

Students do drive Sydney; SA knows

Paul Nicolaou



International students, who are so important to Sydney's economy, have found a champion all the way from South Australia.

Premier Peter Malinauskas and Business Sydney are on the same wavelength.

Arbitrarily capping international student numbers can do nothing to solve the housing crisis, but will do a lot of harm to the economy.

Sydney is where the harm could be the hardest felt because so many sectors, hospitality in particular, depend on international students.

The SA premier warned both sides of politics that the planned cap on new international student enrolments to 270,000 next year is damaging.

Malinauskas is alarmed by the continuing political battle over international students and that

they are being wrongly blamed for the housing crisis. He is right. Building more homes is the solution to the housing crisis.

For example, along a redeveloped urban-blighted Parramatta Rd that could add 35,000 new homes and build a community to save it.

International students are just as much a victim as locals in the rental crisis. Additionally, a major report confirmed that international students comprised only 4 per cent of Australia's overall rental market.

It also noted the rental squeeze in Sydney started in 2020 in the absence of international students during the pandemic.

Without international students, Sydney wouldn't function. They do jobs that locals won't do, making them vital to the operation of cafes, restaurants, pubs and other

service-orientated businesses.

Ask any restaurant or cafe owner in the CBD and they will tell you how hard it already is to attract employees.

Australian Bureau of Statistics data showed the post pandemic return of international students took the value of Australia's education exports to a record high of \$48bn in 2023.

Students also spent in a big way contributing nearly \$14bn in the December quarter alone.

A lot of this spending would have taken place here.

So, let's stop the unfair blame game and treat international students as being unambiguously positive for Sydney.

It's good to know that Premier Malinauskas has stood up for them, and very publicly.

Paul Nicolaou is executive director of Business Sydney