

9 July 2024

Business Strongly Backs International Student Market

Independent Higher Education Australia (IHEA) endorses and welcomes the comments by Australia’s two peak business groups – the **Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ACCI)** and the **Business Council of Australia (BCA)** – strongly expressing concerns about the Government’s damaging policies to the international student market.

As is widely known Australia’s education of international students is our biggest service export, valued at \$48 billion and our fourth biggest export after iron ore, gas and coal.

Andrew McKellar, CEO of ACCI, recently stated that the *Education Services for Overseas Students Bill*, currently before Parliament:

“ ... could inadvertently harm the sector. Specifically, the subjective criteria for cancelling courses based on perceived value to Australia’s skills needs or public interest should be replaced with targeted actions to avoid penalising specific areas of study. ACCI is also concerned about the proposed enrolment caps, which could harm providers and Australia’s reputation as a welcoming destination for international students.’ [ACCI Update 05 July 2024]

He went on to say:

“As many of you would know, international students significantly contribute to the workforce while they are students and later if they remain beyond graduation. Compelling providers to offer a particular course to domestic students for two years before being able to take international students could hinder new independent providers. Finally, the broad definition of ‘associate’ and the requirement to disclose education agent commissions could deter valuable investments and complicate compliance for providers.”

Joining the chorus was Bran Black, CEO of the BCA, who stated:

“We face an uncomfortable truth: without migration in recent years, we would be in a real-terms recession. International students accounted for almost a quarter of all GDP growth over the year to March 2024.” [Australian Financial Review 03 July 2024]

Further, he stated:

“Amid proposals to cut the number of students coming to Australia, calm heads must prevail, so we don’t cannibalise one of our long-term national advantages for short-term benefit. Yes, we have housing supply challenges. Yes, there are shoddy “education” providers. But as we tackle these challenges – and I don’t dismiss their significance – we must avoid self-harm. After all, we are playing with Australia’s fourth-largest export at a time when our economy is on a knife’s edge.”

We urge the Government to change course and listen to these voices of reason.

Ends

Media Contact: Dr Jerry Nockles, (jerry.nockles@iheau.edu.au)