



His Excellency the Honorable Dr Kevin Rudd AC

Embassy of Australia

Via email

RE: U.S. Student Visas for Australia

Dear Mr. Ambassador:

We are writing today to ask for your assistance in advocating for a reconsideration of the 125% fee increase for student visas (subclass 500) to Australia, that went into effect July 2, 2024.

NAFSA: Association of International Educators and The Forum on Education Abroad collectively represent thousands of U.S. institutions and their study abroad staff, who in turn assist their students in securing visas to study in Australia. Our members have recruited students eager to study in Australia later this year. Overnight, however, students have seen the cost of a visa skyrocket to \$1600 AUD. This drastic fee change is coupled with much longer visa processing times than ever before. These factors deter students from participating in study abroad in Australia.

The large majority of students from U.S. institutions who wish to study in Australia are non-award/non-degree seeking students whose sojourns are fewer than two semesters. The students do not earn bachelor's degrees in Australia: their goals are for cultural and academic exchange and to experience Australia and its world-class institutions. These are ideal visiting students, who engage with Australian students and culture, add to the diversity of classrooms, bolster the local economy, and then return home to finish their academic degree.

According to the most recent *Open Doors* data released by the Institute of International Education¹, Australia has traditionally been one of the most popular study destinations for American students. Prior to the global pandemic, Australia consistently ranked as one of the top 10 destinations for U.S. students' non-award study. For 2015-2020, over 20,000 U.S. students in Australia contributed to the local economy and supported jobs at

¹ <https://opendoorsdata.org/>

universities and businesses. Now, Australia has dropped out of the top 25 destinations for study abroad for U.S. students. This recent student visa fee increase is likely to prevent Australia from returning to its pre-COVID popularity with American students.

NAFSA and The Forum, on behalf of our members, believe that the new visa fee is an unreasonable cost for a non-award student, whose stay in Australia is relatively short. The fee is a significant barrier to study in Australia, especially when compared with study options in other English-dominant locations. We request that the Ministries of Home Affairs and Education consider a reasonable visa fee of \$800AUD, or 50% of the July 1 increase, for short-term, non-award students.

International education, including study abroad, provides a way for burgeoning scholars, scientists, philosophers, and other young adults to collaborate and address complex problems that we face together. These will be our future leaders, contributing to important diplomatic, business and scientific roles between our two countries. We appreciate your consideration of a more reasonable fee, ensuring more students can participate in these international exchange opportunities.

We would welcome any opportunity to discuss with the Embassy what can be done enable American students to travel to Australia.

Sincerely,

Signature Redacted

Fanta Aw

Executive Director & CEO

NAFSA: Association of International Educators

Signature Redacted

Melissa A. Torres

President & CEO

The Forum on Education Abroad

Cc: Phil Honeywood, CEO, International Education Association of Australia (IEAA)