

Review of Australia's response to international student needs during the COVID-19 pandemic

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During 2020 and beyond, coronavirus disease has profoundly disrupted global economic, health and higher education systems. As universities shuttered campuses and businesses locked down, Australia's export education sector stalled. Many international students who were able to return home, did so, while those who could not, would experience varying levels of support and exclusion. Government policies and practices during 2020 are analysed alongside research literature and media reports to provide an overview of how the COVID-19 pandemic affected the Australian higher education sector and international students. Specifically, the analysis addresses the emerging and emergent impact of this pandemic on the public higher education sector and its international education activities and proposes corresponding recommendations for systemic and institutional recovery. These recommendations call for increased government fiscal and welfare support, strengthened regulatory safeguards, extended post-study work rights, progress regarding foreign qualifications recognition, and institution-level strategies. A long and varied list of sources chronicles events.

Keywords: COVID-19, higher education, international education, international students, Australia

Introduction

The emergence of severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2) infections in late 2019 and the resultant eponymous COVID-19 pandemic foreshadowed profound disruptions to global economic, health and higher education systems. As the virus spread across national borders via international airways and sea lanes, the World Health Organisation (2020) finally declared a pandemic on 11 March 2020. Like other governments, the Australian Government responded by closing its borders (20 March) for non-residents and recommended that temporary migrants return home (Gibson & Moran, 2020).

With respect to international students, this recommendation was justified on the basis that, as temporary migrants, visa requirements stipulate that they must demonstrate sufficient funds to afford cost of living and travel expenses while studying in Australia (Department of Home Affairs [DHA], 2020a). Given these legislated safeguards, the Australian Government's initial pandemic response was to exclude temporary migrants from fiscal stimulus packages (Frydenberg, 2020; Morrison, 2020a; Parliament of Australia [PA], 2020a; PA, 2020b). This messaging arguably compounded emerging and longstanding concerns regarding international students. These include the finding that students felt abandoned during this emergency period, as well as established concerns relating to education quality, their study experience, safety and wellbeing, and exposure to exploitative employment conditions, racism and discrimination (Akanwa, 2015; Baas, 2010; Bavas, 2020; Debets, 2018; Doherty, 2020; Marginson, Nyland & Sawir, 2010). During the months following the Australian Government's recommendation to return home, Australian state and territory governments would amass approximately \$99 million in COVID-19-related initiatives, independent of the Australian Government, to support on-shore international students (International Education Association of Australia, n.d.). These funds represent slightly less than 0.4 per cent of the \$26 billion in income generated by tuition fees and goods and services purchased by international students in 2019 (Australian Bureau of Statistics [ABS], 2019).

In this paper, we will frame the impact of this pandemic on the Australian higher education sector within an international education context during 2020. Using a rapid review approach, the authors analysed materials relating to higher education policy and programs, health systems, migration, export education and international students. Accordingly, the sections that follow will explore Australia's export education

sector, its over-exposure to China and pivot towards India, the eventual COVID-19 crisis, and associated sectorial responses. The paper will close by proposing a pragmatic range of policy recommendations that focus on systemic and institutional recovery.

Leveraging international education

Over the 2018-2019 fiscal year, international students in Australian schools, English Language Intensive Courses for Overseas Students (ELICOS), vocational education and training (VET) and higher education institutions contributed \$37.6 billion to the economy. In the higher education sector alone, this included \$12 billion in tuition fee income, and \$13.9 billion in further goods and services (ABS, 2019). A consequence of international student enrolment growth has been that many universities substituted

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their reliance on government funding with a reliance on international student tuition fee revenue (see Audit Office of New South Wales, 2019; see Victorian Auditor General's Office, 2018). To varying degrees, revenue generated by Australian universities is dependent on international student enrolments. In 2017, 23 per cent of universities' revenue came from international students, with research-intensive universities being disproportionately exposed to any downturn in student numbers (Koslowski, 2019; PA, 2019). Additionally, international students often invest differentially in their Australian qualifications (PA, 2019), with tuition fees highest at research-intensive universities (Chew & Fogarty, 2018).

