

Covering the gap

Social inclusion, international students and the role of local government

Toby Paltridge, Susan Mayson

Monash University

Jan Schapper

La Trobe University

Over the last twenty years or so the number of international students in Australia has grown rapidly. At the same time, official responsibility for providing support to international students has been devolved from governments to educational institutions. In this paper we argue that while education institutions have a significant role in supporting international students, there is a large gap in social support provided to them when off-campus. This is a gap which we believe could be filled by local government, to provide international students with greater integration and security when they are off campus. The ideas outlined in this paper are based on a critical examination of international students' experience in Australia and are intended to contribute to and advance recent debates about the safety, security and value of international students to Australian society. We argue that international students' status as temporary visitors creates the conditions for social exclusion, that is, an inability to engage fully in the economic, cultural, social and political aspects of Australian life. In light of this, we suggest that local government, especially as it relates to the provision of human services, has a role in helping international students access social support services. We argue that local government can be instrumental in ensuring the social inclusion of international students in our communities. This, we suggest, would improve international students' overall study experience and contribute to their greater integration and participation in the Australian community.

Introduction

Over the last twenty years or so, political strategies and policy development at Federal and State levels of government have driven the growth of international education in Australia. At the same time, official responsibility for providing support to the international students who have arrived in Australia as a result of these policies, has been devolved from governments to educational institutions (Marginson, Nyland, Sawir & Forbes-Mewett, 2010). This is problematic for several reasons, not least of which is that the majority of issues experienced by international students occur off campus, an area where education institutions are able to provide only limited support (Marginson, 2011). We agree with Marginson *et al.* (2010) that inter-

national students, due to their position as 'non-citizens' and 'temporary migrants', are relegated to outsider status despite the fact that they are invited to live in Australia for an extended period of time. This outsider status has implications for international students' safety and security as past events have demonstrated (Forbes-Mewett & Nyland 2008; Marginson *et al.* 2010).

In this paper we argue that while education institutions have a significant role in supporting international students, there is a large gap in social support provided to international students' when off-campus. This is a gap which we believe could be filled by local government, to provide international students with greater integration and security when they are away from their education institutions' grounds. In adopting this position we take up the point

from Marginson *et al.* (2010, p. 458) that, 'It is crucial to improve coordination between the universities and other public agencies, especially policy, local government [our emphasis] and state officials handling housing or tenancy and health services.' However, we go even further. It is our contention that local government can do more than just provide accommodation and health services to international students. We argue that local government can be instrumental in ensuring the social inclusion of international students in our communities. In light of concerns about international students' safety and security there is potential for education institutions and local government to work together to provide a system of whole-of-life support to international students whilst studying in Australia. This, we suggest, would improve international students' overall study experience and contribute to their greater integration and participation in the Australian community.

We argue that developing ways to improve the support provided to international students, and thereby their social inclusion and overall experience, is important for both economic and moral reasons. Morally, we believe it is highly unethical to accept international students into Australia and then essentially abandon them once they arrive, expecting them to adapt to life in a foreign country without appropriate support (Peterson, Briggs, Dreasher, Horner, & Nelson, 1999). Economically speaking, providing comprehensive support for international students is important because a reputation for safety and the guarantees of a positive experience are a source of advantage in the increasingly competitive international education market (Lane, 2011; Mazzarol & Soutar, 2002).

The ideas outlined in this paper may be controversial; however they are based on a critical examination of international students' experience in Australia. We accept that while not all our suggestions may be feasible they are intended to contribute to and advance recent debates about the safety, security and value of international students to Australian society. We argue that international students' status as temporary visitors creates the conditions for social exclusion, that is, an inability to engage fully in the economic, cultural, social and political aspects of Australian life. In light of this, we suggest that local government, especially as it relates to the provision of human services, has a role in helping international students gain access to social support services.

The current lack of support for international students in their off-campus lives is concerning, and likely has negative consequences for not just their social inclusion in the broader Australian community, but their overall study experience as well. We believe there is a pressing need for

some means or organisation to formally provide critical support (e.g. housing, employment, integration, advocacy, etc.) to international students off-campus, in conjunction with the on-campus support provided by education institutions. We suggest that local government – given its role, engagement and proximity with the community and existing services – is a good, although not necessarily ideal, choice to fulfil this role.

In this paper we first discuss the role of international students in Australia and the issues they face. We then specifically explore how international students are socially excluded from Australian society and the impact this has on their security and lived experience. Next, the regulatory support structure for international students is discussed. We then move on to describe the role of local government in Australia. Finally, we posit what exactly local government should be doing to support international students in their off-campus lives.

International students in Australia

International students are a significant presence in Australian society. Their gross contribution to the Australian economy was approximately \$18.6b in export earnings (across all levels of international education) in FY2009/10 (Australian Education International, 2011), provide on average 15 per cent of Australian universities' budgets, and sometimes much more (Senate Standing Committee on Education, Employment and Workplace Relations 2009), and comprise 25 per cent of all students in Australian post-secondary education (Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations [DEEWR], 2009). International education is Australia's fourth largest export (Marginson, 2011) and largest service export (Australian Education International 2011). As such, the export of educational services to international students represents an important contribution to Australia's (and its universities) economic prosperity.

