

Statement in Support of Public Transport Concessions for All Students

To Whom it May Concern,

Across the state, students have been campaigning for greater equity in New South Wales's public transport concession scheme for the past thirty-five years. We believe that all students deserve equal treatment. For international students who are excluded on the sole basis of their nationality, exclusion from public transport concessions is a clear example of discrimination.

For part-time students, exclusion from the concessions scheme is punitive. Studying part-time allows students with dependents or financial obligations to return to study. Students with disabilities often opt to study part-time in order to access treatments. As the cost of living rises, many students are forced to study part time because they cannot afford to live without some form of income. These students are often profoundly in need of travel concessions, yet they are prevented from accessing them due to their enrolment status.

We believe all students need concessions. Concessions recognise students' reduced earning capacity, as well as their contributions to the state of NSW by pursuing higher education. For both international and part-time students, the exclusion from transport concessions adds insult to injury. By arguing that inclusion in the scheme would be too expensive for the state of NSW, we deny these students' extensive economic, cultural and social contributions to NSW.

In 2023, transport concessions are more important than ever. All students are facing a cost-of-living crisis. Housing is increasingly unaffordable, and students are increasingly priced out of living close to their university campuses. As a result, they pay more in public transport costs—and, for part time and international students, this means paying full-fare. These inequitable fares have far-reaching consequences—part time and international students then face increased risk of food insecurity and poverty.

Transport concessions are a workers' rights issue too. International and part-time students use public transport to get to and from their workplaces. In healthcare, social services, and education, students use public transport to get to their placement sites where they contribute to workforces facing acute shortages. Part time and international students are forced to pay double the fares paid students domestic, full-time students for the same journey.

In March 2024, a petition circulated by Sydney University Postgraduate Representative Association and the Sydney University Student Representative Council gathered over twenty thousand signatures with the support of the student unions in NSW. The petition demanded that the NSW Government expand its transport concession scheme to all students, regardless of their country of origin or study load. This petition is due to be tabled at the NSW Legislative Assembly on Thursday, 9th May.

We believe that travel concessions are a vital way to ensure all students have an equal opportunity to pursue education and training—from the moment they set out for campus to the moment

they arrive home. Transport concessions are a vital vehicle for a more fair, equal NSW. We are requesting your support. Please stand with students as we fight for equal concessions for all.



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