



Manatu / Memorandum

Ki a / To: Rt Hon Jacinda Ardern MP

Nā / From: OUSA Executive

Te rā / Date: 07/10/2020

Te Kaupapa / Re: Recommitting Government Contributions to University Student Financial Hardship Funds for 2021

Tēnā koe,

The Otago University Students' Association asks that the Labour Party, if re-elected, recommit government contributions to tertiary financial hardship funds for 2021. The current government commitment of \$1.5 million to the University of Otago hardship fund has been incredibly successful in supporting our most impacted students and ensuring they can continue studying at the University. We strongly believe that financial hardship for tertiary students will continue into 2021 and will likely worsen.

The University of Otago's Pūtea Tautoko has this year made over 1800 grants to date, exceeding \$3 million in total. This equates to approximately 8% of Otago students, and highlights the depth of impact COVID-19 has had on the student community. Over the year the need has increased rather than diminished, with over 100 applications for support being received each week for the past month. The University and OUSA project that this growth in demand will continue into 2021. Within those requiring support, traditionally marginalised groups, including Māori, Pasifika and international students, are over-represented.

Pūtea Tautoko will continue to be run throughout 2021, reflecting our projections of student hardship and Treasury's projection that it will be in 2021 that New Zealand feels the full economic impact of COVID-19. It is vital the government steps up and recommits funding. This would ensure that students continue to be supported. Additionally, it would ensure the onus of contributing to the fund is not left predominantly to other members of the tertiary community, who have also been impacted by COVID-19.

The University of Otago has confirmed to OUSA that it endorses the provision of ongoing Government funding to address student hardship in 2021. We understand that the Vice-Chancellors will be writing to the TEC about this very important matter.

Committing this money will ensure students stay in study. This not only benefits the tertiary sector, but also New Zealand as a whole, as these talented graduates join the workforce. As stated, education is key to New Zealand's COVID-19 recovery. Recommitting funding is the way to ensure that this is



realised in New Zealand. The University is committing significant funds to Pūtea Tautoko in 2021 but expects that, even with ongoing donations, this will be less than is required to meet the financial need of the student community.

As we ask for this additional funding, we advocate for and speak on behalf of all students at the University of Otago. We look forward to your response.

Sincerely,
The Otago University Students' Association Executive