

# International Student Mental Health

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:

# Issues raised in ISANA workshops



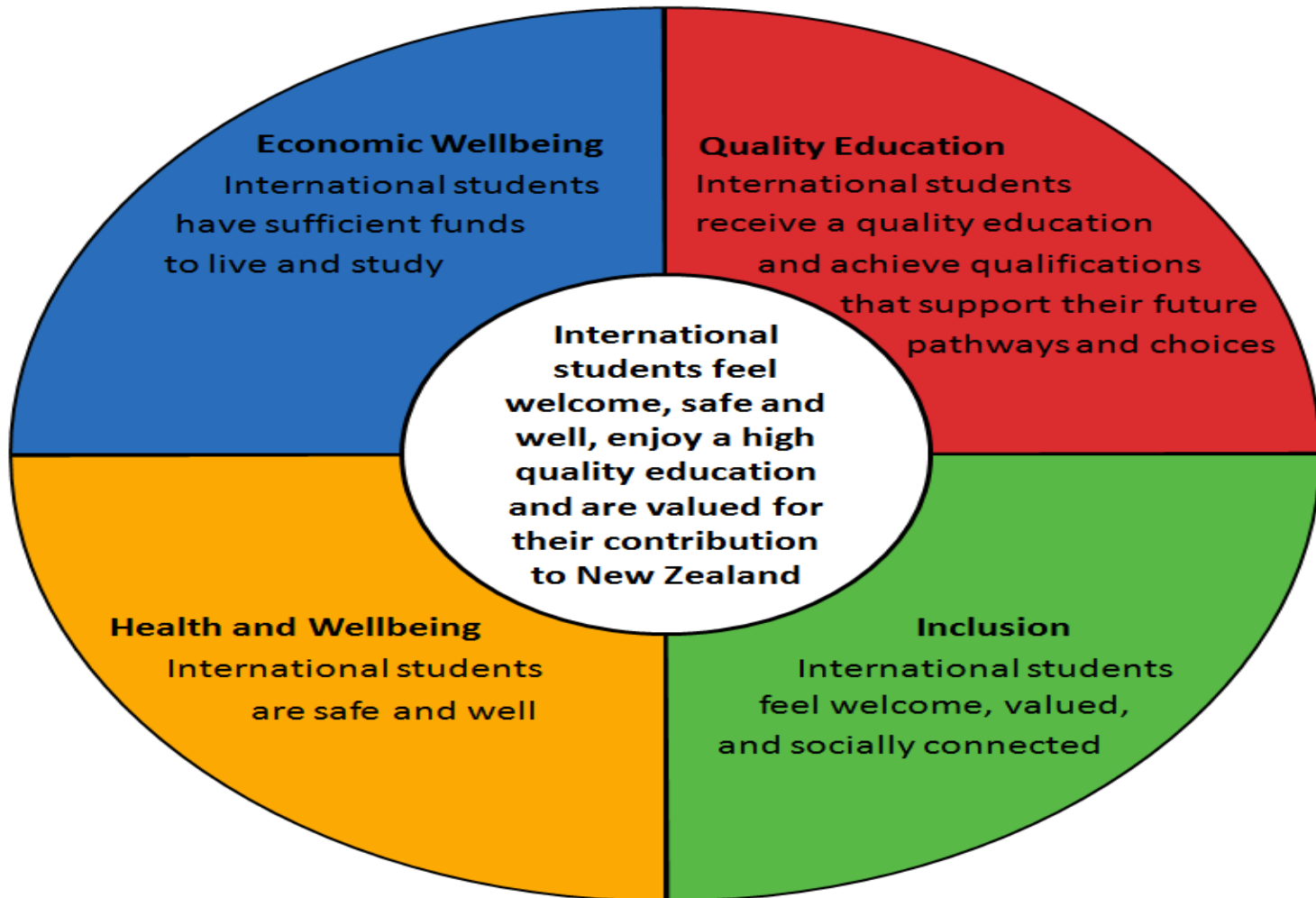
- increasing stress and mental health challenges
- pre-existing mental health issues not declared
- students not taking up recommended referrals to mental health services due to cost
- students not taking proper primary/preventive mental health actions – delaying until critical for care
- health insurance cover for mental health capped - brought into play only when service needs are critical and expensive
- ISANA 2015 conference - mental health primary issue of concern ahead of sexual health and general first aid

