

s 22

From: s 22
Sent: Wednesday, 25 March 2020 5:02 PM
To: POWER, Travis
Cc: s 22 · ATKINS David · s 22

Subject: Re: International Student eligibility for Economic Stimulus and support [SEC=OFFICIAL]

Thanks

I realise I am delayed, but I think that we should also use the TPs and key messages to talk about the other social support that is available for students if they experience financial hardship. We can state the facts, ie GTE means they should have the resources, but many of them are on second student visa and may also be experiencing financial hardship from home.

Thanks, s 22

s 22

s 22

Austrade

s 22

Sent from my iPad

On 23 Mar 2020, at 4:20 pm, POWER, Travis < s 47F > wrote:

OFFICIAL

s 22

See DRAFT attached. s 22 has been onto me about this issue too.

This is with Treasury for clearance, so not for sharing at this stage.

Happy to take views.

DHA colleagues – for info/views too. Mentions student visas.

Travis

Travis Power
Assistant Secretary
Partnerships Branch | International Division
Australian Government Department of Education, Skills and Employment
Phone +s 47F | Mobile s 47F

From: POWER, Travis
Sent: Monday, 23 March 2020 1:29 PM
To: s 22 ATKINS, David s 47F

Cc: s 22
s 22

s 22

Subject: RE: International Student eligibility for Economic Stimulus and support [SEC=OFFICIAL]

OFFICIAL

s 22

I believe the answer to Q1 is no.

Will confirm on Q2. I assume your answer is correct.

TP

Travis Power
Assistant Secretary
Partnerships Branch | International Division
Australian Government Department of Education, Skills and Employment
Phone +s 47F | Mobile s 47F

From: s 22

Sent: Monday, 23 March 2020 1:27 PM

To: POWER,Travis <s 47F

>; ATKINS,David s 47F

>

Cc: s 22

>, s 22

s 22

Subject: FW: International Student eligibility for Economic Stimulus and support [SEC=OFFICIAL]

OFFICIAL

Hi Travis/David,

We have received a query from the Victorian Government to ask where international students might be eligible for support under the Federal Government's economic support package (most recently updated yesterday).

Have you got any words/response on the queries below?

In particular, interested in:

- Whether international students will be able to access some type of employment support (including income support)
- how SMEs run by international students can access cash flow and other assistance packages.

On the second point, I would imagine that if a business owned by an international student is registered here in Australia, they will be eligible for these programs? Appreciate if you could confirm this point.

Many thanks- s 22

s 22

International Education Strategy

s 22

From: s 22

(Melbourne)

Sent: Monday, March 23, 2020 12:26 PM

To: s 22 (Canberra)
Subject: FW: International Student eligibility for Economic Stimulus and support [SEC=OFFICIAL]

OFFICIAL

Hi s 22

Is this something we have any information on at the moment? I'm pretty sure I'm not the right person to answer the questions below but that in the future this is the sort of thing I'd publish on the SIA website when we have the information.

s 22

From: s 22 (DEDJTR) [mailto:s 22]
Sent: Monday, March 23, 2020 11:38 AM
To: s 22 (Melbourne)
Subject: International Student eligibility for Economic Stimulus and support

Hi s 22

Hope you're well, and staying safe in these trying times.

I'm getting in touch in the hope that either you or someone you can point me towards may be able to assist in determining where international students might be eligible for support under the Federal Government's economic support package (most recently updated yesterday).

In particular, interested in:

- Whether international students will be able to access some type of employment support (including income support)
- how SMEs run by international students can access cashflow and other assistance packages.

On the second point, I would imagine that if a business owned by an international student is registered here in Australia, they will be eligible for these programs? Appreciate if you could confirm this point.

More than happy for you to give me a call to discuss this, or for you to refer me on to someone who might be better placed to answer if required.

Best

s 22

s 22

| Global Victoria

Level 33, 121 Exhibition Street, Melbourne, Victoria Australia 3000

T: s 22 | E: s 22

See how the work we do is making a difference: [The Victorian Connection](#)

<http://global.vic.gov.au>

<image001.png>

<image002.png>

<image003.png>

<image004.png>

<image005.png>

We acknowledge the traditional Aboriginal owners of country throughout Victoria, their ongoing connection to this land and we pay our respects to their culture and their Elders past, present and future.

