

Archived: Tuesday, 30 June 2020 2:15:00 PM
From: s 22
Sent: Thu, 2 Apr 2020 15:51:29
To: Minister.Littleproud@agriculture.gov.au
Subject: Request to support onshore International Students facing hardship due to COVID19
Sensitivity: Normal

Dear Mr Littleproud and Mr Tehan

VO We are pretty sure you and your teams are swamped with plethora of requests and suggestions in these difficult times for our country and its people. Hoping with all that going on we are not going to forget about international students in our great land. Not only they deserve our support and sympathy in these testing times, an opportunity also exists to showcase how Australia is the country for international students once we reach the other side.

VO Without knowing what the government is planning to help these students we are proposing the following:

- Provide financial help similar to New Start for at least six months to students going through hardship. This way they are able to stay in their current accommodation and feed themselves during this period of hardship.
- There is also an option to employ many of these students for fruit picking or other Ag sector where deemed fit, if feasible the process needs to be established and started asap with a mandatory 14 day quarantine before this workforce is moved to regional areas. I see this way a lot of help can be offered to our farmers and growers in this time of need.
- There is also an option to help them temporarily employed in any other urban sector where gap exists.
- Provide free mental health support to needy students who might be struggling to cope.

VO Lastly bit about us, s 22 - bunch of proud Australian people have come together to support needy in the community in these testing times.

VO Yours faithfully

VO On behalf of s 22

s 22

3 April 2020

The Hon Scott Morrison MP
Prime Minister
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

Dear Prime Minister

We write to you as members of the Queensland International Education and Training Advisory board, which supports the delivery of education to more than 100,000 international students who are living in this state.

We believe that it is critical that our Federal Government, and all levels of government, recognise that International Education is a significant service industry that more than 23,500 in this state. It also contributes more than \$39 billion nationally and \$5.4 billion to the Queensland economy (ABS statistics).

This industry is now subject to severe stress with many full fee-paying international students stranded a long way from home, many losing their part time income and subject to eviction from their place of residence.

Without some support, these students will become a public health and humanitarian risk for the Federal, State and Territory governments. International students make up one in 50 people in Australia and are an important part of our social fabric in almost all communities and regions.

Some of our universities and TAFE Institutes which fund research, build innovation, deliver community spaces, support regional arts and sporting events, and contribute extensively to productivity and local employment are facing significant financial challenges. In addition, quality private colleges and English language schools are at imminent risk of closure which further exacerbates the student's situation.

We know that students are better supported when they are enrolled in colleges and universities, and for this to happen, they need to remain open and functional, albeit now delivering most of their courses through different online mediums.

Without an intake in Semester Two, many institutions will be seriously challenged, and this country will be in danger of losing one of its top four industries. So more broadly, if the Government wishes to protect jobs, this sector needs to be worthy recipients of funding to tie us over.

As part of the COVID - 19 response package, we are requesting your government to urgently consider establishing a National Hardship Fund to support the International Education and

Training sector which could be delivered via states and territories to assist in managing this public health and humanitarian risk.

We believe that it is imperative to help keep the doors of our education institutions open, and provide support to alleviate the hardship being experienced by these students, many of whom have lost part time jobs, and are struggling to meet their tuition and accommodation payments while finding money for food and groceries. To date we understand that they are not eligible for any government assistance.

If we are not seen to be providing some level of support for the most severely impacted of these 570,000 stranded students, then we believe that the reputational risk to Australia will be considerable with the impact being felt well beyond this sector.

We, the undersigned, request that your Government gives urgent consideration to this situation to assist this vulnerable cohort of students during this COVID-19 crisis.

Yours sincerely

s 22

Archived: Tuesday, 30 June 2020 2:14:25 PM
From:
Sent: Sun, 5 Apr 2020 17:43:05
To:
Subject: Dept. of Home Affairs to DSS – ACCESS TO BENEFITS FOR VISA HOLDERS - s 22(C/DUTTON/MINISTERIAL REFERRALS)
Sensitivity: Normal

From: s 22 [mailto:s 22]
Sent: Saturday, 4 April 2020 5:59 PM
To: Tudge, Alan (MP)
Subject: International Students needing your help

To

Alan Tudge MP, Minister for Immigration, Citizenship, Migrant Services and Multicultural Affairs

Let me introduce myself, my name is s 22 I am currently on student visa of s 22 in Sydney, NSW.

I was referring to the letter on <https://minister.homeaffairs.gov.au/davidcoleman/Pages/Coronavirus-and-Temporary-Visa-holders.aspx>, which state, "The Government will undertake further engagement with the international education sector who already provide some financial support for international students facing hardship. For example, we understand there are some education providers that are providing fee discounts to international students."

I am grateful as international students, for the contribution that you already made. But in reality, my institution doesn't provide financial support. I have been trying to contact them regarding this matter. I am wondering, if you are on international student's side, will you be able to engage with my education provider, s 22 in regards to financial support? It might only take five minutes of the time to send an email to them. However, It might affect greatly on behalf of myself and other students of s 22

Please find the details of my education provider below,

s 22

Thank you and hopefully you will be able to following up.

Kind Regards

s 22

Archived: Tuesday, 30 June 2020 2:19:09 PM
From: s 22
Sent: Tue, 7 Apr 2020 15:24:25
To:
Cc: s 22
Subject: Current Covid-19 pandemic and situation of International Students in Australia.
Sensitivity: Normal
Attachments:
Letter from Federations.pdf;

Dear Hon Dan Tehan MP,

I am writing to you on behalf of Federation of Indian Associations and Communities in states of Australia.

We have recently written to the Hon Prime Minister of Australia with recommendations and measures that can be taken to help International Students in Australia during this crisis of COVID-19 Pandemic.

