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# **Racism and the Tertiary Student Experience in Australia**

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## **Racism and the Tertiary Student Experience in Australia**

This paper is a report of a workshop held on 31 March 2010. Public policy does not stand still, and a dynamic area such as this has continual policy adjustments and program changes. At the end of this paper is a list which refers readers to government responses and some of the policy work currently under way.

This paper is not meant to be a definitive policy piece, but rather a discussion starter as key stakeholders examine and debate a better way forward.

A few weeks after the workshop the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) considered the Baird Review of the Education Services for Overseas Students (ESOS) Act 2000 ([www.aei.gov.au](http://www.aei.gov.au)) and in its communiqué of 20 April 2010 ([http://www.coag.gov.au/coag\\_meeting\\_outcomes/2010-04-19/docs/communique\\_20\\_April\\_2010.pdf](http://www.coag.gov.au/coag_meeting_outcomes/2010-04-19/docs/communique_20_April_2010.pdf)), COAG stated that it had agreed to a suite of practical initiatives.

Some of these are:

- an international student consultative committee will be established to give international students a national forum to put forward their views on issues affecting their study and living experience in Australia;
- international students will benefit from a national community engagement strategy that will facilitate connections between international students and the broader community, including increased understanding of rights and support services;
- a Study in Australia information portal will provide a single source of authoritative, comprehensive, accurate and up-to-date information for students, including information on personal safety, student support services, and tenancy and employment rights and responsibilities; and
- from 1 January 2011, international students will have access to an independent statutory complaints body, as international education providers will be required to use this as their external complaints and appeals process

The communiqué further states that

- COAG noted that early measures have already been taken to strengthen regulation and education quality. Governments have implemented a program of rapid quality and financial viability audits of international education providers and require that all providers re-register under tighter new criteria in 2010. COAG also acknowledged work with overseas governments to improve the regulation of education agents operating in their countries.

- Strengthened migration policy arrangements will also encourage international students to focus on obtaining a quality education from a quality provider and will ensure that student visa applicants have the necessary funds to live in Australia.
- Australian Police Commissioners have agreed that through the Australian and New Zealand Policing Advisory Agency (ANZPAA), police would share best-practice safety initiatives related to international students and ANZPAA would work with stakeholders as appropriate, to disseminate this information.

A quick follow up were two releases by the Minister for Immigration who on 27 April 2010 announced changes to visa requirements <http://www.minister.immi.gov.au/media/media-releases/2010/ce10031.htm> and on 17 May 2010, changes to the skilled migration intake <http://www.minister.immi.gov.au/media/media-releases/2010/ce10036.htm>.

Amendments to the ESOS Act were due to be introduced in mid – 2010. The participants at this workshop were predominantly from the university sector, and did not deal with the many complexities in the VET system or of private for-profit providers.

Adam Graycar  
25 June 2010

# **Racism and the Tertiary Student Experience in Australia**

**Adam Graycar**

## **General objectives**

**O**n 31 March 2010 a workshop was convened by the Academy of the Social Sciences in Australia, the Australian Human Rights Commission and Universities Australia to locate and examine evidence within useful social science so that the issues relating to attacks on international students can be better understood and outcomes attained. The workshop sought to propose ways

- to consider how to reduce race related crimes against international students;
- to enhance the safety of international students in Australia; and
- to develop the evidence base upon which policymakers and University administrators can act.

While there have been distressing acts of violence, Australia is generally regarded as a best practice country in its migration policies, absorption of people from a variety of backgrounds and its international student experiences. Notwithstanding a generally positive track record there is always room for improvement. Recent problems do show that such improvement must be forthcoming.

## **1 The issue**

In recent times foreign students in Australia have been assaulted and indeed murdered. Victimisation is a painful and shameful experience and not condoned in any public policy or institutional arrangement, yet it occurs.

When an international student is assaulted is that student a victim of a race related crime, or a general victim of crime? This is an important central issue in this discussion.

There are approximately 630,000 full fee paying overseas students in Australia possibly the highest in the world as a proportion of the total population. Except for Indian students in the most recent year, these numbers continue to grow. While a very small number have been actually assaulted the ramifications are very significant.