International students also bring many non-economic benefits to Australia, benefits rarely discussed in the popular media and debates about the value of international students. In an effort to redress this blindness to the ways in which Australian society has been enriched by the presence of international students, Adams, Banks and Olsen (2011) provide a comprehensive list of benefits including; enhancement of public diplomacy and trade, especially through alumni of Australian institutions; a culturally rich learning environment for local students; greater international understanding and awareness among all students; and development of multinational professional and per-

sonal networks by students. While such benefits are difficult to quantify, international students enhance the culture and knowledge of Australian society and extend Australia's political influence in addition to more tangible economic contributions.

While international students and their welfare have been of interest to academics for some time (see Marginson *et al.*, 2010), recent events have raised the profile of international students and the issues they face as (temporary) members of Australian society. Unfortunately, it has not been the growing awareness of their contributions to Australian society that has recently brought international students and international education into the spotlight (Babacan, Pyke, Bhathal, Gill, Grossman & Bertone, 2010; Commonwealth of Australia, 2010a; Council of Australian Governments, 2010; Jakubowicz & Monani, 2010). It has instead been the involvement of international students, either as victims or alleged perpetrators, in incidents of violent crimes, along with revelations of exploitation and visa fraud that have focussed the attention of the media and different government agencies on their plight and off-campus activities.

We acknowledge that there is a danger in focusing on high profile incidents that involve international students in Australia and that, despite the many negative stories in the media, the majority of students who have participated in surveys indicated they are satisfied with their experiences in Australia. For instance, according to the International Student Survey 2010 (Commonwealth of Australia, 2010b), conducted by the Federal Government over 2009 and 2010, approximately 86 per cent of surveyed international students across all education categories were satisfied or very satisfied with their experience of living in Australia. However, this does not mean that they do not experience problems. It must also be said that of those 14 per cent who were not satisfied with their experience in Australia many would have faced serious issues, some potentially life threatening. It is an unfortunate fact that a number of international students have died or been killed, usually off-campus, and under terrible circumstances (Marginson *et al.*, 2010; Olding & Kwek, 2012).

Following their extensive research Marginson and colleagues (2010) published a comprehensive study of the issues experienced by international students in Australia. The list of problematic areas for international students is too large to list here, but some examples include the difficulty in finding affordable accommodation in safe neighbourhoods relatively close to their study location, exploitation by employers, personal safety, living and studying in a foreign language, and establishing new social

networks. These findings are not revelations; the majority of the issues identified have been documented during preceding decades by other researchers (for example, see Mori, 2000; Perrucci & Hu, 1995; Yeh & Inose, 2003). Yet, despite being well known, these problems have persisted.

Amongst this list of difficulties faced by international students, it is clear that most involve their lives outside their educational institution. It is off-campus that international students confront problems such as finding suitable accommodation and employment, exploitation by landlords and employers, personal safety concerns or discrimination by locals (Marginson *et al.*, 2010; Paltridge, 2009). Dealing with such issues is challenging and, unfortunately, many international students who do experience difficulties in Australia suffer severe consequences because they lack the support network possessed by locals (Deumert, Marginson, Nyland, Ramia & Sawir, 2005; Forbes-Mewett & Nyland, 2008). These outcomes, we argue, are a consequence of the social exclusion international students experience in Australia.

Social Exclusion and International Students

Compared to Australian citizens and permanent residents, international students do not have the same ability to participate socially, economically, politically or culturally within the community. This we argue results in the social exclusion of the majority of international students in Australia. As mentioned in the introduction to this paper, we support the arguments made by Marginson *et al.*, (2010) that international students are generally outsiders in Australian society as a consequence of their status as temporary non-citizens. This has negative implications for international students' safety and security, as evidenced by past incidents of violence and exploitation against them (Forbes-Mewett & Nyland, 2008; Marginson *et al.*, 2010).

We are well aware, having constructed the difficulties of international students within the conceptual frame of social inclusion and exclusion, that there are definitional and political problems associated with these terms. According to Silver (1994) defining social exclusion is a difficult task, with Atkinson (2000) and Millar (2007) arguing that it is not so much that there are no definitions of social exclusion, but that there are many, most of them vague, and all of them contested. Not only is the use of the word 'exclusion' endlessly disputed (Gallie, 1956, as cited in Silver, 1994) but social exclusion itself is considered an ambiguous concept that is 'loaded with numerous economic, social, political, and cultural connotations and dimensions' (Silver, 1994, p. 536). The same has also been

said of social inclusion, with Caidi and Allard (2005) arguing that its multiple meanings have been created opportunistically to justify different policy initiatives.

Despite these definitional and conceptual difficulties we persevere with the concepts of social exclusion and inclusion because they are generally used as concepts capable of encompassing the broader social and economic issues that marginalised groups, such as international students in Australia, face. In support of our use of social exclusion Millar (2007) and Raffo and Gunter (2008) contend that at the most basic level, social exclusion describes multi-dimensional socio-economic processes which cause specific groups or individuals, in specific locations to be excluded/included in specific ways from mainstream society. Those suffering from social exclusion are 'excluded not only from the goods and standards of living available to the majority but also from their opportunities, choices and life chances' (Millar, 2007, p. 2). According to Steinert (2003), the dimensions of social exclusion are generally agreed to include political, economic, social and cultural activities.

In our view, the same characteristics apply to social inclusion. However in the interest of conceptual clarity we acknowledge that there is much debate about the relationship between social inclusion and social exclusion (O'Reilly, 2005). Some authors contend that the concepts are binary opposites, while others argue that being not socially excluded does not mean one is socially included and vice versa. O'Reilly (2005) suggests that the two concepts lie on opposite ends of a continuum. The advantage of this conceptualisation is that it allows for varying degrees of inclusion/exclusion and also for the two terms to be used interchangeably. We have chosen to adopt O'Reilly's (2005) conceptualisation here as it is logical and makes discussion involving these concepts easier. Consequently, the two terms are used interchangeably in this paper.

