



Meeting of Expert Members of the Council for International Education 5 August 2020

On 5 August 2020, Expert Members met by videoconference to address the challenges facing Australia's international education sector as it adapts to a new economic and geopolitical environment. The spread of COVID-19 continues to disrupt the provision of education, both onshore and offshore, and is having a profound effect on society. As one of Australia's most successful exports, the international education sector plays a vital role creating jobs that reinvigorate the domestic economy, particularly in small and medium-sized enterprises like accommodation, hospitality and tourism.

Expert Members discussed in detail the short to medium term economic and strategic outlook for the sector, identifying key issues that influence the sector's ability to reopen and recover post COVID-19. Members agreed that work to underpin a new National Strategy for International Education should stand on Australia's quality education, complemented by positive student experience that enriches teaching and learning environments. The National Strategy should support the sector increase its resilience through entrepreneurship and innovation including diversification strategies for Australian providers in their modes of delivery, products and source countries; and promote Australia, including regional and rural areas, as a high quality education destination that will enrich international and domestic students' lives.

Examining ways to increase employability of international students, Members identified the importance of focusing on work integrated learning and virtual internships that count as credit for qualifications while also helping graduates become job ready anywhere in the world. Members agreed to identify and prioritise concrete, practical ways to support providers to be flexible in delivering work opportunities to students. Members also emphasised the importance of clear messaging to international students about Australia's economic situation to manage expectations of employment prospects while studying and post study in Australia.

Members welcomed the recent announcement on changes to student visas. These changes are a positive step forward in maintaining Australia's global competitiveness as international student mobility recommences. They also noted how evolving health conditions in Australia have affected the implementation of pilot programs to return international students and noted that work is still underway. As part of this discussion, Members also considered how the Council can best prepare for future crises, including building on the success of the Global Reputation Taskforce's response to the 2020 summer bushfires and the initial peak of the COVID-19 pandemic to ensure that international students, providers and Australian businesses are resilient enough to withstand future risks.