

Best Practice in International Student Engagement



***ISANA: International
Education Association PD
31 August 2023***

Acknowledgement of Country

I respectfully acknowledge the Wurundjeri people of the Kulin Nation, the traditional owners of the land on which this session is hosted, and pay our respect to their elders past, present and future and all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people participating today.



Outline

- Project overview
- Project plan and progress to date
- Framework for enhancing international student engagement
- Research findings





Project Overview

The main aims of the project are:

- ❑ to identify good practice in international student engagement across a range of areas
- ❑ to develop and promote good practice guides and resources to enhance international student engagement

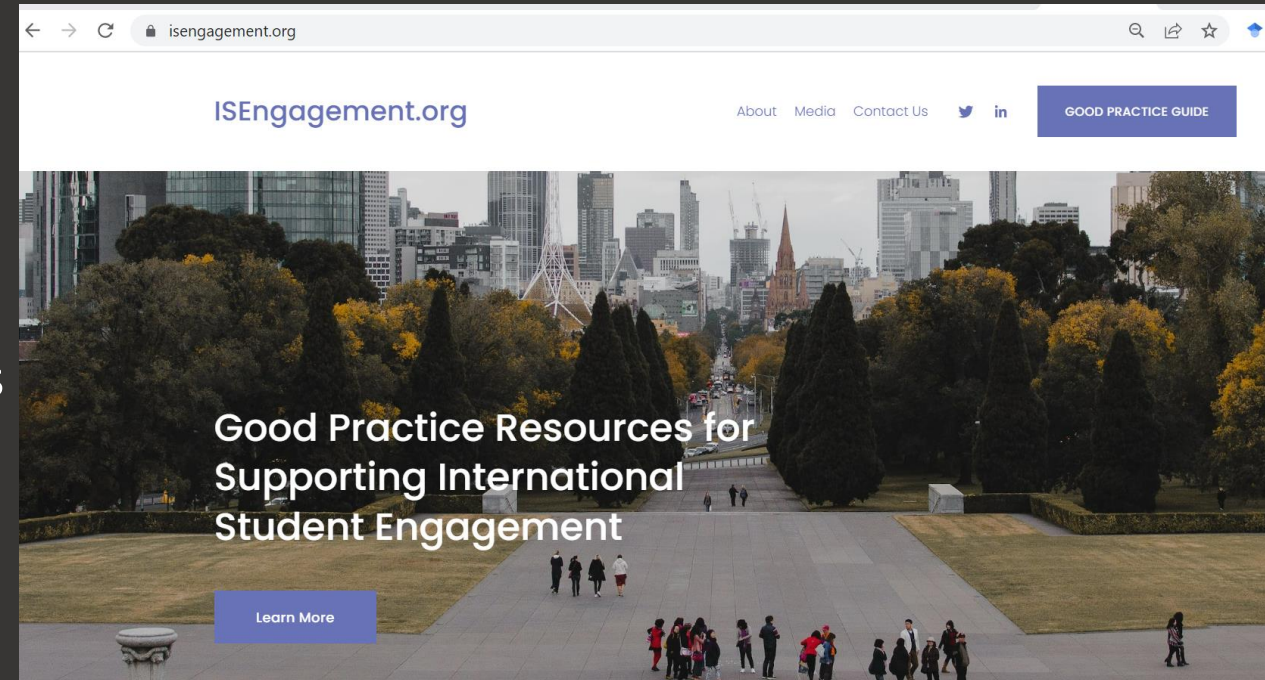
Project Team: Ly Tran, Jill Blackmore, Danielle Hartridge, Helen Forbes-Mewett, Renata Aldana and Diep Nguyen

Deakin University has been contracted by the Australian Government to undertake the Best Practice International Student Engagement Project under the International Education Innovation Fund (IEIF).

Multiple approaches to collect data to assist in the development of an evidence-based Best Practice Guide and resources

