



The Hon. Dr Geoff Lee MP
Minister for Skills and Tertiary Education
Acting Minister for Sport, Multiculturalism, Seniors and Veterans

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Mr Gurnam Singh
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Dear Mr Singh *Gurnam*

Thank you for the opportunity to participate in the COVID-19 Virtual Round Table on Wednesday 1 July 2020 to talk about the challenges facing international students as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

International education is key to the NSW economy contributing more than \$13 billion to the NSW economy each year, creating thousands of jobs and helping support university research and infrastructure. I acknowledge its importance for our global engagement, cultural awareness and for the major economic impact it has for New South Wales and Australia.

International students are valued members of NSW society. They enrich our higher education and multicultural communities and offer cross-cultural insights that benefits our society.

The NSW Government has announced a \$20 million package to help support international students through COVID-19 that includes temporary crisis accommodation, a dedicated 24/7 NSW Government COVID-19 hotline (13 77 88), and 50,000 free subscriptions to the multilingual My Legal Mate student app. For more information, students should visit <http://www.study.sydney/news-and-stories/news/covid-19-international-student-welfare-support>.

You may be interested to note that as the Acting Minister for Multiculturalism I recently announced the COVID-19 Community Support Grants program, which is providing over \$6 million in funding for multicultural communities including migrants and temporary visa holders. More than \$500,000 of this funding will go towards providing immediate assistance for basic necessities like food, transport and language support for these vulnerable people.

Universities in NSW have also committed more than \$180 million to support the welfare of their domestic and international students. Some universities are allowing delays to fee payments as well as offering grants and interest free loans.

Many international students who complete their studies choose to make NSW their long-term home. For those who return to their home countries, their positive experiences while studying in NSW can lead to lasting personal and professional relationships between international and domestic graduates. These bonds help NSW to maintain its position as a leading global study destination.

Yours sincerely

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