

Friday 29 May 2009



## Australian universities continue to prioritise student safety

Australia's universities today condemned the recent attacks on Indian students in Melbourne and re-stated their commitment to ensuring that staff and students of all backgrounds continue to enjoy a safe environment.

Universities Australia Chief Executive, Dr Glenn Withers expressed sincere regret at the reports of attacks on Indian students studying in Australia.

"All universities do seek to create a safe on-campus environment for everyone through measures including 24-hour security, escorting and shuttle buses, CCTV cameras, well-lit precincts and incident reporting. Off campus there is extensive liaison with Australian authorities," Dr Withers said today.

A meeting of Deputy Vice-Chancellors (International) from Australian universities will be hosted by Universities Australia in Canberra next Thursday, to continue to discuss issues of international student welfare including concerns over student safety.

These university leaders will also be meeting with Ambassadors from several countries, including the Indian High Commissioner Her Excellency Mrs Sujatha Singh, to discuss existing and future initiatives to assure the safety of international students.

Lead Vice-Chancellor on international issues for Universities Australia, Professor Daryl Le Grew from the University of Tasmania will also attend the meeting, and said today that "we condemn such incidents unequivocally and take them very, very seriously. Student welfare is of paramount concern to Australian universities".

"Universities are determined to ensure that international students remain safe while in Australia, working closely with police, governments, councils, and student organisations to deal with these events if they arise, and to help ensure they do not occur and we are encouraged to see a swift and strong response by police, with offenders identified and charges laid," Professor Le Grew said.

Dr Withers also said "injury to even one student is totally unacceptable, and a strong and constructive response to any attack, however motivated, is essential. We know through surveys of the many, many thousands of enrolled and graduating students that the overwhelming experience of international students is positive, and this should be the outcome for every student".

Universities Australia also supports the Government's proposed roundtable with international students to discuss their study experience, including welfare and safety, along with the vital Student Services and Amenities Bill before the Federal Parliament.

"The capacity of universities to provide the right support for all students will be strengthened by the Government's actions," Dr Withers said.

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