

We acknowledge the tradition of
custodianship and law of the Country on
which the University of Sydney campuses
stand. We pay our respects to those who
have cared and continue to care
for Country.



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**Organised Collaboration: how various
NGOs supported the needs and
aspirations of international students at
the height of COVID-19**

**NCOSS NGO Researchers Forum
Mark Riboldi – 29 March 2023**



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Image via Addison Road Community Organisation

Context: International Students in COVID-19

- International students face housing insecurity, wage theft, insecure work and have none of the rights of citizens.
- The industries that shut down were the ones international students worked in.
- The Morrison Government excluded non-citizens from JobKeeper and JobSeeker.
- The public discourse was focussed on the general impacts of COVID-19.

As coronavirus spreads, 'it's time to go home' Scott Morrison tells visitors and international students

By [Jano Gibson](#) and [Alexis Moran](#)

Posted Fri 3 Apr 2020 at 3:15pm, updated Fri 3 Apr 2020 at 9:32pm



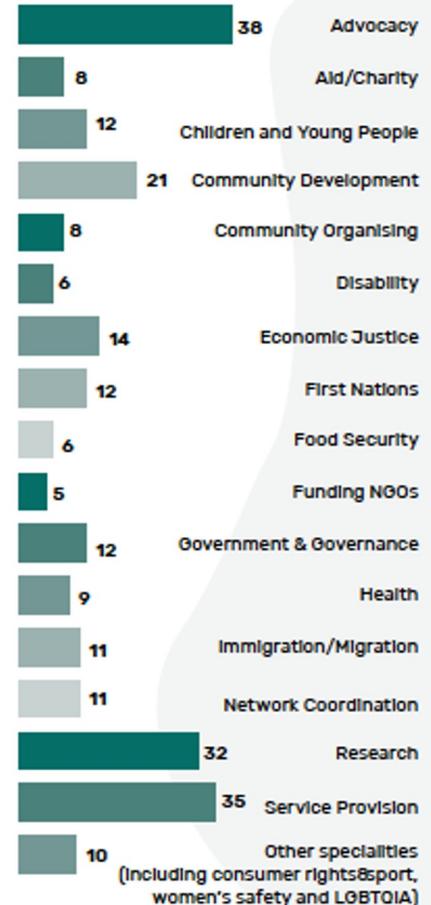
An already vulnerable community, abandoned by the Australian government and thrown into crisis.

Context: Civil Society Research

- Sydney Policy Lab research project funded by the Paul Ramsay Foundation, looking at Civil Society Leadership, Community Connection, Systems and Networks, and Advocacy and Influence.
- 53 semi-structured interviews and 12 in-depth focus groups informing a major report – *Nurturing Links Across Civil Society*.
- Conducting follow-up interviews, research and journal articles with Professor Kurt Iveson.

<https://www.sydney.edu.au/sydney-policy-lab/news-and-analysis/news-commentary/nurturing-links-across-civil-society.html>

And the people we spoke with, and the organisations they work for, specialise in a variety of areas:



Participants:

Collection method	Participant CSO / individual
Initial interviews:	Sydney Community Forum, Redfern and Marrickville Legal Centres, Craig Foster, Addison Road Community Organisation, City of Sydney, Foodbank NSW, Sydney Alliance, Settlement Services International, Migrant Justice Initiative
Follow-up interviews:	Addison Road Community Organisation, Sydney Community Forum, United Workers Union, Oz International Student Hub, Sydney Alliance
Field notes:	Conversations with students at Addison Road Community Organisation engaging in mutual aid activities, as well as organisers from the United Workers Union and the Sydney Alliance.
Focus group:	Sydney Alliance, GetUp, Australian Red Cross, Sydney Community Forum, Addison Road Community Organisation, Asylum Seeker Centre, Democracy in Colour, Jesuit Refugee Services, University of NSW.
Documentation	Addison Road Community Organisation, Sydney Community Forum, Oz International Student Hub.

Activities:

- Mutual aid amongst students to meet immediate needs led to a ‘takeover’ of Addison Road Community Organisation.
- A community organizing approach by Sydney Community Forum and the Sydney Alliance supported students to find collective power.
- A coalition coordinated by the Sydney Alliance centered the needs of students in systemic advocacy.



Outcomes

- Material support for international students from various state governments around food, housing and income.
- Seed funding from City of Sydney and NSW Government for the **Oz International Student Hub** (OISH).
- Initial physical premises for OISH from an education provider (OISH now auspiced by Sydney Community Forum).



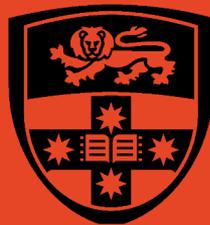
Takeaways

1. Community organizing as a tool to center the voices of *lived experience* within advocacy and service delivery.
2. The importance of place and space (both physical and online) for civil society activity.
3. The role of intermediaries and community hubs for holding and enabling collective activity.



Challenges

1. Ongoing survival and viability of Oz International Student Hub.
2. Translating responsive success in crisis to proactive systemic advocacy.
3. Increased funding and support for relational and community-oriented practice.



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