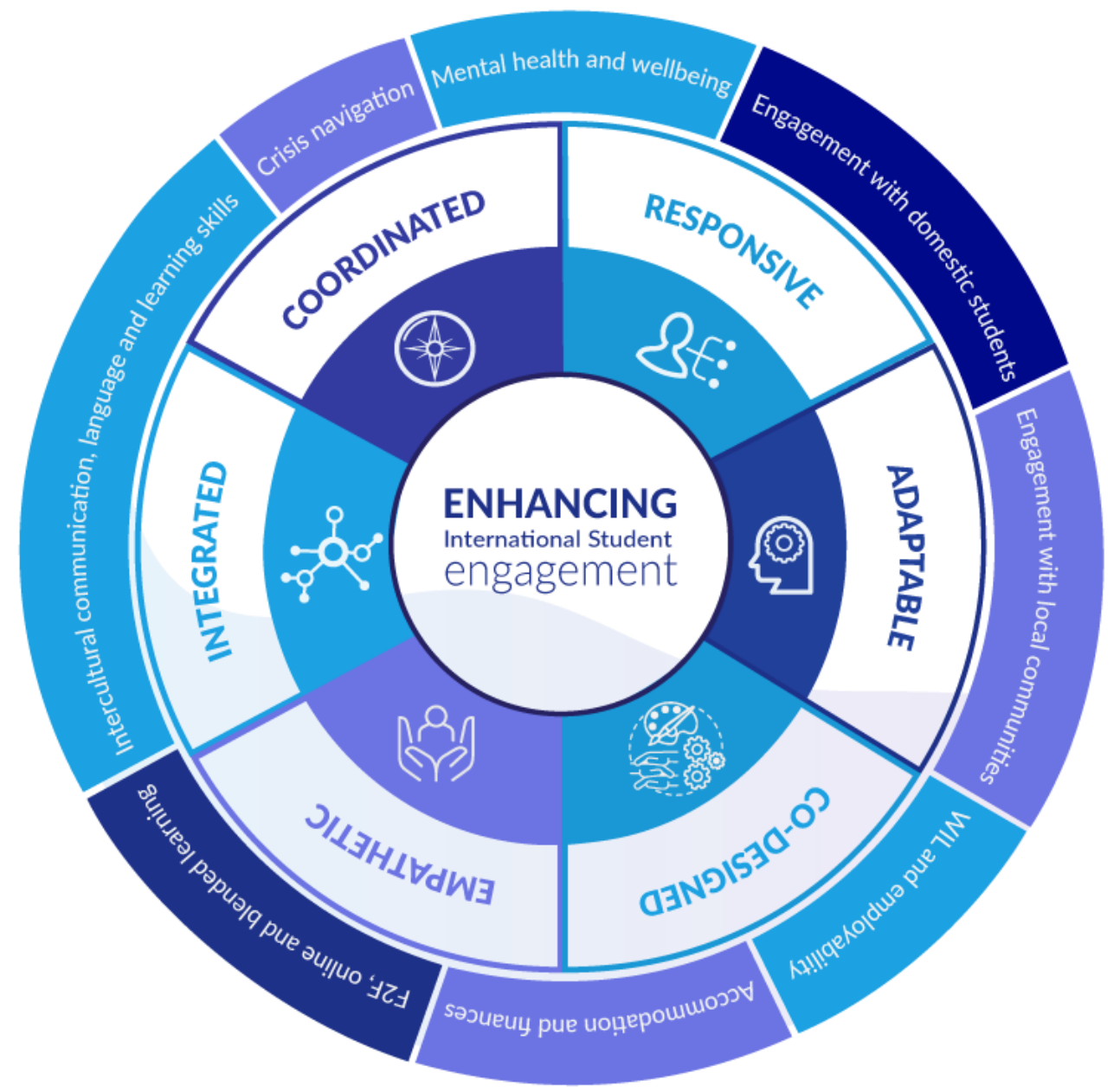


- ✓ Desktop analysis of existing literature and good practice examples
- ✓ Three surveys:
 - Over 6,000 responses
 - International student survey: 3,402 responses
 - Graduate survey: 1,723 responses
 - Stakeholder survey: 956 responses
 - 251 pages of responses to open-ended questions
- ✓ 11 consultation workshops with 213 stakeholders
- ✓ Interviews with 30 key stakeholders
 - The Best Practice Guides
 - The project is scheduled to conclude in March 2024.



Framework for enhancing international student engagement

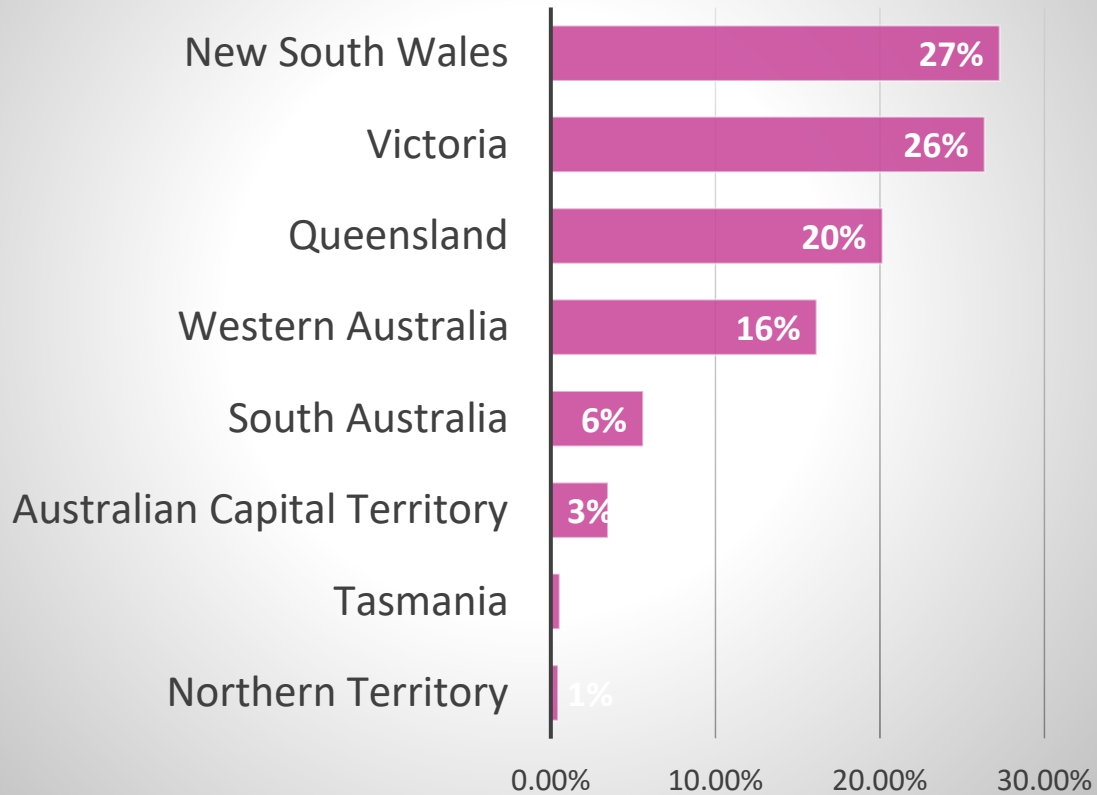
Based on desktop analysis but not final framework



