25/01/2023

Dear Prime Minister Hipkins,

I wish to extend my congratulations on your ascension to the role of Prime Minister. It is very exciting to see a former students association President in this role, and I do hope that while in this role you will look back on your time in student politics fondly and use this to implement transformative policy in the tertiary space.

Student unions are struggling, and need government support to be emboldened. You have a chance now to effect those changes that you advocated for back when you were in the student politics space. Please think back to how strong the student unions were before VSM, and consider the position we’re in now. You have the power to effect meaningful change, change that will benefit the lives of 100,000 tertiary students across the country.

The cost of living crisis is having a detrimental effect on student livelihoods. The areas that inflation is affecting the most are those that make up the bulk of a student budget. Coming into this election year, I ask that you keep this at the forefront of your mind whenever you’re presented with a policy making decision.

Thank you for the support for students that this government has provided over the last 5 years. Increases to the student living loan have definitely improved the material conditions of students across the country. First year fees free has enabled flexibility for students who aren’t sure what they want to study, and helped to keep down student loans.

Now is the time to really expand upon these policies. Increasing the student allowance threshold, reintroducing the postgraduate student allowance, and an expansion of the fees free scheme to cover 3 years of tertiary study would be very well received by the student community, and increase equity and accessibility in the tertiary space.

I wish you all the best for what I can only imagine will be an incredibly busy year. Be bold, and please, remember the students. OUSA is always willing to work with your government to help to improve the lives of students at the University of Otago, and across the country. Please do not hesitate to get in touch at any time.

Ngā mihi,

Quintin Jane  
2023 OUSA President.

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