

Submission received from: Satyaki Chanda

Dear Mr Baird,

Thank you for instituting such a comprehensive programme to seek so wide a spectrum of opinion in deciding changes to the ESOS Act as is currently in force.

Being an International Student and having come to appreciate the particular circumstances confronted by us in Australia, I have a recommendation to make towards strengthening the system in operation.

The issue as I perceive it -

Increasingly publicised attacks on International Students in metropolitan cities.

Impact of the issue -

The reputation of Australia as the destination of choice for students seeking to pursue studies abroad, has been tarnished. The result has been that a reasonable number of students from the Commonwealth who would otherwise have considered Australia are now turning towards England and New Zealand.

Root cause of the problem as I see it -

1. Students habitate economically depressed localities, where rents are obviously lower and thus more affordable.
2. This exposes students to violent crime to which they are more vulnerable being softer targets for a criminal.
3. Students engage in irresponsible conduct, and whereas in their home countries they would have always respected the fact that there were certain areas best not ventured into after a reasonable hour, the perceived notion of Australia as a universally safe haven, leads them to act imprudently.

I debunk the suggestion that the attacks on International students have anything to do with racism. Having lived in this country and seen for myself the attitude of Australians to those from a different race, I say with confidence that racism on an organised scale that manifests itself in violence is impossible in this country. I am not unrealistic and do accept that in certain sections of society, albeit a negligible minority, there does exist racial prejudices. But however I cannot accept the point that it can take the form of violent attacks. If not human nature, the fear of the hand of law will act as an effective detriment.

Therefore a line must be drawn between race-related crimes and opportunistic crime to which racial minorities appear as easy targets.

Solution -

The University of Tasmania, through the Tasmania University Union operates a system of housing targetted particularly at foreign students. The TUU leases houses around the University from private landlords and then sub-lets it to University students.

The system works perfectly, since the student lives in clusters with other fellow students, with the university as his landlord. Thus he is shielded from the outside society to a great extent. I realise that the layout of Hobart aids the system since the

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University is located in a residential suburb, however this would work equally well in larger cities provided the houses leased and sub-let are clustered around a particular area, thus forming a safety net for students.

In this context the system in operation in New Zealand may be studied. A precondition for applying for a student visa in case of New Zealand is having a guarantee of accommodation, which in most cases takes the form of a written assurance from a New Zealand education institution or other persons that suitable accommodation is available for a prospective student.

If system were to be developed to adapt this and apply it to Australia, it would in my opinion help greatly safeguard the personal safety of international students, and put an end to the non-sensical talk of Australia being a racist country unsuited to foreign students.

Also Sir I would deem it my duty to do all in my power to point out to those outside Australia who judge the country by looking at sensational media reports, that in reality this is a very welcoming and accepting society which offers quality education to an international student. You can count on me if ever you require somebody to let it be known how the real Australia is perceived from the eyes of an International student.

Thank you for the opportunity to voice my opinion.

Satyaki Chanda

Institution - University of Tasmania

Role - Postgraduate student (Course - Master of Professional Accounting)

Home Country - India