1. It is devastating for the individual and his/ her family and friends.
2. It signals a lack of safety in the community.
3. It is an affront to and breach of human rights.
4. It causes problems for educational institutions whose educational futures and investment strategies have factored in international student numbers which may be impacted by such incidents.
5. It causes problems for private sector businesses, large and small, that deliver goods and services to this population, or depend on it for labour.

6. International education is a major export earner for Australia and there will be economic effects of any diminution should Australia be perceived as an undesirable destination.
7. One murdered student (early 2010) was from India, and the incident caused major anguish in the Indian media and bilateral negotiations at the highest inter-governmental and diplomatic levels.

In addition to assault and murder, there are examples across a wide front of activities of exploitation of international students.

Equally there are claims that many international students are in Australia, not for genuine educational purposes, but really to work or to obtain permanent residency and ultimately citizenship, and that the courses in which they enrol are incidental to their main interest. This claim has been made strongly in the vocational education domain where occupations on the MODL list are filled by people who undertake VET courses.

Proposing policy options to deal with this situation requires activity on many fronts. The policy analysis needs to move across many frames and ask

- For whom is it a problem?
- What are the drivers?
- What policy levers can be used?
- What community activities are appropriate?
- Who owns the problem and therefore should have the lead in resolving it?

The issues canvassed here have both domestic political impacts and also affect Australia's international relations activities and international reputation.

It should not be overlooked however, that most international students have a happy and rewarding experience in Australia.

## **2 Who are the players?**

- The Commonwealth Government issues visas for international students.
- The Commonwealth Government sets the policy framework for tertiary education.
- The Commonwealth Government (Human Rights Commission) protects the rights of international students.
- The Commonwealth Government sets limits for investment by foreigners in housing.
- The Commonwealth Government sets the framework for fair employment, though State governments implement many of the awards.
- The Commonwealth Government sets Australia's foreign policy and there are many overt and subtle ways in which the international student experience has an impact.
- State governments regulate private and state-owned educational providers though the duty of care is not always clear.
- State governments are responsible for the police and general safety issues.
- State governments are responsible for transport and the granting of concessions.
- Local governments approve housing as fit for habitation.

- Educational institutions, both public and private, provide education, the ostensible reason for the presence of international students.
- Universities and VET providers vigorously seek international students and have a duty of care to them.
- Agents recruit students in country and have a responsibility for providing accurate and realistic information.
- Businesses ranging from fast food outlets to blue chip accounting firms who provide goods and services and employ international students to deliver these.
- Non government organisations provide support in a variety of spheres for an ethnic membership, as well as for broad based issues such as social housing, employment advocacy, etc.
- The media have a responsibility to report accurately.
- The 'Australian community' has a responsibility to treat all with fairness.

In addition to these obvious players, providers of other everyday services such as health insurance or public transport concessions have an impact on international students. Sometimes international student consumers of these services receive benefits different to those received by the Australian population. This is a cause for lobbying and activity.

For each of these there needs to be an understanding of what change, if any, is required to improve the situation, and where the policy levers might lie. Policy responsibility for parts of the issue is diffuse and ownership is scant and patchy. The leadership to achieve the objectives above should certainly come from the Commonwealth Government but implementation is not their responsibility alone.

The context within which these players operate is shaped by The Council of Australian Governments (COAG) which has endorsed a National International Students Strategy, and the Ministerial Council for Tertiary Education and Employment is taking issues forward. Also the Education Services for Overseas Students Act and accompanying National Code provide a tuition assurance scheme and requirements for international education providers. Recent state government initiatives in Victoria and NSW have included rapid audits of high risk providers.

### **3 What are the risk factors?**

Pursuing policies of international education has risks and rewards. Over the decades, the presence of international students has enriched our educational institutions and our society, promoted diversity and built enduring relationships at a personal and institutional level between business, community and government leaders. There are however, downsides when adverse experiences occur.

Apart from the risks to individuals, who suffer victimisation, there are risks to the universities, TAFE and private education providers, the standing of the Australian governments, and cohesion of communities. There are also risks to Australia's general international standing.

Repeating the point made earlier, when an international student is assaulted, is that student a victim of a race related crime, or a general victim of crime? Also some crimes

that involve international students reflect intra-ethnic tensions, though that is not the focus here.