Have attached a copy for your attention in this email, your kind consideration is much warranted on this.

We have been working together to support the International Students during this period of crisis due to the COVID-19 Pandemic.

For a number of weeks, we have been running various programs to support and provide some relief to these student in this time of crisis. Some university and guild bodies have now started to come out and work with us as well.

The federations in consultation with various student groups have come up with some suggestions and measures which if implemented, can significantly help and assist the students without putting any strain on the economic situation of Australia. The attached letter outlines the suggestion that we have come up with and would like to your attention to consider when formulating policy decisions. Please see the attachment for the detail.

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Regards,

s 22

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∅cbpat3\∅
∅cbpat3\∅Mob :s 22 www.fiawa.org.au
∅cbpat3\∅Facebook@FIAWA.Inc | Twitter <https://twitter.com/fiawainc>
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7th April 2020

To,

The Hon. Prime Minister, Premiers, and Chief Ministers,

Re: Current Covid-19 pandemic and situation of international students in Australia.

Dear Hon. Prime Minister, Premiers, and Chief Ministers,

COVID-19 pandemic has created widespread anxiety and panic amongst the International Student Community in Australia, which is over 560,000, contributes over \$38 Billion to our Australian economy and support around 250,000 jobs. There are over 86,000 Indian International Students in Australia.

We are being approached by a large number of students on a daily basis who are distressed having lost their jobs, unable to pay rental, and do not have any safety net to fall back on. They are stressed and anxious about their uncertain future.

Being the group of Federation of Indian Associations and Communities in states of Australia, we have been working together to support these International Students and for a number of weeks, we have been running various programs to support and provide some relief to these student in this time of crisis. Some university and guild bodies have now started to come out and work with us as well.

COVID-19 is testing all the world leaders as the world has not seen such event in last 100 years. We have seen how hard everyone is working. These are testing times and we do not want to distract the government from task on hand. However, we kindly urge the government to offer help and assistance where it is genuinely needed.

This crisis is no one's fault, and we should work together to ensure these young International Students in Australia get a Fair Go, the Australian way. We Australian have always risen to any challenges and we should ensure these young dreams and aspirations are supported.

After a rigorous consultation process, brainstorming, and having conducted a survey of students to identify their major issues, we have come up with certain possible solutions, which can certainly work towards helping the students without draining our country's financial resources.

We appeal to you to kindly consider the requests/possible solutions outlined below:

1. Indirect reduction of immediate financial obligations:

Pertaining to the current COVID19 crisis and recommended precautions/restrictions, all education delivery has moved online and being conducted remotely. This has significantly affected the students' learning experience and the quality of education that they initially expected and agreed to pay for.

While this situation and relative changes have arisen from an unforeseen and totally unexpected series of events, it has also resulted in a significant cost reduction for the education providers in delivering the education.

We believe that taking advantage of the significant cost savings that the providers are temporarily able to make, it is also achievable to offer temporary fee discounts, rebates, and fee credits to the students, which will significantly reduce their financial burden and help them sustain and sail through this relatively short-term crisis period.

2. Visa obligations and regulations:

Student visas are governed by a set of conditions, which are defined by visa regulations. These conditions require students to fulfil certain requirements in order to maintain their enrolment and visa including further visa and residency options. Due to the temporary flexible learning modes, it has become possible for students to participate in their studies from anywhere, including their home country if they are able to safely travel.

However, the visa regulations do not allow students to do this and if they decide to temporarily go back to their home country then it jeopardises their current visas and possible future visa extensions.

We believe that if the students are given the flexibility of being able to continue their remote studies from their home country, for the time being, without effecting their current visas and future visa and residency options then this will encourage many to take up this option. This will result in them not worrying about their wellbeing and rental accommodation or daily meals while also being able to continue their studies. In this period of extreme demand and scarcity of resources, this will also ease off the burden on the Australian systems and services.

3. Relaxation in enrolment conditions:

All student visas carry conditions that require the students to remain enrolled in fulltime study load with their respective education providers. Non-compliance with this condition can seriously effect validity of their current visa and future visa or residency options. A temporary relief to the students from this condition can enable them to enrol in relatively fewer subjects/units in their course and this will reduce their fee obligations for a semester or two. This temporary measure will encourage more

and more students to continue their studies while also helping the education providers to avoid a bigger loss of enrolments and revenue.

4. Expanding the scope of Overseas Students Tuition Fund:

The Overseas Students Tuition Fund was established for protection of students in instances of provider closures and is funded by the contribution of education providers through the Tuition Protection Service levy. The responsible governing bodies may consider temporarily expanding the scope of this fund to include provisions to help the students in exceptional, unforeseen, and unpredictable situations like we are facing now. If this fund can incorporate such discretionary flexibility for the use of funds, then we shall have available a significant pool of funds that can then be used appropriately to help the students during this crisis.

5. Effectiveness of access to superannuation:

In a recent development, the students have been given access to their superannuation funds for up to a certain limit, given that they have been in Australia for more than 12 months. This gesture is welcome, however in practicality it does not deliver much of a real help to students due to following facts –

- A) Most students, on their arrival into Australia, take a fair bit of time to settle and find any part time work around their main goal of studies.
- B) Their initial 3-6 months are spent without any work and once they have found work it is generally inconsistent and no more than 20 hours a week. This does not give them a great income and of course not much super.
- C) The students who have spent more than 12 months in Australia, do not actually have enough super accumulated to be of any real help.

6. Leaving Australia: The option of leaving Australia:

While leaving Australia and going back to their respective countries is an option, it does not stand out to be a beneficial one for both students and the education providers unless certain regulations and visa conditions are not relaxed.

