

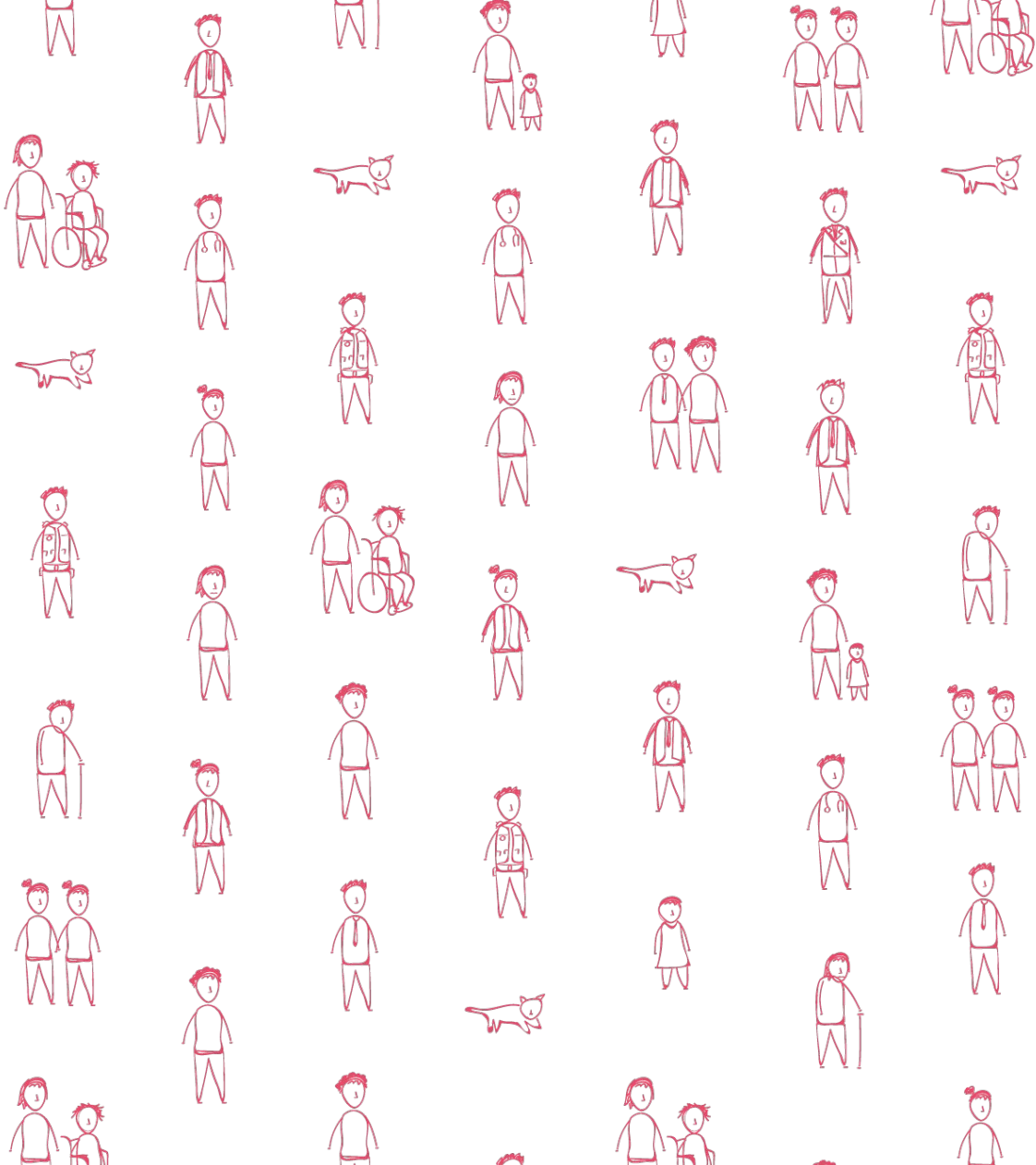
Student-Led, Student Centred: Better supporting international students' legal needs

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INNER MELBOURNE
COMMUNITY LEGAL

ISANA Conference | 7 December 2018



How might we get legal support to international students who need the most help but are the hardest to access?



