

Q20.

Australian Strategy for International Education consultation submission

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Q1. Name *

Wesa Chau

Q2. Organisation *

Resilience Against Racism

Q3. Occupation/role at the organisation (if applicable)

Co-founder

Q4. Contact email address *

[REDACTED]

Q5. Contact phone number

Q6. 1 - What do you see as the key priorities for a new Australian strategy for international education? [limit to 500 words]

One of the key priorities for a new Australian Strategy for international education is to enhance the international student experience for the existing international students and ensure any students who come to Australia to study are well supported at the education institutions as well as their experience outside of education institutions (such as employment, housing etc...).

Q7. 2 - Students should be at the centre of the new Strategy. How can Australian education providers deliver the best possible student experience both now and in the future? [limit to 500 words]

As founder of the Australian Federation of International Students (AFIS) in 2002, the issues I advocated at that time still exist and have not changes and this is partly due to the lack of will by education providers to provide to international students. While ESOS provides a framework to ensure it is provided, however, the ideas aimed to support students are not effective without the support workers understanding culture and it should be a requirement for staff working with international students to be trained properly in cultural awareness (not a tick the box exercise through online learning). I have a few ideas on how education providers can provide better student experiences: 1. a requirement for all education providers to ensure they invest into student welfare. This can be achieve by requiring providers though legislation to invest at least \$1 into student welfare for every \$10 they budget into marketing. This ratio is an effective method to ensure providers take student experience seriously. 2. a requirement for everyone who work with international students to be trained in cultural competence. For example, I have created some free webinars to support people who work at education providers on cultural diversity. They can be accessed here: <https://culturalintelligence.net.au/cultural-diversity-webinar/> These sessions can be further replicated and provided to professionals working with international students (including lecturers).

Q8. 3 - What changes are needed to make Australia more globally competitive over the next decade? [limit to 500 words]

International students have spoken quite strongly about their experiences of racism in the past decade, yet these have not been taken seriously. In 2020, the Resilience Against Racism project that I co-founded ran a number of workshops to international students in Victoria and we had 181 students who participated, the session was well received with many of them wanting more to help them deal with racism in the classroom and in the workplace. 74% of the students attendees were Asian international students (from all parts of Asia, including South Asia, East Asia and South-East Asia). In order for Australia to remain competitive, Australia must invest into addressing racism as utmost priority. As founder of AFIS, I was involved in addressing racism against Indian international students around 2008-2010, the incidents impacted on some parents' decision to send their children to Australia to study and required Australian officials to visit India to address it. The racism increased due to the pandemic impact more than just Chinese international students, but also South-East Asian international students. An example is the high profile case of Asian international students being bashed at QV Melbourne known to be Malaysian students. This case shocked many people in Melbourne. An ANU research report suggested 84.5% of Asian-Australians experienced racism in 2020 and additionally, China also recommended their citizens not to study in Australia due to racism. People may debate whether these are simply China's strategy to create fear, however, from working with the Chinese-Australian community in Australia, the feeling of racism (without the influence of the Chinese government) is absolutely real and they are telling their family and friends back in China about these experiences. I have personally supported three victims of racism within the Chinese-Australian community (including students) in the past two months.

Q22. 3.1 - Policy and regulatory flexibility are important in enabling providers to innovate. How can we utilise these settings to pursue opportunities, and in what other ways can we work together to ensure Australia remains globally competitive? [limit to 500 words]

Q21.
4 - How can providers, governments and stakeholders work together to achieve diversification opportunities (for example of disciplines, source countries, study destinations and delivery models)? [limit to 500 words]

Q9.

5 - What are the necessary skills for the future that students should be prepared for? [limit to 500 words]

Q10.

5.1 - How can Australia improve employability outcomes for international students, ensuring students have the necessary the skills to compete in a globally competitive labour market? [limit to 500 words]

It is important to include cultural competence in the Australian education - for both local students and international students, in order to increase employability outcomes for all students. When discussing cultural competence, we cannot assume people of a different cultural background innately know what it means, it requires people to help them identify it and understand how it is applied in the Australian context and have the words to articulate cultural competence as a skill (not simply an identity). At the same time, it will help them understand the Australian workplace culture. I have provided sessions with international students on this topic and the feedback from students is that it helped them understand their employers in Australia better. These skills will also increase their skills to be employed abroad - in their country of origin or other countries.

Q11.

6 - How do we create a uniquely Australian education experience? [limit to 500 words]

Q12.