As highlighted in the points 2 and 3 above, if a student leaves Australia then they are not only breaching their visa conditions but also risking their enrolment. This will result in their visas and enrolments being cancelled, it is also going to be a huge loss of revenue and numbers of students for the education providers significant enough that many providers may end up with an unviable business. If this start to happen then we might see a vicious cycle of students leaving resulting in closure of providers resulting in more students forced to leave due to provider closure.

We also need to realize that this pandemic situation is not going to last forever but if students leave Australia then they are severely jeopardizing their visas, studies, and all that that they have tirelessly worked towards for establishing themselves in this country. We are talking about hundreds of thousands of lives and dreams.

If this solution has to work then it shall come with relaxation in visa, study, and enrolment conditions to allow them to come back, at appropriate time in the future, to be able to continue their studies without losing their fees, enrolments, and easier visa extensions.

- 7. Sustenance Allowance:** Some students who have been here for longer than 12 months, are in the process of getting PR and have longer-term goal for becoming a future Australian citizen. We should consider providing some type of Sustenance Allowance as a kind Australian gesture of support. This will go a long way in terms of integrating these future citizens and they will carry a positive feeling of being looked after by the country that they have chosen to call home. We do not know what formulae we can arrive to or what amount should be provided but they are working equally hard like any other Australian. There must be some humanitarian considerations. This will make Brand Australia even bigger.

"We community organisations, collectively represent over 700,000 strong Indian Diaspora in Australia. We are part of fabric of this multi-cultural society and we are proud Australian of Indian origin. From Cricket to Curries, From Canberra to Delhi, we are the living bridge between the two proud nations, and we take this Australia India relationship and translate into people-to-people relationship. We work tirelessly to ensure integration of the diaspora into mainstream Australia; we support young people, families, elderly and work with government at all level. Overall, we contribute tremendously to the Australian Nation building process.

We urge your team and the national cabinet to please think through these suggestions, work on related policy setting, which delivers outcome which reflects fairness, shows compassion, kindness and reaffirms Australia as a Fair Dinkum country and enhance Brand Australia to be received well globally."

Yours Sincerely,

s 22

s 22

-----END-----



Australian Government
Department of Education,
Skills and Employment

Our Ref MC20-003857

s 22

Dear s 22

Thank you for your email of 7 April 2020 to the Hon Dan Tehan MP, Minister for Education, regarding the novel coronavirus (COVID-19). The Minister has asked me to reply on his behalf.

I acknowledge you have written on behalf of the Federation of Indian Associations and Communities in Australia, which includes a number of state and territory affiliates. I appreciate the difficult situation you have described, in which Indian students are experiencing financial hardship while they remain in Australia and the challenges they face when deciding whether to leave. I want to thank you for the work you have done in listening to students and providing a range of suggestions for the Australian Government to consider.

The Government continues to work with the international education sector to minimise the impact of COVID-19, and that includes finding ways to support international students. The suggestions you have provided on behalf of the Federation of Indian Associations and Communities in Australia will be taken into consideration as the Government continues to work through the unprecedented challenges being faced in light of the evolving COVID-19 situation.

The Australian Government is actively monitoring the spread of COVID-19. A National Cabinet, made up of the Prime Minister, Premiers and Chief Ministers, has been established to coordinate the national response to COVID-19 across all Australian governments. The most recent advice from Australian Government agencies is available at www.australia.gov.au.

The Australian Government's priority is to keep communities safe and we will continue to follow the medical advice of the Australian Health Protection Principal Committee (AHPPC), which is developed by chief medical officers from the Commonwealth and each state and territory. The aim of all governments is to safeguard the health of Australians.

The Australian Government knows that COVID-19 is affecting international students in Australia. We appreciate that international students often engage in part time work to help support themselves while studying in Australia. As you note in your letter, industries that typically employ international students are experiencing job losses as a result of the measures implemented to slow the spread of COVID-19.

There has always been an understanding that temporary visa holders are able to support themselves while in Australia. As part of their visa application, international students have had to demonstrate that they can support themselves completely in their first year. Many students will continue to rely on family support, part-time work where available and their own savings to sustain themselves in Australia.

As you have noted, on 4 April 2020 the Australian Government announced some steps that may assist your members and these include some extensions to work limits and access to superannuation. Further information is available on the Department of Home Affairs website

at <https://covid19.homeaffairs.gov.au/> or by calling their Global Service Centre on 131 881 and from the Australian Tax Office website at: www.ato.gov.au. I acknowledge your points regarding the limitations of these measures in the current circumstances.

The Government continues to work with universities and the international education sector to minimise the impact of COVID-19, and that includes finding practical ways to support international students. Numerous institutions have put in place measures to assist international students who are facing hardship with crisis payments, fee assistance, changes to tuition requirements and critical dates. These are just a few examples. International students are also able to access mental health support through their education provider. Therefore, please encourage your members to speak to their provider in the first instance about any additional support that is available to them at this time. Universities are autonomous entities that set their own international student tuition fees and are able to make their own decisions about how best to manage and mitigate the impact of COVID-19 on their students.

In the meantime, the Department of Education, Skills and Employment's COVID-19 website provides further information on mental health and other support services available to international students www.dese.gov.au/news/coronavirus-covid-19. Study Australia's website www.studyinaustralia.gov.au provides more information on support services available to international students.

I note your suggestion regarding the use of the Overseas Students Tuition Fund for emergency relief. The Australian Government has announced a waiver of regulatory fees for 2020 and 2021 paid by educator providers listed on the Commonwealth Register of Institutions and Courses for Overseas Students. Payment of Tuition Protection Service levies, which includes the Overseas Students Tuition Fund, by registered providers will also be deferred to a later time. This will help providers to invest in retraining staff, reshaping offerings and, importantly, support students.

