



Committee Secretary  
Legal Affairs and Safety Committee  
Parliament House  
Alice Street  
Brisbane QLD 4000

**11 July 2021**

**Submissions to Inquiry Into Serious Vilification and Hate Crimes**

To whom it may concern,

The Council of International Students Australia (CISA) welcomes the opportunity to contribute to the Committee's inquiry into Serious Vilification and Hate Crimes in Queensland. CISA is the national peak student representative body for international students in Australia. Formed in 2010, we are a non-profit, non-partisan and noncommercially aligned organization in response to the need for a national voice and unified advocacy for the more than 650,000 international students in Australia studying onshore or offshore.

This submission will first provide a general introduction of the situation of international students in Australia when it comes to being target of racism and racial vilification. It will then address the specific recommendations discussed in the *Serious Vilification and Hate Crime: The Need for Legislative Reform* options paper ('**options paper**').

This submission is made on behalf of the national Executive Committee of CISA. We welcome the opportunity to answer any questions from the Committee regarding this submission. We can be contacted via [REDACTED]

Kind Regards,

Belle Lim

National President

Kevin Marco Tanaya

National Secretary

## **International Students and Incidents of Racism and Racial Vilification**

It is an unfortunately undeniable and greatly concerning fact that international students in Australia are no stranger to being subject to racist incidents and vilification. It must be noted that many international students originate from Asia or are persons of colour. While it was by no means the cause of ongoing racial discrimination, the COVID-19 pandemic has further worsened the situation as we have seen increasing instances of racist incidents and vilification targeted at people of Asian descent in Australia<sup>1</sup> since the start of the pandemic, including international students.<sup>2</sup>

Without diminishing the experience of racism suffered by Australians, it must also be noted that there is arguably an extra salient dimension when it comes international students experience with racism. International students may be used as an avenue for individuals to engage in 'proxy racism'. That is, they might engage in racist and harmful stereotyping or vilification against international students, along with other temporary visa holders, of a particular race as they feel it is 'safer' or more justified to do than if they had directly targeted Australian citizens of that race. Regardless, direct or proxy, racism is racism and should be seen as equally unacceptable.

## **Actions against Serious Vilification and Hate Crimes**

Whether in Queensland, Australia or the rest of the world, no single initiative will resolve the problem of racism. It is a systemic and deeply embedded issue that calls for an equally comprehensive policy response.

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<sup>1</sup> Jason Om, 'Report Reveal Racist Abuse Experience by Asian Australians during Coronavirus Pandemic', ABC News (online, 24 July 2020) <<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2020-07-24/coronavirus-racism-report-reveals-asian-australians-abuse/12485734>>; Chin Tan, 'Where's all the data on COVID-19 racism?', Australian Human Rights Commission (Web Post, 9 May 2020) <<https://humanrights.gov.au/about/news/opinions/wheres-all-data-covid-19-racism>>.

<sup>2</sup> Bassina Farbenblum and Laurie Berg, "'Garbage' and 'Cash Cows': Temporary Migrants Describe the Anguish of Exclusion and Racism During COVID-19", *The Conversation* (online, 17 September 2020) <<https://theconversation.com/garbage-and-cash-cows-temporary-migrants-describe-anguish-of-exclusion-and-racism-during-covid-19-146098>>; Catalina Florez, 'Racism has impacted a quarter of Australia's International Students During the Pandemic', SBS News (online, 17 September 2020) <<https://www.sbs.com.au/news/racism-has-impacted-a-quarter-of-australia-s-international-students-during-the-pandemic>>

It is apparent from the options paper that there are significant legal issues when it comes to addressing both the most egregious instances of racism and 'minor' incidents of racism. CISA is in agreement with the recommendations of the options paper. We respectfully submit that the Committee should seriously consider the recommendations of the options paper and be amenable to its conclusions.

We do respectfully highlight that boosting community confidence that their report of racial vilification and hate crimes would be taken seriously is of particular importance. The effect of stronger laws may be blunted if the community remains sceptical that these laws would be enforced.

We also respectfully submit that any reforms should be accompanied with greater efforts to educate and inform the community about the said reforms and the issue of racial vilification and hate crimes more generally, including measures specifically aimed to inform international students.

Finally, we also respectfully submit that greater funding and assistance to agencies that assist those subjected to vilification and hate crimes is needed in conjunction with any adopted reforms. This includes the Queensland Human Rights Commission, legal aid agencies and community legal centres, with special focus on organizations and initiatives assisting international students, migrants, or those who speak English as a second language.