Notice:

The information contained in this email message and any attached files may be confidential information, and may also be the subject of legal professional privilege. If you are not the intended recipient any use, disclosure or copying of this email is unauthorised. If you received this email in error, please notify the sender by contacting the department's switchboard on 1300 488 064 during business hours (8:30am - 5pm Canberra time) and delete all copies of this transmission together with any attachments.

<Document1.docx>

s 22

From: s 22 <s 22>
Sent: Saturday, 4 April 2020 11:42 AM
To: SANDERCOCK.Karen; HARTIGAN,Brooke
Cc: s 22
Subject: International Student Hardship Fund [DLM=Sensitive]
Attachments: Austrade Student Welfare and Hardship Fund Concept - S and T views.docx; Crisis support for international students experiencing loss of income due to COVID19 (002).docx

Sensitive

Hi Karen and Brooke

Please find attached a paper compiled by Austrade from a range of comments/feedback from states as part of CSTIETF. This sounded similar somewhat to the thoughts of the MO (and maybe s 22 in some parts. Re-attaching my thoughts as well as I will use this as a start. Will bring together a framework and assumptions and will circulate in a couple of hours for feedback and then we can roll on from there.

Cheers

s 22

SUPPORTING THE WELFARE OF INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS IN AUSTRALIA AND NATIONAL HARDSHIP FUND

OVERVIEW OF PROPOSAL

This proposal has been developed by all states and territories, to act swiftly to support the international education sector and international students during the COVID-19 pandemic. It is vital that we take a united approach to meeting the welfare needs of international students in order to protect the reputation of Australia.

The proposal will establish a joint Commonwealth, state and territory funded national wellbeing scheme, communications strategy and hardship fund to support international students who are currently in Australia and who are vulnerable due to the impacts of COVID-19.

The international student wellbeing fund would be dispersed through non-government organisations (NGOs), student welfare offices at Australian education providers, and Australia's network of Purpose Built Student Accommodation (PBSA) providers.

Linking eligible students to support would be facilitated through and oversighted by Australia's study destination agencies in partnership with local education and service providers.

The funding sought through this proposal would complement other sources of funding being directed towards international students' welfare needs, include existing State and Territory and education provider schemes.

The initiative would be managed as a partnership between Commonwealth, State and Territory and Study Destination agencies with responsibility for international student wellbeing. States and Territories, Study Destination Agencies, and Australian education providers are already mobilising support for international students, including through:

- Food drives (e.g. see TAFE QLD)
- Engaging directly with local, state and national NGOs
- Hardship funds and other bursary payments (see various universities)

This proposal would enable a national, scaled-up, and consistent approach to supporting the welfare needs of all international students in Australia, irrespective of where they live, or the institutions they are enrolled with.

RATIONALE

An estimated 570,000 international students are resident in Australia trying to continue their studies during COVID-19. Under visa conditions students must demonstrate capacity to pay for tuition and living expenses, however due to the economic impacts of COVID-19 on global markets and the Australian economy students may find themselves in a vulnerable financial situation. International students (along with most temporary residents) do not meet the criteria for many of the COVID-19 government (Commonwealth and State and Territory) support packages.

Travel restrictions and lowering air capacity across the world came more quickly than many expected, leaving many unprepared and 'stranded'. As temporary residents in Australia, we

have a shared responsibility to the wellbeing of all community members (including international students).

The ways that we support vulnerable international students will have lasting reputational impacts on Australia's international education sector and our society and economy more broadly. The Global Reputation Taskforce was formed to help protect Australia's reputation as a welcoming destination for international students. The Taskforce has recommended funds be allocated to efforts to manage our reputation.

The coronavirus represents an unprecedented challenge to the viability of Australia's international education and training sector, both short-term (i.e. inability for students to enter Australia and/or complete studies) and long-term (how we are viewed in our management of the crisis and the care and services we offer impacted students).

ASSESSMENT OF NEED AND VULNERABILITY

The impacts of this crisis are felt most by community members who are already vulnerable – young/or on scholarship and therefore lower socio-economic; from culturally and linguistically diverse populations; people who are disconnected from their families and communities; lack of permanent shelter. These are all categories that many international students frequently fall into. Equally, student's families in home countries, who have been funding education, may have also been adversely impacted through loss of income and or access to capital.

