

Multicultural Melbourne

Dear Swinburne Partner,

Australia is a vast multicultural country, offering opportunities for many people around the world. In fact, 'Multicultural Melbourne' is home to more than 130 different nationalities and was recently named the third most liveable city in the world (*Economist*, 2009).

A large proportion of Swinburne staff and students have an international background and recent media coverage suggesting that Australia is unsafe and unwelcoming does not represent their personal experience.



The [Swinburne Punjabi Club's recent Vaisakhi celebrations](#) – which were held at the Hawthorn campus – is just one example of how staff and students from different nationalities

are able to come together, have fun and gain a greater understanding of one another's culture.

What do our staff and students have to say?

We've spoken to a number of staff and students from India who have come to think of Melbourne as a 'home away from home'. They say they've always felt welcome and haven't had reason to feel vulnerable or unsafe. You can read a sample of their experiences in this update.

What are we doing to support student safety?

Swinburne takes student wellbeing seriously and we have many services in place to ensure the safety of our students. We held a focus group earlier this month to gauge how students are feeling and find out what more we can do to improve their safety.

How are we working with authorities in India?

We're working closely with authorities in India to reassure them that Australia is a safe and welcoming country. Consul-General of India, Ms Anita Nayar, will be a guest speaker at one of our graduation ceremonies in July and earlier this month we hosted a delegation from the Telegu Desam Party (TDP).

If prospective students or their parents have any concerns about safety issues that you are unable to answer, please encourage them to email international@swinburne.edu.au.

Yours sincerely,

Mr Jeffrey Smart
Pro Vice-Chancellor (International and Recruitment)

Pre-departure sessions in India

Mr Lyndon Joseph will be travelling to India for the following pre-departure sessions and will be joined by AEI Counsellor Mr Quentin Stevenson-Perks in Delhi.

| City | Date | Venue |
|-----------|------------------|-----------------------|
| Hyderabad | Tuesday 30 June | Taj Krishna Hotel |
| Delhi | Friday 3 July | Hotel Hyatt Residency |
| Chennai | Wednesday 8 July | The Park Hotel |

Please visit our website for [times and venue locations](#).

Student safety at Swinburne

Student health, safety and wellbeing is a priority at Swinburne. We provide numerous facilities and services to support the safety of all our students. These include:

Detailed pre-departure and orientation information

Including an information session by Victoria Police about keeping safe in Melbourne.

Ongoing counselling and support services

We have a dedicated team of International Student Advisers as well as free and confidential counselling.

24-hour security at all campuses

Security facilities on-campus include CCTV and a late-night chaperon service to accompany students around campus, to their car or the train station.

A free night bus service

Students can be dropped off safely in the local area to the Hawthorn, Lilydale and Prahran campuses.

In response to our student safety focus group earlier this month, we're also producing a wallet-sized safety card with relevant contact numbers for all students. We will continue to work closely with Victoria Police to raise awareness about personal safety and with Swinburne Security to improve security measures around campus.

➔ Find out more about [student safety at Swinburne](#).

What do our students have to say?



Anuroop Sabharwal has been living in Australia for one and a half years and says recent media coverage hasn't changed her perception of Melbourne. "Swinburne has been a part of my life since I arrived," she says. "I have never felt like there has been any discrimination."

"Swinburne has many people from different backgrounds and they encourage a multicultural environment."

Senate inquiry into education

The Australian Senate has agreed to an inquiry into international education. This follows pressure from a number of student and peak bodies, including the International Education Association of Australia (IEAA).

In particular, the inquiry will investigate:

- Student safety
- Adequate and affordable accommodation
- Social inclusion
- Student visa requirements
- Adequate student support and advocacy
- Employment and protection from exploitation

The inquiry will also look into the roles of education providers, migration and education agents, state and federal governments and is expected to be delivered by Monday 16 November 2009.

“Despite the efforts of many institutions and individuals, we have slipped in our duty of care to some of our international students,” said Stephen Connelly, IEAA President and Swinburne’s Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Development and Engagement).

“The recent events are not symptomatic of a change in the Australian community’s attitude towards international students, but they are a wake up call that we always need to be proactive in support of our students.”

What do our staff have to say?

“I have been here for two years and haven’t found any traces of racism,” says Professor Ajay Kapoor, Associate Dean (International) in the Faculty of Engineering and Industrial Sciences.



“I find Australians to be very open – they say what is in their hearts. This allows me to do the same and I find that absolutely superb”.

“Melbourne is one of the safest cities.”

Professor Ajay Kapoor

Professor Kapoor and his family moved to Melbourne two years ago – after spending more than 20 years in the UK – and have felt very accepted in the wider community.

“A couple of isolated incidents do not make the whole city unsafe,” he says. “In my 20 years of living outside of India I have never lived in a better place than Melbourne”.

Indian politicians meet with Swinburne



Swinburne was pleased to host a delegation from India’s Telegu Desam Party (TDP) earlier this month as part of the group’s visit to meet with the Australian Government and the Indian High Commission.

TDP parliamentary leader Nama Nageswara Rao led the delegation that included A Revanth Reddy, a member of the Andhra Pradesh State Assembly representing the Kodangal constituency.

Swinburne Deputy Vice-Chancellor Stephen Connelly met with the group and reassured them that Australians would not tolerate the recent attacks on Indian students.

“Police have confirmed that the attacks were not racially motivated but rather a result of general community issues in particular suburbs, around the use of public transport late at night at certain stations,” Connelly said.

He explained that extra police have been deployed near trouble-prone spots in the suburbs and the Australian Government has set up a task force – chaired by Australia’s National Security Adviser – to ensure a coordinated, effective approach is adopted.

Universities Australia steps into action

Australia’s peak industry body representing the university sector, Universities Australia, has adopted a ten point action plan for student safety.

“Universities believe that the situation requires a national response and close cooperation between all education providers and the Commonwealth government, state authorities, foreign governments and their diplomatic representatives and other partners [to ensure] the present and future safety of all students,” said Dr Glenn Withers, Chief Executive of Universities Australia.

➔ Find out about the [Universities Australia action plan](#).

More reading

Australia has a proud multicultural history and the majority of international students have a truly enriching experience. Here is a sample of positive stories about life in Australia.

[Australia is the home of multiculturalism](#)
The Hindu (Monday 8 June)

[Indians and police bond over cricket](#)
SBS World News Australia (Friday 19 June)

[The other view from Down Under](#)
Ahmedabad Mirror (Monday 22 June)