International Students and Public Transport. The Issues.

For many years, international students in both New South Wales and Victoria have been asking one question: "WHY?" "Why do they pay more for public transport in these states than other students?" Why are they not eligible for public transport concessions like students in other states?

Why indeed? Believe me, you are not alone in your questions. Like my colleagues at universities, schools and TAFE institutions around New South Wales and Victoria, I have long lent my voice to the debate about why international students are not entitled to these concessions. Universities in both states have lobbied the government on many occasions in an attempt to have this changed. So far, despite all efforts, there has not been much success.

Most recently, I wrote to the Minister for Public Transport in Victoria, Lynne Kosky to ask her this very question. The reply from the Minister’s office, I’m afraid, was neither positive nor encouraging.

I was asked the question, “Why do you think that international students should be entitled to public transport concessions when they are not entitled to other forms of government assistance like Medicare, unemployment benefits and Commonwealth Supported Places at university?” I replied that international students contribute significantly to their respective State governments, not only directly through their tuition fees and living expenses, but indirectly by bringing relatives into the country to visit. These relatives naturally spend money and contribute to the economy.

Unfortunately, the significance of this answer was lost on the Minister’s office. The reply to this was simply that the government does not consider international students to be eligible for fare concessions because they are “not long term tax contributors”.

While this is the case at the moment, I would like to say that all is not lost in the long standing fight to gain a fairer deal for international students. The Melbourne City Council recently called a meeting of key staff from a number of universities to discuss the issue and work together to ask the government to re-think its policy on this matter.

We can only hope that the government will eventually see reason and solve this problem equitably for all concerned.

See what students (both local and international) think about this matter on page 11.
Greetings from the United States to ACU students and staff! My name is Jessica Case, and I was an international student in Brisbane, Australia from the U.S. last semester. I studied just one semester from February to June 2008, taking general course requirements and some psychology classes at the Banyo campus. I just wanted to take a moment to explain to ACU and Australia as a whole how wonderful my experience was studying abroad at the Brisbane campus of ACU.

Before leaving for my journey to Australia I had little knowledge of what to expect or what life would be like at all. I had some ideas from friends and family around that recommended traveling to the “land down under,” but I had no expectations of my own. I was happily surprised to see such a kind welcome into Australia. Starting from my plane ride from Los Angeles, California to Brisbane, Australia I was well taken care of, not to mention the burst of warm air I felt after hopping off the 14 hour plane ride. From day one, my experience in Brisbane was unforgettable.

I spent the first half of my journey living with a wonderful family in Banyo, who took great care of me and properly welcomed me into the Australian culture. It was in this family that I established long lasting bonds with the Australian culture and the “no worries” way of life. For the second half of my journey, I moved into a house in Northgate with three other international students. The other students and I were fortunate enough to be able to rent from the family that I stayed with in the beginning so, all ties were kept strong between us and the family.

Not only did I have the experience of meeting people from around the world, but I was able to create unbelievable friendships with people from other countries, as well as travel the east coast of Australia. During my stay I was able to travel with my room mates and other students to Cairns, Port Douglas, Brisbane, Sydney, the Gold Coast, the Sunshine coast, Tangalooma, among several other remarkable places. I was able to endure experiences that I had always dreamed of but never imagined would come true. While traveling up and down the coast I was able to go sky diving, snorkeling in the barrier reef, ride horses across the breath taking beaches, and simply bask in the gorgeous amount of sunlight that Brisbane receives everyday. I found the country of Australia to be extremely naturally beautiful and I was pleased to meet the nicest population of people in the world.

All in all, studying abroad in Australia was the best experience of my entire life, and I feel that it will far exceed any other travel opportunity in the future. I have been able to show my pictures and tell my story to several different groups of people since I have returned back to the United States, but the level of appreciation I have for this journey to Australia is beyond comprehendible to anyone who has not visited this fine country.

There are simply no words that I could possibly put together in order to perfectly describe such an experience, so I will just continue to express my story to all those who will listen. In turn, I am currently working on developing a better program with my university in New York in an effort to help more students from the U.S. to study abroad in Australia. Thank you so much to everyone who helped make this experience unforgettable for myself and many others who have been lucky enough to visit Australia!

“Broaden your experience. Spread your wings and fly! Take advantage of the exchange program and do part of your degree in another country and discover other cultures!”
Don’t say “yes”, when you want to say “no!”

Don’t say YES, when you want to say NO is the title of a 1975 book by New York psychologist, Herbert Fensterheim, and Jean Baer. They aim to teach their readers how to assert their rights in work, study, relationships, sex, social situations and in family life. Many of us are brought up in families and cultures that discourage us from respecting our own rights, needs and beliefs and that dissuade us from articulating them.

Do you find it hard to say no? Do you find yourself doing things you really don’t want to do? Do you feel inferior? Do you go to pieces when you are criticised? Do you feel it is selfish to say what you want? Do you think your opinion is not worth expressing? Do you feel you should always do what other people want you to do? Are you always listening to other people’s problems and concerns? Do you find it hard to express your feelings?