International Students Legal Information

A free resource for international students living in Victoria.

English | [中文](#) | [Tiếng Việt](#) | [Español](#)



Life as an international student can be difficult at times. It's OK to ask for help.

These stories are based on experiences international students have had.

Learn about the people and services that can help you

Inner Melbourne Community Legal is a for social purpose community legal organisation working to achieve fairer laws and legal outcomes and improved wellbeing.

We do this by providing free legal help, free legal education, and law reform and advocacy.

imcl.org.au

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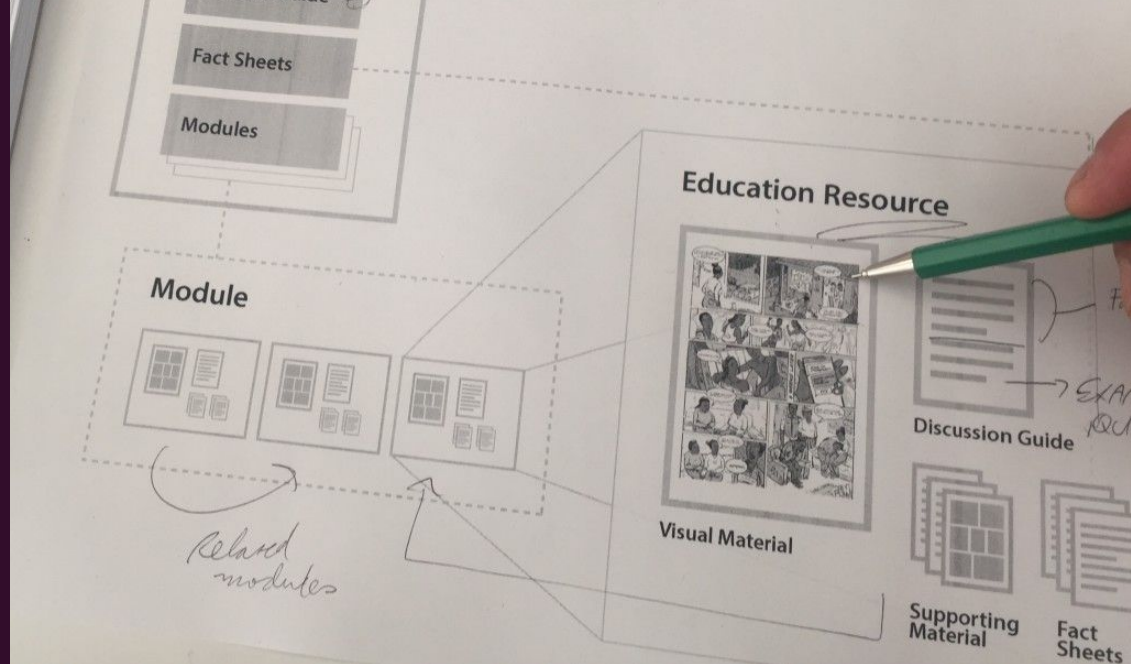


PaperGiant is a strategic design consultancy that helps organisations understand and solve complex problems.

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Why do this?

- Over 175K international students in Victoria and a significant proportion living and/or studying in the City of Melbourne (our catchment area)
- Anecdotal evidence that international students in Melbourne aged 18-25 are experiencing a range of legal problems, and could be better supported by legal and community professionals
- Students and their support networks may not identify problems as legal problems with legal solutions
- Students not reaching us for help

International students are encountering a range of issues and would benefit from legal assistance.

