

PEAK STUDENT BODIES CALL UNIVERSITIES TO DO BETTER FOR INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS

Wednesday the 8th of May 2019 – The peak student bodies – the Council of International Students Australia (**CISA**), National Union of Students (**NUS**), Council of Australian Postgraduate Associations (**CAPA**), National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Postgraduate Association (**NATSIPA**) and Union of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Students (**UATSIS**) – stand united in calling on Australian universities to deliver better education and opportunities to international students, who pay extortionate tuition fees.

The recent ABC News Four corners episode, *Cash Cows: Australian universities making billions out of international students*, reiterates an ongoing issue that not just CISA but all peak student bodies have been concerned with.

The cost of attending university for international students can be a barrier. It allows students to fulfil their potential in the growing global citizen network and improve their employment prospects. The cost of education in Australia for an international student is excessive and more needs to be done to ensure that Universities are supporting these students rather than short-changing them for profits. Better student support systems, opportunities for community involvement, and work experience and cocurricular activities need to be available to an international student to complement their theoretical knowledge to produce global citizens.

Education providers must fulfil their promises to produce job-ready graduates. Institutions also have a responsibility to assist their students in securing post-study employment and pathways to migration. Many international students require assistance to understand the Australian job application process and work culture. Thus, international students rely on their institutions to provide such support and services in order to enter the workforce.

As stated on [“The Importance of universities to Australia’s prosperity”](#), a university education report prepared for Universities Australia by Deloitte Access Economics from 2015, university education “equips students with the knowledge and skills that allow them to make greater contributions to society; they generate and disseminate knowledge which enhances productivity and improves living standards, and they provide a myriad of broader community benefits.”

International education, as the third-largest export nationally, boosts the Australian economy, generates jobs and brings in trade opportunities. International students also comprise a substantial proportion of the population and bring cultural diversity and to their communities.

Braedyn Edwards, President of Union of Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Students Association, said: “Universities must acknowledge that along with providing students with the knowledge to gain entry into the workforce; they need to ensure they are equipping students with the necessary skills to thrive. Better support services – whether they be academic or other – are required. This ultimately means making sure students are getting value for their money.”

Natasha Abrams, National President of Council of Australian Postgraduate Associations, said: “International students typically pay hundreds of thousands of dollars to study in Australia. Higher education providers must do more to ensure that these students are receiving a quality education, including by funding student associations to provide support services and social opportunities.”

International students coming to Australia and paying high fees expect to get a return of investment. For many international students, studying in Australia provides the ability to learn a different language and culture. It is essential for international students to take back world-class education and skills when they return to their home countries, as well as there to be pathways to migration for graduates who wish to make a life in Australia. Favourable job opportunities for graduates are consistently ranked as of greater importance in international student host country choice than lower course fees, travel costs or other living expenses.

Bijay Sapkota, National President of CISA, confirmed “There needs to be a stronger value proposition for international students who come to study in Australia, not only for the benefits of international students but also the sustainability of the international education sector and reputation of Australia’s education system around the world. If international students are equipped with skills and supported by the sector, they would be a significant asset to promote Australia’s soft Diplomacy around the world, while students who intend to stay here will be better integrated to the community with skills that could contribute in the development of Australia. “

Desiree Cai, President of National Union of Students, said: "International students are often failed by the university sector and the government by a lack of support on campus. Universities must do better- they must provide better language and academic support, counselling and careers services, to ensure that all students have the opportunity to succeed in their degrees."

Dr Sharlene Leroy-Dyer, the Vice-President of the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Postgraduate Association, stated: "International students pay absorbent fees to study in Australia but are not adequately supported by universities. Universities need to ensure that International students receive a quality education and adequate support services to ensure value for money. We as an education system also have an overall duty of care for all our students. International students are not only financially under pressure, but also are at times physically and mentally vulnerable being so far from their loved homes. We at NATSIPA would like to see greater support within the sector for extracurricular activities to ensure a greater overall educational experience. "

Australia as a country needs to acknowledge and support the benefits of overseas students in the international education sector. CISA is calling for institutions, peak bodies, the public and the Australian Government to join in the conversation at the **CISA National Conference 2019 in Perth, WA** to discuss the future of international education sector and grow the opportunities for student leaders to bring new fresh ideas for the whole sector.

CISA, NUS, CAPA, and **NATSIPA** have a joint agreement to work together on issues of mutual interest and have made this statement together to reflect unity on working to improve the quality and value of international education in Australia.

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