Dated 2nd June 2009

Dear Swinburne Representatives,

I write to address the serious concerns around the safety of Indian students studying in Melbourne and to reassure you that at Swinburne we are doing all that we can to support our Indian students at this time.

Studying and living in a new culture brings many rewards but there are also challenges. Issues around health, safety and wellbeing can impact on a student’s study experience.

Swinburne University of Technology has a proud history of providing education to students from across India over many years. Many of our alumni have returned to India to positions of influence in government, business, industry and social services.

Our Indian students are an important part of our student community. Last month, the Swinburne Punjabi Student Club staged a festival to celebrate Vaisakhi, which was opened by our Vice-Chancellor, Professor Ian Young. (http://www.international.swinburne.edu.au/about/news/vaisakhi.html)

The festival was attended by Swinburne students of all nationalities, and is an excellent example of the way in which Indian students are educating students from Australia and around the world about the culture of their country.

Swinburne has numerous procedures and activities in place to support the safety and wellbeing of all international students, which we would like to outline for you:

- Pre-departure Information with information about safety and security
- Online advice about safety and security, including links to external websites
- Links to other websites on dealing with safety and security issues
- Orientation sessions involving Victoria Police
- International Student Advisors at all campuses
- Counselling services
- Targeted workshops
- Upgrading of security arrangements on all Swinburne campuses
- Night bus at the Swinburne Lilydale campus
- And many more.
Further initiatives are currently being discussed to ensure that the safety of all our international students. Swinburne has a good working relationship with Victoria Police. We will continue to work with the Victoria Police and other emergency services in order to develop joint strategies to raise safety awareness amongst Indian and other international students.

We are working with other Victorian and Australian universities to ensure that our efforts in student safety and wellbeing are coordinated as effectively as possible. The Australian universities are in regular contact with consular staff from India and other countries as we work together to improve the experience of all international students. We are also working with student groups, and the International Education Association of Australia, to ensure that a cross-sectoral response to this issue is made.

I’m sure you will agree with me that media reports of Australia as a ‘racist’ country are sensationalist. Any attack on any student is to be condemned. But those of us who work in international education know that the vast majority of Indian students studying in Australia have a positive experience. It is up to all of us to ensure that students have access to the best possible safety information, services and support.

I would encourage you to reassure students and their families that Swinburne is doing everything in its power to ensure the wellbeing of our students. Our Indian students are acknowledging this support.

If prospective students or their parents have any concerns about safety issues that you are not able to answer yourself, please don’t hesitate to contact me for assistance at jsmart@swin.edu.au, or encourage them to email: international@swinburne.edu.au

If current Swinburne students are writing to you expressing concern, please don’t hesitate to ask them to contact me at jsmart@swin.edu.au

Thank you for the services you provide to students, and your ongoing support of Swinburne, and of Australian education more broadly. It is my hope that by working together, we can overcome this difficult situation.

Yours sincerely,

Jeffrey Smart
Pro Vice-Chancellor (International and Recruitment)
EMAIL SENT TO ALL INDIAN STUDENTS ON FRIDAY 29 MAY, 2009

Dear students

Please check the following link: http://www.international.swinburne.edu.au/arrival/living-in-melbourne/safety/

You may be aware of recent reports regarding the assault on a group of Indian students and the hospitalisation of one of those students. The perpetrator of this assault has been caught and, police advice is that this was a random attack that occurred at a party and was not a premeditated racial attack.

Two students from Swinburne were attending the party at which the assault took place. Our International Student Advising staff are providing ongoing support to the students involved. We have been in contact with the Victoria Police, the India Consul in Victoria, and we are in regular contact with the students.

Swinburne is concerned for the safety and well being of all of our students, and we are continuing to offer every support we can.

To those of you who may be affected by these events, we would like to remind you of the support services available to you should you need them:

International Student Advisors
For advice and access to other support services

Hawthorn:    Jo-Anne Lamb - 9214 5159
Hawthorn:    Andrew Sedmiradsky - 9214 45016
Prahran:     Taeko Sakurai - 9214 6112
Prahran:     Suzie Roach - 9214 6112
Lilydale/Wantirna:  Lorraine McKenzie - 9215 7186

Student Counselling Service
This is a free and confidential service available for all Swinburne students and is available on all campuses. Please also encourage others to seek help if necessary.

Hawthorn
TD Building, level 3
Phone: 9214 8025

Prahran
Level 2 PK Building, Room PK223 (near Swinburne International office)
Phone: 9214 6734

Lilydale
Student Centre Reception
Phone: 9215 7101

Wantirna
WA Building, Room WA118
Phone: 9210 1293

Ben Mackenzie
Director
Swinburne International & National Recruitment
Swinburne University of Technology
AUSTRALIA

Gail Quirk
Manager, International Student Life
Swinburne University of Technology
Tel: +61 3 92148884
Fax: +61 3 92145795
www.international.swinburne.edu.au