

Media Release

The Hon Martin Pakula MP

Minister for the Coordination of Jobs, Precincts and Regions – COVID-19

Minister for Racing

Minister for Jobs, Innovation and Trade

Minister for Tourism, Sport and Major Events



Wednesday, 29 April 2020

EMERGENCY SUPPORT FOR VICTORIA'S INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS

International students will receive a relief payment of up to \$1,100 as part of a Victorian Government emergency support package that will help tens of thousands of people across our state.

International students are a vital part of our education system, our economy and our community. They give so much to Victoria – not just through the fees they pay, but also through the economic activity they generate for our businesses, and the contribution they make to our vibrant, inclusive society.

Like so many people during this pandemic, international students have been affected by casual job losses in retail and hospitality, making it even tougher for them to make ends meet. Many have also fallen through the cracks of Federal Government programs – unable to access the support they need to support themselves.

To ensure Victoria's international students can buy the basics and get through to the other side of the crisis, the Victorian Government will establish a \$45 million *International Student Emergency Relief Fund*.

The fund will provide a one-off payment to students in need while expanding emergency provisions for those experiencing exceptional circumstances.

Up to 40,000 international students enrolled at Victorian universities, TAFEs, private vocational education and training providers and English language colleges who have lost wages and work due to the coronavirus pandemic could benefit from the relief payment, which covers demonstrated lost income up to \$1,100.

The payments, which will require co-contributions from university hardship funds, build on existing Victorian Government support provided to international students through the Study Melbourne Student Centre such as free legal aid and mental health services.

More than 150,000 international students currently living in Victoria are also eligible for the Victorian Government's rent relief program, including subsidies of up to \$2,000, and those legally allowed to work in Victoria are eligible for the Working for Victoria initiative, which helps people who have lost their jobs to find new employment.

International education generated \$12.6 billion revenue for Victoria last financial year, supporting around 79,000 jobs, with most students coming from China, India, Nepal, Malaysia and Vietnam.

For more information about the relief fund and other dedicated support, go to studymelbourne.vic.gov.au.

Quotes attributable to Minister for Jobs, Innovation and Trade Martin Pakula

"International students give so much to Victoria – it's only fair we support them in their hour of need."

"This virus doesn't discriminate and neither do we – we are in this together and we will get through it together."

Quote attributable to Minister for Education James Merlino

"It's important that we back the people who have made such a strong commitment to our state, and we will make sure that our education providers can emerge from the other side of this crisis in a position to quickly rebuild."

Quote attributable to Minister for Training and Skills and Higher Education Gayle Tierney

"We'll continue to work closely with the sector to give international students the support they need so they can continue to focus on their studies."

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