



IRU Opening Statement: public hearing for the Inquiry into Australia's tourism and international education sectors

18 April 2023

The Innovative Research Universities (IRU) is a group of seven Australian universities committed to inclusive education and innovative research that advances communities.

Since their founding, our universities have had a strong commitment to international education and to engagement with the Indo-Pacific region. We continue this commitment as part of our 2022-27 strategy. Our members were pioneers in establishing Asia-Pacific studies, and as a group we have a strong track record of working collaboratively on international engagement, such as our work in Pakistan.

We believe that there are long-term opportunities for international education in Australia to grow and diversify. However, in order to achieve our potential in this sector, there are some key issues that need to be addressed.

There is a disconnect between the genuine temporary entrant (GTE) requirements and how it relates to international students and the relationship between higher education and migration, including post-study work rights (PSWR). In respect to student visas, there should be a more refined "genuine student" approach.

There is further potential to recognise international education's value as a soft power. Our international graduates allow us to build connections and relationships with their country of origin, as well as third countries. This is a long-term investment into Australia's international relationships, which is particularly important in the Indo-Pacific region.

Similarly, social license is essential for international reputation and domestic sentiment. We can do this by reframing the discourse from one of purely economic benefit and to focus on the overall social and cultural benefit of international education for communities across Australia.

We would also like to emphasise that international education is a two-way process and includes outbound domestic students. These students are also contributors to Australia's soft power as well as providing essential international experience to their onshore careers.

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