If you answered yes to most of the above questions, it may be that your self-esteem – the degree to which you value yourself – is low, and, that you find it hard to communicate what you feel and what you want. Both men and women may struggle with their sense of worth, yet, as John Milton (1667), the English poet, attests in Paradise Lost: ‘Oft-times nothing profits more / Than self-esteem, grounded on just and right / Well managed’.

Women in many cultures are socialised to regard themselves as inferior to men and, in consequence, may have a low sense of self-worth. This is particularly the case for women involved in nurturing occupations such as nursing, teaching, mothering, child care and social work where caring for others is the primary focus. In these situations, looking after oneself tends to be forgotten or it is seen as selfish and, therefore, not acceptable.

It is often people’s fear of conflict that will lead them to say yes when they want to say no. This can happen through a common, yet unconscious, defence mechanism called reaction formation. ‘Defence mechanism’ is a descriptive metaphor for the temporary clouding of reality through thoughts, feeling and behaviour. Reaction formation is the process through which unacceptable feelings are controlled by behaviour patterns which are directly opposed to them. Somewhat surprisingly, we do the opposite to how we feel.

By way of an example of reaction formation, consider the situation where a friend may be constantly telling us about their problems. In time, we may find ourselves feeling worn out and angry about it, but, we repress these feelings because of the anxiety they cause us. After all, they may lead us into conflict with our friend. And we behave in a manner opposite to how we feel. That is, we may ask our friend even more questions about their problems; empathise more deeply with them; invite them to dinner, etc. One of the real problems with this is that the original feeling of anger lives on in us unconsciously and usually causes us to feel depressed – depression being anger turned against the self and a painful and disturbing state of mind. It is important, then, to discern the meaning and ingredients of our generosity to others.

The capacity to say no is often included in the definition of the word, self-assertion, about which many books have been written, at least in the Western world. Being assertive is different from being aggressive. Self-assertion is defined as expressing ourselves appropriately with respect for the rights of others. And while it is not about being pushy, it is also not about being trampled on by others and not about finding ourselves doing things that we really don’t want to do and don’t believe in.

In my article in next month’s edition of ISV—The Voice, I will describe some verbal skills which will help us to become more assertive and, in turn, increase our self-esteem. Attempts to change ourselves, though, are often met with pressure from others to revert to our old ways and to maintain the status quo.

Generally, people like us to remain the same. While we recognise this, we need not be deterred by it.

It is important to be aware, also, that there are limitations to change. Some people are more able to be free than others and this varies at different stages in life and with different cultures. Standing up for ourselves has consequences and, at times, these may be more negative than we are prepared to accept. All the same, so much is possible and, to quote Milton (1638, Lycidas) again: ‘At last she rose, and twitched her mantle blue / Tomorrow to fresh woods, and pastures new.”

Editor’s Note:
Please read the November edition of ISV—The Voice for the conclusion of this topic.
New International Office at North Sydney

Emily Leite
International Student Adviser
Sydney and Canberra

Last week the International Education Office at our North Sydney Campus relocated to new premises. We have relo- cated to 42 Edward Street which is just next door to the main MacKillop campus.

The office building is actually a heritage-listed lovely old home which has been trans- formed into offices for the whole International team. If anyone had come to visit the old offices you would understand how happy all the International office staff are with their new abode!

When you walk in the front door you will find the International Information desk to the right. This where all new and potential students can come for general inquires about International Educa- tion, and this is also where our OSHC Worldcare repre- resentative is when he is on campus.

When you enter and take the door on the left it will take you to the International Student Adviser’s office and the student waiting area. In the waiting area is the inter- national notice board which is worth a look for informa- tion about upcoming events, accommodation and employment opportuni- ties.

The International Office would love to say a big thank you to the MacKil- lop Campus Op- erations who have assisted us with getting our new office ‘just right’ and also to all stu- dents who were very patient with us over the past few weeks while we were moving.

The IEO in North Sydney is really keen to show off our new offices so come in and have a look!

New Club Launched at St Pat’s: Conversation Corner

Rahat Ryhan
BBus (Accounting)
Final Year—Melbourne

The CONVERSATION CORNER is a students’ social club and is the initiative of students from the School of Business and Informatics. Its aim is to help bridge the gap between international and local students at the Melbourne Campus. The club was officially launched on the 6th of August with the objective of breaking down the cultural and language barrier by allowing inter- national and local stu- dents to interact together with extra curriculum ac- tivities.

Membership is only $10 for an entire year and will allow members to attend various events organized by the club, such as friendly soccer matches, movie nights, shopping adventures at DFO and Smith Street and other fun activities.

Members will meet each Wednesday from 12-1pm during the common lunch hour in room 2.59.

The Director of SAGE Pty Ltd, Mr. Alex Wong is the main sponsor of the Conversation Corner. Also on behalf of the International office, Mr. John Crowder (International Student Adviser) has offered oc- casional sponsorship for different events.

Currently there are 9 members in the club. However, the success and its sustainability lies in continued membership and participation in the events run by the club.

Finally, the Conversation Corner is really grateful and wants to thank Elsie Chan, Ide Clinton, Marcia O’Neill, Gavin O’Sullivan, John Crowder and also the entire SIFE team for their continuous support.

Editor’s Note:
This is a fantastic initiative and a wonderful idea. The International Office is fully supportive of this new club and its desire to help make integration between local and inter- national students easier. We look forward to being involved and encourage as many students as pos- sible to drop by on Wednesdays and support internationalization.

