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New Zealand

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Dear Minister Hipkins,

Congratulations on your appointment as Minister of Education for this parliamentary term. As the national body that is leading the professionalisation of practice in the international education sector, ISANA NZ (International Education Association) is looking forward to engaging with you and maintaining our association.

ISANA NZ's key priorities for supporting sector recovery in the next three years include:

- Supporting the efforts to bring international students back into New Zealand, ensuring their well-being and maintaining social licence with the public
- Continuing to champion the programmes and initiatives that are advancing professional pathways, sector-specific course and accreditation to underpin sustainability
- Ensuring the robustness of support for international students currently in New Zealand who we view as a vital link in the chain of recovery

Through the pandemic crisis in 2020 ISANA NZ has commended the work that the Ministry of Education and ENZ have undertaken to support international students. The association is presently contributing to the International Education Recovery-Border group that is facilitating the entry of early cohort international students. Despite the disruptive impacts of COVID-19, our membership has steadily grown in 2020 with membership drawn from schools, PTEs, ITPs and universities. Through its offering of webinars, catch-up forums, published writing and conference offerings, ISANA NZ has provided a timely facilitative hub for those working closely with international students, including at-risk students.

ISANA NZ provides specialist training and professional expertise in the following areas:

International Student Experience Certificate (online) for staff

Postgraduate course development (partnering with the VUW School of Education)

Culturally responsive pedagogy that is relevant to international students

Global citizenship learning for both domestic and international students

Advocacy for frontline staff who are indispensable to a sustainable recovery

Developing and promoting bicultural approaches to international education strategy

Tailored pastoral support and orientation practice that enhances student wellbeing

The export education sector is at a critical juncture. Highly experienced international education practitioners are being made redundant with budgets being slashed, and this will profoundly impact capacity to provide wrap-around support for students. This in turn will preclude international education as a lead export sector that contributes substantively to the nation's economic recovery. To help stave off further cuts, we do therefore look to your support for continued investment in a sustained, collaborative approach to progressively opening the border to more international students while meeting public health concerns.

The loss of frontline expertise is particularly damaging because export education is a sector without an established specialist profession. International education currently lacks sector-specific courses, credentials and professional pathways. This shortcoming combined with the loss of experienced practitioners will make it almost impossible to fulfil the goals of the 2018-2030 International Education Strategy in the near term, which rightly puts students at the heart of the international education enterprise.

ISANA NZ was the first national body to call for the establishment of a *specialist International Education profession*. The COVID-19 disruption offers a once-in-a-generation reset of an industry that has been preoccupied with the revenue benefits of export education. If education providers revert to type, a rare opportunity will be lost to truly professionalise the sector and set New Zealand apart as a study destination renowned for its holistic student-centred policy.

We therefore also ask for your stated support for professionalisation as an integral part of the recovery strategy which enables a truly transformed sector. This needs targeted investment to maintain momentum, but presently there is no dedicated funding for specialist training and career pathway development for 2021. And because of the deferral of Export Education Levy payments and its impact on International Student Wellbeing Strategy funding, ISANA NZ's immediate future is uncertain. The impetus for professionalisation might therefore be lost. There remains, however, an historic opportunity to invest in a transformative change that leaves a lasting legacy. An investment in professionalisation provides the conditions for international students to prosper with more effective wraparound support and a fuller integration into New Zealand's classrooms, which benefits the global citizenship experience and learning of all students.

We request an opportunity to meet with you to discuss our professionalisation proposal in more detail and look forward to your response.

Yours in education,



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