



Establishing a nationwide Australian Student Card

The Australian Greens call for the establishment an Australian Student Card to grant all students – undergraduate and postgraduate, domestic and international – concession rates for public transport in every state and territory.

Background

Student concession cards are currently only recognised within the state or territory of their home institution.

The Northern Territory has the most equitable system, closely followed by SA and Tasmania. At the bottom of the lists is New South Wales and Victoria where postgraduate, international and part-time students are denied the level of access to concession travel enjoyed by other students.

The following table highlights how the states and territories currently fare with concession travel on public transport:

<i>State/Territory</i>	<i>Undergraduate</i>	<i>Postgraduate</i>	<i>International</i>	<i>Visiting interstate student</i>
<i>NT</i>	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
<i>SA</i>	Yes	Yes	Yes	Additional card
<i>TAS</i>	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
<i>ACT</i>	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
<i>WA</i>	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
<i>QLD</i>	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
<i>NSW</i>	Yes	Some	No	No
<i>VIC</i>	Yes	No	No	No

Given the discrepancies in the recognition of various student cards in states and territories across Australia, it is clear that a national agreement between all public transport bodies, with the support of the various education departments, needs to occur.

During the course of the Senate inquiry into the Welfare of International Students, the Committee received evidence from the broader student community and key stakeholders supporting the idea of establishing a nationally consistent student card for undergraduates, postgraduates and international students.

Establishing a nationwide Australian Student Card



When discussing the inequalities that face international students in particular, Dr Withers from Universities Australia told the committee of the unsuccessful attempts to have the issue of travel concessions placed on the COAG agenda “The areas that [students] most indicated some concerns about were those not completely within university control. Australian employers and state government travel concessions were in fact the two most common complaints in our exit surveys. We sought to have things put on the COAG agenda because, in the case of the travel concessions, they are a state responsibility.”¹

At present, aside from not recognising concession cards from other states or territories, New South Wales and Victoria also deny concession rates their own postgraduate and international students – who are more often than not, students that need assistance the most. For example, postgraduate students undertaking research are frequently required to undertake extensive travel to conduct research activities. And, for a number of reasons, international students are often compelled to live further away from their educational institution than their domestic counterparts, thus facing substantial public transport costs on a daily or at least regular basis.

Why is an Australian Student Card necessary?

A nationally consistent student concession card would not only be a more equitable approach in support all students in their tertiary studies, but it would also reflect the realities that a student’s need for concession prices does not stop at state borders.

How would the Australian Student Card work?

The Greens will work to ensure that all tertiary students should have access to concession travel on public transport, regardless of their location, residency status or type of enrolment.

While not strictly a federal issue, given concession cards are subsidised by State Governments to relevant transport companies, implementing a nationwide Australian Student Card would need to be addressed and agreed to at COAG, when both the federal Education and Transport ministers have the opportunity to meet with their state and territory counterparts.

¹ <http://www.aph.gov.au/hansard/senate/commtee/S12398.pdf>