In street crime victimisation is related to location, racial appearance, socio-economic status, and age and gender. Young people tended to be out more often at times and places where crime is more prevalent, and crime statistics clearly show that young males are more likely than others to be victims of crime. Gender is also a risk factor, as men are more likely to be out than women, and women are more likely to manage exposure to risk. Language proficiency is also a risk factor, in that individuals may not look different, but may become a visible target if they speak differently. Socio-economic factors have an impact on risk factors. Poorer international students for example live in neighbourhoods that have a higher crime rate. Also, most poorer students have to work, and tend to work in casual jobs which are often high risk and night jobs, such as in fast food outlets, taxi driving, etc. The combination of employment and environmental factors such as being out and about at night also puts them at risk. It is also possible that ostensibly wealthy international students can be targeted as they are seen as vulnerable and likely to be carrying or to have possessions of value.

#### **4 What do we know?**

We know that international students come to Australia with very complex motives. We know that some experience racist attacks - verbal and physical.

The latest ABS annual crime victimisation survey had 25,600 participants aged 15 years and over. The response rate was 87 per cent. The survey asked if the respondent was a victim of a crime over the past 12 months. This survey excludes overseas residents and people in non-private dwellings such as university residences. The survey also does not ask or report ethnicity. It is therefore of limited value for informing the question at hand.

- In Australia during 2008-09, 527,000 individuals, or 3.1 per cent of the Australian population, were victims of physical assault. Of these victims of physical assault, 82,000 were born overseas.
- The victimisation rate is higher amongst Australian born respondents: 3.6 per cent of the Australian born population were victims of physical assault; 1.7 per cent of the overseas born population were victims of physical assault.
- Of the 82,000 overseas born victims 40,000 were from English speaking countries and 42,000 were from non-English speaking countries.
- Of those aged 15-24 who were studying full-time there were 30,700 victims of assault, a rate of 4.6 per cent. 27,100 were born in Australia and 3,600 were born overseas. Australian born students had a victimisation rate of 6 per cent. Overseas born students had a rate of 1.7 per cent.

Telephone surveys conducted by researchers at the University of Western Sydney between 2001-2008 polled 12,512 respondents and probed experiences of racism. One in five overseas born respondents stated they had experienced racism in education (see Table 1).



The responses from this large scale survey could be disaggregated further, and some of the categories in the table below separated out (for example, the 'hardly ever' response).

**Table 1. Experience of racism, Australia 2001-08.**

Place of discrimination*	Australia %*** (n: 9271)	Overseas % (n: 2710)	Total survey respondents % (n: 12512)
In the workplace	12.8	29.7	17.5
<b>In education</b>	<b>14.5</b>	<b>21.0</b>	<b>16.6</b>
When renting or buying a house	4.6	11.6	6.8
In any dealings with the Police	5.4	11.0	7.3
At a shop or restaurant	15.5	22.4	17.8
At a sporting or public event	13.8	23.1	16.4

Source: Challenging Racism Project surveys, state and territory telephone surveys, 2001-8.

**Question wordings:** \*How often have YOU experienced discrimination because of your OWN ETHNIC ORIGIN in the following situations? \*\*How often do you feel that because of your own ETHNIC ORIGIN; \*\*\*Percentage 'Yes' are those who answered any of: Very often; Often; Sometimes, and; Hardly ever.

A smaller survey with 4000 respondents was conducted by the University in 2006. It focused on individuals' experience of racism and what they did about it. This study identified that 19 per cent of respondents stated they had experienced verbal racism. 75 per cent (of the 19%) had been called an offensive slang name for their cultural group. Other incidences of racist language included: racist jokes (52%), stereotypes in media (63%), verbal abuse (65%), and offensive gestures (51%). The reporting of racist physical attacks was much less frequent, with approx. 6 per cent experiencing some form of racist attack.

