

## **Sydney University international students gain more support and a new governance model**

The Sydney University Postgraduate Representative Association (SUPRA) is pleased to report significant progress in advocating for international students at the University of Sydney. This follows a comprehensive roundtable discussion during the University's centenary celebrations of international student education. The University, in agreement with SUPRA and student organizations, has committed to developing a roadmap aligned with its 2023 strategy and establishing a formal governance model for international student support.

### **Context of the roundtable discussion**

2023 marks a milestone year, celebrating both the 100+ years of the first known international student at the University and the return of international students onshore post-pandemic. In collaboration with student organizations and coordinated by Student Life, SUPRA led a series of activities aimed at fostering social connections and recognizing the valuable contributions of international students.

The roundtable discussion, a student-initiated concept, united student representatives and University leaders, facilitating a deep dive into the current needs and experiences of international students. This forum was an opportunity to voice concerns and provide insights directly from the international student community.

### **Key discussion themes and insights**

The discussion revolved around four primary themes: Learning and Academic Experience, Governance and Institutional Model, Employability and Career Advancement, and Living in Sydney and Wellbeing. Key insights included:

- **Learning and Academic Experience:** Students expressed the need for consistent pre-arrival and onboarding processes, better faculty support, and more regular academic touchpoints.
- **Governance and Institutional Model:** There was a call for a strategic plan for international student support, advocating for a governance model that addresses visa arrangements, advocacy, and employability.
- **Employability and Career Advancement:** Students highlighted the necessity for the University to build relationships with international employers and to integrate internships into international student programs.
- **Living in Sydney, Wellbeing, and Support:** The need for multi-language, peer-to-peer support information, clearer healthcare policies, better accommodation guidance, and more scholarships was emphasized.

### **Proposed key actions and commitments**

In response to these discussions, the following actions have been proposed:

- Establishment of a formal governance model for international student support: a proposed subcommittee under the UE-Education Committee is currently under

development.

- A student-staff advisory program will be established to develop a roadmap in coordination with Student Life, aligning with the University's 2032 strategy.

## **A unified effort for a brighter future**

In 2024 SUPRA is leading student representatives in ongoing consultations with Student Life to establish the new subcommittee and to ensure quick wins such as improving quality of information provided to Sydney Future Students with respect to postgraduate pathways at university, improving orientation and onboarding experiences and early information to new students on accommodation options and their residential tenancy rights and access to support. Importantly, SUPRA proposes that democratically elected student representatives who are chosen to sit on the subcommittee be remunerated for their time and quality participation.

'We are grateful for the support of the Pro Vice Chancellor of Student Life, Prof. Susana Scarparo, for her prompt response in sponsoring the Subcommittee relevant to international students, positioning it within the Education sector. This ensures that international students' concerns about their learning experience receive direct attention from the faculties,' said SUPRA President Weihong Liang.

