supports students, not punitive policies that entrench inequity", said Randall.

NZUSA calls on political parties to prove their commitment to tertiary education by addressing the drivers of student debt once and for all – by dealing to out of control fees and introducing universal student allowances.

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