**Table 2.**

Place of discrimination	Australia (N=9271) %	Overseas (N=2710) %	Indian & Sri Lankan respondents (N=147) %	Indian and Sri Lankan % <u>difference</u> with all respondents
Workplace	12.8	29.7	40.8	+23.3
Education	14.5	21.0	28.4	+11.8
Renting or buying a house	4.6	11.6	26.4	+19.6
At a shop or restaurant	15.5	22.4	42.6	+24.8
When dealing with police	5.4	11.0	18.9	+11.6

The larger survey had 147 Indian and Sri Lankan respondents. When compared with all respondents a higher proportion of Indian and Sri Lanka born students (28%) said they experienced discrimination in the educational context compared to 16 per cent for all respondents. Furthermore, in the workplace and in the public realm, a much higher rate of Indian and Sri Lankan respondents stated they had experienced racial discrimination compared to the experience for all respondents.

The same survey showed that 80 per cent of the Australian population believe there is racism in Australia. Perhaps over-influenced by the fact that there is no basic institutional racism in Australia, politicians often deny that racism is an issue.

The survey identified that there was strong public support for action against racism. The 2006 survey found that 86 per cent agreed something should be done to stop racism in Australia. Data confirmed there is racism in Australia and it occurs too often. There was little to suggest the racism is due to status as students, and highlights the broader issue of racism against visible minority groups. To focus only on students means focusing on symptoms and neglecting the causes.

There are sub-texts within the data. Workshop participants spoke about the poor likelihood of some victims reporting assault (especially Chinese students) while others reported that students who work illegally are not likely to report for fear of other consequences. African people in Australia report high rates of racial discrimination. In addition there appear to be tensions between groups that many might think as homogeneous, eg, 'Chinese' or 'Indian' (tensions between Muslims and Sikhs). There is more discrimination than there is violence. For example international students sometimes observed that although their English may be perfect they could be treated as if they could not speak English.

We know that some universities make considerable efforts for international students yet one study showed that about 50 per cent of academics said they do not treat international students any differently from local students. Therefore, they do not nuance their teaching for different populations. On campus, however racial discrimination is not as pronounced as it is in the wider community. Off campus, problems are more extensive. International students experience difficulty in housing, job selection and access to work experience. The behaviour of employers at work also affects students' wellbeing. Also the restriction on working hours to 20 hours per week does affect quality of life and living standards and may place students in more vulnerable circumstances. (Many comparable countries do not allow foreign students to work as much as 20 hours per week).

We do know that Australia is still highly regarded as a diverse and multicultural society and evidence from instruments such as the World Values Survey shows Australia hosts a congenial environment, while results from the Course Experience Questionnaire and the Graduate Destination Survey show many positives for international students. But to sustain this, build on it and deal with continuing problems is essential too.

## **5 What don't we know?**

We do not know enough about who are the victims, who are the perpetrators and the contexts of each.

There are no official data about racially motivated crime, and no data on victims' perception of whether the crime was racially motivated. There is difficulty in capturing information about ethnicity. As ethnicity is rarely captured in police, prison or courts data, it is particularly challenging to identify any race motivation in a crime. Appearance is often used as measure of race, and country of birth is used as a proxy indicator for ethnicity. These do not yield accurate information yet capturing this information in surveys is very difficult, as it is to ascertain the intent of a perpetrator.

From media coverage of attacks against international students, it is often assumed that offenders are Anglo racists who dislike Indians. There is anecdotal evidence that offenders are frequently not Anglo, and are often from other ethnic groups. It would be naïve to assume that offenders are usually disadvantaged marginalised youth targeting international students.

While we do not know who the offenders are it is hard to ascertain whether perpetrators are opportunists or racists. We know nothing about the personal troubles of perpetrators, who has the most influence on perpetrators, whether they are disengaged from the mainstream of society, what social networks they have, whether they are attending school, or are employed or unemployed. We know little about their economic situation, their alcohol and drug profiles, whether they are part of gangs, whether they engage in high risk behaviour or carry weapons. Are they forming subcultures along ethnic or socio-economic lines, and are they in some sense also victims? There is also co-ethnic violence and exploitation in the areas of employment, housing etc.

To better understand vulnerability we must examine the whole lifestyle of the students. We need much better information of income and expenditure, employment and accommodation of international students, and better understanding of the situation in provincial cities as compared with major metropolitan areas.