The Prime Minister has announced that States and Territories will put a six-month ban on evictions for both residential and commercial tenants during the COVID-19 pandemic. Students seeking more advice on their rights as a tenant at this difficult time should contact the relevant state/territory authority :

- o WA: Western Australia Consumer Protection - www.dmirs.wa.gov.au/
- o Victoria: Consumer Affairs Victoria - www.consumer.vic.gov.au/
- o NSW: Fair Trading - www.fairtrading.nsw.gov.au/
- o Queensland: Residential tenancies Authority - www.rta.qld.gov.au/
- o SA: South Australia Consumer and Business Services - www.cbs.sa.gov.au/
- o Tasmania: Consumer, Building and Occupation Services - www.cbos.tas.gov.au/
- o ACT: Tenants Union ACT - www.tenantsact.org.au/
- o NT: Northern Territory Consumer Affairs – www.consumeraffairs.nt.gov.au

International student visas and visa conditions are managed by the Department of Home Affairs and I recommend that you contact the Minister for Home Affairs about these. There is further information for temporary visa holders who are considering their options at <https://covid19.homeaffairs.gov.au/staying-australia>.

As you would be aware, this is an evolving situation. The Australian Government continues to look for ways to support our community of international students, and assist those who are suffering financial hardship, including exploring options with universities and with states and territories.

Thank you for bringing your concerns to the Australian Government's attention.

Yours sincerely
s 47F

David Atkins (Dr.)
Assistant Secretary

26 April 2020

s 22

From: s 22
Sent: Friday, 3 April 2020 4:29 PM
To: s 22 (T. Zimmerman, MP) s 22
Cc: Zimmerman, Trent (MP) <s 22
Subject: Letter to Mr. Trent Zimmermann MP

The Hon. Trent Zimmerman MP
Member for North Sydney
Parliament House
Canberra

Dear Trent:

I am writing on behalf of ALABC, with the purpose of requesting your support to assist the Latin American international students currently in Australia. As you may be aware, amongst our members we have an important number of Universities, Education institutions and Migration and Education Agents.

The international education industry is at the forefront of impact from the COVID-19 crisis. Australians and international students have been stood down from work and they are uncertain about when and if they will come back to work. The International education sector contributed \$37 billion to the local economy last year and it supports nearly 250,000 jobs nationally. Education providers are struggling to keep running their business and they will not survive unless there is an immediate intervention from the government.

Brazil, Colombia, Chile and Mexico represent the four largest Latin American student source countries for Australia (representing over 91 per cent of Latin American students in Australia). Colombia and Brazil alone accounted for 80 per cent of all Latin American students studying in Australia. Mexico, Peru, Chile and Argentina represented nearly 16 per cent of all Latin American students in Australia. Many students are vulnerable as they rely on part-time jobs for living costs, and the education industry must plan for assistance where possible. They have no way of getting home as Australia and the world shuts its borders.

Given the highly unusual and rapidly evolving circumstances of the outbreak international students are now in uncharted waters. International students are not eligible for Centrelink payments and other forms of financial support offered to residents and citizens of Australia.

We are writing to respectfully request temporary measures from Federal and/or State governments, such as the following:

- Measures that allow the Department of Education, Skills and Employment to provide support for Education Providers, so they are not required to commence procedures to cancel the visa of students who are unable to pay the costs as they are unable to work due to COVID-19.
- Measures that provide any sort of financial support to Landlords so they are not required to start eviction proceedings against residential tenants who are unable to work due to COVID-19.
- Some ALABC members believe that a HECS-style loan to support international student's study continuity will have the immediate flow-on through the economy – retaining provider trainers and staff and giving students the means to pay for other services like accommodation and retail. Retaining students allows providers to bridge the gap until travel is opened again and will decrease the burden on the TPS funds of college closures and out of work provider staff on the government.
- The ability for International Students to access any accumulated superannuation. The current regulations only allow a refund when the students leaves the country.
- Early tax refunds as many students earn under the tax-free threshold of \$ 18,200 and automatically received between \$ 1,000 and \$ 1,500 back each year.
- Access to the Job keeper program.

The measure are interim and have the possibility of retrieving the funds in the future, unlike one-off grants/offsets sent to businesses. The benefits to the Australian economy far outweigh the risk of non-payment of loans. How we take care of students during this period will assist in a faster recovery and build the reputation of the sector of making a 'student first' approach in Australia.

We believe that by taking these measures the Commonwealth, State and Territory governments will be acting decisively in the national interest to address the economic consequences of the Coronavirus, without further permanent or structural impact on local economy as well as it will maintain the protection of those most vulnerable.

We are dealing with a very unusual challenge and we respectfully request that you take these factors into account and put in place the suggested measures.

We trust that this information is sufficient but invite you to contact us if you require anything further.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if we can be of further assistance.

Yours sincerely,

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Australia-Latin America Business Council

s 22

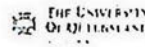
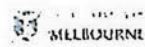
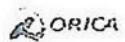
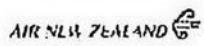
T: ^{s 22} 1300 0 ALABC DD: s 22 }
Suite 1401, Level 14, 14 Martin Place, Sydney NSW 2000, Australia
www.alabc.com.au



PREMIUM LATIN AMERICAN PARTNER



PATRON MEMBERS





**COUNCIL OF
INTERNATIONAL
STUDENTS
AUSTRALIA**

CISA Welfare Package Proposal

The Honourable Mr Christian Porter MP,
Minister for Industrial Relations
christian.porter.mp@aph.gov.au

The Honourable Mr Alan Tudge MP,
Acting Minister for Immigration, Citizenship, Migrant Services and Multicultural Affairs
alan.tudge.mp@aph.gov.au

Senator the Honourable Simon Birmingham,
Minister for Trade, Tourism and Investment
minister.trade@dfat.gov.au

