



Meeting of the Council for International Education

Thursday 3 December 2020, Canberra

Ministers and Expert Members of the Council for International Education (the Council) met for the fifth consecutive year, reflecting on the challenges and achievements of 2020 and discussing priority actions to reinvigorate Australia's international education sector in a 'COVID-Normal' world.

Today's meeting recognised 2020 has been a difficult year for all involved in international education particularly students and education providers. While the closure of Australia's international borders has been critical to slowing the spread of COVID-19, it has presented many challenges to the sector and students in Australia and overseas. The challenges are not over but hope is emerging that Australia will again be able to welcome international students in 2021.

Toward a new *Australian Strategy for International Education*

The Council agreed that a new *Australian Strategy for International Education* is its priority for 2021. Developed collaboratively across the sector, a new strategy will reaffirm that Australia is open for business and an effective, trusted global partner of choice in international education, training and research. Reflecting both new trends and enduring strengths, it will enable the sector to diversify, provide greater connections and opportunities for students and providers, and build a prosperous international education and training community in Australia and overseas.

The successful use of technology in 2020 has highlighted opportunities for growth and diversification through online and blended learning, with the development of new delivery models such as micro-credentials critical to future success. As countries around the world look to their skilled workforces to lead economic recovery from the impacts of the pandemic, Australia has a key role to play.

Council members agreed that 2020 had reinforced Australia's reputation as a global leader in skills-based training for job-ready graduates, congratulating the sector for continuing to deliver a high-quality education to students in Australia and overseas in the face of significant challenges. Reforms to the higher education sector to meet increasing demand for skills in science and technology, as well as significant investments in the local VET sector, will further strengthen Australia's role in supporting strong global graduate employment outcomes.

Working towards the return of international students is a priority for 2021. Australia's world class institutions and liveable cities will remain a drawcard for those seeking an overseas study experience, while the nation's success in managing and then recovery from COVID-19 will do much to reassure students and their families that we are a safe and welcoming study destination. Cooperation between the Commonwealth, state and territory governments and the sector have advanced plans for the return of international students, when health conditions and quarantine capacity allow.

Next steps in the development of a new *Australian Strategy for International Education*

The Council's Expert Members will lead stakeholder consultations from February to April 2021. Written responses to a consultation paper will also be sought, to allow for the expected delivery of the new *Australian*

Strategy for International Education by mid-2021. The Council urges stakeholders to consider future opportunities and engage in the development of the strategy. Further information on opportunities for consultation on the development of the strategy will be made available in early 2021 at <https://internationaleducation.gov.au>.

Achievements in 2020

The Council agreed that 2020 had been a year of rare challenges, from summer bushfires to the closure of international borders and the ongoing economic impact of COVID-19. Throughout these challenges the Australian Government, state and territory governments and education providers came together to support the resilience of the sector and the welfare of Australia's international student community.

This included measures totalling \$1.5 billion from the Australian and state and territory governments, including fee deferrals, food and accommodation support, and mental health support from education providers. Cross-sector collaboration underpinned the work of the Global Reputation Taskforce, established by the Council in February 2020, with the international education community also uniting virtually through the ongoing #InThisTogether social media initiative.

As well as the pandemic response, in 2020 the Council delivered policy initiatives to improve employability outcomes, increase access to supplementary courses for international students, support international engagement in regional Australia and counter foreign interference. The Council also noted initiatives by the Australian Government to drive deeper collaboration on quality assurance, drive qualifications recognition and online education with our established and emerging bilateral and multilateral partners, and to progress the implementation of the *VET International Engagement Strategy 2025*. Work on these priorities will continue in 2021.

Ministerial Members

- The Hon Dan Tehan MP, Minister for Education (Chair)
- Senator the Hon Marise Payne, Minister for Foreign Affairs
- Senator the Hon Simon Birmingham, Minister for Trade, Tourism and Investment
- Senator the Hon Michaelia Cash, Minister for Employment, Skills, Small and Family Business
- The Hon Karen Andrews MP, Minister for Industry, Science and Technology
- The Hon Alan Tudge MP, Acting Minister for Immigration, Citizenship, Migrant Services and Multicultural Affairs

Expert Members

- The Hon Phil Honeywood, CEO, International Education Association of Australia (Convener)
- Mr Malcolm Baigent, Executive General Manager, University Partnerships Australasia, Navitas
- Professor Helen Bartlett, Vice-Chancellor and President, University of the Sunshine Coast
- Professor Heather Cavanagh, Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research and Engagement), Charles Sturt University
- Ms Janelle Chapman, Executive Director, TAFE Queensland International
- Ms Karyn Kent, CEO, StudyAdelaide
- Professor Linda Kristjanson AO
- Ms Belle Lim, National President, Council of International Students Australia
- Ms Kathleen Newcombe, CEO, Sarina Russo Group of Companies
- Mr Derek Scott, Principal and CEO, Haileybury
- Professor Michael Wesley, Deputy Vice-Chancellor (International), The University of Melbourne