There are numerous ways in which international students are socially excluded from political, social, cultural and economic processes and activities in Australia. For example, when we examine the political dimension, international students are not citizens of the host country and therefore can only lay claim to the reduced rights of a temporary migrant (Deumert *et al.*, 2005). One of the most important citizenship rights is the right to vote. Although we are not necessarily advocating for international students to be given the right to vote in Australia, we do suggest their lack of enfranchisement means they are not likely to be afforded a priority amongst politicians' many constituencies. Their lack of political signifi-

cance was exemplified in 2009 by the slow response of governments to the spate of violent attacks against international students. It was only after large-scale street protests and strong diplomatic pressure from home country governments that the Australian Federal and State Governments initiated any action to address the safety concerns of international students (Nyland, Forbes-Mewett & Marginson, 2010).

In the social dimension, international students frequently lose the support of family, friends and community when they move overseas to study (Forbes-Mewett & Nyland, 2008). Students often find it difficult to replace these relationships due to language barriers, cultural differences, and heavy study and work-loads. These factors limit time for socialising. Limited financial resources also reduce students' ability to participate in many common social activities. Added to this is the unwillingness of many locals to form friendships with international students, greatly limiting their access to informal support networks.

Economically speaking, international students have limited work rights and limited knowledge about their rights in Australian workplaces. This means they can and do face exploitation by employers (e.g. Babacan *et al.*, 2010; Ham, 2011). These two factors can also overlap in that some international students need to work more than 20 hours per week during semester in order to support themselves, thus breaching their visa conditions; some employers then use this fact to exploit those students under the threat they will inform the Department of Immigration and Citizenship (DIAC) of the student's breach. Of course, such excessive work hours are likely detrimental to international students' studies and it would be best if they had sufficient financial resources that they did not need to work more than 20 hours per week in order to support themselves. While one of the requirements for a student visa in Australia is providing proof that one has access to sufficient money to cover tuition fees and living expenses for the duration of one's study, the required amount being set arbitrarily by the Australian government, this is only checked when applying for a visa. Hence, potential international students can 'fake' access to the required money (e.g. borrow money temporarily, claim sponsorship from a relative who won't actually pay, etc.) and thereby obtain a student visa without actually having sufficient financial resources to support themselves without working excessive hours (Marginson *et al.*, 2010). In addition, the amount of money accessible per year required by the Australian government was, before being increased on 1 January 2010 (Bowen, 2009), far too low for a student to actually survive on (Marginson *et al.*, 2010). International

students also often find it difficult to access safe accommodation due to financial issues and/or lack of rental history. Further, international students do not have access to many common support services, such as free public healthcare (they must have private health insurance) and welfare, and in Victoria and New South Wales, in contrast to all other states and territories, they are also ineligible for student concession tickets for public transport.

Culturally, the majority of international students come from Asia and are not part of the dominant Anglo-Australian culture. This can cause some of the students to feel quite lonely and separate from the society around them, as their concerns and view of the world are quite different (Sawir, Marginson, Deumert, Nyland & Ramia, 2008). However, if they are of the same culture as an immigrant group that is already established in Australia then they may find some similar cultural contexts and a greater level of acceptance and recognition of their culture by mainstream Australian society than those from cultures which are little known in Australia. International students from Western nations such as the United States or Europe therefore typically find 'fitting in' much easier than those from non-Western cultures (Chapdelaine & Alexitch, 2004; Sawir *et al.*, 2008).

In summary, by being socially excluded, international students have reduced security across all four dimensions of social inclusion – political, economic, cultural and social. For international students, social, economic political, and cultural exclusion has significant consequences for their security and well-being. The more a group is socially excluded the more vulnerable its members are to life's misfortunes (Babacan *et al.*, 2010). Physical security is reduced as those who are considered to be 'outsiders' are more frequently found in areas where they are likely to be the target of street crime and more likely to be exploited by employers and landlords. Social security is reduced because those who exist on the edge of society have less access to both formal and informal support networks. Economic security suffers because those who are socially excluded find it more difficult to obtain safe, well-paying employment, and/or access welfare. Culturally, international students are faced with different norms, customs and attitudes, which may make it difficult for them to navigate life in Australia.

Despite these many different ways that international students are excluded from support and services that most Australian citizens take for granted, it should be noted that the Australian Government does not entirely absolve itself from any legislative responsibility for their well-being while studying in Australia. However, as noted in the introduction to this paper, the government responsibilities are essentially devolved in their entirety to educational institutions. The next section of the paper examines what these responsibilities are and how they have been devolved.

Support for International Students in Australia

By their very nature international students have greatly reduced security (physical, social, economic) compared

Compared to Australian citizens and permanent residents, international students do not have the same ability to participate socially, economically, politically or culturally within the community. This we argue results in the social exclusion of the majority of international students in Australia.

to citizens or permanent residents of the host country, or what they would enjoy in their home nations. This is a combined result of their status as temporary migrants; their general loss of informal social networks as a consequence of moving to a foreign country where they know few, if any, people (Forbes-Mewett & Nyland,

2008); and their social exclusion. Consequently, international students generally need far greater support than local students in order to compensate for, and address, their reduced security and social exclusion. However, in Australia, currently this additional support is at best only partially available (with the possible exception of university accommodation; see Paltridge, Mayson & Schapper, 2010).