The Honourable Mr Dan Tehan MP,
Minister for Education
minister@education.gov.au

Senator the Honourable Anne Ruston,
Minister for Families and Social Services
minister@dss.gov.au

Dear Ministers,

The Council of International Students Australia (CISA) understands this is an extremely stressful time for everyone due to the COVID-19 outbreak. CISA is extremely grateful to the supportive actions and measures taken by the Federal and State Governments and stakeholders to help international students during this distressing time. CISA would like to bring to your kind notice that international students are facing immediate financial hardship due to the loss of casual/part-time employment and the impact of the pandemic on their savings. During these unprecedented times, international students are generously asking for access to short-term welfare packages to assist them through this crisis. CISA is kindly requesting all stakeholders to work together to ensure the impact on the livelihoods and mental wellbeing of international students is minimised so students will be able to continue studying and contributing to Australia once this outbreak has been contained.

CISA kindly puts forth following recommendations based on immediate and pressing concerns that international students have raised for all stakeholders in the

1. Welfare Payment

- The \$550 welfare assistance to be made available for international students as well.

2. Rent and Utilities Assistance

- International students to be covered in the Evictions Moratorium and rent relief arrangements.

3. Visa Extension

- Leniency on visa requirements around study load.
- Extensions for all subclass 500 student visas at no cost.



**COUNCIL OF
INTERNATIONAL
STUDENTS
AUSTRALIA**

4. Reduction in tuition fees and course load

- A reduction of fees or reimbursement of part of fees paid.
- Students to be able to convert to part-time study conversions without consequences.

5. Financial assistance, loans, scholarships, bursaries

- Dedication of more funds, and requirement leniency for international students to receive financial aid, loans, bursaries and scholarships.

6. Internship and placement support

- Flexibility around placement and internship requirements.
- Increased support for students to secure placement, internships and graduate programs.

7. Mental health support

- Provision of free counselling for international students.
- OSHC to increase the number of covered counselling sessions for international students.

8. OSHC coverage

- Coverage of all COVID-19 related medical expenses.
- Free influenza vaccine.

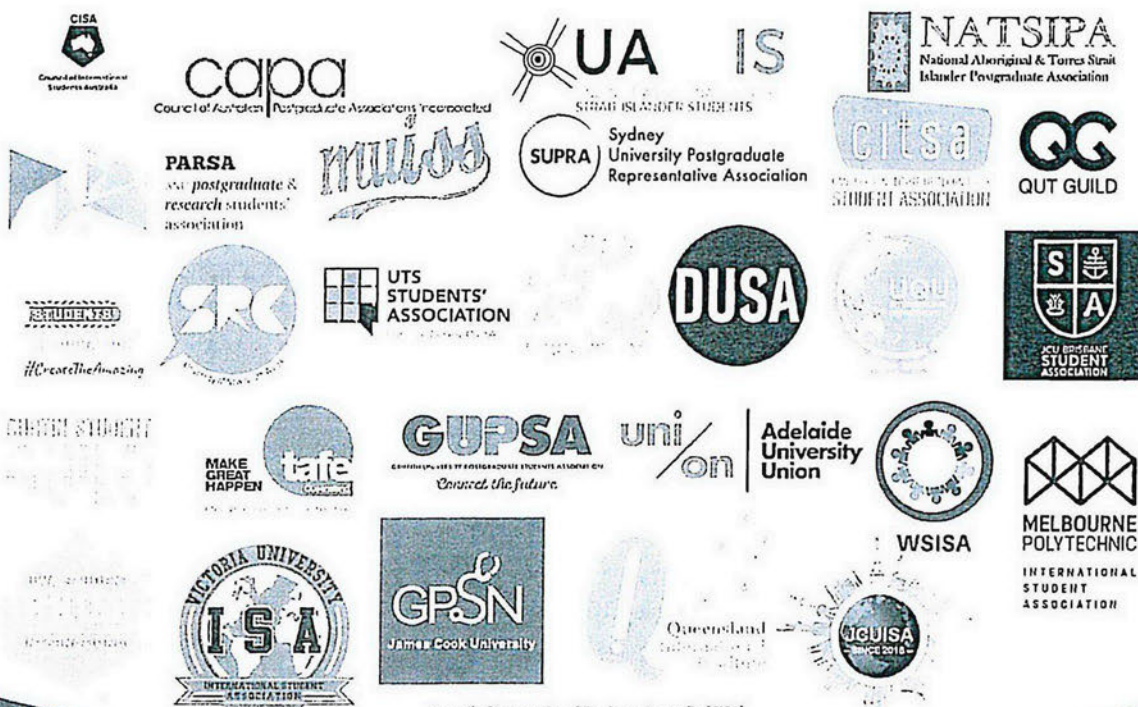
9. Care packages

- Provision of care packages and support system for students in self-isolation.

10. Student helplines

- 24/7 information helplines to direct students to the relevant information they require.

The above recommendations are endorsed by,



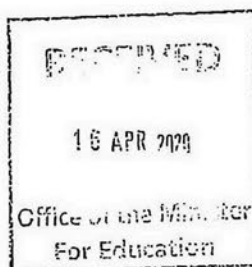


The Hon
ALEX HAWKE MP
Federal Member for Mitchell



9 April 2020

The Hon Dan Tehan MP
Minister for Education
PO Box 6022
House of Representatives
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600



Dear Minister

This letter follows representation from ^{s 22} regarding the impact of the coronavirus pandemic on international students.

^{s 22} and concerned about how students in the travel, tourism and hospitality sectors are struggling with the impacts of the pandemic. He has suggested a number of ideas which may be of assistance.