The impact of COVID-19 on students is not uniform, nor is their resilience. Therefore the response needs to be flexible enough to respond to individual circumstances. Other international students will have sufficient assets, personal networks and other aspects essential for wellbeing.

States and territories are currently working to ascertain the current and potential hardship within the international student cohort. Evidence based assumptions and modelling would estimate the number of students in need of immediate assistance, as well as demographic factors and high-risk locations/sectors etc. throughout Australia.

Data to inform this needs assessment could include 2019 international student data to the SA4 level (sector, nationality) and the 2019 ABS Census and Temporary Entrants Integrated Dataset (ACTEID)¹.

ELIGIBILITY

NGOs, education providers, and PBSAs would disperse funding based on existing governance structures. These distribution mechanisms would align with established State Disaster Recovery mechanisms. Student eligibility to be modelled against other hardship funds and referral programs.

¹ The ACTEID links data from the Australian Bureau of Statistics 2016 Australian Census of Population and Housing and temporary visa holders' data from the Department of Home Affairs. The ACTEID enables understanding of the characteristics and labour market outcomes of international students who have graduated and transitioned on to a Temporary Graduate visa (subclass 485).

CHANNELS AND DISTRIBUTION/DISPERSAL POINTS

Non-Government Organisations (NGOs)

Additional funding to support NGOs to address the needs of international students would be dispersed via existing mechanisms such as [GIVIT](#)².

Australia's network of charities and NGOs are already responding to unprecedented levels of community need. This sector needs additional funds/resources to assist all demands on their services.

Many of these services will have had no, or minimal, contact with international students. Under this proposal, members of the Study Australia Partnership would engage with national and state-level service providers to raise awareness of, and inform ongoing responses to, international students' welfare needs.

Charities with strong affiliations to local resources, diaspora groups, and internationalisation ethos would be enlisted, along with larger, national community organisations.

To support engagement and facilitate a partnership approach between Study Australia Partners and the NGO sector, we will provide NGOs with quality data and analysis on international student demographics, and the sector more broadly.

Student welfare offices at Australian education providers

Some education providers (particularly the universities and schools) have established student service support mechanisms, while other providers, particularly in the ELICOS/VET sector have operations which do not include significant student support.

Those with student support services are well equipped to deal with individual/immediate cases of support but are not resourced to provide ongoing financial, educational, and emotional support for 6-9months (the predicted timeframe for the Australian COVID-19 health/economic response).

International students who are enrolled with CRICOS registered education providers, could be monitored through the PRISMS student management system and other systems.

Purpose Built Student Accommodation Providers

The announcement that evictions from rental properties will be put on hold for six months will help some international students. However, we know that others remain at risk of homelessness. Many of Australia's Purpose Built Student Accommodation (PBSA) providers have capacity at this time. Funding to PBSAs would support crisis accommodation services for international students and ensure stronger pastoral care for those most vulnerable students.

COMMUNICATING WITH INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS AND PROVIDERS

Funding under this proposal would be utilised to scale existing, and establish new, digital communications channels to provide key information and referral to international students during the crisis. Communications would also emphasise the sector's concern for students'

² GIVIT works with charities and agencies operating at the coalface and has experience in reconciling government/business funds to individuals via charities. Qld Department of Communities and some Federal Government departments have experience in engaging with GIVIT to disperse funds / resources during disasters.

welfare and acknowledge the significant contributions they make to Australia communities and the economy.

Digital channels will provide information and links to national, jurisdictional, and local services encompassing services such as housing, meals, health (including mental health), counselling, and legal advice. These communications would not explicitly identify international students as eligible recipients of support, but would be disseminated through international student facing channels.

Digital platforms will also enable international students to better connect with Study Destination Agency student liaisons including staff and/or international and domestic student peers

A key feature of digital channels will be the linking up of International Student Ambassadors (Study Destination Agencies and education provider levels) so build in additional support and resourcing for student leaders through a national community of practice model.

Digital channels will also facilitate the gathering and communicating of good news and reputation protection stories by extending the existing **#InThisTogether** call to action. This consists of a collaborative platform for state and territory partners, education providers, partners and domestic and international students and the local community, to continue sharing our messages of support and examples of good practice. National messaging will be integrated with states and territories, institutions and education providers.