Yasuko Ito
Locum Counsellor
Counselling Service

“Yooi don! (On your mark, ready, get set, go!)” Students wearing red or white hair bands called Hachimaki sprinted from the start line aiming for the goal. It’s the 50 metre race taking place on the school ground. The sun shines on them, fellow students and families cheering on with excitement. Many students enjoy this day known as ‘Sports day’, I for one felt that way because there were no classes held on the day. This is my childhood memory of a fine October day in Japan. Today I would like to share this event with you.

After the notoriously hot and humid typhoon season whizzing through Japan in September, comes a refreshing, autumn in October. Autumn is referred to as “a season for sports”. In fact, the 10th of October is celebrated as “Sports Day” since the 1964 Tokyo Olympics.

Many Australians would agree that this is a nation which regards sports very highly. In contrast, though Japan is not well known for sports to say the least, nevertheless we have a national holiday to celebrate sports. Sports Day has become firmly embedded in the Japanese culture. Even here in Melbourne’s Japanese schools, this event is carried out every October.

Sports day is an annual festive event staged by many schools, from kindergartens all the way through to high schools and some universities. Students are divided into red and white house colours and compete against each other. Some of the popular games include ‘Tsunahiki’ (tug-of-war, see photo) ‘Tama-ire’ (throwing balls in a basket), ‘Tama-korogashi’ (rolling gigantic balls to the goal), egg and spoon race, track races and various relays from 50 metres to 2000 metres. Also there is ‘Pan-kui kyoosoo’ (sweet red beans bread roll eating race) in which the students run up to the bread rolls that are tied to strings hung on a row of rope, taking a bite on to it without using hands and running with it to the goal as quickly as possible. How hilarious is that?

The non-competitive programs such as traditional folk dancing, group gymnastics, and cheering with school bands are included in the program as well so all the students can join in in some way.

Preparations for the Sports day start a few weeks before the event. During the week prior to the sports day, students have no regular classes, but practice their events throughout each day, culminating in a full dress rehearsal the day before the big day. On the Sports day, there is a huge crowd of parents, relatives, friends, and sometimes even their pets, who attend the school ground, and usually sit on the sidelines as spectators to cheer on the students. As you can expect, there are many amateur cameramen and women busily snapping photos. And yes, I must not forget to mention, the other highlight of the day, which is lunchtime. Time to indulge on grand bento lunch boxes with family and friends to talk about the morning’s events. Seasonal ingredient such as chestnut rice and treats are neatly packed into the lunchbox. As the day comes to an end when all the programs are completed, the scores are added up and the winner is announced. Some jump up and down with joy, some overwhelmed, and some shed a few tears. Each of us responds in our own way whilst sharing the day.

One of the simple learnings of Sports day is that regardless of winning or losing, it is the process, as opposed to the outcome that is nourishing. It’s about doing one’s best, and more importantly, enjoying that, and sharing that experience with those close to you. Perhaps for those reasons, many of us look back at our own experiences of the day with nostalgia.

Editors' Note:
On behalf of all international students at St Patrick’s campus, we would like to sincerely thank Yasuko for her wonderful support and kindness during her time here and for her time in preparing this article.
Do you want to apply for Permanent Residence?

Jasmine Ruffilli
Barrister and Solicitor
Registered Migration Agent

The first port of call for many overseas students wishing to apply for permanent residence after having completed their studies in Australia is the Skilled – Independent (Residence) visa (subclass 885).

This visa allows overseas students who have completed their course of studies in Australia and who are holders of certain temporary visas to apply for permanent residency. This visa is points tested and requires points with a pass mark of 120.

Points are not awarded for some of the criteria required for this visa (skills, eligible visa, two years study, location, health and character) with the balance of the criteria requiring point’s allocation. This visa is geared towards students who have completed their studies in Australia and who have characteristics and qualifications needed in the Australian labour market and so it is important to choose the course you wish to study wisely to maximize the points you may achieve for “occupation” if you intend applying for Permanent residence in the future. As this is within the INDEPENDENT category of skilled visas, sponsorship is not necessary.

APPLYING
To be eligible to apply for an 885 visa you should be in Australia and be:

an overseas student or former overseas student

a holder of a Skilled – Graduate (subclass 485) visa or Skilled – Recognised Graduate (subclass 476) visa

a holder of a Trade Skills Training (subclass 471) visa.

You should also satisfy the following criteria:

be under 45 years of age

have good English language skills

have the skills and qualifications that meet the Australian standard for an occupation on the Skilled Occupation List (SOL- the list of skilled occupations that are in need in Australia.- ) and your “nominated occupation” is classified as either:

a 60 point occupation or

a 50 point occupation

FEE
The first instalment of the Visa Application Charge must be paid at the time of application and is $2105. The second instalment of the Visa Application Charge for dependents aged 18 years or over with less than functional English must be paid before the visa is granted and is $2925.

ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

AGE:
You must be under 45 years of age on the day of making your application unless you hold a Skilled - Graduate visa (subclass 485). Points awarded under this category depend on your age and range from 30 for the youngest age group (18-29 years) to 15 for the oldest age group (40-44 years).

