

## Student Organisation Leaders Convene to Rebuild Student Voice in International Education

March 2025

**5 March 2025** – student leaders from across the country gathered by the Council of Australian Postgraduate Associations (CAPA) and the [NSW International Student Representative Committee](#), met with peak industry leaders from the National Student Ombudsman, Welcoming Universities, the Commonwealth Department of Education, International Education Association of Australia, to discuss how to [collectively re-establish the national student voice in international education](#). The event hosted by the [Sydney University Postgraduate Student Association](#).

With the support of student leaders from University of Melbourne, University of Queensland, University of Sydney, University of Adelaide, University of New South Wales, Monash University, University of Technology Sydney, University of Wollongong, University of Western Australia and Central Queensland University, Weihong Liang, CAPA International Student Officer, announced the launch of CAPA's National International Student Voice Campaign.



“Our key priority is to revive Australia’s mechanisms for listening to students’ voices,” Weihong said.

“As an organisation of postgraduate student leaders, CAPA is committed to placing international students at the heart of any new peak body,” said CAPA National President Jesse Gardner-Russell.

“As experienced and trusted national student leaders, CAPA will be facilitating a broad national consultation process with international students from all areas of education.”

## The Gap in International Education Representation

Our roundtable discussions with student and industry leaders identified that since the collapse of the Council for International Student Association:

- Student voices are not being heard in policymaking
- There is an increasing complexity of representing the diverse needs of international students
- International student leaders need mentoring, training and ongoing support
- International students face unique challenges in navigating complex political and policy structures to be effective advocates.

“We have not had a dedicated national student association actively representing and speaking for international students studying in Australia for at least three years, which has meant that while universities, larger student unions and the Australian public discuss the future of international students, nobody hears from us.”

“At the same time, many media stories and social media posts have misrepresented the reality of life as an international student, and we have not had any organisation focused on correcting the mistakes and giving Australians a true picture of who we are, what we contribute and how to address key issues,” said Weihong.

## Towards a National International Student Representative Institution

To meaningfully engage students, education providers must view them as equal partners, rather than merely as customers receiving a service. Therefore, it is essential that any future international student body is designed by students, for students.

Student leaders identified the following key principles for a successful international student body:

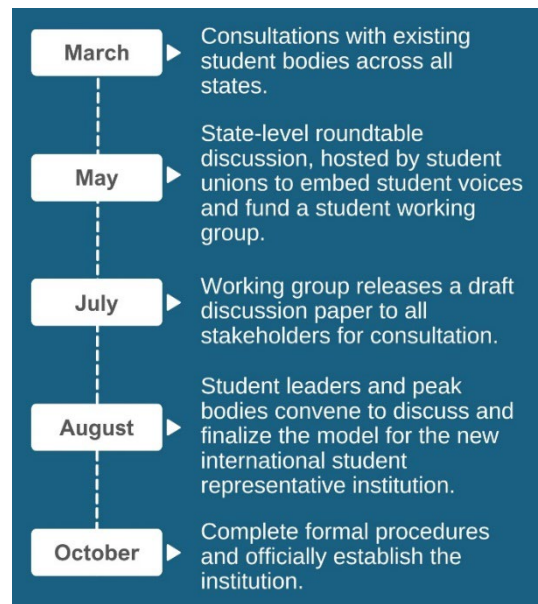
- Bring students together to act on key issues.
- Facilitate meaningful engagement with policymakers, especially early in the process.
- Lead education campaigns to improve student conditions.
- Ensure that student voices remain at the centre of international education.



## Roadmap for Rebuilding International Student Representation

CAPA believes that student organisations play a vital role in fostering student engagement and partnership. Representative bodies serve as passages between the student population and the university administration, enabling students' voice in the governance and decision-making processes that shape their educational experience.

Student leaders agreed that this event marks the beginning of an important initiative, with the goal of formally establishing the new body by the end of 2025.



### Call for Collaboration

In 2017, Council of Australian Postgraduate Associations (CAPA), National Union of Students (NUS), National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Postgraduate Association (NATSIPA), and Council of International Students Australia (CISA) signed an Memorandum of Understanding to promote collaboration, mutual support on student issues, and sharing of non-confidential policies. The MoU underscores that no single organisation can represent all students and that only through collaboration can students be fairly represented at the national level.

Student leaders recognise that this effort cannot succeed without the support of universities, industry, government, TAFE, schools and the wider student community. We call on all stakeholders to join us in this initiative—through support, suggestions, and participation—to strengthen the student voice in international education.

### Weihong Liang & Jesse Gardner-Russell

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