



COVID-19 OUR RESPONSE

PROGRESS REPORT APRIL 2020

DRY FOOD DONATION

As COVID-19 continued to shut economies, push people into isolation and create uncertainty and greater vulnerability, KUAA rallied together with a number of other organisations to support the most severely affected members of our community - the international students. There are about 14,000 Sri Lankan students studying in Australia out of which over 10,000 stay in Melbourne. Most of these students lost their supplementary income sources due to the pandemic and found it extremely hard to make ends meet.

As more and more people entered into mandatory self-isolation, KUAA stepped in to provide help to those students who do not have the support of an income or a network of family and friends. KUAA coordinated with the Sri Lankan Consulate in Victoria, Mahamevna Buddhist Monastery and Aus News Lanka in this effort. Hundreds of KUAA volunteers are contributing their time, resources and labour into this ongoing process as the lockdown and restrictions continue to be enforced.

KUAA focused on two key areas so to help students to cope with the difficulties posed by the disruptions and consequent financial hardships. These included:

- Distributing essential food supplies;
- Coordinating free professional support through medical practitioners, lawyers and accountants

KUAA mobilized its members to purchase essential supplies and organise them into packages while taking critical steps to prevent the transmission of COVID-19 and respecting the social distancing measures. As at the end of April 2020, we have been able to:

- Set up a smooth process for purchasing and packaging food
- Prepare more than 500 packages of essential supplies
- Coordinate the delivery of nearly 300 food packages and hygiene materials
- Organise food package storage points in Forest Hill, Bundoora, Werribee, Glen Waverly, Mount Waverly, Mulgrave, Dandenong, Narre warren and Berwick.

KUAA publicised the availability of support to students on numerous communication platforms including Aus News Lanka Facebook Page. Sri Lankan Consular Office in Melbourne received calls and emails from students who

requested food packages and the information was passed on the KUAA Emergency Response Team. In most cases, these packages were delivered on the same day.

Currently, KUAA manages a delivery of around 50-100 food packages per week. The package has enough dry rations for a week's period. In some instances, more than one package was delivered to students who live in shared accommodation facilities.

FREE PROFESSIONAL ADVICE

Having spoken to the students, KUAA also started a process through which students can receive free professional advice for a period of two months on a number of key services. Many Sri Lankan doctors, accountants and lawyers joined hands with KUAA to offer free services to students in the following areas:

- Medical advice and support;
- Visa related issues; and
- Superannuation and taxation.

By the end of April, nearly 15 students benefitted from these services. Most students sought support for withdrawing their superannuation funds and questions around their visa status.

The students welcomed this support, as they were unable to return to Sri Lanka or receive money from families back home who are equally affected.

We would like to give our heartfelt thanks to all the kind and generous people of the KUAA membership and the public, who financially contributed to this initiative. Many others have also supported us by donating their time, resources and labour to make this effort a success. The significant volume of kindness and generosity that we have seen in these trying times has been a true testimony of the true Sri Lankan values of care and pure will, and we are immensely thankful to all those who chose to be a part of this effort.



KELANIYA UNIVERSITY ALUMNI ASSOCIATION AUSTRALIA

Compiled by Shashike Gamage