ENGLISH:
You must meet the English language threshold which is usually at the “competent” English level and will give you 15 points. You can increase your overall points score by achieving a higher English language score. If you meet IELTS results for proficient English, you will gain 25 points.

NOMINATED SKILLED OCCUPATION
You must nominate an occupation on the Skilled Occupation List (SOL) that is relevant to your skills and qualifications with skills and qualifications which would allow your skills to be recognized as suitable by the assessing body suitable for a 60-point occupation on the SOL or a 50-point occupation on the SOL. It is important to note that you cannot apply for this visa if your nominated occupation is not on the SOL. The SOL can be found at the following website: http://www.immi.gov.au/allforms/pdf/1121i.pdf

SKILLS ASSESSMENT
At the time of making your application, you must have applied to have your skills assessed by the approved assessing body for your nominated skilled occupation.

ELIGIBLE VISA
You and all secondary applicants must hold an eligible visa and any one of the following applies to you:

Two (2) Years Study in Australia
You must have met this eligibility requirement in the six (6) months immediately before the date of making your application. To meet this requirement, you must have completed study in Australia in no less than 16 calendar days.
months, either: a single qualification requiring at least two (2) academic years study or more than one qualification resulting in a total period of at least two (2) academic years study.

The Australian qualification/s you have completed must be closely related to your nominated skilled occupation.

Location

You and all secondary applicants included in your application, must be in Australia when you lodge your application for this visa AND at the time that a decision is made on your application.

Specific work experience

You will be awarded points if you have been employed for three (3) of the last four (4) years in an occupation on the Skilled Occupation List (SOL).

Australian work experience

You are eligible to be awarded Australian work experience points if you have been employed in Australia: in an occupation listed on the Skilled Occupation List (SOL) totaling at least one (1) year in the four (4) years immediately before the day you lodge your application. You can also be awarded these points if you have completed a recognised Professional Year in Australia. However at this time the only Professional Year Courses which have been specified by the Minister are Computing Science and Accounting.

Australian qualifications

You can be awarded points for an Australian qualification if: you have completed Australian qualifications as specified and all instruction was in English.

Occupation in demand/job offer

If your nominated occupation is on the Migration Occupations in Demand List (MODL) or if you also have a full time job offer from an employer in Australia. Details of the MODL List can be found at:


Health & Character

In addition you must pass the health and character criteria and show that you have obtained acceptable health and police clearance.

BONUS POINTS:

An extra 5 points may be awarded from any ONE of the following categories:

Australian community language

To be eligible for Australian community language points you must be “fluent” in one of the listed community languages.

Regional Australia study

You can be awarded points if you have met the two (2) year study requirement while living and studying in a 'regional Australia/low population growth metropolitan area’ in Australia.

Partner skills

You can claim 'partner skills' points if your spouse or inter-dependent partner is included in your application (not an Australian permanent resident or an Australian citizen) and is also able to satisfy the basic requirements of age, English language ability, qualifications, nominated occupation and recent work experience, and if they have obtained a suitable skills assessment from the relevant assessing authority. In the next issue I will discuss other options for applicants who do not achieve the 120 points needed to apply for a subclass 885 visa.

ABOUT JASMINE RUFFILLI:

JASMINE RUFFILLI is a Barrister and Solicitor and Registered Migration Agent (MARN 9359468) with her Law Practice O’SULLIVAN & RUFFILLI, at 175 Victoria Parade, Fitzroy with over 18 years experience. Queries or suggestions regarding any future articles are welcome.
At the beginning of the semester a group of ACU staff met together on the premise of promoting the differences in culture that are present at our North Sydney campus with the objective of organizing a Cultural Diversity Concert. After many meetings and lots of planning this concert took place on the 4th September 2008. As we were organizing the event we were not sure how many people were interested or who would come, or even who would perform! After a great deal of promotion we able put a good size program together for the night. From there we would see how the night would turn out…

On the night as the room started to fill with excited staff and students, the performers were in the dressing rooms nervously getting dressed and putting the finishing touches on their acts. Then the room kept filling and filling, so many people had come to watch and support their friends and family perform and to participate in the night. Over the whole night we believe over 250 spectators came to watch and participate in the show.

The acts were so diverse and came from many cultural backgrounds. The night started with a Welcoming Ceremony and included a “Welcome to Country” dedication to the Aboriginal ancestors of the land, this was followed by an authentic Indian chant to pray and bring blessings to the night. The night continued with many singing and dancing performances starting with a great act by one of our own Nursing Lecturers doing some Arabic Belly dancing – what a show! This was followed by one of our Australian students with a lovely voice singing and playing the flute (not at the same time might I add) she also did a wonderful rendition of the Australian classic Waltzing Matilda. Next up was one of our Indonesian students who read (and translated from Indonesian) a poem which carried the theme “we are many, but we are also one” - this tied in excellently with our Cultural Diversity theme and was very moving.

This was followed by two very talented Nepali dance groups, and as you can see from the photos there was a lot of movement by them and their lovely costumes. Richard Falkner from the ACU Printery was up next with an Australian guitar ballad. After that there was a piece from a Japanese acoustic rock band which had a lot of feeling.