That said, Boucher (2020) notes that international students are a key component of the Australian success story, as many have transitioned from holding student visas to making professional contributions as permanent residents (at least 16 per cent between 2000-01 and 2013-14) (DHA, 2018). Others have taken alternative pathways (e.g., Temporary Graduate Visas) on their way to boosting Australia's community and economy (PA, 2019). Over the last 30 years, Australia's national, state and territory and local governments have successfully marketed Australia's education sector, lifestyle, multiculturalism, post-study work rights and research-based global rankings to recruit more international students. The Australian Government's Strategic messaging framework emphasises Australia's welcoming, supportive environment, quality education, diverse study options, employability, rewarding student experience, and visionary research. Large diaspora communities have also embraced inbound students (ABS, 2017; ABS, 2020). In many cases,

international students from yesteryear are now the parents of Australians. To date, this marketing and recruitment model has proved extraordinarily successful, with Australia's export education sector comprising 957,000 international students in 2019 (Department of Education, Skills and Employment [DESE], 2020a).

Over-exposure to China and the pivot to India

The first quarter of 2020 witnessed a drop in absolute higher education international student numbers (to 362,578) (DESE, 2020a) as some withdrew from their courses, while others deferred or changed their study focus. By August 2020, higher education international student enrolments (404,515) were four per cent lower than in 2019 (DESE, 2020b), and by December 2020, enrolments totalled 418,168, down 22,500 from that recorded for 2019 (DESE, 2021). This reduction has weakened Australia's higher education system. These downward enrolment trends reflect border restrictions and transformed academic practices associated with the commencement of the COVID-19 pandemic, shifting market conditions and onshore agents luring higher education students to VET. While reports suggested that some onshore education agents have profited from this pandemic by increasing commissions and shepherding students towards less reputable education providers (Mulder, 2020), unscrupulous conduct is limited to a small proportion of agencies (PA, 2018). At the same time, this drop in enrolments can also be attributed to Australia's trade approach to higher education, and the systemic and institutional policies and practices that have historically reinforced it. As will be demonstrated, Australia's 'pivot' to diversify markets from predominantly Chinese students by focusing also on Indian students highlights how trade policies and practices have shifted in response to geopolitics, market opportunities and emerging risks.

In recent years, Australia's higher education sector has been warned about its exposure to China – reaching 165,000 students in 2019 (DESE, 2020a) – and reliance on international education revenue. In response to these foreseeable and known risks (Babones, 2020), various attempts at mitigation have emphasised pivoting to India as an additional major market (Freeman, Barker & Lahiri, 2018). With a population approaching 1.4 billion, a large youth demographic, high unmet demand for higher education, growing unemployment and over 330,000 globally mobile students in 2017, India has captured much of the world's attention as a potential source of international student enrollees. The United States has long attracted the largest proportion (enrolling 43 per cent of India's outbound international students in 2017), although there is competition among other Anglophone countries,

the United Arab Emirates, European countries (UNESCO Institute for Statistics 2020), and Asia (De Wit, Ferencz & Rumbley, 2013).

If Australia further seeks to develop its market share of Indian international students, then several considerations should be assessed in advance. As Figure 1 illustrates, migration policy settings, eligibility criteria and pathways, work rights, student well-being, financial stability and education provider integrity each play their part. For example, various Howard Government initiatives prior to the global financial crisis of 2008 served to entice international students towards Australia. Following this global financial crisis, a perfect storm of events saw Indian student enrolments diminish. This included a strengthening Australian dollar (starting at 38.39 INR/AUD in 2009 and peaking at 59.06 INR/AUD in 2013), greater global competition for international students, changes to visa and migration policies, increasing academic requirements, disincentivising education-migration pathways, reputational damage due to dishonest VET and ELICOS providers and, of course, the economic contraction itself (Teo, 2018). Exposés in the Indian media of international student-related safety scandals and racism influenced family and student destination choices, occasionally consigning governments and education bodies to damage control (Baas 2010). In recent years the trend has corrected, with the number of Indian higher education students more than doubling from 2016 (44,000) to 2019 (91,000) (DESE, 2020a).

