



COMMUNIQUE COUNCIL FOR INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION MEETING 7 August 2023

On 7 August 2023, the Hon Tim Watts MP, Assistant Minister for Foreign Affairs, the Hon Pat Conroy MP, Minister for Defence Industry, Minister for International Development and The Pacific, and Mr Nicholas Moore AO, the Pacific and the Special Envoy for Southeast Asia, met with the Council for International Education (Council) to discuss international education's role in delivering Australia's foreign policy objectives.

Chaired by Co-Conveners of the Council, Mr Julian Hill MP and the Hon Phil Honeywood, members discussed a number of significant issues including how Australia's international education sector can contribute to a peaceful, prosperous and resilient region and advance our global interests.

Assistant Minister Watts, also a member of the Council, highlighted international education as a national asset that delivers on Australia's domestic and foreign policy objectives, and stressed the need for innovation in responding to partner country needs and priorities. Members considered the role of international education and research in Australia's bilateral partnerships and multilateral fora. Subsequent discussion covered how Australia can maintain its competitiveness, promote our open and distinct education offerings and better leverage existing alumni networks to realise soft power dividends.

Minister Conroy emphasised the importance of Australia's education engagement with the Pacific, including how new migration commitments, including the establishment of the Pacific Engagement Visa and PALM scheme family accompaniment, will lead to more Pacific islanders than ever before studying at Australian schools and tertiary institutions. Members discussed how Australia can deepen links with Pacific education systems to expand student mobility, including through greater partnerships with Pacific Islands Forum (PIF) institutions.

Mr Moore discussed the forthcoming Southeast Asia Economic Strategy 2040 and the Government's commitment to deepening engagement with Southeast Asia. Members noted the importance of growing Australia's transnational education presence to provide pathway partnerships in established and emerging source markets, to secure and generate student pipelines towards study in Australia.

Expert Members identified the need to inspire curiosity and build knowledge of the regions, and the need to build capability of institutions to deliver against this objective. Diversification of Australia's offerings, particularly through transnational education, TVET and teach-the-teacher models was promoted to support people-to-people links and reframe international education away from a transactional economic export.

The Council acknowledged the release of the Australian University Accord (AUA) Interim Report, and the important reference to international education within the report. Members noted further consideration of a levy on international student fee income will be conducted as one of many ideas to be tested through the Accord process, and is open for discussion on merits and implementation practicalities.

The Council welcomed the Department of Education's preliminary work with Indian counterparts to develop an Australia-India Education Strategy and noted work across agencies on government reform processes, and to deepen collaboration on alumni engagement.

The next Council meeting is expected to take place in early October and will focus on updating members on the progress of the Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade (JSCFADT), Trade Subcommittee's *Inquiry into Australia's tourism and international education sectors* and the Migration Strategy.