International students are often viewed only in terms of their economic usefulness to the host country, and the focus is on expenditure, rather than their income situation. Although street crime victimisation is reported, there are many other types of crimes or abuses and perpetrators: employers who exploit, educational colleges which behave rapaciously and unethically, the behaviour of some immigration agents and landlords, to name a few. For example, some landlords, it is claimed will not rent to Indian students. This constitutes racial discrimination. There have been claims of landlords expecting sex for rent (and sometimes in addition to rent). There are cases of exploitation through overcrowding, poor conditions such as no smoke alarms. Understanding the context of the student can complete the policy picture.

Very little of this information would come from administrative data. Survey data, on the other hand, is expensive to collect. Administrative data is generally more accurate than survey data, although it does not allow for more detailed information. Survey data yields greater understanding of complex factors, value based judgments and cultural information, such as religion, etc. Selection issues and selection bias exist in all survey data. For example, who gets picked and why? Once chosen, who agrees to participate? What might we infer from those who decline to participate?

Any survey would need to go beyond the crime victimisation issues mentioned above and examine the whole lifestyle of the students. We need much better information about the income and expenditure of international students, better understanding of the situation in provincial cities as compared with major metropolitan areas, including the

situation of local ethnic members of those communities, and their relationship with international students.

## **6 Some responses**

Responses can come from several groups

- Educational providers;
- Employers and landlords;
- Community groups; or
- Governments

### ***Universities and other educational providers***

Significant revenue from international students has come over the years, and it not always been used to provide a high level of assistance to international students. Often it has been used to fund other areas.

Providing an education is a holistic experience, not merely a consumer activity in which cash is exchanged for a qualification. Providers must work to better integrate international students. There is a new best practice guide for the types of strategies that universities can adopt. For example, they can provide community linkages focusing on housing and, transport as well as forging contacts with community organisations. Community outreach is a significant positive for universities whose activities should not stop at the boundary of a campus.

Providers should be required to have a statement of responsibilities that include responsibilities in racial discrimination and the place of full fee paying international students. Peak bodies, in conjunction with governments could develop such statements. Some inclusions might be to:

- ensure race is accorded the attention given other forms of discrimination;
- collaborate with other institutions to promote openness on racism;
- report incidents of race discrimination to appropriate agencies (lower level racism);
- address racism against own students off-campus;
- ensure all staff are trained to recognise and combat racism; and
- provide information to current and potential future students about steps taken to address racism associated with the institution, their families, agents and governments.

### ***Employers and landlords***

International students occupy a marginal place in the labour force. Government response has been to clamp down on employment venues that are breaching laws. Most vulnerable workers are not in a union and often unions are opposed to cheap

labour and international workers. Students enrolled in private colleges often work in precarious jobs and rely on public transport. These students are overrepresented in these jobs and are often employed in ethnic or co-ethnic businesses, often paid off-the-books and do more hours than they are allowed. What can we expect from employers employing these people? Employing them because they are available and cheap makes them vulnerable to exploitation. Also, as users of public transport working late hours they are further vulnerable to physical and verbal attack. It seems unlikely that there is an easy mechanism to make employers responsible for safety in getting to and from work. Even ensuring decent and acceptable working conditions is difficult and resource intensive. The development of best practice protocols would be beneficial.

Housing is available across a wide spectrum, with two extremes for international students. First there is student accommodation in small apartment blocks in inner city locations where there is good security and occasional supervision. This is marketed to parents who want to know their children are safe, and of course, who can afford this type of accommodation. Second, poorer international students live in lower socio-economic status suburbs and often pay a lot for crowded and poor quality housing. The economic imperative for many international students is to take the cheapest option regardless of quality. A housing quality task force might examine pathways to better housing.

### ***Community organisations***

There is no formal structure of community support nor any coherence among groups that advocate for international students and who promote safety among the myriad of other needs of international students. Many community groups play a significant role as educators of the community at large as well as supporters of specific populations. Violence that affects international student also affects the whole community. Many international students are unaware of support services and community groups that operate in their locality or sphere of interest.