The pivot from China towards India presents an opportunity for Australia to correct the current over-reliance on a single geographical market, while acknowledging the increasing importance of Indian nationals in Australia's higher education sector. Geopolitical shadings around the Australia-China relationship (Laurenceson & Zhou, 2020) also illustrate the need to rethink revenue projections for international education. Supporting Indian international students through their higher education learning, living and recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic will subsequently go some way to encouraging Indian nationals' return following the full reopening of Australia's borders.

International students' experiences of the crisis

As COVID-19 cases ebbed and flowed, the ensuing crisis highlighted the high-risk nature of international student life, with significant fixed costs, often precarious employment, and frequent social isolation. In early 2020, many of the casual positions typically held by international students disappeared overnight (Morris, Mitchell & Ramia 2020). The recessionary effects of COVID-19 lockdowns globally also meant that many international students could not rely on family for supplementary income, nor provide remittances. Importantly,

Indian ELICOS enrolments and AUD/INR exchange rate

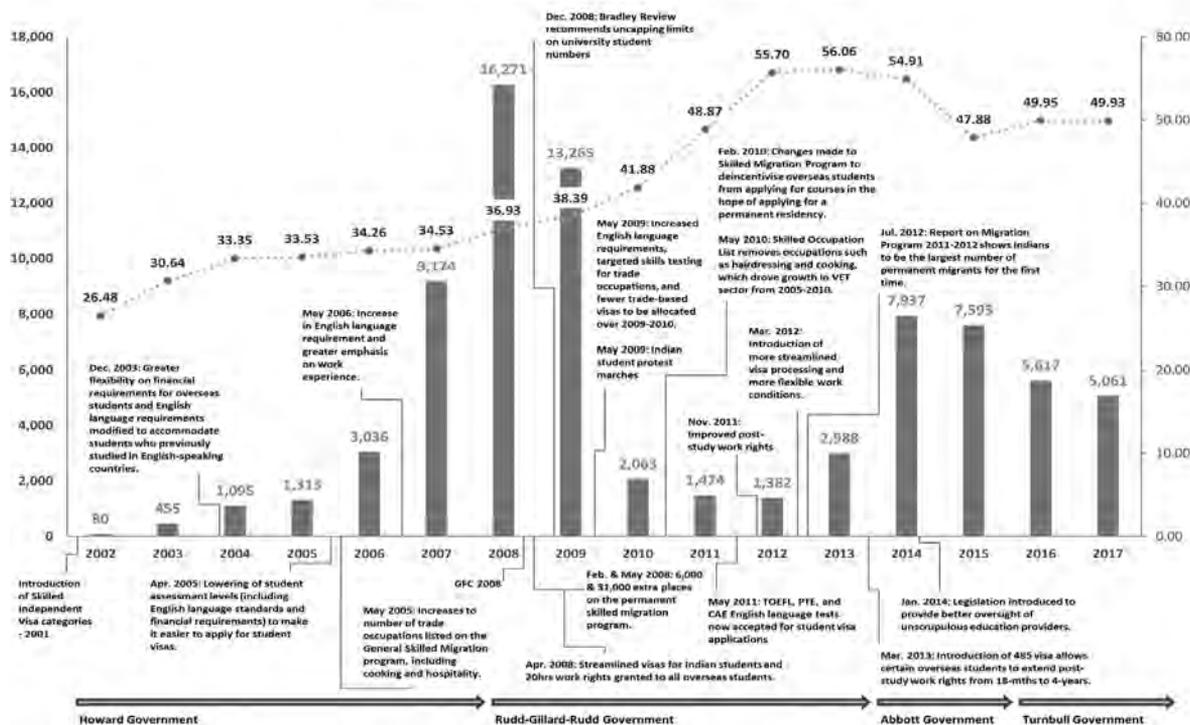


Figure 1: Australian international education policy shifts, and Indian higher education student enrolments

international students working in essentially public-facing positions in sales, and in community and personal services have been highly exposed.