# The project



- Ministry of Education partnered with ISANA NZ
- To scope key issues and identify areas for follow up
- To inform serious efforts to improve early identification and response to international student mental health issues

# International Student Wellbeing Strategy



# Two surveys

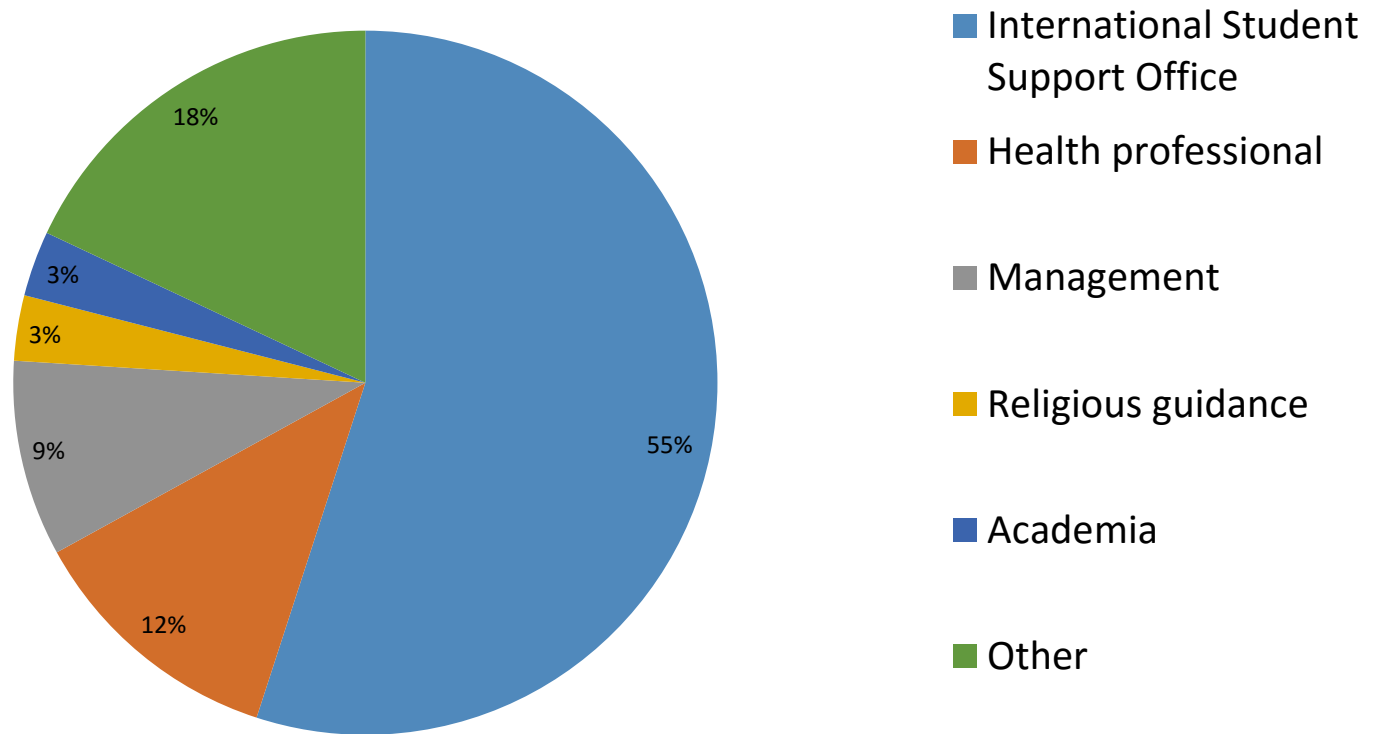


- of 109 professionals working directly with international students, through the ISANA member network – 41 responses
- to six medical health insurance providers to help clarify insurance coverage for international students – 4 responses

