

Brisbane, 26 October

INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS' MENTAL HEALTH IS BIG BUSINESS

By Kevin Scheffe, National Sales Manager, Institutions | International Health

We can all agree that COVID has tested those with even the most robust mental health, let alone international students and visitors who were cut off from returning to their home countries. The same goes for students and visitors who quickly returned home to be with family before the borders shut and could not return to their life in Australia. Both cohorts have had their mental fortitude tested during this unprecedented period.

Whether it manifested in financial stress, grief, loss, or just the trauma of going through a pandemic isolated from their support system, there's no doubt that the reality of coming to study in Australia was vastly different to the dream they were once sold. Especially when students were learning online in their bedrooms in India, Nepal or elsewhere and not in Australia at all living the life they imagined.

One in four young people in Australia will experience mental health issues each year. Importantly, students from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds are at an even greater risk¹. Moreover, more than one in four university students experience high-stress levels that negatively impact their studies, relationships, and daily lives².

In the past three years, Allianz Care, an expert in health cover for international students and visitors, has seen a 24 per cent increase in the cost of hospital claims for mental health issues. In 2020, the average cost for claims related to hospitalisation for severe mental health concerns was \$74,000³.

The bottom line is that students experiencing poor mental health are at risk of not continuing their studies, resulting in poorer completion rates. There are multiple knock-on effects of this: not only is job security for Australian university staff impacted, but the broader economy feels the impact of a reduction in skilled international labour – many of whom commence working in Australia after their studies resulting in revenue loss across a range of industries.

The economic impact of international students

The pandemic has revealed the incredible contributions international students make to our economy. In 2019, education and tourism were Australia's fourth and fifth largest exports, contributing \$17 billion in tuition fees paid by international students and \$23 billion in international students' living expenses while they studied in Australia⁴.

These numbers have fallen sharply. As a result of the pandemic, in August 2022, international students were entering the country at less than 20 per cent of pre-COVID levels⁵. As businesses grapple with attracting and retaining staff during the global skills

¹ [Orygen | Under the radar | The mental health of Australian university students](#)

² [Black Dog Institute | Handling student stress](#)

³ Allianz Care OSHC claims data 2018- 2020.

⁴ [The Conversation | COVID halved international student numbers in Australia. The risk now is we lose future skilled workers and citizens](#)

⁵ [Brisbane Times | Australia's most in-demand professions revealed, but migrants wary of returning](#)

shortage, there are increasing opportunities for international graduates to choose where to travel for education, employment and permanent migration.

With such a wealth of choices at their fingertips, not every international graduate will choose to stay in Australia. So how can we entice international students back to our shores and support them throughout their studies?

Improving graduation rates and outcomes

Working with some of Australia's largest universities to protect and support their international students for over two decades has given Allianz Care significant insights.

For many students, accessing healthcare comes with some apprehension about how much treatment will cost, stopping them from seeking support early, and at times further compounding poor mental health. Developing early intervention services for international students is key to minimising enrolment attrition and hospitalisations⁶.

Allianz Care has developed the Allianz Care Mental Wellbeing App, partnering with Uprise to better support international students coming to Australia.

Using a wellbeing algorithm to profile individuals and provide recommendations, the early intervention, tech-enabled platform provides a personalised approach to mental fitness training to help users train their minds, reframe their thoughts and get in touch with real people to chat when needed.

Tapping into global best practices for mental wellbeing, the program can be completed at members' own pace to support their personal journey. Individuals can navigate the training independently or receive guidance from a coach.

The use of innovative technology has introduced a more convenient and personalised approach to care, allowing members to access support how and when they want it. This is helping remove the barrier to accessing care, facilitating easier access to curative and preventative healthcare.

Ultimately, the prosperity of the education and tourism sectors and businesses looking for skilled workers relies on Australia's ability to attract and support international students.

ENDS

⁶ <https://uprise.co/outcomes/>

Press contact

Thrive PR allianzpartners@thrivepr.com.au

About Allianz Partners

Allianz Partners is a world leader in B2B2C insurance and assistance, offering global solutions that span international health and life, travel insurance, automotive and assistance. Customer driven, our innovative experts are redefining insurance services by delivering future-ready, high-tech, high-touch products and solutions that go beyond traditional insurance. Our products are embedded seamlessly into our partners' businesses or sold directly to customers and are available through two commercial brands in Australia: Allianz Global Assistance and Allianz Care. Present in over 75 countries, our 19,400 employees speak 70 languages, handle over 58 million cases each year, and are motivated to go the extra mile to offer peace of mind to our customers around the world.

For more information, please visit: www.allianzpartners.com.au

Social media

Follow us on LinkedIn [Allianz Partners Australia](#).