

Urgent Media Release

Date: Saturday, 30 May 2009

GSA President condemns police response to Indian student attacks

The University of Melbourne Graduate Student Association has today applauded the decision by Indian international students to publicly protest against racist violence in Melbourne. A protest rally and march to State Parliament has been called for tomorrow (31/05) by the Federation of Indian Students Australia (FISA, www.fisa.org.au).

GSA President Paul Coats said “It is appalling that Victoria Police refuse to acknowledge the racism that is inherent in violent attacks against up to 70 Indian students in the last 12 months- they have become part of the problem, not the solution.” Coats added, “it is now up to the Indian students themselves to mobilise and show that they are *not* the deserving victims the police seem to make them out to be.”

Coats went on to say that “the assertion by Police Deputy Commissioner Kieran Walshe that these attacks are ‘opportunistic’ implies that it is Indian students who should bear the burden of removing the ‘opportunity’, presumably by staying at home in silence. This is a racist premise – when other groups are attacked they are not treated this way”.

The GSA has today called for immediate action by the state government to address the real factors that are leading to these attacks:

- *Lack of access to affordable housing in the inner city or near locations where students complete their studies:*
This necessitates long travel times, and international students will understandably use University facilities as a refuge for study until late at night to avoid overcrowding at home.
- *Lack of staff in the public transport system:*
All stations, trains and trams, should be attended by staff 24-hours a day. Many more staff should be employed to fill these attendant roles.
- *Lack of public transport concessions:*
International students and graduate students should be granted transport concessions. The differential treatment of international students by the state government sends a signal that it is acceptable to discriminate against people.

GSA President Paul Coats will attend and speak at the rally tomorrow:

Rally to defend Indian students rights

11:30am, Sunday 31 May

In front of the Royal Melbourne Hospital

Then march to State Parliament

For more information contact: Paul Coats, GSA President, 0416 509 140.