Employment issues

Underpayment or non-payment; unsafe workplaces; cash-in-hand work; sham contracts; working too many hours for visa class

Tenancy

Sub-letting (“accidental landlord”); overcrowding; excessive, lost or non-refunded bond; property damage; unfair rent hikes; landlord intimidation

Traffic offences & fines

Car accidents; speeding fines; transport ticket fines

Educational provider disputes

exploitation by agents; administrative disputes with providers; issues with fees (e.g. if the school goes bankrupt)

Personal safety

Bullying (including cyberbullying); sexual harassment; interpersonal conflicts; family breakdown; family violence; stalking; assault.

Other issues

Online identity theft; bill shock and debts; fraudulent phone accounts; flights; car rental; stolen property

Who has the biggest need?

- Students in non-university learning settings who may be more vulnerable to exploitation and the experience of legal problems and less supported to seek help for those problems
- Students that are not being reached through traditional face-to-face legal education

Learning about international student legal troubles

We interviewed key members of the Melbourne international student community to learn what legal issues students face, how they get help, and barriers to support.

ISANA International Education Association

Council for International Students (CISA)

Echoes Global Education

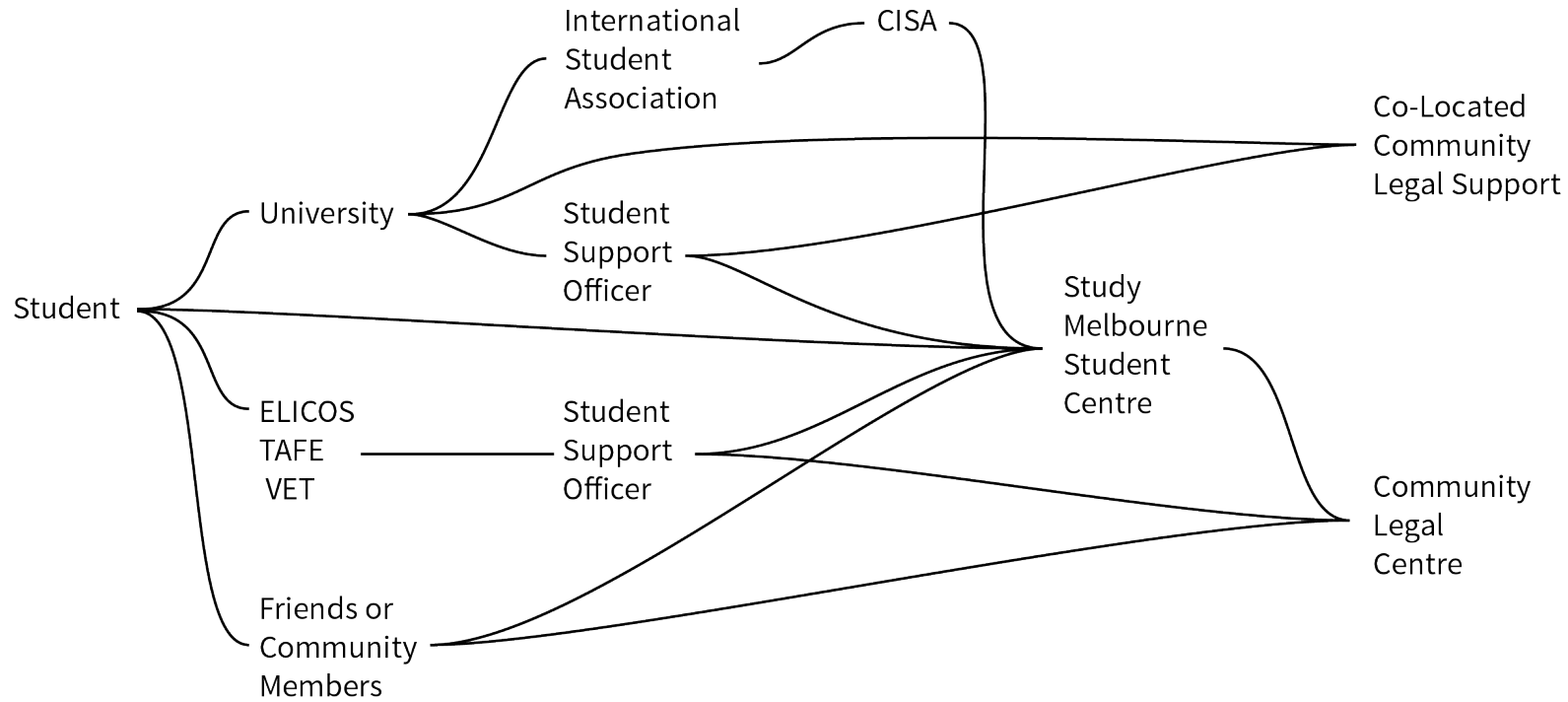
Meld Magazine

Student Legal Services Network

Study Melbourne Student Centre (SMSC)

Dr Shanton Chang, The University of Melbourne

Student support redirection pathways



International students fear
reporting things, in case
they lose their visas

“Students are afraid to enforce their rights due to visa concerns.”

WestJustice

Significant barriers prevent students accessing support for legal problems

- The information is available but it isn't getting to the students
- If the students don't trust a system, they won't use it
- Messaging is inconsistent across the support network

Issue: Problems at home with: people living there, building conditions, feeling unsafe, and being charged lots of money for accommodation

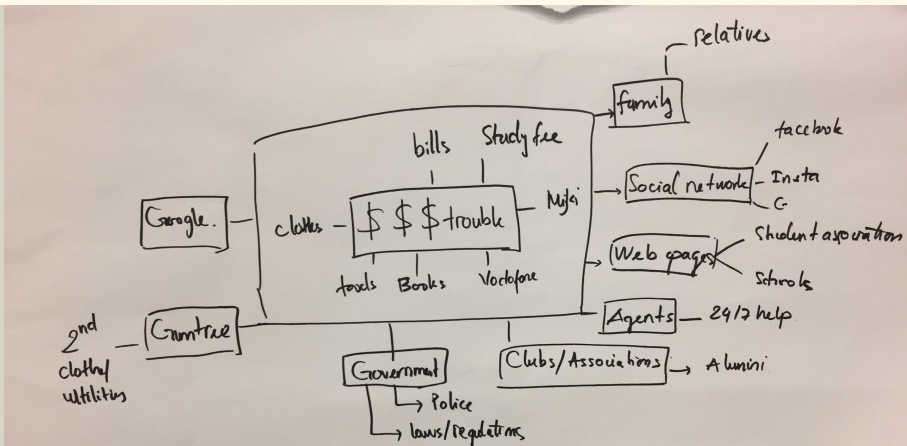
Trang's story*

"I stay in a house with 12 international students. When I first moved in I couldn't sleep for 5 days because of the noise from the water pump. I'm on a 6 month contract and paid a \$500 bond. I told my landlord about the noise and they told me I can just move, but I will lose my bond. Or I can move to a room for a higher price. I told Deakin about the problems, but then I just adapted. I am used to it now." – P09, Vietnamese, female.