# Responses from ISANA members



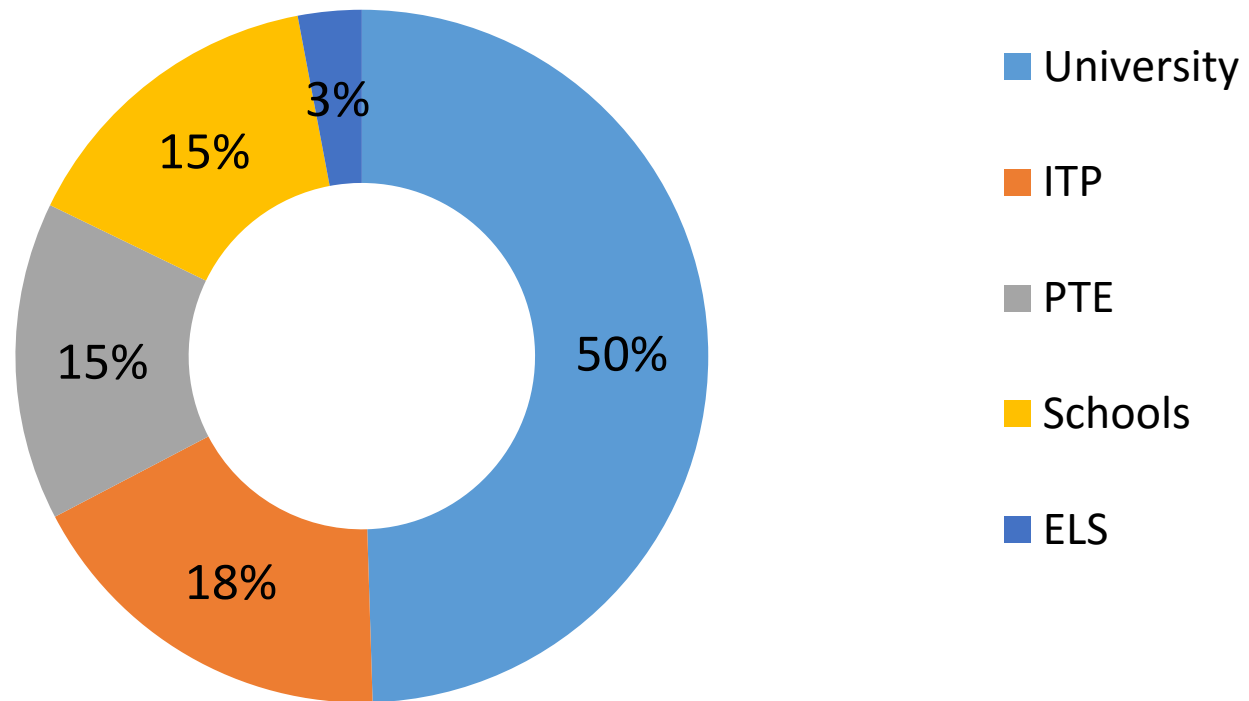
## % of respondents



# Responses from ISANA members



## Provider type



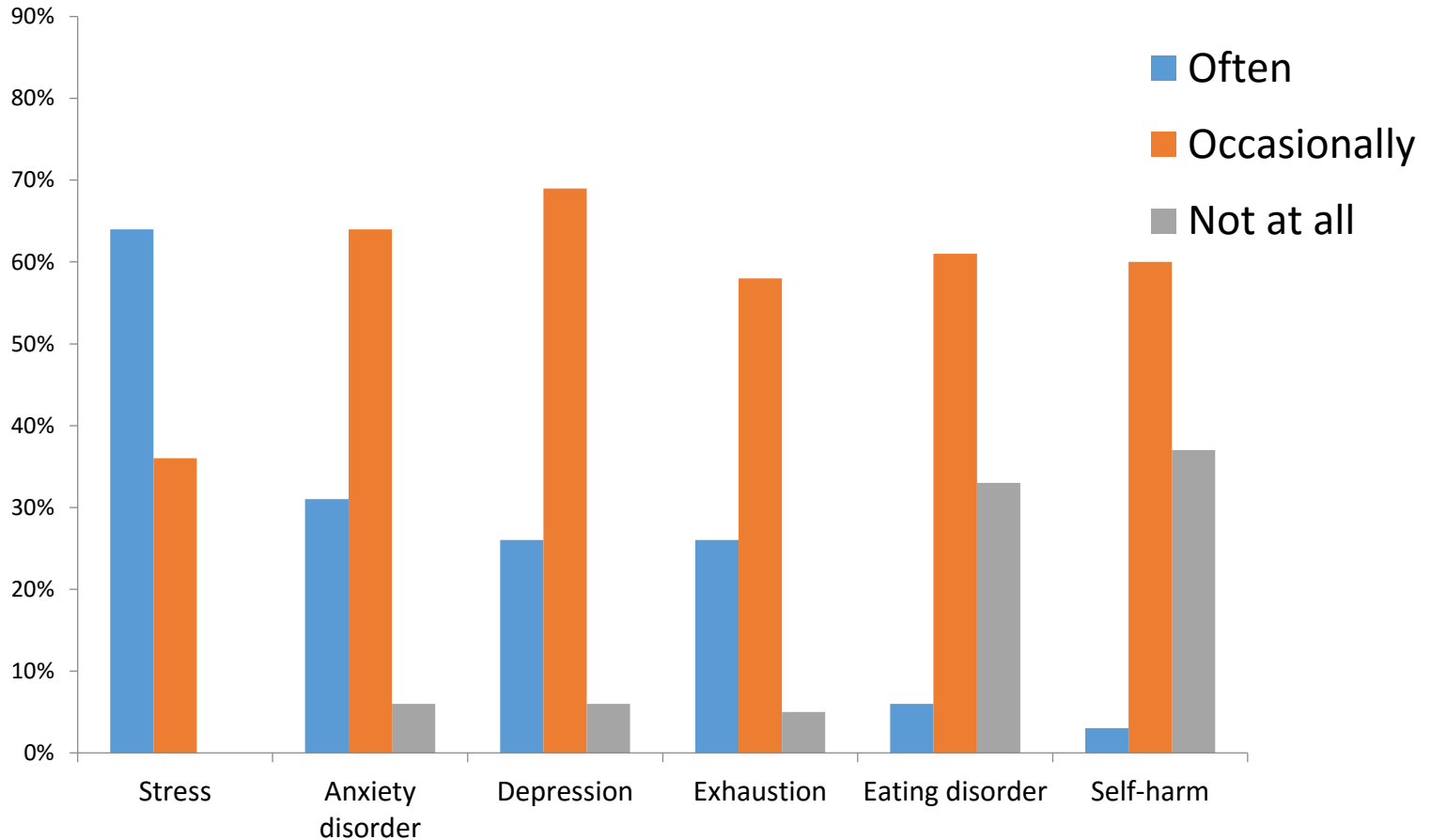


# Responses from ISANA members

- 