Next there was a Chinese song, a Nepalese, and an Indian Song (by our own Informatics Course Coordinator Girija). We have such talented students and staff! I am sure that everyone present would agree that a high point of the show was the Sudanese Rock Band’s piece which was a rock band and a choir rolled into one. They played some ‘cool’ tunes for us that were so much fun that nearly everyone got up to dance half way through the show.

The night was an excellent demonstration of some of the different cultures that we have present here at our North Sydney campus. The night also reflected that although we all come from very different backgrounds we are all unified as humans beings and should be given the opportunity to ‘show off’ our different cultural backgrounds. I was not the only one who thoroughly enjoyed the event – Pro-Vice Chancellor Professor Peter Wilson had some words to say about the concert: “I would like to express my thanks to all those who were involved in organising and/or attending the cultural concert last week. That was a very special celebration of our cultural diversity - truly inspirational to all of us.”

I would also like add my thanks those students who participated in the event by showing us your talents and to those who also came along to watch. Also I would like to thank the ACU staff who helped with all the organizing, catering, funding and hard work. All of your efforts really helped to make the night a huge success.

Special thanks to Shreejana for her great effort at being MC for the night. She was so dedicated and came although she had broken her leg the day before!
An Exquisite Evening: Sydney Cultural Diversity Concert

Shreejana Narula
Sydney

Walking down the stairs to the library everyday, I meet and greet my friends from Australia, Japan, Philippines, Indonesia, China, Sri Lanka, Germany, Columbia, Nepal, Sudan, Italy, Canada, USA and India. ACU is one of the few universities in Sydney with this kind of diverse representation of the globe. Early September this year, a pamphlet was noticed in the canteen area, it said cultural diversity concert was to be held in the university premises and all the students were invited to participate. This really keyed my friends and I up as we saw this as a prospect to represent our country in the university which was great. On the day of the concert, no surprise the hall was jam-packed with international students and their families. As the concert went on we learned the different cultures and the difference in expression. This was a great opportunity to make friends and know their culture.

Personally, as MC (master of ceremony) of the concert I was enchanted by the beauty of cultural diversity at ACU. When I spoke to the participants about how they liked this program, everyone expressed delight and said that such programs should be more frequently organized as these help students to rejuvenate from the daily routine of books, assignments, assessments and studies. All the performers were utterly incredible with liveliness and patriotism in their recital.

I think it is very thoughtful of ACU management to help students take a break from their daily routine and have fun by organizing such a vivacious program. We appreciate the organizers and thank everyone responsible to make it triumphant.
New Experiences for New Chinese Students

Liu Yong - Nursing

Two months ago, I arrived in Melbourne. Prior to that, I had never been abroad in my life! Over the past two months of being here, I have tried to objectively compare Melbourne with China, which is my motherland. I would like to share my experiences and observations with other people here.

Firstly, I would like to comment about transport in Australia. I go to school by train every day. In most cases, the trains are on time. What surprised me most is that during the morning peak hours, the trains are as crowded as China’s subways! I did not expect this. There are more cars in Melbourne than in Guangzhou, which is the third major city of China. But the biggest difference here is that drivers obey traffic rules strictly, so serious traffic jams are rare.

The food in Australia is a little bit different from that in China. On my second day in Australia, I visited the Victoria Markets, because people told me that it is the biggest market in Victoria. It is a clean and busy place. You can find all kinds of food there, including seafood, meat, fruit and vegetables, as well as a lot of other interesting things like souvenirs, clothes and even animals! The price is quite reasonable, except for vegetables, which I find to be rather expensive. In China, people consume a lot of vegetables. I think Chinese students have to adjust to the eating style of Australia.

The biggest difference is one that affects most international students, particularly from Asia, I believe. This is that there is a great difference between university life in Australia and university life in China. This semester, we already have three essays to write! Every subject has a long list of reading materials, which we are required to get through in order to understand the topic more widely. In China, students are required to attend all of the classes and learn and remember what the lecturers teach in the class. But in Australia, students have to do research by themselves. Lecturers only discuss the important points of essays with their students and the students decide what to write and how to write! They search for information by themselves. I have to learn how to manage my time to finish my work on time. It certainly is a far more independent learning style here!

I believe that my study in Australia is exciting and full of challenge. It is my first time to leave my mother country and live in another country. I think it is a precious experience for me because I learn how to better manage my life.

Tony Cai - Nursing

“It’s awesome!” This is the most common expression from my Homestay parent! As a guy who has never left China, I’d like to use this sentence to describe my first months in Australia in my Homestay. The first time I went fishing, the first time I watched footy and the first party I had here have all been awesome experiences for me! I am so lucky that I live in a local family home. Nicky (my Homestay “mother”) is a very nice lady who is good at cooking both Mexican and traditional Australian food. Because of her, I know that after meal times comes dessert and then time for reading. Chatting around fire place in ambient surroundings created by candle light is no longer just the imagination of my reading! It has become a reality!

“Polite” is another word for me to describe this country. For two months I have never seen a single car break traffic rules (like overtaking on the wrong side or driving through red lights!) just to save time.

“Thank you” and “sorry” are words which just roll so freely from Australian lips! When I walk in the street, it is easy for me to receive a smile or a nod of acknowledgement from people passing by. Everyone is just so friendly!

