



798-1260



**THE HON PETER DUTTON MP
MINISTER FOR IMMIGRATION
AND BORDER PROTECTION**

MS16-000877

Dr Dennis Jensen MP
Chair
Standing Committee on Petitions
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dennis,
Dear Dr Jensen

Thank you for the Committee's letter of 24 June 2013 to the former Minister for Immigration and Citizenship, the Hon Brendan O'Connor MP, enclosing Petition Number 798/1260 which requests the provision of a stipend or daily allowance for international students during their internship whilst undertaking the Professional Year programme. I apologise for the delay in this response.

The Professional Year (PY) programme was introduced to the points tested visa programme in 2007 to encourage international students to gain formal learning and workplace experience in order to enhance their employability in the Australian labour force. The PY aims to:

- familiarise participants with the Australian workplace;
- teach participants how to communicate effectively and professionally; and
- educate participants about all aspects of the Australian workplace through its internship component.

PY programmes are developed and administered by industry professional bodies according to guidelines set by the Department of Immigration and Border Protection and the Department of Employment. Students are required to pay a fee to undertake the PY programme. The fees for each PY programme are set by the provider, who in most instances oversees the programme while it is delivered by a partner organisation such as a Technical and Further Education institution (TAFE) or other registered training organisation.

As students make the decision to undertake the PY programme to improve their prospects in the Australian labour force, it is their responsibility to ensure they have the appropriate means to fund their stay in Australia. The PY programme information is clear in that the work experience offered is in the form of an unpaid internship. Should students seek a stipend from their internship placement

employers they may wish to discuss this directly with the employer.

I understand that there is a strong expectation from PY candidates that they will achieve permanent residence upon successful completion of the PY programme. However, successful completion of the PY programme is not a guarantee of permanent residence, and there is no requirement under the points tested visa programme for an international student to undertake the PY.

Thank you for bringing the Committee's concerns to my attention.

Yours sincerely

16/03/12

PETER DUTTON