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Supporting international students to support Australian jobs

The Morrison Government is making a number of changes to student visa arrangements to ensure Australia remains a priority destination for international students as we emerge from the COVID-19 pandemic.

International students are extremely important to Australia and our economy, contributing \$40 billion annually and supporting 250,000 jobs. Many also go on to become great Australian citizens.

While the closure of our international borders has been critical to our success in slowing the spread of the coronavirus, and Australia has been a leader in this regard, it has presented challenges to the education sector and students, both here and offshore.

These five visa changes will ensure international students are not worse off due to the coronavirus pandemic and that Australia remains competitive with other countries.

The changes include:

- The Government will recommence granting student visas in all locations lodged outside Australia. This means when borders re-open, students will already have visas and be able to make arrangements to travel.
- International students will be able to lodge a further student visa application free of charge, if they are unable to complete their studies within their original visa validity due to COVID-19.
- Current student visa holders studying online outside Australia due to COVID-19 will be able to use that study to count towards the Australian study requirement for a post-study work visa.

- Graduates who held a student visa will be eligible to apply for a post-study work visa outside Australia if they are unable to return due to COVID-19.
- Additional time will be given for applicants to provide English language results where COVID-19 has disrupted access to these services.

Acting Minister for Immigration, Citizenship, Migrant Services and Multicultural Affairs Alan Tudge said the changes provide assurance to international students already in Australia and those who haven't been able to travel due to COVID-19 border closures.

"These measures back the international education sector – our fourth largest export sector – and will assist its recovery," Mr Tudge said.

"In making these changes, we have been guided by the principles that the health of Australians is key, but that international students should not be further disadvantaged by COVID-19.

"We are a welcoming nation with a world-class education system and some of the lowest rates of COVID-19 in the world. Students want to study here and we want to welcome them back in a safe and measured way when it is safe to do so.

"Doing so will not only support the education sector, it will also have flow-on effects for many local communities and businesses, including accommodation services, tourism, hospitality and retail."

Minister for Education Dan Tehan said the changes would give international students confidence in their visa arrangements so they can make plans to study in Australia when it is safe to do so.

"Our remarkable efforts in controlling the spread of the virus mean we can begin to welcome back international students in a COVID safe way once state borders re-open and face-to-face learning resumes," Mr Tehan said.

"As well as supporting jobs, international education builds our connection to the rest of the world and supports a number of critical industries like health, aged and disability care."

The Government has previously relaxed work restrictions for international students working in the health, aged and disability care sectors during the COVID-19 pandemic. It has also been flexible in cases where the COVID-19 pandemic has prevented international students meeting their visa conditions, such as not being able attend classes in person.

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