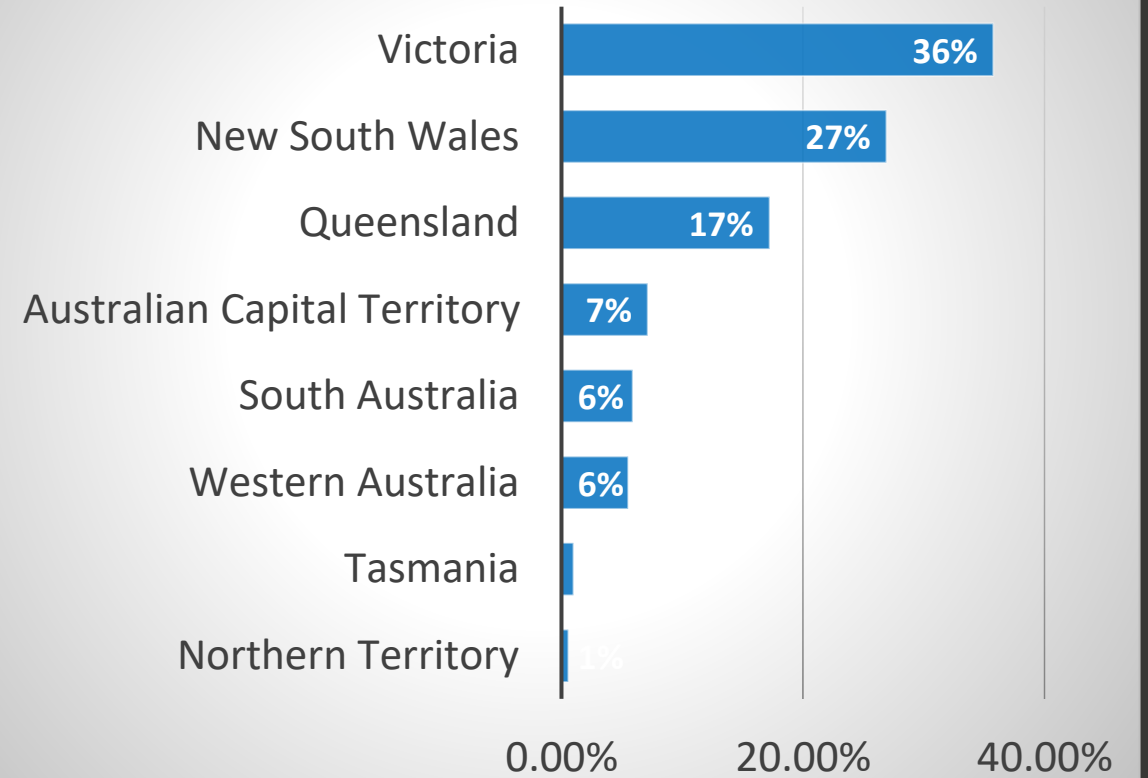
PARTICIPANTS BY STATE



Participating international students



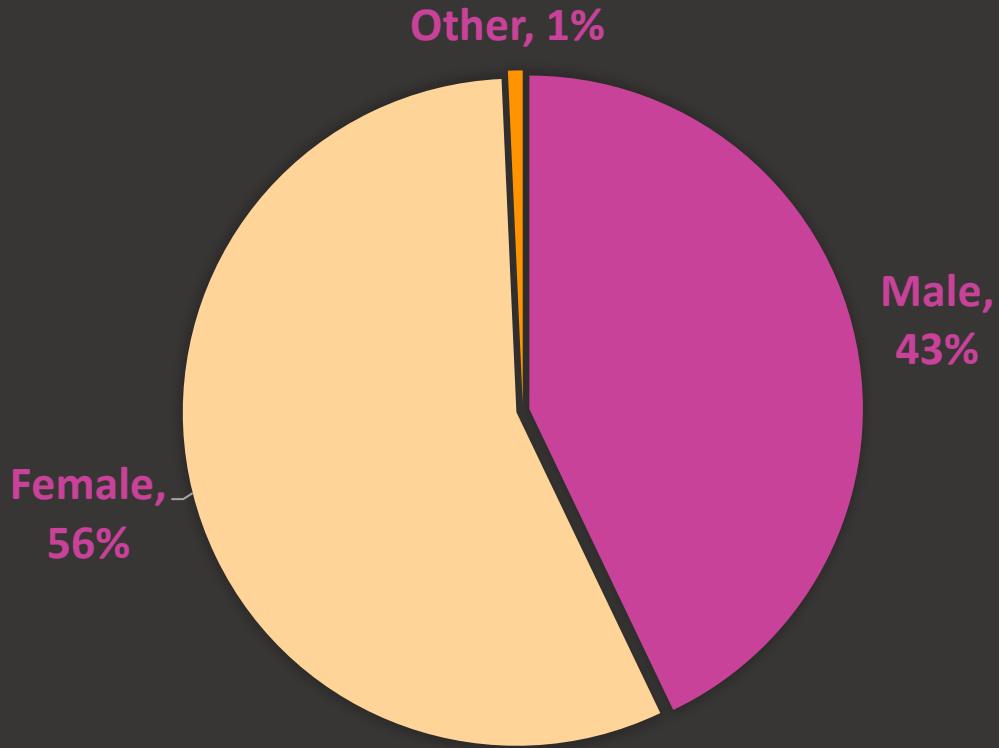
Participating international graduates



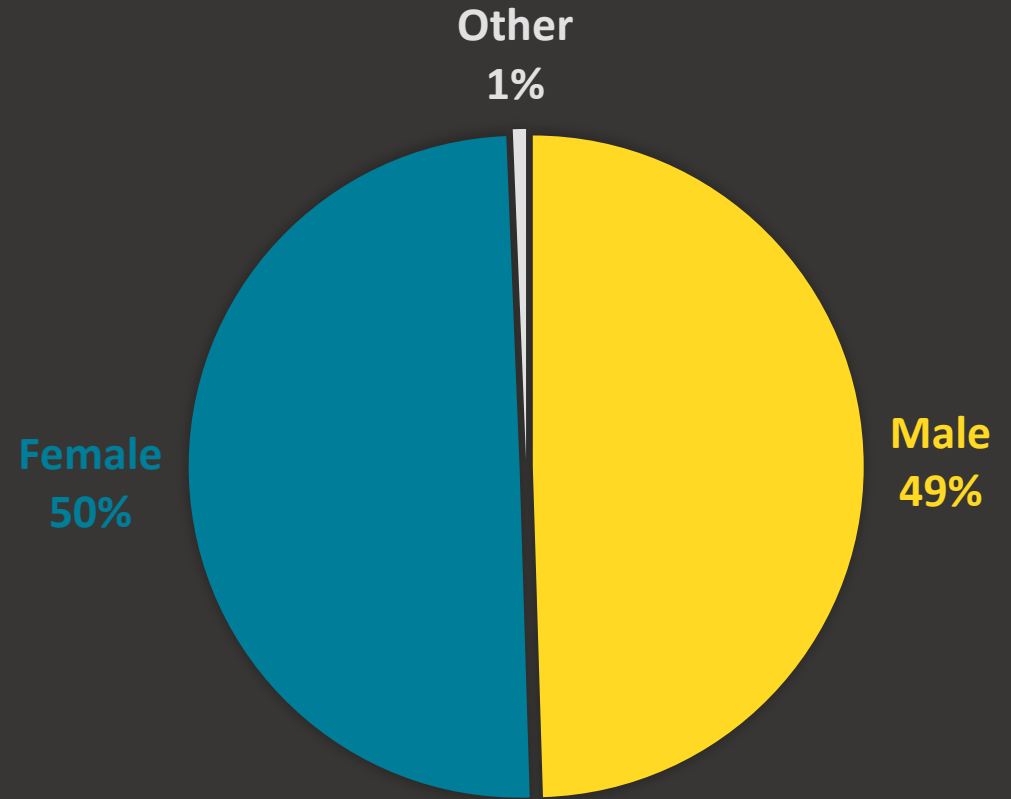
PARTICIPANTS BY GENDER



Participating international students (n=3402)



Participating international graduates (n=1723)



From the perspectives of three groups of respondents, the top areas that international students need support the most (from moderately to extremely) were:

THE NEED FOR SUPPORT ACROSS AREAS OF ENGAGEMENT

From the perspectives of three groups of respondents, the top areas that international students need support the most (from moderately to extremely) were:

International students	International graduates	Education providers and stakeholders
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● finding jobs (78%) ● career orientation and employability (78%) ● work-integrated learning/internships (76%) ● employment related concerns (70%) ● financial issues (67%) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● finding jobs (77%) ● career orientation and employability (77%) ● work-integrated learning/internships (73%) ● employment related concerns (70%) ● Connection with domestic students (67%); Dealing with crisis (67%) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● English language skills (99%) ● face to face learning (86%) ● adjusting to teaching and learning approaches (85%) ● Connection with local Australian community (84%); Connection with domestic students (84%); Mental health and wellbeing (84%); Work integrated learning (84%); Career orientation and employability (84%); Employment related concerns (84%)

AREAS OF HELP SEEKING



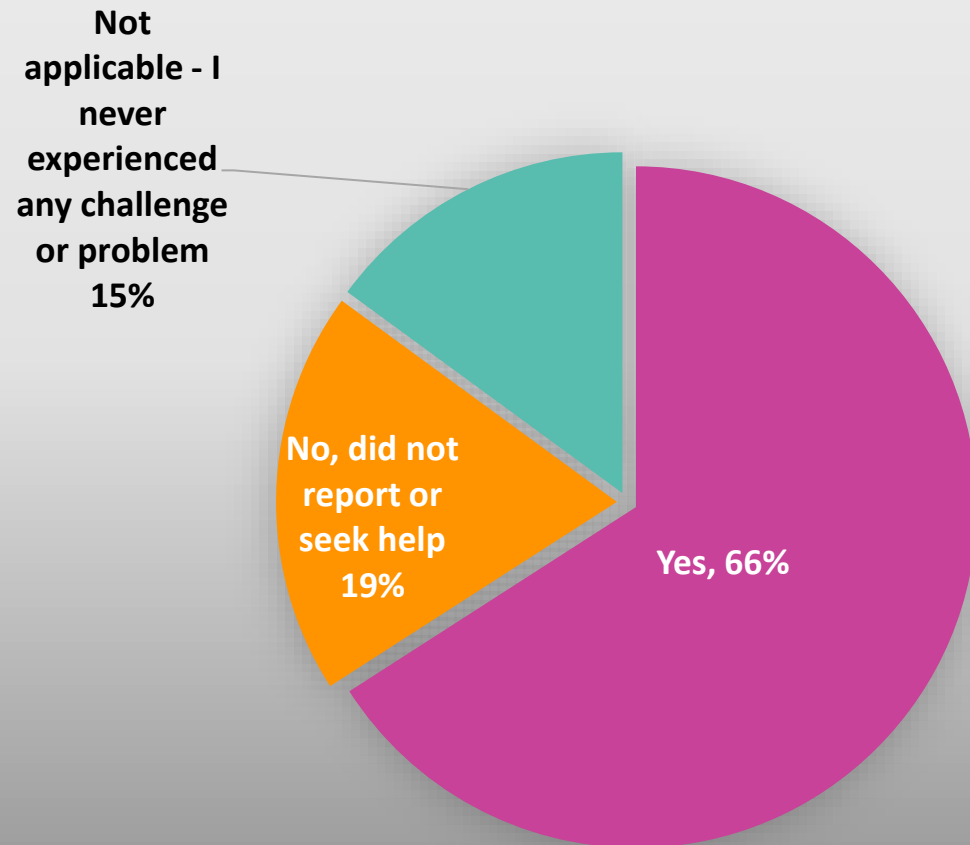
The top areas that international students have sought support from moderately to extremely identified across three surveys are:

International student	International graduate	Education provider and stakeholder
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Finding jobs (59%) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Finding jobs (70%) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • English language skills (80%)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Career orientation and employability (58%) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Career orientation and employability (69%) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accommodation (65%)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work-integrated learning/internships (56%) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work-integrated learning/internships (67%) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Face-to-face learning (64%)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Face-to-face learning (56%) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dealing with the impacts of COVID-19, war, political tension, financial crisis, natural disaster (64%) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Finding jobs (63%)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Connection with teachers and staff (55%) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Face-to-face learning (62%) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dealing with the impacts of a crisis (63%)

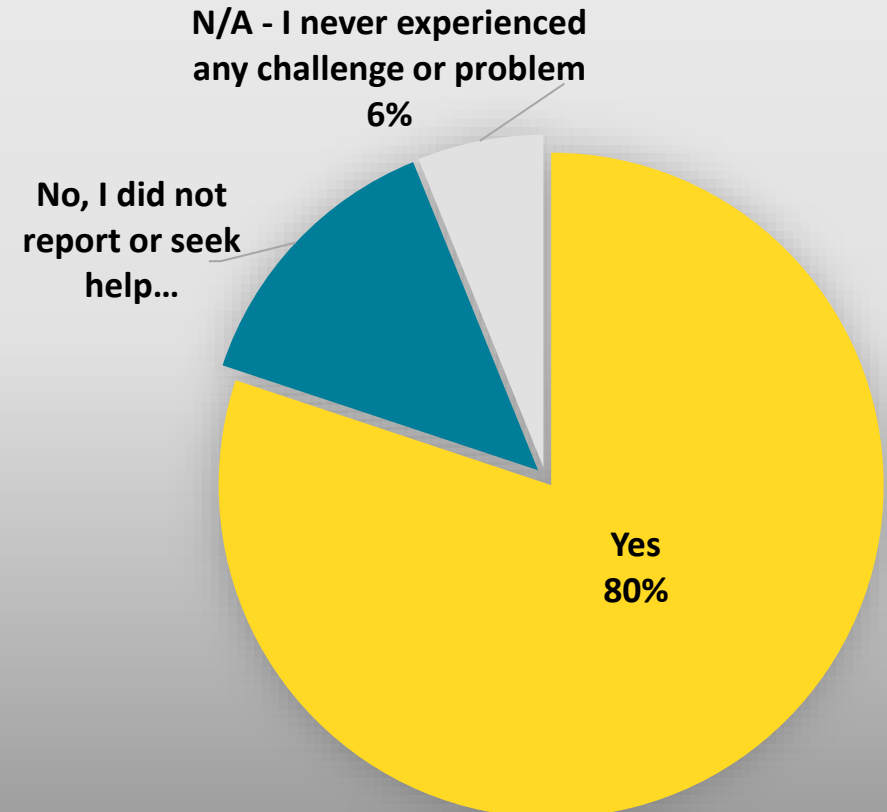
WHETHER INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS SEEK HELP WHEN EXPERIENCING PROBLEMS



International students- If you experienced any challenges or problems and needed help, did you actually seek help? (n=2461)



International graduates - If you experienced any challenges or problems and needed help, did you actually seek help? (n=1272)



REASONS FOR NOT SEEKING HELP

The main reasons why participating international students and graduates did not seek help or report their problems were:

International student survey	International graduate survey
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • did not know the process (15%) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • did not know the process (14%)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • did not know how to articulate the problem (11%) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • unaware that support would be available (13%)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • unaware that support would be available (11%) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • did not want to get into trouble (10%)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • did not want to get into trouble (10%) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • did not think anything would be done about it (9%)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • fear that my request will be rejected (9%) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • fear of discrimination (8%)

MOST NEEDED AND USED SUPPORT SERVICES

The top services needed and used by international students were:

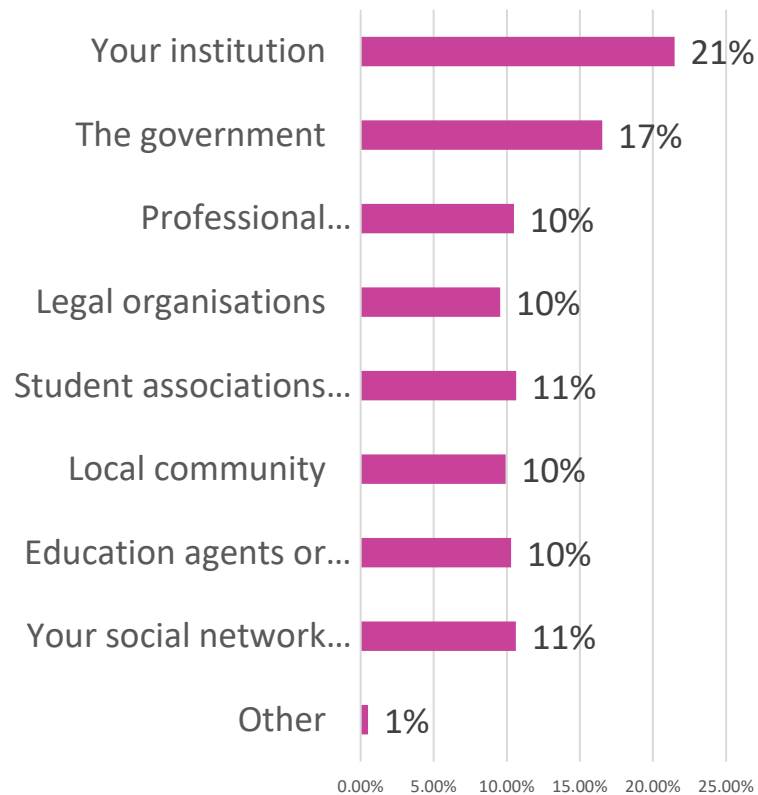
International student survey	International graduate survey
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support from my family at home (61%) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support from my family at home (55%)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support from my teachers/lecturers (58%) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support from my teachers/lecturers (49%)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support from my international friends from other countries (50%) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support from my international friends from other countries (46%)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support services provided by my institution (47%) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support services provided by my institution (45%)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support from my domestic friends or co-national friends (43%) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support from my co-national friends (44%)

WHO SHOULD PROVIDE GUIDANCE ON HELP SEEKING AND COMPLAINT MAKING?

