



Meeting of Expert Members of the Council for International Education 4 November 2020

On 4 November 2020 Expert Members met for their eighth meeting of 2020. Expert Members progressed issues to support the international education sector's recovery from the disruptions of this year, particularly international student health and wellbeing, recognising the value of the sector to the Australian community and articulating the vision for a new Australian strategy for international education, training, research and mobility.

Expert Members welcomed the decision of the majority of National Cabinet on 23 October to a *Framework for National Reopening*, including the return of international students to Australia through pilot programs. Members also supported recent statements by the Prime Minister and Commonwealth Minister for Education signalling the process to welcome students for Semester 1, 2021. Expert Members noted the importance of supporting student welfare, the findings of the National Hotel Quarantine Review, and the progress being made in the South Australia and Northern Territory pilot programs from late November 2020. These pilots will provide important experience for other states to advance their plans to return international students to continue their studies in Australia.

To support the sector, Expert Members are developing an *Interim Report on the National Strategy for International Education*, to be considered by the Council for International Education in December. Expert Members emphasised that the COVID-safe return of international students underpins the future success of Australia's international education sector and is integral to national economic recovery. The report outlines the vision for a new Australian strategy in 2021, ensuring Australia continues to appeal to international students seeking high quality, impactful, innovative and distinctly Australian education. This report also reinforces a shorter-term roadmap to assist the sector's response to the pandemic and also details the actions of the Council this year, who have been advising on policy considerations and progressing initiatives to assist with COVID-recovery.

Expert Members acknowledged that community support and social licence will be critical throughout the return of international students to underpin Australia's reputation for quality international education and training and ensure positive experiences for both international and domestic students. Expert Members considered how social licence has been developed in other industries, including Australia's agriculture sector, and established a sub-group to progress and guide initiatives to enhance community support for the sector.

International student mental health and wellbeing remains a high priority for the international education sector, including for students in Australia and those studying online and offshore. Several initiatives were considered, particularly contributing to existing frameworks for student support, working with industry representatives to co-design information for students and facilitating a community of practice for providers.

The upcoming Council for International Education in December attended by both Expert Members and relevant Ministers, will consider a strategy to facilitate the return of international students to Australia, provide advice to the Prime Minister on the status of Australia's international education sector, and advance the foundations of a new strategy for international education, ahead of public consultations in early 2021.