

Hon Clare O'Neil MP
Minister for Home Affairs

PO Box 6022
House of Representatives
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

Subject: Request for Consideration on Changes to Student Visa Policies

Dear Minister O'Neil,

We hope this letter finds you well and thank you and the department for taking a proactive approach to addressing many of the issues plaguing the existing immigration system. We agree with many of the recommendations to streamline and simplify the current immigration system but also wish to express our concerns on several points that we feel will be detrimental to the international students we represent.

1. Preserving quality and integrity of Australian higher education

In the interest of international students, loopholes allowing non-genuine students to exploit the existing student visa system should be addressed. It is our view that amending regulations that currently permit visa holders to transfer to a lower degree after entering Australia would be the only necessary measure needed to limit non-genuine students' applications. Our concern with increasing test score requirements for the International English Language Testing System (IELTS) is it discriminates against non-western students and, more importantly, fails to recognise the monopolisation and financial exploitation of international students by the testing industry. For example, the IELTS results currently expire after two years. It is nonsensical that a recent graduate who had previously met the IELTS requirements to be granted a student visa would again need to complete another IELTS test to be eligible for the 485 Temporary Graduate Visa. Undertaking these tests is expensive for international students. Many will agree that the government should examine this unscrupulous process more closely as it only benefits the testing industry.

2. Restoring permanency at the heart of skilled migration

We welcome a policy that supports temporary migrants in pursuing permanent residency,

but we are concerned with the provisions to reduce the duration of temporary graduate visas and the proposition to reduce the age eligibility for the Temporary Graduate Visa from 50 to 35. The former is not fit for purpose, especially for those pursuing research positions, because these jobs are often highly dependent on the outcome of a research grant application. Several months often go into planning a research grant application and waiting for the outcome, which significantly cuts into the duration of a graduate visa. The latter also affects many research graduates because talented researchers will have their graduate visa applications automatically rejected due to their age, not because of the merit and value they offer to our society. This is particularly concerning for current international research students who made decisions and sacrifices many years ago based on previous policies but are now at risk of being caught out by these more recent unexpected changes. As mentioned earlier, our underlying concern with these policies is that Australia will become a less appealing destination for international students to pursue research. We, therefore, implore the government to reconsider this age limit policy to ensure a free flow of research talent into Australia based on merit and ability and not by age.

We hope the current government will allow an open dialogue with us to provide further consultation on several of these matters before formally implementing them in 2024.

In solidarity,

 Weihong Liang <i>President</i> Sydney University Postgraduate Representative Association	 Sahampath Hettiarachchi <i>President</i> Monash Graduate Association
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 <p>Bustanul Arifin <i>President</i> Postgraduate Student Committee Curtin University</p>	 <p>Aaron Bui <i>President</i> Queensland University of Technology Student Guild</p>
 <p>Dr Sharlene Leroy-Dyer <i>National President</i> The National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Postgraduates Association (NATSIPA)</p>	 <p>Tony Le <i>President</i> UNSW Postgraduate Council</p>
 <p>Jesse Gardner-Russell <i>President and Board Chair</i> The University of Melbourne Graduate Student Association</p>	 <p>Richard Lee <i>President (Higher Degree in Research)</i> Association of Postgraduate Students, The University of Queensland</p>
 <p>Craig Wilson <i>Public Officer</i> Southern Cross Postgraduate Association</p>	 <p>Charlie Tran <i>Post-Graduate Officer and Board Representative</i> Griffith University Post Graduate Student Association (GUPSA)</p>
 <p>Phoenix O'Neill <i>President</i> ANU Students' Association</p>	<p>Name Position Association</p>