6.1 - What is our value proposition for both international and domestic students? [limit to 500 words]

Our multicultural community is Australia's asset, however the international education sector does not utilise it - this is obvious when we see leaders of sector are not culturally diverse, including those appointed to the expert members appointed to this Council (apart from the international student, none of them have cultural backgrounds of where the majority of international students are from - ie. Asia). It means the Universities, Tafes and professional bodies have not taken cultural diversity seriously. Australian government should acknowledge this and put pressure on the sector to improve their own cultural competency. When an organisation fully understands and committed to cultural diversity , representation follows naturally. The lack of representation is the symptom that the system is not inclusive. This sector, more than any other sectors in the country, should have no excuse for being largely mono-culture. There are many former international students who are employed as junior staff, but are not provided with the support such as leadership programs, to help them advance to senior roles. It is a systemic problem that must be addressed.

Q13.

6.2 - How do we offer an Australian education experience while complementing the value of Australian offshore and online education? [limit to 500 words]

Community support for the international education sector is important for the sector's social licence. How can the benefits this sector provides to Australia be better understood by wider community? (this question is missing in your form) Invest in the community in which the education providers are located. For example, if a University is located in the City of Monash, they should be working with the Councils to create initiatives. These initiatives must be an investment and not project based, because I have seen projects only getting started, but have to finish after one year, so there is no desire to work hard to create the network and community. Another key to having these initiatives to be successful requires the 'right person' in the role who understands the motivations and drives of international students, as well as the community. Even if they are from the same culture, the motivations are different, so any projects must consider both sides.

Q14.

7 - What else should the Council for International Education and the Australian Government consider in developing a new strategy? [limit to 500 words]

Proper budget consideration is required when developing this new Strategy, otherwise, it will be another strategy that will not work. This is particularly in relation to international students experience, which requires much more funding by both education providers and government. Students having great experiences will ensure sustainability of students coming to Australia in the future, whereas having more international students experiencing racism in their classroom, workplace or public transport or even hearing from friends experiencing racism impacts on the student experience.

Q15.

8 - Do you have any additional comments or feedback to share?

I am making a submission as an individual with extensive experience working in the international students sector. Below is my summary biography for reference. Wesa Chau - biography Ms Wesa Chau is CEO of Cultural Intelligence, a research, training and consulting firm helping organisations harness the power of cultural diversity. She is currently serving as an advisory board member of the National Foundation of Australia-China Relations, board member of Holmesglen Tafe Foundation and formerly served on the Victorian Multicultural Business Ministerial Council and Victorian Ministerial Council for Womens' Equality. Her professional experience ranges from working in the community sector, academia and government. As a student, she was the founder of Australian Federation of International Students in 2002 and drove national conversation to focus on issues relating to international students at a time when Australians were not interested in international student issues, and grew the organisation to service 8000 students during her tenure. Her role was instrumental in helping to establish the International Student Care Service (predecessor to Study Melbourne). She had also held a senior manager position at Action on Disability within Ethnic Communities, a former board member of InTouch - multicultural center against family violence and Ethnic Communities Council of Victoria. In 2020, Wesa initiated the Resilience Against Racism project in response to covid-19 inspired racism towards Asian-Australians and provided support for people experiencing or witnessing racism. As a consultant, Wesa developed a number of leadership programs for people from culturally diverse communities, including a number of culturally appropriate leadership workshops for Asian-Australians at the Asian-Australian Leadership Summit and provided numerous leadership programs for international students, including UTS-INSEARCH, Monash College, Deakin University and more. In research, she explored topics ranging from Asian diaspora in philanthropy, leadership, cultural diplomacy and politics. She was one of the key authors of a number of ground-breaking research alongside Emeritus Professor John Fitzgerald, including the Asian-Australian Diaspora in Philanthropy research commissioned by the Lord Mayor Charitable Foundation and International Cultural Engagements among Australians of Pacific Islands and Asian Descent commissioned by Australia Council of Learned Academies. Wesa was awarded the inaugural Swinburne-Scanlon Intercultural Fellowship 2016 to Malaysia and India, supported by the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT). Wesa's engagement in Asia covers greater China, India and Southeast Asia. She was invited to be a delegate on the Australia-China High-Level Dialogue 2017 led by the former Prime Minister Hon John Howard OM, AC, alongside senior Australian politicians, business leaders and diplomats. She was also a delegate on the Australia-China Youth Dialogue 2012; Victorian Super Trade Mission to China 2012; Australia-India Youth Dialogue 2018; project manager for the Australia-ASEAN Emerging Leaders Program at Asialink, a leadership program for Australians and Southeast Asians social entrepreneurs; and involved in the creation of Australia-ASEAN Co-Lab in 2020. Wesa Chau has received several awards for her contribution to the community. In 2020 she was the education category winner for the 40under40 most influential Asian Australia; 2016 she was awarded the prestigious Victorian International Education Internationalisation Award; inductee to the Victorian Women Honour Roll in 2012; and named Young Victorian of the Year in 2010 among others.

Q19.

If you wish to upload a document to support your submission, including a document answering the discussion questions, please upload it here.

Q16.

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