In Australia, the *Education Services for Overseas Students (ESOS) Act* provides the security framework for international students by outlining government and education institutions' formal responsibilities towards international students. The National Code of Practice for Registration Authorities and Providers of Education and Training to Overseas Students 2007, which is established under the ESOS Act (Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations, 2007), stipulates that education institutions are to provide '...the opportunity for students to participate in services or provide access to services designed to assist students in meeting course requirements and maintaining their attendance.' (p. 16),

as well as '...the opportunity for students to access welfare-related support services to assist with issues that may arise during their study, including course progress and attendance requirements and accommodation issues. These services must be provided at no additional cost to the student.' (p. 16). Such requirements, in addition to being vague, only mandate education institutions to provide minimal support services in relation to their study and course requirements. With the exception of involvement in accommodation issues, the ESOS Act does not cover international students' lives away from campus. This means that international students must rely primarily on whatever informal and limited support networks they possess to help them live, study and work within the Australian community.

Marginson *et al.* (2010) suggest that when formulating the legislation, the government may have hoped that competitive pressure would encourage education institutions to provide a high level of service as a means of making themselves more attractive to prospective international students. However, this appears not to have occurred. It is suggested this has not been the case because, until recently, the number of potential international students wanting to study in Australia well exceeded the capacity of education institutions to take them (Marginson, 2011), thus limiting competitive pressure between education institutions. Further, to do so would mitigate a significant rationale for inviting international students to Australia - the subsidisation of domestic student places and research (Marginson, 2011; Marginson *et al.*, 2010; Thakur & Hourigan, 2007). Given these factors, there appears little competitive incentive for education institutions to provide more than the bare minimum of legally mandated support services to international students.

Added to this, and perhaps very tellingly, international students are referred to in the Act as consumers of educational services (as opposed to human beings or temporary citizens) and hence as we have argued above, the burden of care is effectively passed on almost entirely to the students (Marginson *et al.*, 2010). The result is that international students are reliant primarily on their own, often weak, informal support networks when off campus. This begins to explain why international students, beyond the reach of existing regulation or the (often limited) support services provided by educational institutions, end up in precarious and sometimes dangerous situations leaving them open to violence and/or exploitation.

There is little political pressure at this time to change the ESOS Act and it is therefore unlikely in the foreseeable future that international students will be granted a more

extensive range of rights while studying in Australia. We argue then there exists a need for some institution(s) to provide much-needed support to international students when off-campus. Our contention is that local government (also known as local councils or municipal councils - sometimes abbreviated to just 'councils'), due to its position and role within the community, can and should perform this function.

The role of local government in Australia

'Out of all spheres of government in Australia, local governments possess the closest relationship with communities and therefore have a unique opportunity to gain an understanding of, and to meet particular local and community needs.' (Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government 2010, p. 2)

Due to proximity to its constituency, local government has a significant role in shaping communities that are 'civil, equitable, culturally sensitive, environmentally sustainable and democratic' (Kiss, 1999, p. 110). This is reflected in the ongoing trend of increasing the provision of human services which assists local government to address problems specific to their community. We include in this view of local community international students who reside in local communities, albeit temporarily, and the community specific issues that arise for them.

Although traditionally considered as being only responsible for the 3 Rs of 'roads, rates and rubbish', in the last two decades local government has steadily moved towards the provision of human services to the local community (Dollery, Wallis & Allan, 2006). This shift means that local government is more responsive to the broader social and cultural demands of their communities. Dollery *et al.* (2006, p. 555) state 'In essence, Australian councils are moving away from their traditional narrow emphasis on "services to property" towards a broader "services to people" approach.' Such services include, but are not limited to, health, welfare, community development and recreation (Haratsis, 1992; Jones, 1989; Morris, 1986; Thornton, 1995).

Of course, a major constraint for most local governments in providing services to the community is limited financial resources (Dollery *et al.*, 2006) and the needs of international students may not be high on local governments' to do lists. Consequently, most councils tend to focus on what they see as their core business - providing key services to ratepayers. And hence, as Dunn, Thompson, Hanna, Murphy and Burnley (2001) found, many councils see the promotion of multiculturalism and addressing the

needs of diverse community groups as secondary to their 'core' business and are reluctant to spend money on such programmes. Dunn *et al.* (2001), however, argue against this position, identifying numerous ways that the services and programmes provided by local government fail to reflect the diversity of the community they are supposed to represent. They state that '...failing to incorporate multiculturalism in local government risks the situation where local administrations selectively determine — either overtly or implicitly — who is and is not effectively a local citizen.' (Dunn *et al.* 2001, p. 2479).

In the context of limited budgets and contestation around whose needs are met or not met by local government, it is little surprise that temporary residents such as international students are generally neither considered nor included within community activities. This, we argue, needs to change. Local government areas with substantial international student populations (generally those that accommodate, or are near, education institutions) must recognise that international students make up a significant group within their local community and need to take steps to respond to their needs and provide them with support services.