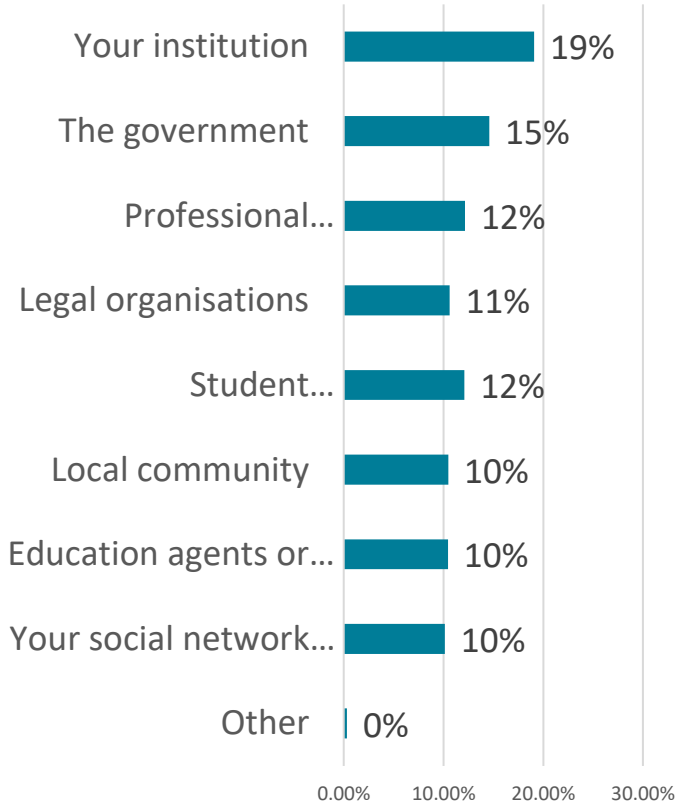


Education providers and the government were believed by all respondents to be the two most relevant stakeholders to provide guidance to international students in seeking help and making complaint.