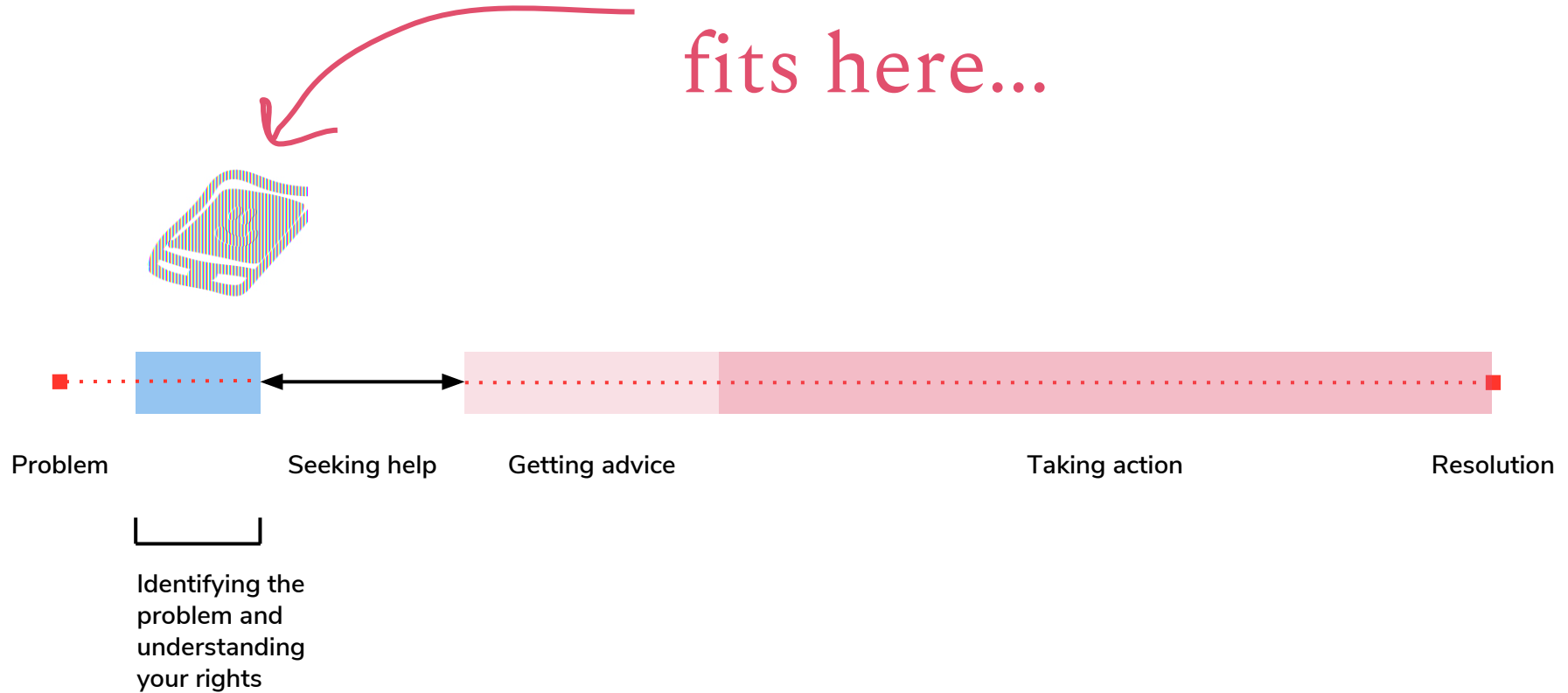
* Name changed

What Trang would want online to help herself or others who encounter this issue

- Information would include:
 - "Government-related information - police, laws and regulations"
 - How to address money-related troubles (bills, study fees, Myki, books, food, clothes, mobile phone)
 - Trang's 'tiered approach' to self-help:
 - Government information first
 - Then speak to peers
 - Then go to student & school
 - Go to family last "don't want to stress them"
- Make information available through:
 - Vietnamese student Instagram and Facebook, 42K members:
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/Vienamese.Students.in.Melbourne/about/>
 - Vietnamese student and alumni clubs
 - Education agents – "24/7 help"



the resource fits here...



*“It needs to be highly
engaging clickbait.”*

Dr Shanton Chang, Computing and Information Systems,
The University of Melbourne.

