

The New Zealand Herald

Anger greets axing of UK scholarships

5:00AM Wednesday July 16, 2008

By [Alanah May Eriksen](#)

University chancellors are blasting Britain's decision to slash a university scholarship programme which has drawn hundreds of New Zealand students to England.

From next year, Britain will no longer fund the prestigious Commonwealth Scholarships for students from developed countries such as New Zealand, Australia, and Canada.

About 25,000 students have won Commonwealth Scholarships since they were instituted in 1959.

Many of those who completed the scholarships in Britain returned to their homelands to play leading roles in cultural, intellectual and political life.

About five New Zealanders were chosen a year and previous scholars have included Deputy Prime Minister Michael Cullen and Law Commissioner Professor John Burrows.

University of Auckland deputy vice-chancellor Raewyn Dalziel said the Vice-Chancellors Committee expressed its opposition to the Commonwealth Scholarship Commission

"I think it is a closing of opportunities that a number of New Zealanders have had over a long period of time so we regret it certainly from that point of view.

She said the committee was "disappointed that this step was taken. It was presented pretty much as a fait accompli to New Zealand, Australia and Canada.

"It reflects the changing nature of the Commonwealth and the decline in its meaning for the former dominions."

Auckland University of Technology vice-chancellor Derek McCormack said the decision was a major blow for the country.

"These scholarships have had a big impact on New Zealand over the years in its development."

The change has also been criticised by outspoken Australian feminist academic and writer Germaine Greer.

"For two million miserable pounds - the cost of a basement flat in Bayswater - England has the advantage of 500 of the best that could be harvested from

Commonwealth universities," she said in a speech to the Royal Commonwealth Society.

"In simply deciding that the Commonwealth Scholarship had not been worth the minute outlay, [Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs David] Milliband has done something extraordinary.

"Of all the investments this unfortunate Government has made, this is one that has produced a profit that can be measured exponentially ... one that goes on and on."

Ms Greer is among a group of former scholarship winners and Commonwealth leaders, including former Australian Prime Minister Malcolm Fraser, who have started a campaign calling on Britain to reverse its decision.

In a letter in the Times newspaper, they described the programme as "one of the great success stories of postwar international partnership".

- NZPA