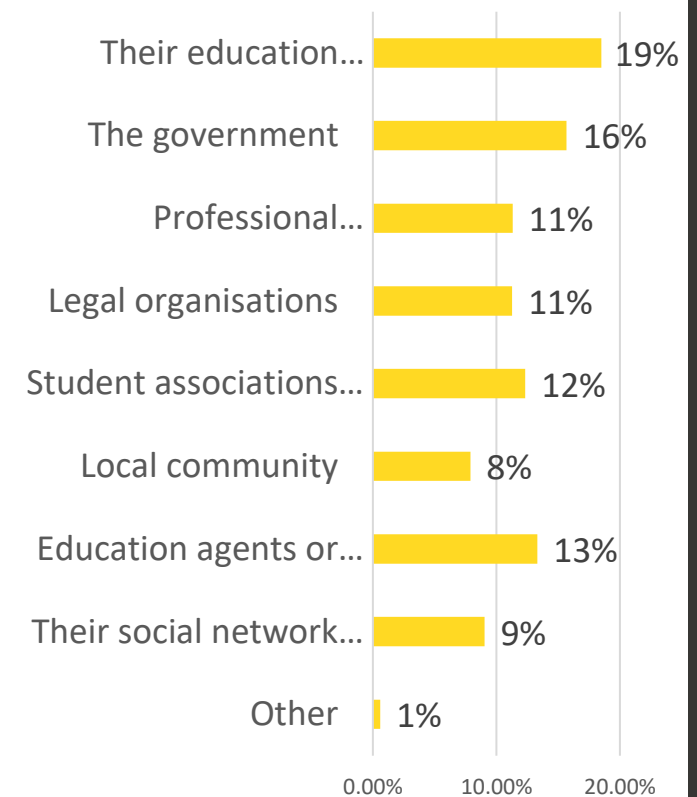
International student survey



International graduate survey

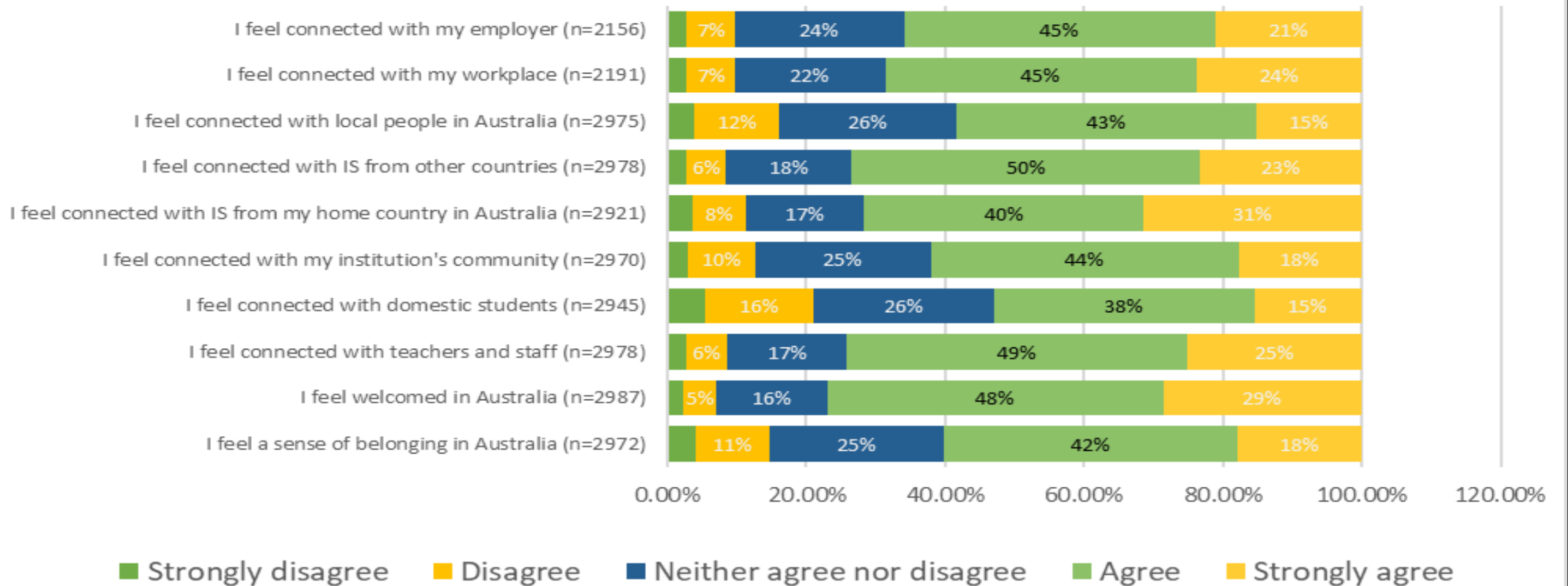


Education provider and stakeholder survey



International student survey

Student survey Q20 - To what extent do you feel engaged while undertaking an Australian qualification?



Top challenging areas for support provision are:

- supporting international students in English language skills (89% of provider respondents believed it was moderately, very much or extremely challenging to provide support in this area).
- dealing with racism or discrimination (74%),
- mental health and wellbeing (73%), finding jobs (73%), adjusting to teaching and learning approaches (73%), and employment-related concerns (73%).

▶ Findings from consultation workshops



Systemic level:

- **Lack of systematically structured policy or regulation**
- **Under-resourcing: No resources for continuity or regularity**
- **Deficit perspective:** we do not see international students coming to Australia with rich cultural, language and learning experiences and recognize those characteristics. Instead, we usually see them as having deficiencies or problems to be fixed.
- **Confusing and time-consuming processes** for international students to file a complaint or seek help.
- Culture homogenisation and stereotyping international students
- **Student status: IS come with labels** - the status of being an international student also limits them to get a work-integrated learning opportunity such as internship

Institutional level

- **Lack of a holistic approach** or whole of institutional and community approach.
- **Communication platforms** used by schools are sometimes inaccessible for students to operate so they are reluctant to use these platforms (e.g. Chinese students prefer WeChat which is not used by the school)
- **Lack of support staff** who are capable of supporting international students

Personal level

- **Sense of Others Students' sense of inferiority and lack of self-efficacy:**
- **International students have too much to worry about (study, job, accommodation) and are reluctant to take add-ons**
- **Communication channels The lack of awareness about resources and support networks for international students**
- **Language barrier** and communication skills in English: Some international students do not engage because the language issue restricts their ability to verbalise and makes them scared of being judged
- **Help-seeking behaviour:** Students may feel that it is their responsibility to overcome their problems and do not expect institutions to support.
- **Stigma** about getting support and counselling services as international students, especially in mental health
- **Lack of trust from students:** not all universities in Australia are good at facilitating career development for students, making students feel insecure and have doubts that career advisors at universities understand their visa issues and cultural language issues.

ENABLING FACTORS AND RECOMMENDATIONS



- Critical need for **funding** to ensure sustainability of support programs and advocating for the contributions of international students.
- **Professional development** (e.g. training, coaching, mentoring) related to intercultural competence/intelligence for all parties, including education providers and stakeholders
- **Whole school/institution approach to supporting IS** including classroom teachers, counsellor, student support staff, excursion coordinator, etc. to work together
- **A more structured approach** to developing cultural, language skills, intercultural competence for IS.
- **Empower students** to interact with various people through initiatives and programs where international students can show what culture really is, what values exist, how they interact with others.
- **Educate the wider community** in the sense of learning from each other and learning about the differences between us in the wider context of society and especially for Australia.
- **Peer support and mentorship** is also carried out by their fellow students who introduce them to school culture, **Community of practice for students**
- **Collaboration: Stakeholders must work together** and listen to more international students' voices in formulating policies for them.

ENABLING FACTORS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Co-design: involve the students as partners or co-creators** where they will tell what they want to do and where they want to go
- **Models of inclusivity:** Helping institutions to prepare models of inclusivity on a larger scale between international students, domestic students and the community. Inclusive curriculum,... and respect diversity
- **Understanding international students' academic and socio-cultural background and providing personalised support** that is culturally responsive to students' needs
- **Developing connection programs** with the key organisation, e.g. linking the students to the local sport clubs and make this to be a more long-term program
- **Providing volunteering opportunities.** Local students can also volunteer in becoming the tour guides for tourists and international students.
- **Providing recognisable and approachable staff members** who IS can easily turn to when in need
- **Early diagnosis and intervention: Identifying the challenges facing IS and providing access to intervention earlier on,** rather than assuming that only IS access support at the crisis point.
- **Advocacy for international students in the corporate space and the community**

