



# Advocacy Policy Kit

## International Students

Updated: 18 May 2026

### Key Message

International students boosted the NSW economy by around \$8.8 billion in 2025. In regional areas, that spend flows directly into local communities. Funding from international students help us deliver world class regional teaching and research in regional NSW.

### Background

Charles Sturt University plays a critical role in supporting regional Australia through education and research. We train the professionals regional communities depend on, including doctors, nurses, teachers and other essential workers, while also leading practical innovation and research in areas like agriculture, health and environmental management that support regional prosperity.

However, many of these disciplines are expensive to deliver and are significantly underfunded by Government. As a result, the University runs a loss on several key courses and must also subsidise much of its region-focused research activity.

A significant increase (highest on record) in international student visa refusals is having significant unintended consequences for regional universities that rely on international student revenue to cross-subsidise teaching and research for the regions

### Why it matters

Our ability to teach and train international students, who allow us to pay for critical courses and regional research, is directly affected by adverse Government policy settings, including unpredictable and expensive visa processes.

This has real implications for the sustainability of courses that are vital to regional workforce supply, including medicine, , dentistry and veterinary science, for teaching facilities that support all our courses, and for research that supports regional industries. Over time, that will mean fewer and fewer health, aged care and education professionals working in our regional areas. Revenue from international students, including those studying at our Sydney and Melbourne campuses, plays a critical role in helping offset these funding gaps and supporting the delivery of education and research in regional Australia.

International students are also imperative to Australia's soft diplomacy - helping to build influence and goodwill through relationships, shared experience and long-term connections.



## What we need

Charles Sturt University supports a strong and well-regulated international education system but believes current settings should better recognise the role and risk profile of regional universities.

The University is calling on government to:

- Work with regional universities as genuine partners, including providing confidential briefings and clearer visa decision data so institutions can better target recruitment toward students who are likely to receive a visa.
- Allow Charles Sturt to return to pre-pandemic international student numbers, noting the University has one of the lowest international-to-domestic student ratios in the sector.
- Take stronger action against non-genuine student transfers, including cancelling visas where students breach their visa conditions and closing policy loopholes that enable “course hopping”.

## Quick Facts

- Charles Sturt University trains many of the professionals regional communities depend on, including doctors, nurses and teachers.
- Charles Sturt University had approx. 8,000 international students pre-pandemic, and only approx. 1,000 now
- Several high-cost courses run at a loss per domestic EFTSL:
  - Dental Science: \$13.2K loss per year and over the 4-year lifetime of the course a loss of \$52.8K
  - Veterinary Science: \$14.8K loss per year and over the 5-year lifetime of the course a loss of \$74K
  - Medicine: \$26.7K loss per year and over the 5-year lifetime of the course a loss of \$133.5K (includes RMHT funding)
- International student revenue helps subsidise regional teaching and research.
- Approximately 50% of accepted international students for Charles Sturt had their visa rejected or not processed in time for Semester 1, 2026
- In 2026, 11 out of 16 international student visa applications to study engineering in Bathurst were refused by government.

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