^{s 22} supports allowing students access to their superannuation for use in Australia and believes this may assist students, complimenting current measures adopted by the Government.

^{s 22} has also suggested a student loan system for international students in the vocational training sector, which will be paid to registered CRICOS providers who are enrolling students for vocational courses. He believes this proposal will enable students to attain additional skills and will improve their future employment prospects.

In light of the above would you please address the suggestions raised by ^{s 22} I look forward to your response.

^{s 22} Yours sincerely

The Hon Alex Hawke MP
Federal Member for Mitchell
Minister for International Development and the Pacific
Assistant Defence Minister

Encl: Correspondence from ^{s 22}

alex.hawke.mp@aph.gov.au

alexhawkempmitchell

alexhawkemp

Suite 8, 23 Terminus Street, Castle Hill NSW 2154

PO Box 1173, Castle Hill 1765

02 9899 7211

Dear Mr Morrison,

Firstly I want to say thank you for the support and leadership you have shown in this crisis. When things get really tough you stand up and lead from the front. Not many people can do that.

I know you will have experts racking their brains working on solutions for the trouble the country is in. I would like to offer some suggestions that may help. I need to stand up and assist as much as possible to keep the country going.

s 22

s 22 At present, international students in some sectors are suffering. Other students are in the healthcare/aged care sector that can be employed for many hours due to the crisis are benefitting

s 22

students are feeling the stress more than some other students. We have been proactive and have found them jobs from logistics to packing shelves and they appreciate this but not all have been able to find employment.

I would like to offer the following ideas/suggestions that may be able to assist this sector, while not costing Australia extra money and why.

Option 1

- Giving students access to their superannuation, If a student returns to their country they can take the money back. Let them access it and use it in Australia. (this will also highlight to students that they need to be employed on the books with all benefits and not paid cash.) however I believe this would only offer a very short relief in this crisis.

Option 2

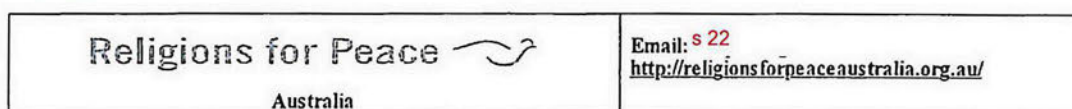
- Implement a VET student loan style system for international students affected by this crisis. For Students to be they must meet the following criteria:-
 - Students have a Tax File Number
 - Current student visa holder with more than six months on their visa
 - Can demonstrate their employment has been for a minimum of six months (via ATO one touch pay system)
 - Students can demonstrate their employment is no longer available.
 - A maximum fee of up to \$750.00 per month to be paid to institutions (for tuition fees only) For a maximum of six months. (This should cover any international student completing either a ELICOS, Vocational or Higher Educational course that is longer than 12 months)
 - Institutions will need to sign up to be a part of this. It will also keep Australians in jobs.
 - Students must continue their studies.
- Once this crisis is over student should have their wages garnished to repay the loan. Within the period of their visa.

Requirements for Institutions to be able to sign up to program

- Be a registered CRICOS provider for more than 12 months (Check on Regulators)
- Are enrolling and still enrolling students. (check made with ASQA re form completed)
- Can demonstrate the students courses are linked to employment opportunities and have been affected by this crisis.
- Only for international students that are still in Australia. (Check through VEVO)

s 22

From: s 22
 Sent: Wednesday, 15 April 2020 2:38 PM
 To: DESE - Minister Tehan <Minister.Tehan@dese.gov.au>
 Cc: s 22
 Subject: Attention s 22 : Religions for Peace Australia and other Religious Leaders Overseas Students Welfare concerns



Dear Minister for Employment, Skills, Small and Family Business, Senator the Hon Michaelia Cash, and the Minister for Education, the Hon Dan Tehan MP,

Members of the Executive Committee of Religions for Peace Australia hope you, your family, your staff and their families are well at this time of crisis.

Religions for Peace Australia (RPA, <http://religionsforpeaceaustralia.org.au/>) is the largest multifaith organisation in Australia and has links in every state and territory. We congratulate the Government on many of the economic packages you have helped put together.

s 22

and the Executive Committee of Religions for Peace Australia have asked me to write to you to mention what actions our network has been taking during the CoVID-19 crisis and raise with you educational issues we are concerned about.

Firstly, our actions: on Friday the 20 February 2020, our Chair, RPA committee members and other multifaith leaders had an emergency meeting about CoVID-19. As a consequence, we made this joint CoVID-19 CRISIS – AN INTERFAITH STATEMENT. We hope it will be helpful on a number of levels, including practically and spiritually. Since then we have sent this statement to many groups including Ministers in the Federal Parliament.

On Friday the 3 April, we held the second COVID 19 meeting of the RPA Australia-wide network plus other religious leaders. Again, all Australian states and territories were present on Zoom or rang in. At this meeting one of the welfare issues raised for the second time was care of overseas students who are often of Hindu, Sikh and Muslim backgrounds (see below).

Since our 2nd meeting, we note the statement of Minister Tudge A/g Minister for Immigration, Citizenship, Migrant Services and Multicultural Affairs on 4th of April.

"In relation to **international students**. We've got almost 600,000 international students in Australia. Many studying in the higher education and vocational education sectors. And these people have been a terrific contributor to our tertiary sector and our economy and they support hundreds of thousands of jobs by being here. Now we're saying to international students that we encourage you to rely on your family support, on your part time work where that is available, and on your own savings to help sustain yourself while you're in Australia. We know that as part of your visa application, you're required to demonstrate that certainly in your first year of being a student that you can support yourself. So our expectation is absolutely that. That if you're a first year student that you're able to support yourself, but if you are unable to support yourself then you might need to consider other arrangements. In relation to second and subsequent year students, as I said we ask you to lean on your families for their support, going into your own savings to support yourself if you need that. In addition, we will allow you to access the superannuation which you may have accumulated here in Australia as well through the part time work which you are able to do while you are here. So that's the message in relation to international students.....

