



Australia's rising cost of living is causing financial strain for international students

Australia is a popular destination for international students, and it's not hard to see why. Boasting world-class education, a stunning natural environment, friendly people and an enviable lifestyle, it's no wonder [international student enrolments](#) continue to grow.

But with a rapidly increasing cost of living, almost 80% of international students in Australia are experiencing some form of financial strain. Here's what you need to know about this important issue.

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Australia's rising cost of living

It's no secret things have been getting more expensive in Australia, and ABS statistics show the [cost of living is still on the rise](#).

Since 2020, rental costs across the country have [risen drastically](#), by around 40% to 50% in Brisbane, Sydney and Melbourne and a whopping 79% in Perth.

"I know many international students who are struggling to find a place to live because of how scarce and expensive accommodation has gotten in the last few years," shares one international student and Allianz Care OSHC member.

Meanwhile, the [Australian Human Rights Institute](#) found that between 2021 and 2023, the cost of grocery essentials increased by 15.2%. Add to this to the increasing cost of utilities, transport and other basic necessities, it's not hard to see how inflation is causing financial strain for international students.

"It is quite concerning because everything just seems to be getting pricier, and on a limited budget, that can be quite difficult," one international student adds.

What international students are struggling with

To find out more, Allianz Partners Australia partnered with Foodbank Australia to create the [2024 Food Insecurity Impact Report](#), which surveyed over 2,500 international students from 79 countries.

While a majority of students reported their financial situation was 'fair' or better, more than 80% said they felt overwhelmed by their financial obligations.

In particular, food insecurity was a major concern. 64.2% of international students worry about having enough food to eat on a daily or weekly basis, while almost 80% said they have skipped meals or eaten less due to the cost of food.



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Students also reported their financial situation played an important role in their overall wellbeing. More than half have experienced depression, anxiety or low self-worth at the hands of food insecurity, and a similar proportion have avoided events and social activities due to their limited financial resources.

This student's experience is no exception.

"The majority of my budget goes towards rent and food, so I need to cut back on social outings and events sometimes in order to get through the week, and this is the story for many students."

What support is available?

Thankfully, there is help for students facing financial difficulties and food insecurity.

Last year, [Foodbank and Allianz Partners Australia collaborated](#) with a range of universities and educational institutions to host student market stalls, delivering over 45,000 kgs of food relief to more than 4,500 students, with the partnership extending into 2025.

Further, many institutions offer assistance through on-campus student pantries, which offer free food and household staples including canned goods, pasta and rice. Others offer financial assistance and mental health help for students who are struggling to make ends meet.

"Western Sydney University runs regular dinners on campus for students," one international student explains, "but sometimes international students aren't aware of these programs and initiatives."

The report's findings included a number of considerations for organisations in the international education sector, including increasing food, financial and mutual aid

support and working to raise awareness and address the stigma associated with financial insecurity.

Further, 45.8% of students identified limited work opportunities as a key financial barrier. This could indicate that increasing awareness of and participation in career support services could be a practical and meaningful way to ease the pressure for many international students.

Practical tips for students

While systemic change is needed to address the root causes of international student financial and food insecurity, there are some practical steps students can take to reduce the pressure.

- **Make a budget:** Tools like the [MoneySmart budget planner](#) can make it easy to track and manage spending.
- **Find part-time work:** Careers services can help students find part-time or casual jobs to supplement their finances.
- **Cook at home:** Eating out can get expensive fast, so it can be helpful to encourage students to make their own food.
- **Shop smart:** Making a shopping list and shopping at affordable stores like Aldi can make a meaningful difference in weekly grocery costs.
- **Access your discounts:** Sign up to UniDays (or other purpose-built student discount platforms) to access exclusive discounts for students.
- **Buy second-hand:** Op-shops, thrift stores and online sites like Facebook Marketplace and Gumtree are great places to find a bargain.
- **Use food banks:** University-run food pantries, local charities, and online platforms like [Ask Izzy](#) can be invaluable resources for students facing food insecurity.
- **Access mental health support:** Financial strain can have a significant impact on student mental health, so it's important students know where to find support if they need it.

Want to learn more? Visit the [Allianz Partners Australia website](#) to read the report and learn more about international student food insecurity.

