

## Foreigners seek tickets to ride

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INTERNATIONAL students from Sydney universities have lobbied NSW Transport Minister John Watkins for travel concession cards after a court last week ruled that the Government had discriminated against foreigners in not doing so.

On Monday, six international students handed out leaflets at NSW Parliament House and requested a meeting with Mr Watkins.

They have had no response, apart from a message from Opposition transport spokesman Barry O'Farrell that the state Liberals welcomed Thursday's ruling by the NSW Administrative Decisions Tribunal.

The action against the NSW Government was brought four years ago by three students - Haoyu Wang, Arturo Nuevo and Roberto Martinez-Neira - and the Sydney University Postgraduate Representative Association.

NSW stopped travel concession cards for foreign students in 1989.

SUPRA solicitor Aristotle Paipetis said the state had unlawfully earned tens of millions of dollars since then.

The ADT said the NSW Department of Transport, the director-general of transport, the State Transit Authority and the State Rail Authority had breached the Government's anti-discrimination act by discriminating against the students on the basis of race.

"The practice the NSW Government and the Transport Department have had of not entitling international students to have a travel concession is unlawful and should cease," Mr Paipetis said.

"If this decision is to be relied on, international students can now apply for a travel concession card."

The students and SUPRA would seek an order "that the minister, the director-general, the STA and SRA cease any discrimination", he said.

Last October, the vice-chancellors of the universities of Sydney and NSW, and the University of Technology, Sydney, wrote to the transport department seeking concession cards for foreign students.

"Sydney is losing quality students to universities in other capital cities, some of whom offer transport concessions," they wrote.

More than 20,000 foreign students at five Sydney universities brought in nearly \$1 billion a year to the city's economy and anyone who went interstate represented a loss to NSW of \$33,000. Sydney's reputation as an international student destination was being damaged by an unwelcoming policy.

"Travel concessions are unquestionably the most complained about issue by enrolled international students," the vice-chancellors said.

A spokeswoman for Mr Watkins said the NSW Government was expected to appeal against the decision. "The federal Government's visa conditions for international students stipulate that they be self-sufficient," she said. "They must sign a declaration guaranteeing they can cover all costs of their stay."

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