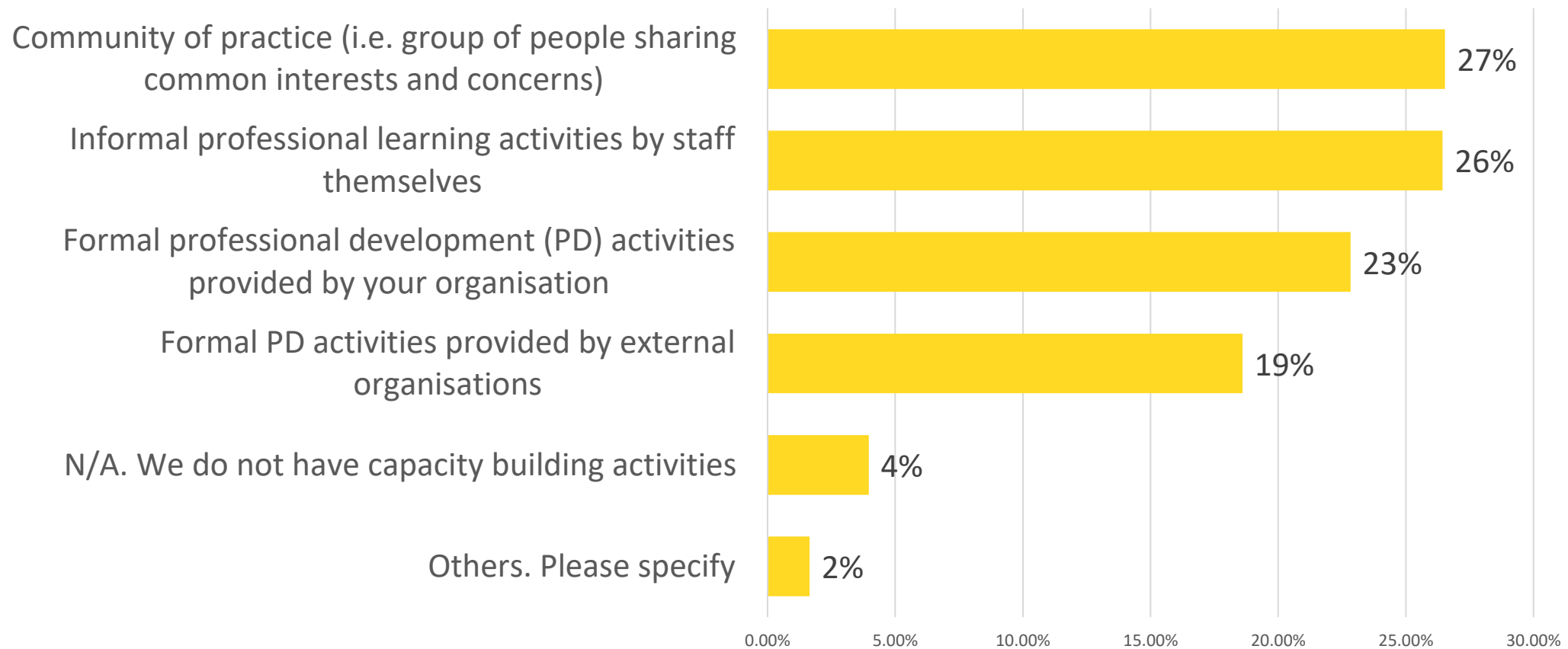
GOOD PRACTICE EXAMPLES

- **Institutions' orientation** and pre-departure program
- **Sports programs organised by institutions and city councils**
- **Study Melbourne's student night program** at the National Gallery of Victoria, for international and local students.
- **City of Sydney's** leadership and ambassador program with the aim to train and build international students' leadership skills; City of Sydney's employment forum where the alumni talk with international students.
- **University of Queensland's student partnership program:** UQ provides funding, and students registered to work with academics to improve the courses. Students are paid and trained to do this job.
- Apps such as **Talk Campus app, Sonder App**
- **Welcome dinner project** helps connect international students with the local community in the area.
- **Sydney Community Forum** advocating for IS and connecting IS with relevant services
- *AI chat box (Charles Darwin University)* to support students to post their queries in their native language which will then be translated into English

- **Study Adelaide's** job-shop which is a job portal to bring together all employers and advertise all special opportunities intended only for international students.
- Swinburne University's critical incident management
- West Justice at western suburbs of Melbourne provide free employment and accommodation legal services for international students in Victoria; **Redfern Legal** dealing with rental issues is a good place for IS to go.
- UNSW's mental health well-being mentoring
- **Curtin University's volunteering program** engaging 22,000 volunteers
- **Confidence program by Confidence Hacker** about building IS' confidence to have the conversation with local people.
- **Study Gold Coast avoid distinguishing between domestic students and IS** and organise events for both groups of students
- **VicWISE programs** giving real life work experience to IS through IS-run projects. IS are involved and become project manager, photographer, event coordinator for VicWISE and other orgs.
- **Oz International Student Hub (OISH):** support for IS during COVID-19 and connecting IS with various community groups.

- For A Meal Program: 2000 IS involved in the program to pack emergency meal to be shipped around the world, including 100,000 meals to Ukraine through Australian Defence Force.
- Rotary clubs funded by Victoria Government through InternMatch portal
- Trauma-informed approach in teaching by USQ college of University of Southern Queensland
- Academic-led engagement program by Monash University, Faculty of Pharmaceutical Sciences based on 3 pillars: communication, social networking to get students connected, and well-being

Mechanisms available in providers and stakeholders' organisations to build the capacity for staff/people involved in supporting IS engagement



- Supporting International Students with Accommodation
- Enhancing International Student Engagement in WIL and Employability
- Supporting International Students in Crisis Navigation
- Enhancing International Student Health and Wellbeing
- Enhancing International Student Intercultural and Community Engagement
- Enhancing International Student Engagement through Teaching And Learning
- Enhancing International Student Engagement

Thank you for your input and support!

Website: <https://www.isengagement.org>

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