

Students reject ‘status quo’ of enshrined discrimination and Watkins’ excuses

Members of the Cross–Campus Concessions Coalition (CCCC) have rejected the rationale presented to NSW politicians by the Minister for Transport to garner support for his proposals to enshrine statutory discrimination against international students.

The CCCC has condemned John Watkins, the NSW Minister for Transport, for his stubborn pursuit of an amendment to the *Transport Administration Act* that seeks to the entrench the discriminatory practices of the NSW Government towards over 59,000 international university students. A recent decision of the Administrative Decisions Tribunal (ADT) found the NSW Government was in breach of the *Anti-Discrimination Act 1977* by failing to grant travel concessions to international students.

Jenny Leong, CCCC Spokesperson and President of Sydney University Postgraduate Representative Association said: “The Minister has decided to treat the finding of the Tribunal with contempt. In the Cross Bench Briefing on the Bill he continues to misrepresent the issue by stating that international students are not eligible for concessions because it is a requirement of their student visa administered by the Commonwealth Government that they have enough money to support themselves.”

“This argument was rejected by the Tribunal. The NSW Government cannot use Federal visa requirements as an excuse for racial discrimination. Far from ensuring they are ‘consistent with Commonwealth policy’, as the Minister claims in this briefing, the NSW Government continues to use this as a smokescreen to deflect from the real issue,” she added.

In the briefing, the Minister downplays the significance of the amendment, claiming he is ‘reinforcing the status quo’ and seeking to ensure transport concessions are available to others. Ruchir Punjabi, CCCC Spokesperson and International Student Officer of Sydney University Students’ Representative Council said: “A change in the law to enshrine discrimination is not necessary to ensure other worthy groups are provided with travel concessions. This is a divisive and misleading tactic on the Minister’s part.”

“The Government continues to derive significant economic benefits from international students, but that may change,” he added. “International students will now give careful consideration as to whether they choose to study in a State where they are subject to enshrined statutory discrimination.” he added.

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The *Cross-Campus Concessions Coalition* includes student representatives from the University of Newcastle, University of NSW, University of Technology Sydney, Macquarie University, University of Sydney, University of Western Sydney, University of Wollongong. The Coalition was formed after the Administrative Decisions Tribunal found the NSW Minister for Transport, the Ministry of Transport, the State Rail Authority and the State Transit Authority in breach of the NSW Anti-Discrimination Act by not granting international students access to transport concessions. This decision can be accessed at: <http://www.lawlink.nsw.gov.au/adtdgments/2006nswadt.nsf/367cac199eaa00eca2570ec0018a6d8/e6f099f13210a370ca257138001e4fc6?OpenDocument>.