Among the range of such groups are not for profit organisations; community legal centres, professional organisations, local city councils, national non-profit business associations, ethnic communities' organisations and student focused organisations. Because they are mission driven, these not for profit organisations often have a comparative advantage in dealing with these situations. They are often dependent to some extent on direct or indirect government support and this support may be an effective way for governments to assist in this area.

Many of these types of organisations have been involved in advocacy and support on behalf of international students. This includes information about safety and racially motivated crime. Community volunteers have worked with international students to report racially motivated crime, and other concerns regarding their residency. They inform students of the legal mechanisms that are available, conduct research into relevant issues, document and disseminate information to international students and enable greater responsiveness to problems.

The key, however lies in providing international students with a voice to make their concerns heard and empowering them to identify what it is they can do. However, when students are struggling to survive and work and learn and do all the other things

necessary for their existence, many often hope that somebody else can do the advocacy. There is a clear role here for student organisations such as the National Union of Students (NUS) and the Postgraduate Association, CAPA.

## **7 Government responses and policy options**

Australia values and exemplifies the rule of law. Criminal behaviour is illegal and is investigated and prosecuted when it occurs. There is equal protection under the law. The human rights framework is in place and there is a strong civic culture. Publicly, Australia has promoted diversity and has expressed strong anti-racism sentiments. Australia has received millions of migrants from every part of the globe and continues to have a robust immigration intake. The admission of international students is done in a systematic fashion and follows an orderly process. There are many positives reported by international students. At a community level there is support for a fair go, and there is a vigilant and free media. Yet we continue to see events that are disturbing and disquieting.

With many dimensions to the student racism issue we have an overall policy smorgasbord that defies simple ownership. One approach is to break each of the activities that require a policy solution into smaller pieces, determine ownership and action, and ensure that there is a linkage plan so that each part meshes well with other parts and does not become a stand alone silo.

If we turn to basic crime prevention techniques we note that every crime has three components, a target, an opportunity and a motivated offender. If we eliminate any one of these we eliminate the crime. We can canvass a range of policies. (Some of these are in progress, some might have no political support.)

### ***We could eliminate or alter the targets by some of the following***

- Restrict numbers of foreign students
- Restrict numbers of international students from specific countries
- Restrict types of students and admit only
  - students who are not so dependent on income from employment and can afford reasonable housing;
  - future leaders (as was done under the Colombo Plan); or
  - high quality students.
- Require better English speaking skills prior to embarkation, or provide related training as part of courses for international students.

### ***We could minimise opportunities for attack if we reduced the opportunities. Some policy options here are:***

- Rely less on vocational education and more on quality tertiary education to attract international students;

- Place greater expectations on providers to provide support services and customer service - enforce ESOS standards;
- Require the provision of accommodation and other measures to improve safety of international students;
- Implement an enforceable employment framework;
- Provide better information to students on how to reduce the risks of being subject to crime; and/or
- Once they are here, impose curfews on international students.

***We could reduce the number of motivated offenders by***

- Ensuring that a protective legal framework is transparent and dynamic;
- A vigorous crackdown on street crime;
- Making international students welcome / better community integration; and/or
- Media campaigns.

Staying with the crime prevention analogy, another feature that reduces crime is the presence of a 'capable guardian'. There are several capable guardians in this situation; one is our human rights framework. Recent attacks on international students in Australia have brought to the fore the need for a greater focus on human rights, and underlined issues such as equality and discrimination based on race. Additionally, these attacks indicate that other basic rights, including housing, employment and public safety, have also been brought into question. These issues are all intertwined, and the Human Rights Commission can play a leadership and co-ordinating role on these matters.

Educational providers are also 'capable guardians'. Where they have not already done so, they need to develop statements of best practice, and work to deliver a holistic experience for international students. There are many guardianship roles they can play, including a zero tolerance approach to racist activities. In addition constructing mentoring relationships can be taken on by various participants.

Law enforcement is another capable guardian, though its role is more likely to be reactive than preventive. Community organisations are also capable guardians, and while their resources are meagre they can offer support and a voice of sanity.

Overall government is a capable guardian and its role could be enhanced, in addition to suggestions made above, by providing support for those subject to racism and also providing special supports to community based organisations.

