



**Media
Release**

**Attention: Education, Health and
Political reporters
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New research shows debt deepens nursing crisis

A study released today by the nurses union NZNO and the New Zealand University Students' Association (NZUSA) reveals that nurses' student debt is adding to the workforce crisis in the health sector.

"Many nurses are considering leaving the country or even leaving nursing altogether, because of their student loans," said Fleur Fitzsimons, Co-President of NZUSA. "Saddling nurses with debt they struggle to repay is damaging the health of our country."

The combination of high debt and low wages means the nurses have to work long hours and too many shifts to keep up with repayments. "Student loans and low wages mean many nurses struggle to get by," said Geoff Annals, CEO of the New Zealand Nurses Organisation. "Many of the nurses surveyed were supporting two, three or four children on low pay while making student loan payments."

"This report shows why nurses are not taking on extra study, and why the number of nurses graduating declined over the 1990s, when participation in other areas of tertiary study increased massively," said Fleur Fitzsimons. "This is not surprising when graduate nurses face long hours, low pay and huge debts."

Geoff Annals said the report showed that fully funding nursing education would alleviate New Zealand's nursing shortage. "New nurses could be debt free if the government paid less than \$30 million a year in tuition and allowances. With the cost of recruiting nurses running at \$100 million a year, investing in nursing education would be saving the health system in more ways than one," he said.

The report, which will be officially launched at a function at Wellington's Turnbull House, at 1pm on 19 June, surveys 376 nurses on the effects of debt on their careers, financial decisions and families.

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For further comment or for copies of the report:

Fleur Fitzsimons, NZUSA 04 498 2500 or 0274 86 86 77
Geoff Annals, NZNO 04 - 931 6703 or 0274 434 193