We also note that on 12 April 2020, Senator the Hon Michaelia Cash and the Hon Dan Tehan MP have announced a package of measures to lift the financial pressures on Registered Training Organisations.

Regarding the statement and package above we would like to raise several concerns.

Firstly, we note Minister Tudge's statement that Year 1 students have signed a statement that they can support themselves during this first year. Secondly, we welcome the news that some universities (appearing to be the more established) have this weekend offered financial/welfare assistance to overseas students and this is appropriate.

On the other hand, Minister Tudge's statement above raises several concerns which have not been adequately addressed by either of your Departments or by that of Minister Tudge.

1. **Students can draw on their Superannuation** - we know from employment inquiries over the years (i.e. Seven 11) that vulnerable visa groups, such as overseas students, are often paid in cash or underpaid. Despite these inquiries to date this superannuation issue is still not under control. Therefore, some overseas students have little or no super to draw on.
2. **Students can go home** - this is not a correct assumption, as many countries are not accepting inward flights nor do all students have the funds for an over-priced ticket home.

Since our 20 February meeting, our concern has been for those overseas students who have lost their part-time jobs due to CoViD-19, so subsequently have little or no money and can't get a flight home during this time of crisis, but whose pastoral care/welfare needs are not being supported by private RTOs and less financially well off Universities. Anecdotal evidence available to us is that the private RTOs and some of the less established universities do not feel they have pastoral care/welfare responsibility toward their students in general and their international students in particular.

Given historic concerns regarding private RTOs, what steps will your Departments take towards the pastoral/welfare needs if the RTO goes bankrupt or fails to adequately address the pastoral care/welfare needs of their overseas students?

We would therefore ask that your Departments

- 1) make clear public and social media statements about how private RTOs and universities have a moral and pastoral/welfare responsibility toward their overseas students at this COVID 19 time.
- 2) That you support the Universities that are struggling financially due to the effects of CoViD-19 to offer appropriate support to their overseas students in need.
- 3) develop practical strategies in appropriate languages for situations such as where to get food and what steps to take if you are evicted, and place these on several appropriate websites such as Study in Australia (<https://www.studyinaustralia.gov.au/>). This will assist some overseas students so they do not become destitute when some private RTOs and universities fail in their pastoral care/welfare responsibilities to their overseas students for reasons mentioned above.

It feels morally and ethically important that during this CoViD-19 crisis that your Departments have practical strategies to protect our overseas students from destitution.

On a practical level overseas students (who have for a number of years contributed to a major Australian industry) will remember and compare between countries how they were treated during this CoViD-19 crisis. Such a comparison could affect our education industry in the long term.

Please could your Departments answer these questions urgently and practically.

Best wishes

s 22

s 22

Religions for Peace Australia

s 47F

From our Website:

Religions for Peace (Australia), formerly known as the World Conference of Religions for Peace (Australia) is Australia's largest community-based organization working for inter-religious harmony and social cohesion.

In abbreviated form, it is known as RFP Australia. It is affiliated with the World Conference of Religions for Peace (now known as Religions for Peace International) with its headquarters in New York – its website is www.religionsforpeace.org. It is the world's largest international coalition of representatives from the world's great religions dedicated to promoting peace. It has 54 national chapters together with cross-national interreligious councils in Africa, Europe, etc. It strives also to create multireligious partnerships to confront the world's most dire issues: stopping war, ending poverty and protecting the earth. Religious communities are the largest and best organized civil institutions in the world, claiming the allegiance of billions across cultural, racial, language, class and cast divides. As grassroots organizations, they have country-based and culturally-based infrastructure and resources to mobilize people as necessary and to deploy assistance and support to where it is most needed.

The mission of Religions for Peace Australia is to work for interreligious peace and harmony and for social cohesion in Australia as well as upholding the universal values of authentic religion and spirituality. Its aims are:

- (a) to work with faith traditions and religious organizations for interreligious understanding and harmony in Australia, including the right to freedom of belief and across the world
- (b) to highlight the salience of religion in multifaith Australia, highlighting its resources and the importance of religion and spirituality in national life
- (c) to work with religious and interfaith organizations as well as with government and civil agencies in achieving social cohesion in Australia
- (d) to create social wealth for the Australian nation, ensuring that the role of religious bodies is positively appreciated
- (e) to sponsor activities and events, including research and evaluative studies, into the multicultural and interfaith perspective in society
- (f) to work with educational bodies to educate the different levels and sectors of society about religion itself and the many faith traditions
- (g) to support national and local interfaith organizations in Australia in their work in local government areas
- (h) to organise meetings of religious leaders at national and local levels and with political and civic leaders
- (i) to encourage interfaith activity and the formation of interfaith organizations among particular groups, including the young



23 April 2020

The Hon Dan Tehan, MP
Minister for Education
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

minister@education.gov.au

Dear Minister,

Re: Hardship support for international students

Further to our recent discussions regarding the provision of support for international students, I would like to provide you with an overview of scale of the need for support for international students and the types of programs being implemented by our members to support a student cohort that contributes more than \$22 billion to the Australian economy.

Currently more than 80% of Australia's 612,619 student visa holders have remained in Australia during the COVID-19 pandemic. These students are particularly vulnerable because of their physical distance from family, friends and other supports which can magnify the impact of accommodation, educational and employment challenges they are currently facing. Many of these students have been able to study in Australia due to the significant financial sacrifices made by family.