Notwithstanding student visa eligibility criteria, unlike some other cohorts, many Indian international students are from lower- to middle-class backgrounds (Gunawardena & Wilson, 2012). Many are heavily reliant on Indian bank loans and part-time employment while they study. In Australia, international coursework students are eligible to work up to 40 hours each fortnight during term time, and unlimited hours outside term time (DHA, 2020b); visas for research higher degree students do not limit hours of work, but often scholarship conditions do. As the pandemic unfolded, local and international media coverage spotlighted the desperate economic and social situation faced by many international students remaining in Australia. It was during this time that the National Union of Students and Council of International Students Australia lobbied for support (Stayner, 2020). MacDonald from the National Tertiary Education Union argued that ‘by inviting these students to come to Australia, we have a responsibility to ensure their health, safety and welfare needs are met’ (MacDonald, 2020, para. 14). Students were seen lining up for free food from sympathetic restaurants and foodbanks (Carey, 2020). It was also reported that some

international students were weeks away from homelessness (O’Brien, 2020) and that Australia’s response contrasted with the more ‘caring, practical support of key competitors Canada, New Zealand and the UK’ (Hill, 2020, para. 1). Importantly, by May, familiar narratives about international students being treated unfairly as cash cows (Olmos, 2020) and dehumanised were again voiced (Alcorn, 2020). Many Indian students faced reduced working hours, while others reported being unable to return home despite classes moving online (Bamford, 2020; Kamil, 2020).

Reports also surfaced, that prospective Indian international students had concerns regarding the impact of the pandemic on future jobs and salaries, personal health, finances, accommodation, post-study periods, and the quality of online education. Many Indian international students reportedly intended to defer studies should universities only offer online classes, while some suggested that they intended to change their choice of study destination (Parmar, 2020). Shiksha’s survey of 850 potential Indian international students found that COVID-19 motivated more Indian students to preference the US or Canada over Australia and New Zealand (Baker, 2020), notwithstanding the widely publicised excellence of New Zealand’s approach and Australia’s generally competent containment.

A lack of fiscal and social supports for international students

The Australian Minister for Education, Dan Tehan, launched the Council of International Education's Global Reputation Taskforce on 21 January 2020 in the wake of a major bushfire crisis. A February 2020 Taskforce communiqué states that 'the Government is firmly committed to supporting the sector to continue to provide the assistance needed to those affected' (Tehan, 2020a, p. 2) by the pandemic. The Taskforce subsequently recommended 'ensuring we maintain a welcoming place for international students and the value of our educational experience is communicated globally' and 'making available support services for international students to assist them during and following crises' (Tehan, 2020b, p. 1). Initial recommendations released in April 2020 illustrated Australia's small government approach to international education. The Taskforce recommended the Australian Government establish committees to manage future crises, invest further in reputation management, and amend student visa criteria impacting applications, post-study work rights, and permanent residency pathways. The Taskforce recommendations narrowly conceive of the Australian Government's role as 'identifying, developing and consolidating new and nascent markets' (Australian Government & Council for International Education, 2020, pp. 1-2).

Major government financing to alleviate the pandemic's effects offered little to international students. The Australian Government's first COVID-19 fiscal stimulus package of \$17.6 billion, released 12 March 2020, focused on Australian businesses and households (Morrison, 2020a). A second package of \$189 billion, released 22 March 2020, supported Australian businesses and workers (Frydenberg, 2020; PA, 2020a; PA, 2020b). Both packages explicitly excluded temporary migrants (such as international students) from unemployment benefits (Morris, Mitchell & Ramia, 2020), including those working in highly casualised, essential positions with limited financial capacity to self-isolate.

Shortly thereafter, the Australian Government's \$18 billion higher education COVID-19 support package, released 11 April 2020, focused on domestic issues and students (Ross, 2020a; DESE, n.d.). It contained no specific provisions relating to international education. Tanya Plibersek, Opposition education spokesperson, labelled this package a 'fraud' for failing to confront international education revenue loss projections (Hunter, 2020). The Government's resolve continued as it repeatedly manoeuvred to exclude public universities from the JobKeeper scheme designed to mitigate staff losses due to COVID-19-induced revenue reductions (Karp, 2020). The October 2020 federal budget provided no relief for international students, while the \$1 billion research fund provided one-off compensation to universities

for reduced government revenue following the passage of the fraught Job-ready graduates legislation. Towards the end of the year, the Australian Government would further amend post-study work visa rights (effective 2021) for international students living and studying in regional Australia (Aurora, 2020), despite challenges associated with securing employment in such locations.