83% confirmed mental health problems and increasing stress are a serious problem for some international students



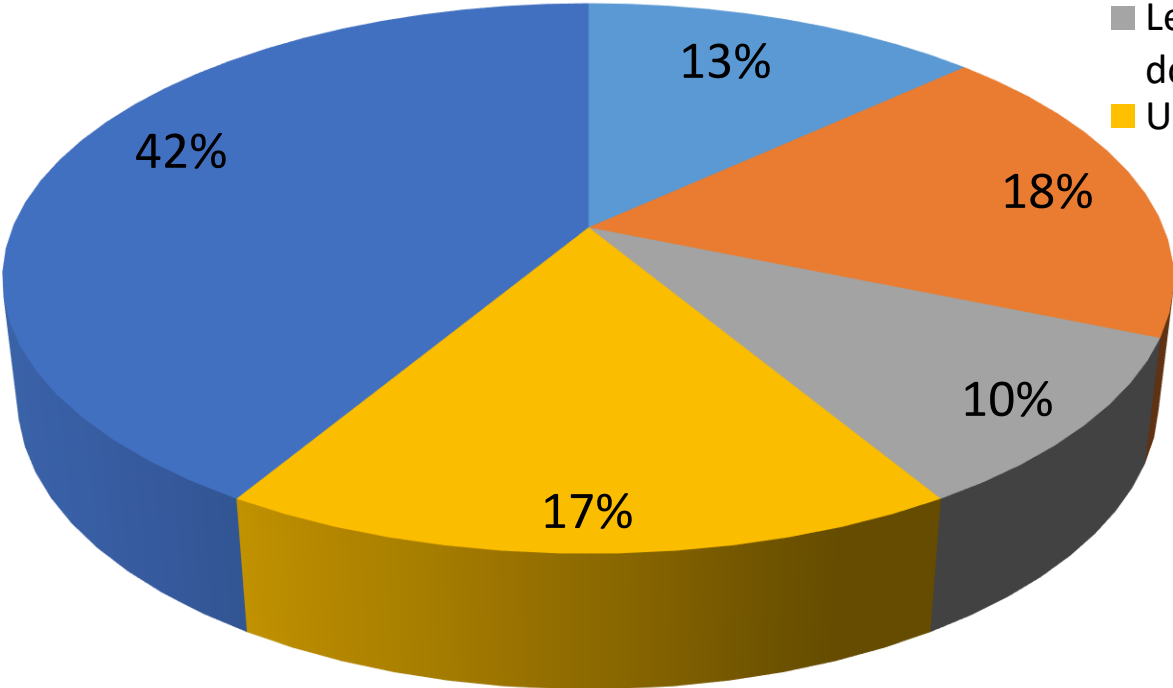
# How often do mental health problems occur among your international students?