What local government can and should be doing to support international students

In 2011, there were approximately 474,000 international students (combined total for all sectors) living in Australia, down from approximately 524,000 in 2010 (Australian Education International, 2012). The majority of these students live in neighbourhoods which are relatively close to their education institutions (Marginson *et al.*, 2010). This means that international students are primarily concentrated in local government areas that include or are close to, education institutions. Consequently, international students will likely be a significant presence in particular local government areas. For example, the City of Melbourne (a local government area which includes the central business district and several inner suburbs of Melbourne, Victoria) contains eight universities and over 90 private education institutions (primarily vocational educational and training colleges), with international students accounting for 27.5 per cent of enrolments in 2008 (City of Melbourne, 2010). This has resulted in international students coming to comprise approximately one third of all young people living in the City and about 10 per cent of its total resident population (City of Melbourne, 2010). International students are also recognised as a visible community group by local governments in a number of other Australian capital and

regional cities, for example the City of Adelaide (Adelaide City Council, n.d.a, n.d.b) in South Australia and the City of Wollongong (Wollongong UniCentre, 2012) in regional New South Wales. Despite not being citizens or permanent residents of Australia, international students are residents of the communities in which they live while completing their studies and for up to four years afterwards (with recent changes to the international student visa regime; Evans & Bowen 2011), and consequently have an impact on that community. Therefore, just like any other significant minority or interest group, international students have a right to protection and support from local government.

Given that local government has the capacity to at least partially address many of the issues international students face, there is a role and opportunity for local government to ameliorate students' current experience of social exclusion and improve their security through the provision of support services. This includes but is not limited to information on tenancy and employment rights, advocacy when dealing with landlords and employers, the establishment and/or promotion of home-stay programmes, the promotion of multiculturalism within the community, the establishment of social programmes to encourage international students to build social networks and promote general interaction between locals and international students. Many local governments already provide support services and programmes to their communities that would be useful to international students, but in many cases it appears the international students do not access these services either because of lack of eligibility or awareness that they are available (Victorian Immigrant and Refugee Women's Coalition 2009, as cited in Dunstan 2011). For example, many local governments offer language and youth services, as well as run community events designed to promote multiculturalism (for example, see City of Greater Dandenong, n.d.a, n.d.b; City of Melbourne, n.d.a, n.d.b; Darebin City Council, 2011a, 2011b). Such activities could easily be extended to include, and/or be marketed to, international students; as some local governments are already doing.

However, a simple but effective initiative that can be adopted by a local government council to assist its international student population is the establishment of a consultative committee that involves the students in discussions and decisions around the provision of services relevant to their needs. We know that Darebin City Council – a local government area in the north of metropolitan Melbourne, Victoria – has established the Darebin Overseas Student Association. Similarly Melbourne City Council has established a committee called InterComm3. These committees

permit a dialogue between the Councils and students, giving international students a voice that is easily heard by Council. We contend that these examples are a vital first step for setting up a successful international student support programme because engagement and empowerment are essential to addressing the social inclusion and security needs of international students.

While some may argue that the provision of support services for international students represents a significant burden on the limited financial resources of many local governments, there are ways to mitigate the cost. Volunteers (including international students themselves) can be used to run many programmes, as Darebin Council has done with its Festival of Lights event which served as a welcome to international students and celebration of Darebin's cultural diversity. The use of student volunteers

is of benefit not just to local government budgets but to the students themselves for participation in community activities can address issues of social isolation, develop English language competence and promote community development. Services and programmes could also be run in conjunction with charities, community groups

and religious groups, thereby splitting the costs between multiple parties. For example, the 'The Couch' international student centre in the Melbourne CBD was established by the Salvation Army, but with support from the City of Melbourne (Perkins 2009). Similarly, the "Welcome to Wollongong Project" is a joint initiative of the City of Wollongong (a regional coastal city located to the south of Sydney, in New South Wales), various education institutions located in Wollongong, and the Illawarra Business Chamber (Wollongong UniCentre, 2012). Another suggestion is to simply extend and/or raise awareness of existing and relevant local government services to international students thereby reducing costs of establishing new services.

There is also much to be gained from packaging international student support programmes into larger support programmes which target broader sections of the community. For example, both the City of Adelaide (a local government area covering the CBD of Adelaide in South Australia; Adelaide City Council, n.d.a, n.d.b) and the City of Melbourne (2010) have a large suite of social support programmes directed towards young people in general,

but included within these broader programmes are policies designed primarily to benefit international students. The 'packaging' approach serves to not only reduce the overall cost of providing support services specifically for international students by making them relevant to multiple sections of the population, but also makes the overall programme more appealing and relevant to the community. This, we contend, is vital for programme survival because such an approach assists in maintaining community support and political will for the programme.

Finally, to further strengthen support programmes, coordination and information sharing local government and educational institutions could share or spread costs between both parties while also increasing awareness of available programmes, particularly by leveraging institutional communication channels, such as email lists

and social media. This type of scheme could potentially provide education institutions with a source of competitive advantage, especially in today's falling market for international students, by allowing them to offer a broader range of services to students at low cost. Cost and information sharing arrangements could be

While some may argue that the provision of support services for international students represents a significant burden on the limited financial resources of many local governments, there are ways to mitigate the cost. Volunteers (including international students themselves) can be used to run many programmes...

mutually beneficial for both local government and education institutions with regard to providing support services to international students. For example, as a move in this direction, the cities of Brisbane (a local government area which includes the entire metropolitan area of Brisbane in Queensland; Study Brisbane, n.d.), Darebin (Darebin City Council, 2011b) and Wollongong (Wollongong UniCentre, 2012) all have their civic welcome events for international students sponsored, in part, by some education institutions located in their local government areas.

