

## Comment

### Letter: Is this spin or is it incompetence?

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OPINION: Tertiary Education Minister Steven Joyce says government funding levels for Australian universities are low for an arts student than the levels here, and more for a science student. He intends reversing this so-called imbalance by reducing funding for arts subjects.

This proposal is based on an incorrect assumption. Yes, university funding for each science student is higher in the lucky country - just under NZ\$20,000 compared with our \$10,338.

But Australian universities also receive more in non-science areas. For example, they get slightly more in humanities disciplines, quite a lot more in behavioural and social studies where the level is almost double, and more than double foreign languages.

In mathematics, an arts subject here, the Australian Government contribution to universities is also almost double.

Whether it's spin or incompetence, we're being misled.

What's worse is that government university funding for each student here is significantly less than in Australia. New Zealand staff-student ratios are now, on average, close to one to 20.

The minister's approach includes more lock-step control, and a nanny-state scolding for the recent international rankings downgrade, much of which can be attributed to the low levels of university government funding.

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