# How do international students mental health issues compare with domestic students?



- Greater than domestic
- Same as domestic
- Less than domestic
- Unsure



# Any significant changes in international students' mental health status over the past three years?



30% answered yes

- increase in students presenting with mental health problems
- and students with disclosed pre-existing conditions

More students experience mental health problems?

Or students becoming more open to seeking help?

23% said no

48% said they didn't know



# Are mental health problems more common among a particular group of international students?

- 41% no
- 31% didn't know
- 28% yes
  - Chinese and Indian students most commonly mentioned
  - Chinese the largest cohort presenting with mental health problems, however worst cases with Brazilian, Chilean, and Japanese students
  - Some present more readily – American and European
  - Asian students present less readily : can lead to greater difficulty because intervention is late

# Processes to monitor students' mental health, identify issues, respond with early interventions



- 33 responses
  - 24 had 4 or 5 processes in place
- Most common
  - Refer to counselling (22)
  - Observation/intervention by tutor (20)
  - Regular student contact (17)
  - Homestay / hall of residence monitoring (13)
  - Monitoring attendance / academic results (11)
  - Refer to pastoral care (10)
- Self-referral the least effective process

# Some students arrive with non-declared pre-existing mental health problems. Is this a problem?



58% - yes some extent

30% - yes to a great extent

13% - didn't know.

