



Communique Council for International Education Meeting 20 February 2024

On 20 February 2024, Expert Members of the Council for International Education (Council) met to provide feedback on initial concepts for the International Education and Skills Strategic Framework and consider current issues across the sector. The Hon Clare O’Neil MP, Minister for Home Affairs, attended to provide an update on the Government’s newly released Migration Strategy.

The Co-Conveners of the Council, Mr Julian Hill MP and the Hon Phil Honeywood, chaired the meeting. They welcomed new Expert Member Luke Sheehy who recently replaced Catriona Jackson as Chief Executive Officer, Universities Australia.

Minister O’Neil provided a progress update on the Migration Strategy which was released 11 December 2023 following close consultation with the Council throughout its development. There was general support from Expert Members for integrity reforms. Expert Members highlighted impacts of visa processing times and rejection rates. Minister O’Neil acknowledged the feedback from Expert Members and committed to consider further how to address implementation concerns. Minister O’Neil thanked the members for working closely with her to improve integrity and create a sustainable future for the sector.

Co-convenor Julian Hill and Ms Karen Sandercock, First Assistant Secretary, International Division, Department of Education, presented initial concepts for the ‘International Education and Skills Strategic Framework’ (the Framework). Ms Sandercock thanked Expert Members for their participation in the targeted sector consultation which occurred in January 2024. She explained the intention for the Framework to outline the Government’s vision for a sustainable international education sector founded on integrity, and the necessity for discussions of optimal composition and size of the sector.

Expert Members agreed the importance of developing the Framework to provide a refreshed direction for the sector. Expert Members discussed opportunities to expand the ongoing diversification of the sector including how to take Australian education and training to the world. Australia’s global reputation as a high quality provider of education and training, and students’ confidence in the sector, were acknowledged as key priorities. Expert Members also considered the sector’s role in supporting skills needs of the wider region. Ms Sandercock confirmed the Department of Education will continue to engage with Council throughout the development of the Framework.

Mr David Turvey, acting Commissioner of Jobs and Skills Australia (JSA), gave an update on the ‘International Students Student Pathways and Outcomes’ study. Mr Turvey explained that the study aims to analyse the extent to which current arrangements foster international student outcomes and pathways into the labour market, in consultation with unions, employers, and training and education providers. Expert Members provided some initial advice for JSA to consider, including examining the distinction between temporary and permanent visa categories, methods to address barriers to employing international students, regional migration settings and approved VET course lists. Mr Turvey advised that JSA will update the Council on the progress of the study.

The Council is expected to meet quarterly in 2024. Meetings will continue to have a thematic focus on priority areas of the international education sector. The next Council meeting is scheduled for May 2024.