As a sector we welcome the assistance the Australian Government is providing to the community. However, the initiatives announced by the Government in response to COVID-19 mostly exclude international students, resulting in them having little recourse to financial or other support.

Our members have taken the initiative in establishing support programs for international students. All 39 UA members have established COVID-19 hardship funds for international students. Many of these funds are extensions of the existing student support funds managed by universities. Moreover, a number of these emergency funding programs have been supplemented by funds provided through voluntary salary reductions by the respective University Executives. These funds have strict eligibility criteria which require students to demonstrate that they have directly suffered financial impact resulting from COVID-19 and that their basic living needs and their continued study may be at risk due to current financial hardship.

As of this week Australian universities had received a combined total of 17,886 applications for hardship support and this number is expected to grow considerably over coming weeks. Reports from a number of universities suggest that more than a third of their international student cohorts have applied for emergency funding. Because many universities are still accepting and processing application acceptance numbers are not yet solid. However, from initial reports from members it appears that the grant rate for these applications is high with the majority of the small number of rejected applications having come from students located outside of Australia.

The scale of these emergency support payments varies between institutions with some students receiving one off payments of between \$500-2000, while other students may receive modest fortnightly stipends over a period of months. Support may be provided through a monetary payment or through the provision of a pre-paid card.



In addition to providing international students with a direct line of funding, universities are also providing other forms of support to assist international students in navigating through this difficult period. Examples of these programs include:

- hardship hampers and grocery vouchers for students unable to purchase food and other grocery items;
- housing bursaries or rent relief;
- funding for computer and/or technology to assist students to study remotely, including the provision of laptops and data packs to support online learning;
- support for food banks organised by Student Guilds and Associations;
- 'academic safety nets' that provide flexibility in assessment and exams, given the significant disruption to study'
- student tuition fee due-date extensions and the development of fee payment plans by instalment; and
- an increase in the provision of student services focussed on financial counselling and student wellbeing.

In addition to these measures, universities are also supporting the individual hardship funds administered by student associations. They are reporting approximately double the number of usual requests from international students mostly for food.

Many international students who have remained in Australia find themselves in a precarious position due to circumstances outside of their control. This includes losing part-time work. Most of these students cannot return home due to lack of flights. All have made a significant investment in an Australian university education.

Whilst the sector is making every effort to support international students during this time of unprecedented disruption and uncertainty, we believe this is an issue that requires the collective support of all stakeholders. We call on the Federal Government to partner with the sector to address this looming economic welfare issue. During this period of uncertainty, a failure to adequately support such a vulnerable population places Australia's position as a leader in international education at peril. Any downturn in international student numbers may take years to recover.

I would be very happy to discuss any of the issues raised above with you at your earliest convenience. UA members have raised this issue with the State and Territory Governments, and I am pleased to say that the majority have now made commitments to assist.

Yours sincerely,

s 22

Ref: DGS20/928
20/12-003/#45

The Hon Dan Tehan
Minister for Education
PO Box 6022
House of Representatives
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Email: minister.tehan@dese.gov.au

Dear Minister *Dan*

I am writing to seek the urgent support of the Commonwealth Government for a National Hardship Fund or other means to support international students who are struggling due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.

I have been actively approached by the NSW university sector, multicultural organisations, and students about the escalating humanitarian crisis for international students living and studying in New South Wales.

An estimated 570,000 international students are currently residing in Australia, (with around 195,000 in NSW) trying to continue their studies during COVID-19. However, international students are a vulnerable demographic. Many are young, culturally and linguistically diverse, disconnected from their families and support networks, and often rely on ad hoc housing arrangements and casual employment. They are ineligible for Commonwealth welfare payments. Some cannot return to their home countries due to inbound travel restrictions, and face a precarious situation in Australia.

NSW universities are implementing significant support packages for international students, but these will not be enough to meet the calls for emergency relief in housing and food. The NSW Vice Chancellors Committee (NSWVCC) have advised that universities in NSW and the ACT have already committed over \$181 million to support packages for their international and domestic students. For example, the University of Technology Sydney has allocated upwards of \$15 million for its student hardship fund. This includes grants of up to \$1,500 for living expenses, interest free loans of up to \$3,000, and food and housing subsidies. Universities in NSW have already fielded over 45,000 requests for support from international students. The gap far exceeds the capacity of the sector to meet.

The NSW Government is providing its own support through Study NSW, by ensuring health care is accessible for any COVID related matter for international students, and a new website that directs students to university and community help.

This issue is not just about welfare of students in hardship. It is also about the importance of the international education sector. In 2018-19, international education was Australia's fourth largest export, worth around \$37.6 billion to the national economy. A recent report from the Mitchell Institute on the impacts of COVID-19 modelled a

loss of between \$10 and \$19 billion to the higher education sector Australia-wide¹. NSW has the largest share of international students, and the impact to NSW alone will likely be over \$6 billion.

In 2018, full-fee paying overseas students at the 10 NSW public universities contributed around \$3.2 billion directly to universities. Those universities are now facing 10 per cent - 30 per cent decreases in international student EFTSL. While dependence on international student revenues is uneven across universities, all will be affected by declining revenue.

If we fail to support international students in their time of need, Australia's international education sector will suffer lasting reputational damage. Ensuring that international students are adequately supported during the COVID-19 pandemic will not only protect their health, but will help to safeguard Australia's international reputation as a provider of quality education and a safe student experience. With adequate support this sector can continue to be a major driver in our economic recovery.

I look forward to your advice regarding how the Commonwealth intends to support international students, and the universities who have taken on the financial burden to support them, in these difficult times.

Yours sincerely

s 22

CC: Senator the Hon Anne Ruston, Minister for Families and Social Services

¹ <http://www.mitchellinstitute.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/Higher-Education-Funding-Report-FINAL-April-2020.pdf>

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