In summary, international students are a substantial minority in many local government areas, particularly those that contain, or are close to, major higher education institutions. In the absence of support for international students outside their educational institution and minimal on-campus support, local governments need to acknowledge the presence of international students within the community they service and provide them with appropriate support services, just as they would with any other significant community group. Local government has the capacity to assist international students and address many

of their issues, including their social exclusion and poor security. We have outlined in this section the numerous ways in which local governments can provide support, giving international students a voice being of particular importance. We have also offered suggestions for how local governments can reduce the financial burden of providing services, including working with local education institutions.

Conclusion

International students, due to their legal status and marginal location in Australian society, experience social exclusion and a reduced level of security in Australia. As a consequence they require a greater level of on-campus, but particularly off-campus, support compared to local students. There are both economic and ethical reasons for ensuring that international students are provided with this additional support. However, as a number of scholars show (e.g. Deumert *et al.*, 2005; Marginson *et al.*, 2010; Marginson, 2011) the current legislated welfare and security regime in Australia, and the level of support provided to international students is inadequate. International students are not simply consumers of educational services; they are temporary residents who need access to appropriate support.

Deumert *et al.* (2005) and Marginson (2011), propose a comprehensive international student security regime based on international students as global citizens deserving of full human rights. Unfortunately, at the current time – despite a review of the ESOS Act (Commonwealth of Australia, 2010a), an investigation into the industry by the Senate Standing Committee on Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (2009), and the development of an international student strategy out to 2014 by the Council of Australian Governments (2010) – neither the Australian Federal Government nor any of the State Governments have moved to adopt such an extensive international student security regime. Consequently, the support services for international students legally required to be provided by government and education institutions remain insufficient, particularly as it relates to international students' lives off-campus. This may become even more of an issue as international students begin to take advantage of recent changes to the international student visa regime allowing them to stay for up to four years after completing their studies (Evans & Bowen, 2011), as those students unable to obtain quality employment (or any employment at all) may find themselves still with limited financial resources but even less support.

This significant short-fall in the formal support network for international students opens up opportunities for local governments to fill this gap and the potential for local government and education institutions to partner in providing support for international students. We argue the role of local government in Australia is to meet the needs of the community, as well as to create a community which is civil, equitable and culturally sensitive. In recent times fulfilling this role has increasingly meant the provision of human services, such as healthcare, community development and recreation. International students form part of the local community during their stay in the host nation. As such, they deserve to be considered a part of the perceived community for which their local government is responsible and to have their needs met and concerns listened to. Therefore, we argue local governments have a role, particularly those who have significant international student populations within their boundaries, to extend existing services to include international students and, where necessary, establish new services to provide them with essential support.

For many local governments, the provision of such services will primarily be constrained by their limited financial resources. However, this should not prevent them from incorporating multiculturalism into their core services and thus providing services to international students. In this paper we have made several suggestions as to how the financial burden can be shared or reduced. In fact, the most important step that a local government can take with regard to providing support to international students, and one that is not very expensive at all, is to give them a voice through the creation of a local consultative body, and to listen to that voice.

We contend that local government is in a good, although far from perfect, position to fill the gap in support to international students left by the current legislative framework. However, such support will only be forthcoming when international students are recognised as legitimate members of their local community and given a voice in decisions that affect them which is commensurate with this position. Until that time, international students will face an uncertain and insecure future as outsiders existing on the fringes of Australian society.

Toby Paltridge is a PhD student and Susan Mayson is an academic in the Department of Management, Monash University, Australia.

Jan Schapper is an academic in the Department of Management, La Trobe Business School, Australia.

