# Social Inclusion and International Students

Presented by the

**Australian Federation of International Students**

# Background

Enrolment data:

– July 2004: 286,668 enrolments
– July 2009: 547,663 enrolments

# Background

Recent media attention brought publicity to the disconcerting state of the 'international student experience'

We are like guests in Australia – except we forever remain visitors and outsiders for the three, plus, years that we remain studying here.'

# Social Inclusion

Silver and Miller (2002):

– 'social exclusion [as the inverse of inclusion, to be] a relational process of declining participation, solidarity and access.'

# Social Inclusion

Unlike tourists and persons with short-stay business agendas, international students remain in Australia over an extended period of time, and expect to (or are expected to) settle in and meaningfully engage with their local peers.

# Social Inclusion

Over-focus on increasing participation, often suggesting that international students do not adequately participate or engage with the wider Australian community.

# Social Inclusion

Overlooked - international students *do* engage with the local community

# Social Inclusion

International students, face similar issues as disadvantaged groups, but these issues of access lie with the fact that international students engage the wider community *passively*, with little desire or incentive to actively engage.

# Social Inclusion

Passive Engagement vs. Active Engagement

# Passive Engagement

I never made friends with my classmates. We were 'hi and bye' friends, maybe, and we spoke during lessons, but once we left the classroom, or if we met on the street – we were strangers again.'

# Active Engagement

Activities that allow them to directly interact with local peers

Kearsley and Shneiderman's engagement theory: relate, create and donate

# Contributing factors of Passive Engagement

External factors (Environmental and institutional)

- Equal Opportunity
- Restrictive environments
  - Student housing
  - Classrooms and programs

# Contributing factors of Passive Engagement

Internal (me) factors (Personal and attitudinal)

- Safety concerns
- Fear of getting lost
- Over focus on academic activity
- Nonchalant about their passive engagement
- Loss of parental supervision and direction
- Unfamiliarity to cultural language devices
- Not getting it right the first time

# Social Inclusion principles

AFIS is proposing the following general principles to guide social inclusion of international students:

# Social Inclusion principles

commitment towards social justice and fair treatment

# Social Inclusion principles

Avoid the creation of restrictive environments

# Social Inclusion principles

Support for actively engaging communities

# Social Inclusion principles

Promote two-way engagement

Further recommendations

Questions and contributions to
AFIS' discussion are welcome.