## **8 Conclusion**

There is clearly a problem. It may be perceived to be a bigger problem than it is at present, but it still has to be dealt with. What we have is a situation where no one agency completely owns the problem. There are issues and activities in policy areas of education, immigration, human rights, employment, housing, transport, law

enforcement, social and community affairs, as well as in the big arena of international relations and diplomacy.

Dealing with the issues at times involves being proactive, and at other times being reactive. We need to be aware, in a policy sense, of any unintended consequences that policy innovation can have, especially in some other sphere. The exercise requires a substantial knowledge base, and we need to build this with enhanced data collection and good and rigorous social science. We need further to evaluate our efforts.

In a big picture sense, what is missing is a broad and effective multicultural policy for Australia. It is about two decades since we last promulgated such a policy and the world has changed its meaning significantly since then.

Visible and authoritative ethical leadership is another element that will make coherent and enduring policies and activities in order to contain racism.

The leadership to achieve the objectives outlined at the start of this discussion paper should certainly come from the Commonwealth Government.



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**The key recommendations from the workshop are:**

- Collect better data to inform debate on international students, such as income, employment, housing and crime. Better data could also be collected from perpetrators. The ABS, DEEWR, Universities Australia, Human Rights Commission, and the Australian Institute of Criminology could shape up this task. (There is joint study between the ABS and Universities Australia which will inform some of the above).
- Improve tertiary education in Australia to attract high quality international students for the value of the education and its vocational pathways. A strategic plan can be developed by Universities Australia, the VET sector peak bodies and the Commonwealth government.
- Require educational providers to have a statement of responsibilities to international students and audit them against it.
- Build a rhetoric and mindset that international students be treated as more than mere consumers contributing export income. This requires a media strategy targeted at the general community, education of politicians and vice-chancellors; the strategy could be developed by the Human Rights Commission, DEEWR and Universities Australia. This might include respected community figures who endorse and promote the development of such a strategy.

***The following could also be built into action plans:***

- De-couple easy immigration opportunities from easy student visas, or, at least, frequently review the link - though this could leave a lot of people in limbo.
- Regulate agents much more strictly.
- Have government take the lead to bring employer peak bodies together to develop best practice protocols for the employment of international students.
- Encourage peak student bodies, eg NUS and CAPA, to keep international students on their radar, and to advocate on their behalf.
- Put pressure on educational establishments which have most of their international students from one country or from a limited pool, to broaden the source, and make sure that international students in Australia get an opportunity to sit alongside Australian students at all stages of their studies.
- Develop a community safety strategy - a general strategy for the whole community.
- Devise a better reporting system through the criminal justice system when events occur. This would involve new categories of data and different reporting from police, coroners and others.

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## **Some recent policy action relating to international students**

### **COAG**

- COAG April 2010 - National International Student Strategy:  
[www.coag.gov.au/coag\\_meeting\\_outcomes/2010-04-09/index.cfm?CFID=109415&CFTOKEN](http://www.coag.gov.au/coag_meeting_outcomes/2010-04-09/index.cfm?CFID=109415&CFTOKEN)
- COAG July 2009 - International Student Strategy:  
[www.coag.gov.au/coag\\_meeting\\_outcomes/2009-07-02/index.cfm#iss](http://www.coag.gov.au/coag_meeting_outcomes/2009-07-02/index.cfm#iss)

### **MCTEE**

- MCTEE June 2010 - Regulation, Quality Assurance and International Engagement:  
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### **Immigration policy changes**

- DIAC May 2010 - Safety of International Students project:  
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- DIAC April 2010 - Student Visa Program Integrity Measures 2009-10:  
[www.immi.gov.au/students/\\_pdf/students-integrity-measures.pdf](http://www.immi.gov.au/students/_pdf/students-integrity-measures.pdf)
- Evans June 2010 - International students welcome:  
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- Evans April 2010 - Government closes student visa loopholes:  
[www.minister.immi.gov.au/media/media\\_releases/2010/ce10031.htm](http://www.minister.immi.gov.au/media/media_releases/2010/ce10031.htm)
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[www.minister.immi.gov.au/media/media\\_releases/2010/ce10021.htm](http://www.minister.immi.gov.au/media/media_releases/2010/ce10021.htm)