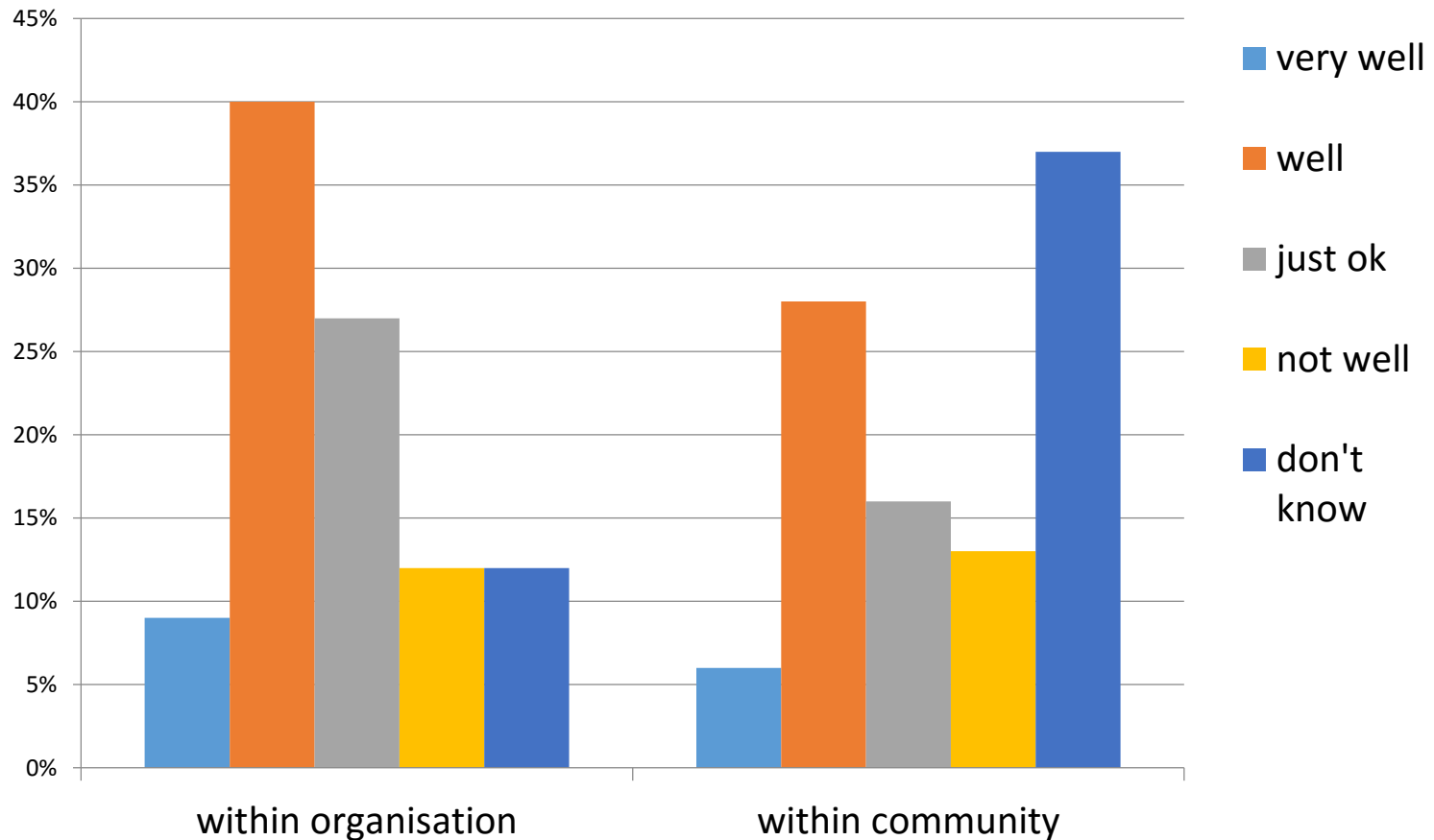
## Resulting issues

- appropriate support
- conditions only surface when serious
- conditions exacerbated

## Student reasons

- conditions not recognised or heavily stigmatised
- affect on insurance

# How are mental health services tailored for international students in your organisation and local community?



# Barriers that might prevent students from accessing adequate treatment for mental health problems?



- 63% said yes
  - Cultural stigma' around mental health the most frequently word/phrase
  - 'Language barriers' and 'cost' were also mentioned to be actual or perceived barriers.
- 15% not aware of any barriers
- 21% didn't know.



# Help to deal more effectively with international students' mental health problems



- training for working with students
- greater availability of interpreters
- trained counsellor on site
- external support groups
- community meetings
- multi-lingual counselling
- culture specific support services

Greater knowledge of existing services

“To know more about the student when they arrive”

# Adequacy of insurance cover



## Issues raised

- students not taking up referrals due to cost
- students not taking preventive mental health actions
- cover for mental health capped
- only once service needs are critical and expensive

Asked health insurance providers

4 responded

# Insurance cover



Cover	Sum Insured	Sum Insured	Sum Insured	Sum Insured
Mental Illness Medical Expenses	20,000	20,000*	unlimited	20,000
Mental Illness Repatriation	Unlimited		unlimited	25,000
Suicide/ Attempted Suicide / Self injury	20,000		nil	20,000
Mental Illness 2 Accompanying Relatives	100,000		reasonable costs	100,000
Accompanying Relatives Suicide/ Attempted Suicide / Self injury (2 relatives)	100,000		nil	100,000
Funeral Expenses	100,000		100,000	100,000

# Exclusion for pre-existing condition



What percentage of claims for mental health were declined as existing condition

- two responded that they were not aware of any such declines
- one estimated 20 to 30% although lacked specific data
- one estimated around 5%

# Claims increasing?



- Two providers - mental health claims as a percentage of total claims did not seem to be increasing
- Two providers - felt there had been an increase – probably due to increased awareness of mental illness

