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International Student Visa changes ensure viability of the sector

The Government's endorsement of the review of Australia's Student Visa Program will create a more streamlined system for international students wishing to study in Australia. These reforms will ensure international education in Australia remains competitive.

"It is a major step forward to recognise that students selected by universities from any country should be subject to a quick, efficient visa assessment that ensures the basic questions identified by Mr Knight of the applicant's desire for education and intent to adhere to visa requirements". said Professor Ian O'Connor, IRU Chair.

"The guarantee of post study work is an important option for students, enabling them to gain experience as the basis for future employment whether in their home country, Australia or elsewhere in the world" said Professor O'Connor.

"There is a growing international workforce of highly skilled people who move across countries during their working careers. The post study visa allows Australia to access this group at the beginning of their work careers, potentially setting the basis for future periods in Australia. The changes for international research students are particularly important in this regard".

The Review recommendations also address many of the smaller issues with administration of student visas. Greater discretion for Department of Immigration Officers regarding visa enforcement in place of automatic cancellation should permit better targeting of effort at those few students enrolled in universities who breach the requirements of their visa.

Mr Knight rightly argues the need for effective ongoing interaction between the education providers and the responsible Government departments. As he points out there will remain issues to the address in implementing the changes and responding to their outcomes. The creation of an Education Visa Advisory Group should be the basis for this.

The IRU looks forward to the Government's further review of the basis for extending the provider risk focus to some non university providers. IRU universities have pathway agreements with select high quality providers. Not all of their students will initially enrol as part of a package leading to a university degree and be subject to the streamlined arrangements. It is important to ensure that these pathways are also able to operate smoothly for all relevant students.

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