- Evans February 2010 - Options remain for overseas students:  
[www.minister.immi.gov.au/media/media\\_releases/2010/ce10008.htm](http://www.minister.immi.gov.au/media/media_releases/2010/ce10008.htm)
- Evans February 2010 - Migration reforms:  
[www.minister.immi.gov.au/media/media\\_releases/2010/ce10006.htm](http://www.minister.immi.gov.au/media/media_releases/2010/ce10006.htm)
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[www.minister.immi.gov.au/media/media\\_releases/2009/ce09101.htm](http://www.minister.immi.gov.au/media/media_releases/2009/ce09101.htm)
- Evans August 2009 - Student visa checks strengthened:  
[www.minister.immi.gov.au/media/media\\_releases/2009/ce09075.htm](http://www.minister.immi.gov.au/media/media_releases/2009/ce09075.htm)

### **Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission**

- Racism and Student Experience Policy Research Workshop, April 2010:  
[www.hreoc.gov.au/racial\\_discrimination/forums/20100412\\_racism\\_students.html](http://www.hreoc.gov.au/racial_discrimination/forums/20100412_racism_students.html)
- Human rights of International Students a major issue, November 2009:  
[www.hreoc.gov.au/about/media/media\\_releases/2009/107\\_09.html](http://www.hreoc.gov.au/about/media/media_releases/2009/107_09.html)

This list was compiled by Grahame Cook.

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## **The Springbank Group of Social Scientists**

The 31 March 2010 workshop convened by the Academy of the Social Sciences in Australia, the Australian Human Rights Commission and Universities Australia brought together the Springbank Group of Australian social scientists.

The Springbank Group are concerned to ensure the contribution of the Australian social sciences research to policies and public debates which mitigate against racism in Australia, in particular against racism against students in Australian tertiary institutions.

This multidisciplinary group assembles expertise from some of Australia's leading social scientists. Members of the Springbank group welcome the opportunity to contribute their expertise to informing the development of sound public policy which mitigates against racism and racially motivated crime against Australian and international tertiary students, and the public debate surrounding this issue.

### **Professor Desmond Cahill**

School of Global Studies, Social Science and Planning, RMIT University

*Immigrant, cross-cultural and international studies*

### **Professor Bruce Chapman FASSA**

Crawford School of Economics and Government, the Australian National University

*Economics of education and public policy*

### **Professor Kevin Dunn**

School of Social Sciences, the University of Western Sydney

*Geography of racism, immigration, migrant settlement, and Islam in Australia*

### **Dr Helen Forbes-Mewett**

School of Social Sciences, La Trobe University

*Relationship between international students and crime*

### **Professor Adam Graycar FASSA**

Centre for Policy Innovation, the Australian National University

*Public and social policy; data for decision making; linking policy and best practice*

### **Professor Graeme Hugo FASSA**

National Centre for Social Applications of GIS, the University of Adelaide

*Demography of migration, internal and international, Australia and Asia*

### **Professor Andrew Jakubowicz**

Cosmopolitan Civil Societies Research Centre, University of Technology Sydney

*Sociology of cultural diversity*

### **Ms Soula Macfarlane**

National Centre for Crime and Justice Statistics, the Australian Bureau of Statistics

*Compilation and publication of national statistics on recorded crime, criminal courts and corrective services*

**Professor Toni Makkai**

College of Arts and Social Sciences, the Australian National University

*Criminology; drugs and crime and quantitative method; immigrants as victims of crime; regulation and compliance*

**Professor Simon Marginson FASSA**

Centre for the Study of Higher Education, the University of Melbourne

*Higher education; international education; globalisation and education*

**Associate Professor Gail Mason**

Sydney Institute of Criminology, the University of Sydney

*Crime, social justice and exclusion; racist and homophobic violence; hate crime law*

**Professor John Nieuwenhuysen FASSA**

Institute for the Study of Global Movements, Monash University

*Immigration, social cohesion, equity, diversity and labour*

**Dr Ly Thi Tran**

RMIT University

*International students in Vocational Education and Training, and Higher Education*

**Dr Selvaraj Velayutham**

Centre for Research on Social Inclusion, Macquarie University

*Globalisation, migration, multiculturalism and the sociology of everyday life*

