



CISA CALLS FOR WELFARE PACKAGES FOR INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS

24th March 2020 – These are uncertain and distressing times for all, CISA understands that the State and Federal Governments and Stakeholders, are actively working on responses and support to the constantly evolving situation. CISA urges stakeholders to ensure the impact on the livelihoods of international students are equally considered in the various support and welfare packages that are being offered.

International students are undeniably contributing to Australia’s efforts in providing for the community with student nurses supporting the health efforts across the country as well as students working hard to restock shelves to keep up with the current demand in supermarkets.

However, many international students are also being laid off, facing a severe decrease in shifts and high job uncertainty. Given the unprecedented circumstances, these students are highly distressed about their savings and funds running low and are fearful of not being able to make ends meet.

CISA National Education Officer commented, “International students are among some of the highest contributors to Australia's economy and it is important that their contributions be used to support them in such tough times. Providing rent relief, freeze or reduced rents, lowering the cost of university/college/tertiary education as they have been moved online will assist students. The course costs should be reduced as international students pay for access to institution facilities and learning environment as well as the overall experience of being on campus, interacting with professors and other students and forging a sense of community. The current public health situation prevents them from accessing all the resources thus a reduction in tuition fees would be ideal.”

CISA National Welfare Officer emphasised the importance of a welfare package including financial support, for example, welfare payments for international students during this critical situation. “Most international students are employed on a casual basis and thereby face a higher risk of job insecurity and susceptible to greater financial impact due to the economic downturn as a result of the COVID-19 outbreak. During this difficult time, international students require increase and accelerated financial concession to stimulate adequate income and ease down the budgetary pressure. We are exploring all avenues and reaching out to various stakeholders to ensure not only that the needs of international students are represented, but also to advocate for tangible outcomes and support for students. In the meantime, we would like to encourage all the international students to reach out to us with their welfare needs and issues by the pandemic and we will continue striving for the betterment of international students in Australia during this crisis”. CISA strongly urges welfare packages for international students in Australia and CISA offers the following recommendations:

1. All casual workers including international students should be given financial incentives or allowances, given that these students are also being laid off and facing hardships due to the current circumstances and going through financial instability.
2. Considering that classroom work is being moved to online platforms, institutions are encouraged to consider fee reductions as the administrative costs are minimised. This would greatly reduce the financial burden on international students in these unprecedented times.



3. Institutions to be flexible with students on placements and internships. Institutions to liaise with companies and organisations to ensure students do not lose placement spots and/or offer extensions for affected students. For students that are carrying on with placements during this time, institutions need to ensure that necessary precautions are taken to ensure the health and safety of students.
4. For institutions that offer students financial assistance and loans (short-term/long-term), there needs more leniency around what the money can be used for given these uncertain times. Institutions also need to look into providing greater assistance for international students through these platforms by increasing the amount of financial assistance that can be offered, the number of loans that are offered as well as helping students plan our realistic repayment plans.
5. Due to the uncertain timeline of the situation, institutions and stakeholders should set up aid assistance helplines for students that are in severe distress and may not be able to afford their basic necessities in the near future as they run low on funds. Welfare packages with basic necessities should be offered to students in need.

CISA President adds, “CISA has been in touch with Federal, State government and ministers regularly. We have been advocating in various committees for international students to be supported during these trying times. We are fighting for international students to get a welfare package and we are positive that it will happen soon.”

‘ISANA endorses CISA’s call for international students to have access to financial and welfare support during this deeply distressing time. International Students have added so much to the richness of Australia’s cultural and social fabric and need our support and understanding whilst continuing with their studies in Australia.’ - Bronwyn Gilson, President of ISANA.

CISA will continue to advocate for the international students to amid the coronavirus pandemic. CISA would like to encourage everyone to adhere to the Government guidelines on social distancing and healthy hygiene habits.

About CISA

Formed in 2010, the Council of International Students Australia (CISA) is recognised as the national peak student representative organisation for all international students in Australia. CISA is a not-for profit, non-politically, and non-commercially aligned organisation formed in response to the needs among international students for a unified voice. More information

Media Contacts:

Mili Mishra

Public Relations Officer
publicrelations@cisa.edu.au or 0451 871 326

Kasun Kalhara

National Welfare Officer
welfare@cisa.edu.au or 0415 355 841

Domi Dana Johnson

National Education Officer
education@cisa.edu.au or 0434 583 050