Lack of travel concessions threatens student numbers in NSW and Victoria

International students are reconsidering NSW and Victoria as study destinations due to the lack of travel concessions, according to the results of a recent survey conducted by the Australian Council for Private Education and Training (ACPET).

Of the 2,036 students surveyed, 1,998 are studying in NSW or Victoria, where international students are not entitled to receive concessional fares on public transport. Of this cohort, 89.5% of students said the lack of concessions meant they would recommend family or friends choose an alternative study destination.

ACPET CEO, Claire Field, said analysis of both state governments’ current modelling for transport concessions reveals calculations have been based on incomplete data and a failure to appreciate future losses to each state’s economy.

“With both NSW and Victoria suffering decreases of $1 billion each in education export revenue in 2010–11, this is not the time to discourage prospective students from enjoying the many benefits of studying in these states,” said Ms Field.

ACPET conducted its own survey to gauge student views on this important issue for international students and ACPET member colleges where they are enrolled.

Two-thirds of students said they would have chosen another study destination if they had known about the lack of discounted public transport before they arrived.

“The average weekly budget for an international student is only $346 to cover rent, food, transport, entertainment and utilities. With a travel concession, international students could save up to $30 per week or, in other words, a saving of up to 33% of their disposable income after rent,” said Ms Field.

“Our members and their students are not surprised by the survey results, which show the lack of discounted travel is a real issue affecting the choice of study destination.

“ACPET calls on both the NSW and Victorian governments to do some serious modeling of the costs of extending transport concessions to all students, regardless of their origin. Such modelling should include the revenue lost when students choose alternative study destinations due to the added burden of full transport fares.”

The results of the ACPET survey are contained within a position paper, ‘Achieving equitable travel benefits for international students’, released today. The paper outlines the economic argument for the extension of travel concessions to international students by the NSW and Victorian governments.

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Claire Field is available for comment

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