# Conclusions - actions?

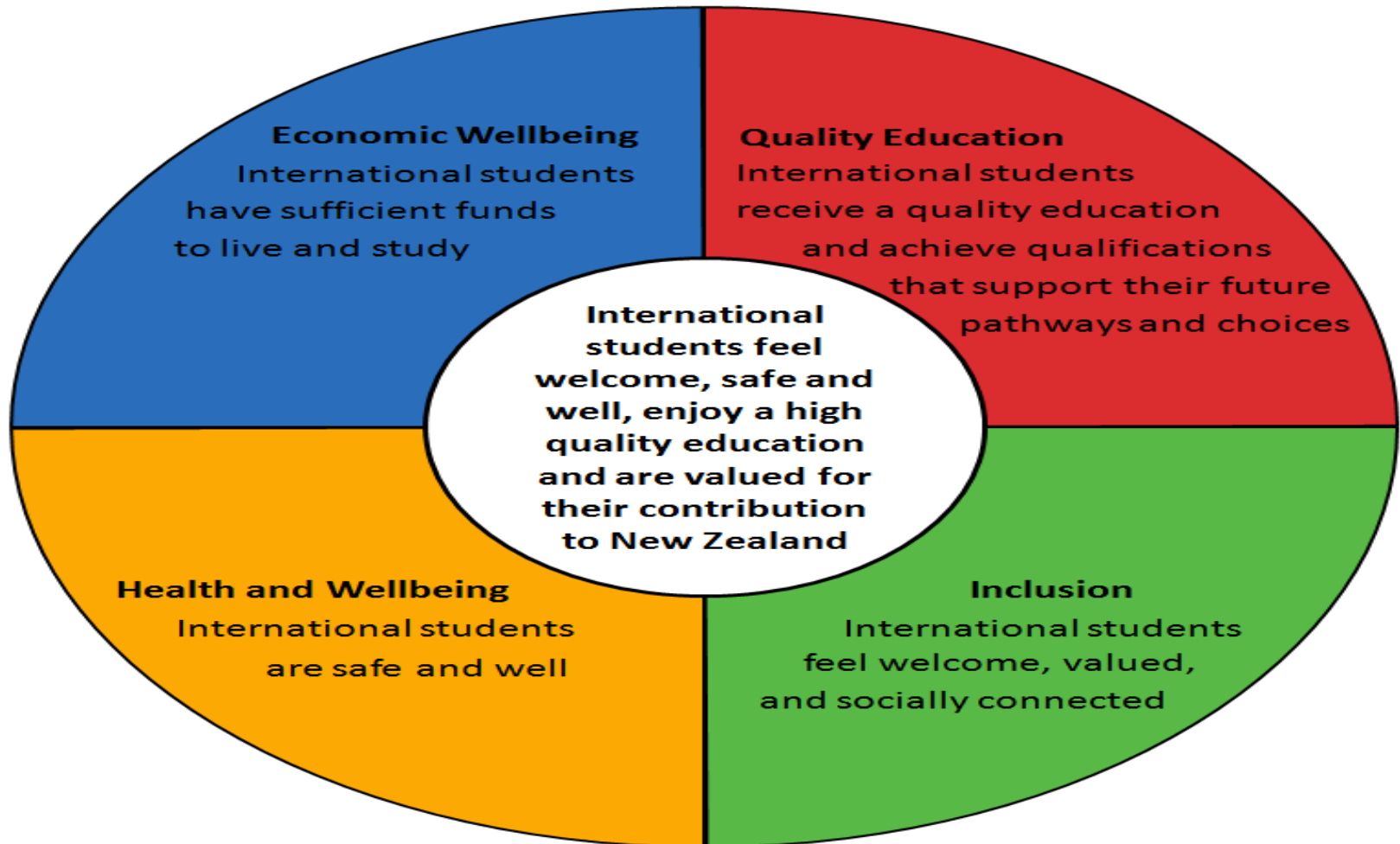


Nothing to indicate that mental health a greater issue for international students than for domestic

But different

- need more research on differences with domestic
- comprehensive information on community services
- good relationship with District Health Board
- find insurance cover where mental health not excluded as pre-existing condition
- more information on insurance cover

# International Student Wellbeing Strategy



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