Unlike in my home country, I feel more relaxed during study in this country. There are sofas for readers in the library, which I always use for my noon nap! With clean carpet, I am no longer worried about how to keep my bag clean. No matter what kind of problems I meet, I can always get help from the International Office.

The other impressive experience for me is following the rules. Personal relationships cannot be so easily used to get “special benefits” in Australia, which is very common in other countries. As a student without any relationships or “background” here, I thoroughly enjoy this fair and open environment.

In short, I have no reason to say that I don’t like this beautiful, friendly, polite, relaxing and fair country. I hope every international student can enjoy their fantastic study experience in Australia.
The Public Transport Debate: Student Views

Vanjitha Chantherakumar
Social Sciences
Melbourne

“That’s awful!”, Catherine Grant, a 2nd year local student exclaimed, as she heard for the first time, that international students in New South Wales and Victoria were not entitled to student concession and had to pay full fare on public transport. Local students are entitled to bimonthly financial aid from Centrelink as well as concession passes for travel. “The whole point of having concession is to help you out now so that you can pay the government later” she said.

“International students are paying full fees for their education on top of having to travel without concession. With a limit of 20hrs of work per week, it is never going to be enough to pay for all the basic necessities of a student!” she said. Bree Gofine, a 2nd year student, added that Australia aims to attract students from all over the world for its well renowned and attractive educational package, but by making things more expensive for them, we’re preventing these international students from fully enjoying the quality of life that Australia has to offer.

Another local student who declined to be named, also agreed that international students should be entitled to concession just as local students, as we’re paying full fees, and that a lot of profit is generated because of international students. She said that she felt it was unfair for full fee paying students to have to pay twice as much as local students for public transport.

Ayane Nishijima, a Japanese exchange student, in Melbourne for 2 semesters in 2008, qualifies for a concession pass because she is on exchange. The reason behind it is that she has taken the place of an Australian student who has gone to Japan for 2 semesters. When interviewed, she said that although she felt lucky to have been granted concession, she felt bad for other international students who have to pay twice as much as she does, to travel. “Even in my passport, it just says I’m on a student visa. It doesn’t say anywhere that I’m an exchange student, so I’m just like every other international student here, but I get to travel on concession. That’s a bit unfair” she said. “Not everyone is lucky enough to have their parents send them money from home every month, and it is really unfair to expect international students in New South Wales and Victoria, who are still students, to pay so much.”

If concession is granted in other states, then why not NSW and Victoria?” asks Lylia Pham, a 2nd year local student.

Why not indeed, one may ask! How much longer should we international students be discriminated against in this way?

ISV – The Voice would like to encourage you all to take this matter up with your respective State Public Transport Minister’s office. We bring an enormous amount of financial benefit to Australia. Shouldn’t we be entitled to something back?

Editor’s Note:
If you are interested in writing to your State’s Public Transport Minister (NSW & Victorian students only), the contact details are as follows:

New South Wales
Minister John Watkins
dp.office@watkins.minister.nsw.gov.au

Victoria:
Minister Lynne Kosky
lynn.kosky@parliament.vic.gov.au

See your International Student Adviser to get a copy of a standard letter that you can either post or email to your minister. This is quite acceptable in Australia and you can not get into any trouble for writing to a government employee.
Tiptoe through the Tulips at the Tesselaar Tulip Festival

John Crowder  
International Student Adviser  
Victoria

Spring is a great time to get out and about, to explore your surroundings and see what this big, brown country has to offer. The weather is decidedly warmer and yet, those fiercely hot days of Summer are still a way off yet. With those wide, blue skies, warm sun and cool Spring breezes, what more could you ask for in terms of good exploring weather.

Every Spring, in the mountains just outside Melbourne, a local Dutch tulip farm holds the Tesselaar Tulip Festival. Even if you don’t particularly like tulips, or any flowers for that matter, the tulip festival is certainly a sight to behold.

This last Sunday (28 September), I visited the town of Monbulk in Victoria’s Mount Dandenong region and tptoe through the tulips myself. I have to say, the sight was quite spectacular!

Fields full of tulips of every imaginable colour stretched out as far as the eye could see and visitors from every corner of the globe came for a day out in what could only be described as an “Australian Netherlands” - complete with both tulips and windmills!

We were greeted at the gate by very friendly staff in traditional Dutch costumes, and yes - they were wearing wooden clogs! Charming Dutch “beauties” greeted the guests and posed for photos in their aprons and hats and horse drawn carriages were at the disposal of any guest who wanted a ride through the tulip fields. For those who were either more able bodied (or didn’t like horses!), a walk through the fields was just as lovely.

I must say that the whole festival exuded a certain charm. It was a wonderful mix of both traditional Dutch culture and the beauty of the Australian bush. As the tulips lay sprawled out before us in the fields, the gum trees swayed gently in the Spring breeze in the distance.

For those of you who prefer the feeling of good food in your tummy to the smell of flowers on the breeze, there was also a wide array of food to keep the most fussy food connoisseur happy (a spread of which I quite readily availed myself, so I speak with some experience here!)

There were traditional Dutch pancakes, hand made chocolates and cheeses, exquisite gourmet hotdogs and hand made ice cream - Ah! A real food-lover’s delight! And of course, it wouldn’t be a Dutch tulip festival without the windmills!