Emerging rights

As the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on Australia grew, the Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency (TEQSA) relaxed standards governing place of study and mode of delivery (TEQSA, 2020). The Department of Home Affairs temporarily relaxed international student visa rules under the *Migration Act 1958*. Enrolled student nurses were permitted to work in the health sector, while visa-related class attendance and online learning rules were relaxed to reflect teaching disruptions. International students already employed in major supermarkets or aged care homes were allowed to work more than 40 hours a fortnight without facing the prospect of having their visas cancelled. This included working in positions deemed essential while Australian workers completed COVID-19 quarantine. This relaxation expired early in the pandemic, on 1 May 2020, as newly unemployed Australians received preference for additional work amidst the deepening economic crisis.

Additionally, mixed messages from the Australian Government caused confusion and serious discomfort among international students. After an emergency Commonwealth, states and territories National Cabinet meeting on 3 April, Prime Minister Scott Morrison delivered the remarkable statement that 'If you are a visitor in this country, it is time ... to make your way home'. Morrison went on to emphasise that 'Australia must focus on its citizens and its residents to ensure that we can maximise the economic supports that we have' (Gibson & Moran, 2020, paras 3, 7). Morrison's nationalistic display offered international students a firm reminder of their second-class status (see Deumert, Marginson, Nyland, Ramia & Sawir, 2005) while reassuring Australians of the Government's prioritisation of citizens.

The following day the Acting Immigration Minister, Alan Tudge, reiterated the message that international students were more or less on their own, softened only by an acknowledgement of the contribution they have made to the education sector and the Australian economy (Migration Alliance, 2020). Minister for Education Tehan was more conciliatory than his Government colleagues when he stated on 8 April that 'my message to our international students is: you are our friends, our classmates, our colleagues and members of our community' (Tehan, 2020c, para. 7). But still, no financial support.

In May 2020, in its effort to move forward, the Australian Government optimistically anticipated the future reopening of residential colleges and international student travel as part of their three-step framework for a COVIDSafe Australia (Australian Government, 2020a). Shortly thereafter, government- and institution-driven pilot programs to bring international students into Australia via COVIDSafe Corridors floundered as cases surged (Independent Higher Education Australia, 2020), and Australian citizens still remained stranded offshore (Visontray, 2021). Following this setback, the Ministers for Human Services and Education provided reassurance to current and potential international students. In a media release titled 'Supporting international students to support Australian jobs', the two Ministers announced immigration changes providing greater flexibility in terms of initial and further student visa application lodgement, post-study work arrangements, and additional time for English language test results. In announcing the reforms, the Ministers reiterated, 'We are a welcoming nation' (Tudge & Tehan, 2020, para. 9). Throughout, the Australian Trade and Investment Commission (Austrade) somewhat disingenuously disseminated strategic 'welcoming' messaging and promoted positivity through the #InThisTogether social media campaign (Australian Trade and Investment Commission (Austrade), 2020).

Amid the pressures, in early 2020, Prime Minister Morrison assured Indian Prime Minister Modi that 'the Indian community in Australia, including Indian students, would continue to be valued as a vibrant part of Australian society' (Ministry of External Affairs, 2020, para. 3). Subsequently, the June 2020 bilateral virtual summit saw Modi reportedly grateful for the care extended to Indian students during this crisis, and Morrison thanking him for his comments (Morrison, 2020b). Shortly thereafter, the Government of India released the long-awaited National education policy 2020, which encourages 'greater mobility to students in India who may wish to visit, study at, transfer credits to, or carry out research at institutions abroad, and vice versa' (Ministry of Human Resource Development, 2020, p. 80).