References

- Adams, T., Banks, M. & Olsen, A. (2011). Benefits of international education: enriching students, enriching communities. In Davis, D. & Mackintosh, B. (Eds.), *Making a difference: Australian international education* (pp. 9-46). Sydney, Australia: University of New South Wales Press Ltd.
- Adelaide City Council. (n.d.a). *Youth Strategy 2010-2014*. Retrieved from http://www.adelaidecitycouncil.com/assets/acc/Community/youth/docs/youth_strategy.pdf.
- Adelaide City Council. (n.d.b). *Youth Action Plan 2010-2011*. Retrieved from http://www.adelaidecitycouncil.com/assets/acc/Community/youth/docs/youth_action_plan.pdf.
- Atkinson, R. (2000). Combating social exclusion in Europe: The new urban policy challenge. *Urban Studies*, 37(5-6), 1037-1055.
- Australian Education International. (2011). *Export Income to Australia from Education Services in 2009-10*. Retrieved from: https://aei.gov.au/AEI/PublicationsAndResearch/Snapshots/2011011401_pdf.pdf.
- Australian Education International. (2012). *International student numbers 2011*. Retrieved from: <http://www.aei.gov.au/research/Research-Snapshots/Documents/International%20Student%20Numbers%202011.pdf>.
- Babacan, H., Pyke, J., Bhathal, A., Gill, G., Grossman, M. & Bertone, S. (2010). *The community safety of international students in Melbourne: A scoping study*. Retrieved from: <http://www.vu.edu.au/sites/default/files/icepa/pdf/The%20Community%20Safety%20of%20International%20Students%20in%20Melb%20A%20Scoping%20Study.pdf>.
- Bowen, C. (2009). *New visa measures to assist international students*. Retrieved on May 16, 2012, from <http://www.minister.immi.gov.au/media/media-releases/2009/ce09101.htm>.
- Caidi, N. & Allard, D. (2005). Social inclusion of newcomers to Canada: An information problem? *Library and Information Science Research*, 27(3), 302-324.
- Chapelaine, R. & Alexitch, L. (2004). Social Skills Difficulty: Model of Culture Shock for International Graduate Students. *Journal of College Student Development*, 45(2), 167-184.
- City of Greater Dandenong. (n.d.a). *Afghan Bazaar Cultural Tours*. Retrieved on March 21, 2012, from <http://www.greaterdandenong.com/Documents.asp?ID=10306&Title=Afghan+Bazaar+Cultural+Tours>.
- City of Greater Dandenong. (n.d.b). *Youth Counselling & Support Services*. Retrieved on March 21, 2012, from <http://www.greaterdandenong.com/Documents.asp?ID=7599&Title=Youth+Counselling+%26+Support+Services&Type=d>.
- City of Melbourne. (2010). *Empowering young people: Young people's policy 2010-13*. Melbourne, Australia: City of Melbourne.
- City of Melbourne. (2012a). *What's on for international students*. Retrieved on February 9, 2012, from <http://www.melbourne.vic.gov.au/CommunityServices/ForYouth/InternationalStudents/Pages/WhatsOnInternationalStudents.aspx>.
- City of Melbourne. (2012b). *International students*. Retrieved on February 9, 2012, from <http://www.melbourne.vic.gov.au/communityservices/foryouth/internationalstudents/Pages/Internationalstudents.aspx>.
- City of Melbourne. (n.d.a) *Multicultural services*. Retrieved on March 21, 2012, from <http://www.melbourne.vic.gov.au/CommunityServices/MulticulturalServices/Pages/Multiculturalservices.aspx>.
- City of Melbourne. (n.d.b). *For youth*. Retrieved on March 21, 2012, from <http://www.melbourne.vic.gov.au/CommunityServices/ForYouth/Pages/Youth.aspx>.
- Commonwealth of Australia. (2010a). *Stronger, simpler, smarter ESOS: supporting international students – Review of the Education Services for Overseas Students (ESOS) Act 2000*. Retrieved from http://www.aei.gov.au/AEI/GovernmentActivities/InternationalStudentsTaskforce/ESOS_REview_Final_Report_Feb_2010_pdf.pdf.
- Commonwealth of Australia. (2010b). *International student survey 2010*. Retrieved from http://www.aei.gov.au/AEI/PublicationsAndResearch/Publications/2010_International_Student_Report_pdf.pdf.
- Council of Australian Governments. (2010). *International student strategy for Australia*. Retrieved from http://www.coag.gov.au/reports/docs/aus_international_students_strategy.pdf.
- Darebin City Council. (2011a). *Multicultural services*. Retrieved on March 21, 2012, from http://www.darebin.vic.gov.au/Page/Page.aspx?Page_Id=102.
- Darebin City Council. (2011b). *Festival of light and friendship*. Retrieved on March 21, 2012, from http://www.darebin.vic.gov.au/page/Page.aspx?Page_Id=7934.
- Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations. (2007). *National Code of Practice for Registration Authorities and Providers of Education and Training to Overseas Students 2007*. Retrieved from https://www.aei.gov.au/Regulatory-Information/Education-Services-for-Overseas-Students-ESOS-Legislative-Framework/National-Code/Documents/National_Code_2007_pdf.pdf.
- Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations. (2009). *Students: Selected Higher Education Statistics*. Retrieved on December 3, 2009, from http://www.dest.gov.au/sectors/higher_education/publications_resources/profiles/Students/2008_full_year.htm.
- Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government. (2010). *2007-08 local government national report*. Retrieved from http://www.infrastructure.gov.au/local/publications/pdf/LGNR_2007-08.pdf.
- Deumert, A., Marginson, S., Nyland, C., Ramia, G. and Sawir, E. (2005). Global migration and social protection rights: the social and economic security of cross-border students in Australia. *Global Social Policy*, 5(3), 329-352.
- Dollery, B., Wallis, J. & Allan, P. (2006). The debate that had to happen but never did: the changing role of Australian local government. *Australian Journal of Political Science*, 41(4), 553-567.
- Dunn, K., Thompson, S., Hanna, B., Murphy, P. & Burnley, I. (2001). Multicultural Policy within Local Government in Australia. *Urban Studies*, 38(13), 2477-2494.
- Dunstan, P. (2011). Beyond the campus: Student engagement and community responses. In Davis, D. & Mackintosh, B. (Eds.), *Making a difference: Australian international education* (pp. 338-364). Sydney, Australia: University of New South Wales Press Ltd.
- Evans, C. & Bowen, C. (2011, November 30). *Government extends support for international education*. Retrieved on April 2, 2012, from <http://www.minister.immi.gov.au/media/cb/2011/cb180779.htm>.
- Forbes-Mewett, H. & Nyland, C. (2008). Cultural Diversity, Relocation, and the Security of International Students at an Internationalised University. *Journal of Studies in International Education*, 12(2), 181-203.
- Ham, L. (2011, April 27). 7-Eleven operators fined \$150K for exploiting students. *The Age*. Retrieved on May 16, 2012, from <http://www.theage.com.au/small-business/franchising/7eleven-operators-fined-150k-for-exploiting-students-20110427-1dwtc.html>.
- Haratsis, B. (1992). *Enterprise: The new business of local government*. Melbourne, Australia: Hargreen.
- Jakubowicz, A. & Monani, D. (2010). *International Student Futures in Australia: A Human Rights Perspective on Moving Forward to Real Action*. Canberra, Australia: The Academy of Social Sciences in Australia. Retrieved from http://www.assa.edu.au/publications/occasional_papers/2010_No6.php.
- Jones, M. (1989). *Managing local government: Leadership for the 21st century*. Melbourne, Australia: Hargreen.
- Kiss, R. (1999). Local government to local administration. The new order. In Costar, B. & Economou, N. (Eds.), *The Kennett Revolution: Victorian politics in the 1990s* (pp. 110-121). Sydney, Australia: UNSW Press.

