

Media Statement

28 August 2024

Innovative Research Universities set out next steps on international education

The Innovative Research Universities (IRU) is calling on government to end unfair visa processing for international students as soon as possible and to amend the *Education Services for Overseas Students Bill* that is currently before Parliament.

The IRU agrees with Education Minister Jason Clare that Ministerial Direction 107 (for changed visa processing) should be removed and replaced with a better and fairer way of managing international education.

IRU Chair Professor Simon Biggs (Vice-Chancellor of James Cook University) thanked the Minister for taking the sector's feedback on board.

"Ministerial Direction 107 has had disproportionate impacts on our students and universities. It has undermined diversification in international education and undermined equity in our university system," he said.

"We cannot wait until 1 January 2025 for Ministerial Direction 107 to be removed – this must be done as soon as possible. IRU member universities are now working to fill the international student allocations that they have been given for 2025, but these efforts will be hamstrung unless Ministerial Direction 107 is removed."

Government should immediately confirm that it will put in place the visa processing capacity needed to fill the National Planning Level of 270,000 announced yesterday, and that it will process student visas for 2025 in a way that provides equalisation for the damage that has already been done by Ministerial Direction 107.

IRU Executive Director Paul Harris said that further amendments are needed before the ESOS Bill currently before Parliament can be passed.

"We thank the Minister for announcing yesterday that certain priority groups of students will be excluded from limits on total student numbers. This amendment was recommended by the IRU and will reassure students and international partners about the continuation of valuable international education programs."

The IRU has put forward a number of other amendments to the ESOS Bill, including:

- Removing the power for the Minister to control or cancel individual courses within universities.
- Including a sunset clause on Ministerial powers so that they transfer to the new Australian Tertiary Education Commission as soon as it is operational.
- Removing the automatic suspension of a university's registration for exceeding its allocation of places and re-writing the definition of an education agent.

iru.edu.au

About the IRU

The IRU is a network of seven comprehensive universities across Australia committed to inclusive education and innovative research that advances our communities. Its members are Flinders University, Griffith University, James Cook University, La Trobe University, Murdoch University, University of Canberra, and Western Sydney University.

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