By contrast, several of Australia's key international education competitors responded to the COVID-19 pandemic by making financial support available to higher education institutions (Moodie, 2020; Davis, 2020), the export education sector more generally (Hipkins, 2020) and international students (Henriques-Gomes, 2020). For example, Canada's COVID-19 Economic response plan

included financial support for eligible international students via the new Canada emergency response benefit (\$500/week for up to 16 weeks). Like Australia, the Government of Canada improved visa conditions (i.e., maximum hours of work, post-study work rights, mode of study), pathways to permanent residency and access to mental health services (El-Assal, 2020; EduCanada, 2020). Similarly, the New Zealand Government extended student visas, introduced a temporary financial hardship fund for foreign nationals (New Zealand Education, 2020), and provided a \$51.6 million strategic recovery package for the export education sector (Hipkins, 2020).

Despite murmuring welcoming messages to potential international students, the Australian Government's policy initiatives have largely been restricted to relaxation of visa rules, and preliminary work on selectively lifting border restrictions. Work undertaken

with the sector to prepare the Protocols and preconditions for international student arrivals (Australian Government, 2020b), and anticipating state International student arrival plans and quarantine arrangements, would prove unsuccessful (other than a small cohort entering the Northern Territory in November 2020) (Vivian & James, 2020).

In addition to clarifying visa rules for international students impacted by the transition to onshore online learning, these changes anticipate some student visa holders studying offshore online, then transferring to onshore studies (including any requisite domestic work integrated learning), and post-study work at a later stage. With a plethora of free MOOCs and low-cost online offerings, this model is unlikely to succeed over time without substantial reductions in tuition fees. The model also anticipates resolution of foreign qualification recognition concerns regarding online learning, including Indian government stipulations (Freeman, 2018). Given the impending financial crisis for Australian universities, and the centrality of the education export sector to Australia's economic prosperity, this posture is disappointing, self-defeating and damaging.

State and university responses

In comparison to the Australian Government, higher education institutions and Australian state and territory governments have been more responsive to the needs of international students during this initial crisis period in 2020. They have employed a diverse range of approaches and acted independently to address student needs. For

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universities, these have included COVID-19 scholarships and grants, interest-free personal loans, emergency food vouchers, pastoral care and technology support packages. Universities progressively introduced initiatives to improve the 'student experience', and provide health and wellbeing support (e.g., mental health).

By late April 2020, most state and territory governments had introduced initiatives supportive of international students facing financial hardship as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. These initiatives reflected, in part, different international student cohort sizes. For example, in Victoria, which hosted 35 per cent of all higher education international students in 2019, including 47 per cent of Australia's Indian students (DESE, 2020a), the Government established a \$45 million International student emergency relief fund and introduced a \$1,500 coronavirus pandemic leave payment. The South Australian Government established a \$13.8 million International student support package, while Tasmania allocated \$3 million for a Temporary visa holder skilled employee assistance program. Western Australia established the Study Perth crisis relief program. Notably, the New South Wales Government, which hosted the largest proportion of international higher education students (36 per cent) in 2019, albeit only 27 per cent of all inbound Indian students (DESE, 2020a), initially deflected responsibility to the Australian Government and other authorities. In May 2020, the New South Wales Government belatedly allocated \$20 million for temporary crisis accommodation for international students impacted by COVID-19.

In addition to support packages, some state governments introduced export education sector recovery strategies. The Victorian Government, for example, introduced the International education short-term recovery plan 2020/21, reporting export revenue losses of \$5.8 billion in 2020, and noting that 'international students in Victoria have ... been significantly impacted by the pandemic, with many experiencing financial hardship, accommodation insecurity and social isolation' (Victorian Government, 2020, p. 3).

Looking ahead for Australia's higher education sector

This review has highlighted several significant events leading up to the COVID-19 pandemic and its impact during 2020. First, the policies supporting the growth and 'success' of the Australian higher education sector cannot be underplayed as they characterise the 'trade-to-marketing' approach taken by various governments from the 1990s to the present. Second, the long-established need to pivot away from the mainland Chinese international student market and towards the Indian market provides an opportunity for the Australia higher education sector to correct its reliance

on one market segment and adjust to current geopolitical demands. Both preceding points contextualise Australia's higher education and international education sectors prior to the COVID-19 pandemic. Third, and following the Morrison Government's response to international students in the wake of COVID-19 outbreaks in Australian capital cities, more forward-thinking policy-making was needed to support international students during the short and medium terms (i.e., with respect to finances, work and visa rights, and health and wellbeing), if only to secure Australia's long-term relevance and competitiveness in the global higher education market.