- Lane, B. (2011, January 26). International sector reaps record dividend, but crash looms. *The Australian*. Retrieved on February 1, 2011, from <http://www.theaustralian.com.au/higher-education/international-sector-reaps-record-dividend-but-crash-looms/story-e6frgcjx-1225994500389>.
- Marginson, S. (2011). It's a long way down: The underlying tensions in the education export industry. *Australian Universities' Review*, 53(2), 21-33.
- Marginson, S., Nyland, C., Sawir, E. & Forbes-Mewett, H. (2010). *International student security*: Cambridge, UK; New York, NY; Melbourne, Australia; Madrid, Spain; Cape Town, South Africa; Singapore, Singapore; Sao Paulo, Brazil; Delhi, India; Dubai, United Arab Emirates; Tokyo, Japan: Cambridge University Press.
- Mazzarol, T. & Soutar, G. (2002). "Push-pull" factors influencing international student destination choice. *The International Journal of Educational Management*, 16(2), 82-90.
- Millar, J. (2007). Social Exclusion and Social Policy Research: Defining Exclusion. In Abrams, D., Christian, J. & Gordon, D. (Eds), *Multidisciplinary Handbook of Social Exclusion Research* (pp. 1-16). Chichester, England; Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, Ltd.
- Mori, S. (2000). Addressing the mental health concerns of international students. *Journal of Counselling & Development*, 78(Spring), 137-144.
- Morris, S. (1986). *Principles and programme: the restructure of local government in Victoria*. Melbourne, Australia: VGPS.
- Nyland, C., Forbes-Mewett, H. & Marginson, S. (2010). The international student safety debate: Moving beyond denial. *Higher Education Research and Development*, 29(1), 89-101.
- Olding, R. & Kwek, G. (2012, March 22). Tasered Brazilian student had 'brilliant future'. *The Age*. Retrieved on May 16, 2012, from <http://www.theage.com.au/national/tasered-brazilian-student-had-brilliant-future-20120321-1vkdr.html>.
- O'Reilly, D. (2005). Social inclusion: A philosophical anthropology. *Politics*, 25(2), 80-88.
- Paltridge, T. (2009). *The effect of university accommodation on international students' socio-cultural adjustment*. (Unpublished Honours dissertation). Monash University, Melbourne, Australia.
- Paltridge, T., Mayson, S. & Schapper, J. (2010). The contribution of university accommodation to international student security. *Journal of Higher Education Policy and Management*, 32(4), 353-364.
- Perkins, M. (2009, July 9). Soft landing for foreign relations. *The Age*. Retrieved on May 16, 2012, from <http://www.theage.com.au/national/soft-landing-for-foreign-relations-20090708-ddfd.html>.
- Perrucci, R. & Hu, H. (1995). Satisfaction with social and educational experiences among international graduate students. *Research in Higher Education*, 36(4), 491-508.
- Peterson, D. M., Briggs, P., Dreasher, L., Horner, D. D. & Nelson, T. (1999). Contributions of international students and programs to campus diversity. *New Directions for Student Services*, 86, 67-77.
- Raffo, C. & Gunter, H. (2008). Leading schools to promote social inclusion: developing a conceptual framework for analysing research, policy and practice. *Journal of Education Policy*, 23(4), 397-414.
- Sawir, E., Marginson, S., Deumert, A., Nyland, C. and Ramia, G. (2008). Loneliness and International Students: An Australian Study. *Journal of Studies in International Education*, 12(3), 1-33.
- Senate Standing Committee on Education, Employment and Workplace Relations. (2009). *Welfare of international students*. Canberra, Australia: Senate Printing Unit.
- Silver, H. (1994). Social exclusion and social solidarity: Three paradigms. *International Labour Review*, 133(5-6), 531-578.
- Steinert, H. (2003). Introduction: The cultures of welfare and exclusion. In Steinert, H. & Pilgram, A. (Eds), *Welfare policy from below: Struggles against social exclusion in Europe* (pp. 1-10). Hampshire, England: Ashgate Publishing Limited.
- Study Brisbane. (n.d.). *Brisbane welcomes international students 2012*. Retrieved on May 14, 2012, from <http://www.studybrisbane.com.au/Study/BWIS/Default.aspx>.
- Thakur, M. & Hourigan, C. (2007). International student experience: What it is, what it means and why it matters. *Journal of Institutional Research*, 13(1), 42-61.
- Thornton, J. (1995). *The urban parish: An alternative approach to local government amalgamation*. Canberra, Australia: Local Government Development Programme Research Series.
- Wollongong UniCentre. (2012). *Welcome to Wollongong*. Retrieved on May 14, 2012, from <http://unicentre.uow.edu.au/v2w/index.html>.
- Yeh, C. & Inose, M. (2003). International students' reported English fluency, social support satisfaction, and social connectedness as predictors of acculturative stress. *Counselling Psychology Quarterly*, 16(1), 15-28.