Episode 1: Making a rental agreement



Episode 2: Rent being increased



Episode 3: Being told to move out



Episode 4: Broken things where I live



Episode 5: Feeling unsafe in a relationship



Episode 6: Someone is making you feel uncomfortable or harming you and won't stop



Episode 7: Not being able to pay a fine



Episode 8: Challenging a transport fine



Episode 9: Not getting a service you've paid for



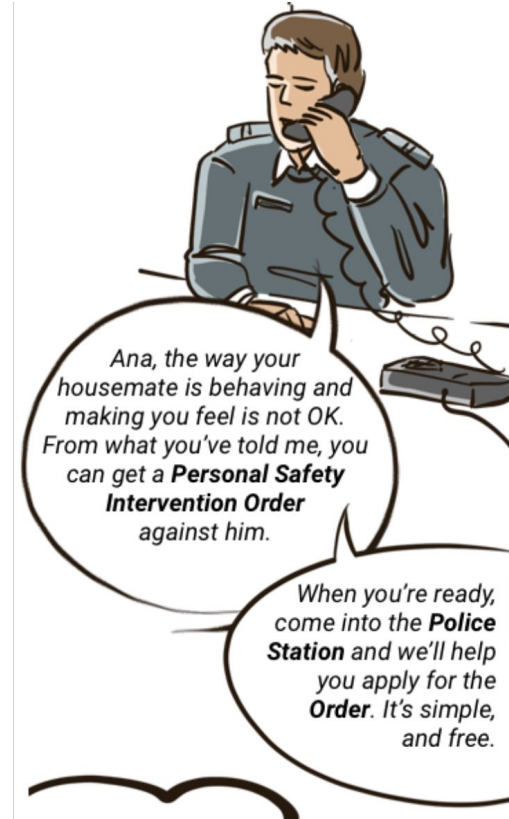
Episode 10: Picking where to study



Plain language, problem focused



Ana's housemate keeps sending her messages that make her uncomfortable and turning up at her workplace uninvited.



Family violence is behaviour by a family member or intimate partner that hurts you or makes you feel scared, sad or controlled.

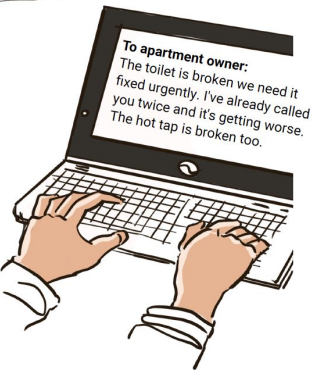
There is a free and confidential service called **Safe Steps** that can help you.

Connection to support

Some things are broken at Laila's share house.



She emails the apartment owner to tell him the problems.



To apartment owner:
The toilet is broken we need it fixed urgently. I've already called you twice and it's getting worse. The hot tap is broken too.

You should tell your apartment owner about things that need to be fixed in writing.

There are time limits.

If the owner does not respond quickly, call **Tenants Victoria**.

Laila calls **Tenants Victoria** about the problems.



Multilingual, with built-in sharing to peer networks





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What's next?

*“It’s not done until a real person
uses it for something real.”*

Caroline Jarrett, user experience researcher and designer.

It's only the beginning!

- More testing is needed with students to ensure the information is being delivered in the right way and is useful and usable
- We need evidence of use and impact via web and social media analytics, and observations of use, so we can see if referral pathways are being used, and change is happening
- We want to get the content out there through people in the community who students respect and trust

Get on the mailing list for an information pack

- **Help us to get the word out -**
post episodes to student social
networks you're part of!
- **Help us to measure reach and impact**
- if you are the admin of a student social
media network we'd love to hear how
posts perform
- Email internationalstudents@imcl.org.au
evidence of how you've seen and heard
about the resources being used!

Take some cards



Thank you to the community

This work would not have been possible without the expertise, support and guidance provided by:

ISANA International Education Association
Council for International Students (CISA)
Echoes Global Education
Meld Magazine
Federation of Community Legal Centres
Student Legal Services Network
Study Melbourne Student Centre (SMSC)
Dr Shanton Chang, The University of Melbourne

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experiences and
ideas to help make
this happen!**

imcl.org.au/international-students

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