During 2020, Universities Australia projected a sector-wide revenue decline of between \$3.1 billion and \$4.8 billion and anticipated subsequent declines of \$16 billion between 2020 and 2023 (Universities Australia, 2020a). These declines represent major financial challenges to the Australian higher education sector and further highlight the crucial importance of international student programs (Marshman & Larkins, 2020). Preliminary estimates suggested that to offset these losses directly via payroll would see estimated job losses of 21,000 full time equivalent (FTE) positions over a six-month period (Universities Australia, 2020b), including 7,000 FTE research positions (Larkins *et al.*, 2020) in 2020. This represents a sizeable proportion of Australian universities' FTE positions (15 per cent of 137,578 FTE in 2019), going by the most recent estimates (DESE, 2020c). Even more dire, Victoria University's Mitchell Institute estimates that the university sector will face international student revenue losses of between \$10 billion and \$19 billion over the next three years, with corresponding knock-on losses to the national economy amounting to more than \$40 billion (Hurley, 2020). While such losses have the potential to trigger a financial crisis in Australia's higher education sector (Norton, 2020), circumventing this outcome will likely require government intervention to ensure the sector's survival and sustainability (Campus Morning Mail, 2020; Ross, 2020b).

Having encouraged Australia's export of education for decades such that it underpins the higher education sector conceptually and pragmatically, it is incumbent on the Australian Government to support its international student 'clients' and their health and wellbeing better, if for no other reason than to ensure the continuity of this trading opportunity. For the present authors, this is the minimum standard for the Australian Government to set itself so as to ensure that it maintains its competitive edge in the global international education market and to build back confidence students may have lost with regard to studying with Australian higher education institutions. This will be especially important for the Indian market as Australia further moves to diversify its pool of potential international students and trading relationships generally.

Recommendations

Looking back now at the response during 2020, Australian international education policy, and particularly actual and potential international students would benefit from targeted and achievable changes. Accordingly, this paper makes five recommendations directed at the Australian Government. First, that Australian Government financial policy settings be changed, extending fiscal support to public universities to reflect decreased international education revenue. In the first instance, this would involve increasing recurrent operational and research funding, while examining longer-term solutions to ensure the ongoing viability of the public university sector.

Second, that in addition to state government and university support packages, the Australian Government extend welfare support to international students experiencing financial hardship. This support could be in the form of national emergency funding through scholarships for international students' accommodation and food.

Third, that, following the United Kingdom's lead, the Australian Government strengthen regulatory safeguards for international students enrolled with universities and non-university higher education providers facing potential institutional and/or course closure. Safeguards could extend to financial risk reporting, enrolment security and/or guaranteed credit transfer pathways. Fourth, that the Australian Government extend post-study work rights to enable international students to gain employment in Australia while accruing monies to repay tuition fees. This strategy would involve reviewing international student visa arrangements, as well as permanent residency pathways and points structure. Particular attention could be given to the circumstances of international students currently studying offshore online to ensure they have access to onshore experiences (including work integrated learning necessary to complete their qualification).

Finally, recognising the pivot to emergency remote teaching, and existing challenges for some international student cohorts with respect to their post-study qualifications recognition, that the Australian Government urgently progress negotiations with the Government of India regarding foreign higher education qualifications recognition for courses obtained via online education.

Finally, we make two recommendations in this paper directed at universities and non-university higher education providers. First, that they establish a special fund quarantining a percentage of international student tuition fees for student financial, health and wellbeing support. Such a fund could progressively provide interest-free loans, scholarships, tuition and residential accommodation fee reductions, as well as support ongoing health and well-being student services

(e.g. health centres, counselling, advocacy and legal advice). Second, that universities and non-university higher education providers reduce international student tuition fees until campuses reopen for teaching and learning. With those forthright recommendations, there is optimism to be found in the educational opportunity that Australia offers.

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