So, if you have a spare weekend (be quick, there are only 2 weekends to go!), pop up to the mountains and have a look at the tulip festival. It is a real sensory feast!

Visit their website at: www.tulipfestival.com.au
When we first had a class at ACU in Brisbane, our instructor, Kate told us that we would have an excursion to the Lone Pine Koala Sanctuary where we could see the “national treasures”, the koala, kangaroo and other animals which are so different to Chinese ones. We were so excited that we went to Maria’s office to register our names.

After waiting for three weeks, the special day finally arrived. It was such a beautiful day to go on such an adventure and when we got on the bus, a new group of students was there. How surprised we were! From Maria’s introduction, we learnt that they were exchange nursing students who all came from the “garden city” of Singapore. We introduced ourselves and chatted with each other. It was very refreshing to meet Singaporeans in another country and we were curious about their culture, such as what food they eat and what the weather was like there. As we could all speak both Chinese and English, it was not difficult to communicate with them.

After Maria bought tickets for us all, we entered the zoo in a very happy mood. Lizards and pheasants were roaming around us as we were walking. The first place which we arrived at was the bird feeding area. When we raised the containers in which the feeders prepared food for the birds, they were bursting to rush to the food in our hands. When the birds were flew onto our heads, we had mixed feelings of joy and surprise. After a while, Maria took us to a different place to watch a show.

As we carefully listened to the staff, we understood that he was talking about how a dog manages a flock of sheep. We saw how well the dog did in herding the sheep to ensure that they didn’t break rank. When the show ended, many people took a picture with the clever dog.

The most fascinating moment for us was when we took a photo with a koala as all of us were very interested in it. Although it was a little heavy and it held on tightly with its claws when we held it in our arms, it was still such a cute animal! We were all so chuffed that we had a picture with a koala! We then watched a video about koalas, which told us that the koala is a lazy animal as it has to minimize energy to maintain a day’s movement. We learnt that koalas eat particular types of eucalypt leaves, so their keepers need to prepare enough leaves for them every day!

To most of us, feeding the kangaroos was the most exciting time! We tried to get close to them and they were very quiet and friendly, so it was not hard to feed them. Probably they ate too much, so some of them refused to eat any more, however they liked taking pictures with the tourists!

After visiting the Lone Pine Koala Sanctuary, the driver took us to Mt Coota from which we could see a view of the whole of Brisbane! It was windy on the top, but we felt very good and took lots of pictures there.

Our trip has become such a wonderful memory of sharing a fantastic time on an excursion with our friends.

All of us who went on this excursion sincerely wish to thank Maria Valastro, the International Student Adviser, for organizing such an unforgettable trip!
Japanese: Oyaku Don

Recipe Contributed by:
Yasuko Ito
Counsellor
Melbourne Campus

Ingredients (4 servings):
- 4 cups of short grain steamed rice
- 300g boneless chicken thighs
- 4 eggs
- 1/3 cup soy sauce
- 1/3 cup mirin
- 3 Tbs sugar
- 1 & 1/2 cup soup stock (dashi)
- 1 onion
- (Optional) 4 dried mushroom (soak in water first) or 4 fresh shiitake mushroom
- (Optional) handful of snow peas

Method:
- Cook rice.
- Cut chicken into bite size pieces.
- Cut onion and mushroom into thin slices. Cut snow peas in half.
- Put dashi soup stock in a saucepan (that has a lid) on medium heat. Add sugar, mirin, then soy sauce in the soup and simmer for a few minutes.
- Add chicken, onion slices and mushroom to the pan and simmer for few more minutes.
- Whisk eggs in a bowl. Bring the soup to a boil, and add snow peas, then pour the eggs evenly over the chicken and onion.
- Turn down the heat to low and put on a lid for 1 minute.

Turn off the heat. (Make sure the eggs don't harden too much, they should be cooked, but still be ever so slightly runny.)

Chinese: Dumplings

Lan Huanying
Nursing

Ingredients:
- 500 grams Dumpling skins

Dumpling stuffing:
- 500 grams Pork or beef mince
- 350 grams Mushroom or 350 grams leek
- One bunch Spring onion
- 2 teaspoons raw flour (rice flour)
- 1/3 teaspoon salt
- 1 teaspoon light soy sauce
- 1 teaspoon peanut oil

Method:
- Mix pork or beef mince with raw flour, salt, soy sauce and peanut oil first, then cut mushroom or leek and spring onion into small pieces and mix together.
- Put the dumpling stuffing in the skin and make dumplings in any shape that you would like.
- Put 8ml peanut oil in the cooking pot and fry dumplings (10-15 dumplings) side by side until golden color (2-3 minutes), then put in 5-10ml of water and cook 1-2 minutes more to ensure that the inside stuffing is completely cooked. Do not use too much water. The dumplings should not be fully immersed, but just enough to cook the insides. Repeat the procedure to cook the others.

Dipping sauce ingredients:
- 1 bunch coriander
- 5 pieces garlic
- 2 inch piece of ginger
- 3 red and 3 green chillies
- Brown vinegar 70ml and light soy sauce 35ml (1:0.5)
- 1/2 teaspoon sesame oil

Dipping sauce: Cut all ingredients into small pieces and mix them with brown vinegar and light soy sauce together. Serve cooked dumplings with dip sauce.

