

Submission summary to Inquiry into the Welfare of International Students

Attention: Committee Secretary
Senate Education, Employment and Workplace Relations Committee
PO Box 6100
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600
Australia

From: Cr Tim Singh Laurence
City of Darebin, Victoria

As a current councillor and past Mayor in the City of Darebin, a City of 135,000 people that is a major catchment for international students, I have worked on the issue of international student welfare with:

- Darebin Ethnic Community Council,
- the Federation of Indian Students of Australia,
- the Sikh community at both Craigieburn Gurdwara and Blackburn Gurdwara,
- the Darebin Overseas Students Advisory Committee,
- the wider local community

During this community work over the last few years I have met with hundreds of students who required help with issues such as housing, employment and safety. I have seen first hand at a community level what occurs when an under-resourced group are placed in an area of relative social disadvantage.

Because I have dealt with student's living issues from a local government point of view I perhaps have some insights that education organisations are not able to impart.

Having first been elected in 1996 as councillor in the northern suburbs I have seen first hand how the international student population has increased and how the support and welfare of this new population has been left to the good will of a very small band of community volunteers.

Since being elected in November 2008 the new council has taken great steps in relation to social inclusion with local students such as the creation of Darebin Overseas Students Advisory Committee, a new Homestay initiative, public forums on college closures, the Federally funded Fair Go for Students program and ongoing in depth research with students.

That Darebin Council work and those specific issues of social inclusion via local government will be detailed in a separate official Darebin Council submission.

I would like to present a verbal submission on the following key points to further some policy innovation that could give a national framework for local and regional solutions.

Specifically, I would like to verbally present some arguments and testimony to the Senate inquiry on the following:

- 1) the need for a 2% levy on the \$15.5 billion education sector to fund adequate student support in housing, welfare and social inclusion across the country
- 2) the need for an amnesty or short term fair system for processing PR applications from current international students who have been caught in the current 'broken system'
- 3) the need for a complete review of future VET system to ensure quality training outcomes

- 4) the need for student housing and social services investment in areas and communities of high social needs who are being asked to accommodate high numbers of international students.

I am happy to present to the Senate Inquiry direct verbal testimony on housing, employment and safety challenges that are affecting international students and the wider community in the northern suburbs of Melbourne and why I have put forward the above four points for far reaching reform.