Editors Note:
Huanying made these dumplings and brought them to our editorial team meeting. They were absolutely delicious!
What are you doing on Friday Night?

Kunal Mehta
MBA, Melbourne

One of my mates asked me this question and I said that I had Uni ‘til 8 in the evening on Friday nights. And then there was that reaction— “Oh that’s so bad!”—the type of response I have got used to!

This is my third semester at ACU in my course of MBA (Accounting). Although till now it’s been a very exciting and interesting experience being a business student, one thing that has kind of taken the enthusiasm off the students this semester has been the timing of the lectures. All the four units for third semester students this semester are timetabled in the evening from 5pm to 8pm. We were discussing in general what the reasons behind such timing could be…one student pointed out that since all the lecturers are sessional, it may be difficult for them to come early in the day. Another student suggested that since this is a business course, the School wants to keep the timing of the classes so that people who work full time would be able to attend School easily. But a lot of us are finding it really difficult to schedule available part-time work. Being international students and doing casual jobs many of us have shifts in the evening. As one student said “it becomes difficult to manage financially when working fewer hours as the cost of living has really increased in the last few months”. Adding further, another student said that she was “living really far from Uni and the trains after 8pm run every 40 minutes—so by the time she reaches home it is almost 9.30 in the evening”. A fourth semester student who does the Friday night class and works at a call centre said that his shifts actually start from 5pm and end at 8pm, so it leaves just 3 days for him to work, which makes it hard to manage the expenses. For a person like me who likes to go out once every few days especially on Friday nights, I also miss out since by the time I reach some place it is already 9pm and then it leaves really little time to unwind as I have start work early on Saturday.

This however is our side of the coin. On behalf of The Voice and my fellow MBA students, I approached Marcia O’Neill, Head of the School of Business and Informatics (Vic) and Course Coordinator of the MBA courses. She was very obliging, immediately giving me an appointment and going to great lengths to explain the various circumstances that have occurred to cause this timetabling issue. She mentioned that students had not advised her of their discontent and she was unaware that a lot of the 3rd semester students were unhappy. She said that if the students had alerted her earlier “perhaps the classes could have been changed to Saturday”! She noted that this probably would not suit some students either, it is difficult to please everyone! She was glad that The Voice brought the problem to her notice.

Marcia pointed out that one of the accounting lecturers was on full time leave in semester 2 making it necessary to hire replacement sessional accounting lecturers. But this was not the only problem, “There is a shortage of teaching staff in accounting all over Australia” she said, noting that this was another career opportunity for us accounting students in the future! Marcia continued to explain that just before the start of this semester, the new time tabling system was put in place which unfortunately was late and was not a smooth transition, and, the resulting timetable had problems. Thus all these factors contributed to having all the lectures in the evening for one of the MBA (Accounting) cohorts. Marcia also assured me that the ongoing post graduate survey would be immensely helpful in raising issues so that action can be taken to solve problems. Also, she said that feedback is important to assist to proactively solve problems—good feedback from students is essential. She wishes to encourage students to always let her know of any issues or discontent because there may be other solutions.

After listening to the issues, the staffing and timetabling problems, I do understand that it is really difficult to maintain a ‘good’ timetable.

Importantly after considering the issues I would like to highlight the point that our School should acquire more full-time teaching staff or at least hire replacement lecturers on short term contracts so they can dedicate their time to the students and our School during the course of the entire semester rather than just few hours in the evening.

Thank you to Marcia O’Neill for giving of her time so freely to openly discuss these issues. Her input has been very much appreciated by myself and I am sure will be appreciated by our readers.

Thanks also to ISV—The Voice for giving us this valuable opportunity to express our views and bring them into the open. This truly is a “voice” for international students and a means by which we can raise issues that concern us.
There may come a time when a stat. dec. may come in useful to you. Particularly, it can be used when other forms of evidence are lacking and you need to provide some form of evidence in order to get a desired outcome.

For example, you have just completed an assignment and you are ready to hand it in. Your assignment is on your USB drive and when you are getting ready to print your assignment, you realize that you have lost your USB stick! You now need to rewrite your assignment but are running out of time, so you have to apply for an assignment extension. Usually, this would require some formal documentation such as a medical certificate or a police report. For such a small thing like a USB stick, you would hardly have made a police report. So what evidence can you provide? You can write a stat. dec. as evidence.

Please remember that a stat. dec. is a legal document in which you state the truth about the facts, for example, the facts about what has happened to you. A person making a false declaration is liable to the penalties of perjury, which is an offence at common law of making a false statement on oath, while knowing that the statement is false or not believing it to be true.

A person who wilfully makes a false statement under the Statutory Declaration Act 1959 (Commonwealth) will be liable for a fine not exceeding $200 or imprisonment for a term not exceeding six months, or both. Be aware that serious penalties apply to making a false statutory declaration.

If you are unsure as to whether the Victoria or Commonwealth Stat. Dec. is appropriate to your situation or whether a stat. dec. will be accepted or not in your individual circumstances or if you require further information regarding the stat. dec. please talk to your International Student Advisor.

Don't wait until the last minute!