Sentiment tracking

To gauge and track the impact of these interventions and to enable continuous targeting of interventions to greatest need, this proposal seeks to develop and mobilise national sentiment tracking processes including quarterly surveys to international student ambassadors as well as analysis of issues that emerge through social media and other channels.

INDICATIVE COSTING

TBC

IMPLEMENTATION

To be developed once scope is agreed.

RISKS AND SENSITIVITIES

Our customers are in Australia

This imperative is common to all jurisdictions and some jurisdictions and education providers are implementing measures to assist students. The risk of leaving it to states and territories to respond separately will result in an inconsistent approach across the country. Internationally, we will all be tarred by the same brush if we leave students behind in parts of the country.

Social licence – don't explicitly badge support as directed to international students. However, through established channels raise awareness of international students of the support that is available to all (rather than that which is only available to citizens and permanent residents).

ATTACHMENTS

Include existing programs and examples of success

Crisis support for international students experiencing loss of income due to COVID-19

- This measure will support the Australian Government's response to stop the spread of COVID-19 by supporting vulnerable international students affected by a loss of work to self-isolate consistent with Australian Government health advice.
- Unlike Australian students who can access income support payments, including those recently announced measures, vulnerable international students who support themselves through work, or don't have family support, do not have a safety net.
- One aspect of the ongoing financial viability for all international education providers, particularly those at risk of closure during the COVID-19 crisis (such as ELICOS, private VET and NUHE providers) is demand from international students currently on-shore.
- International students' experiences during this time of crisis will also shape international perceptions of Australia as a high quality study destination during the recovery period from COVID-19.
- At the same time that hundreds of thousands of Australians are losing their jobs so too are international students jeopardising their ability to make rent payments and meet their own basic needs.
- Not providing support at this time of crisis risks significant criticism of Australian as abandoning international students who have invested significant amounts of money both in student fees but also their contribution to the economy by paying rent, working and paying taxes and spending in small, medium and large businesses. This would be a significant risk to the recovery of the trade after the COVID-19 crisis passes.
- Given travel bans in place, international students are at risk of being out of work, at risk if homelessness and unable to return to their country of origin.
- Already enquiries from international students are increasing requesting financial assistance and is expected to only increase as loss of income starts to bite.
- But this needs to be balanced with community expectations and existing policy settings around Australia's student visa policy settings that international students studying in Australian are self-sufficient.
- It is recommended a crisis support payment for international students currently on-shore in Australia be established.

Crisis support payment for international students

- The payment could be a one-off payment consistent with the approach to economic stimulus payments. Fortnightly payment like an income support payment is not recommended due to potentially more complex administrative arrangements driving increased service delivery costs.
- Two options to determine the quantum of the payment include:
 - **Option 1**
 - Hourly rate of national minimum wage \$19.49 x 40 hours per fortnight x Y months with time period for support to be determined
 - For three months the payment would be up to \$4677.60
 - For six months the payment would be approximately \$9355.20
 - **Option 2**
 - An alternative approach to calculating the quantum of the payment would be to apply (without extending entitlement) the fortnightly rate of Youth Allowance paid to students who live independently (\$462.50) for a period of time during the crisis. This could be 3 or 6 months as per Option 1 or another time period for support to be determined.

- For three months the lump sum payment would be up to \$2775.00. For six months the payment would be up to \$5,550.00.
- This amount could be more palatable in the community than option 1 as it is a broadly consistent amount domestic Australian students could be eligible for through income support.

Eligibility for the payment

- It is proposed all on-shore international students, except in the schools sector, who can demonstrate they were working would receive the payment where they legally declare they have lost income due to loss of work. Those international students on scholarships or who were not working would not be eligible for the payment to target the payment to those most in need.
- This could cover up to 561,154 post-secondary students noting that according to the latest International Student Survey 44 per cent of international students indicated they work meaning the number will likely be much less.
- Total cost for the measure could be up to \$2.7 billion for Option 1 and the equivalent of three months support; or up to \$1.6 billion for Option 2.
- Further criteria could reduce this number particularly if the student was asked to declare assets but this would add service delivery complexity increasing administrative costs. Similarly, costs can be managed by offering support for less time.
- Students in informal work arrangements would be required to declare this to receive payment (and these data could be used for some form of integrity compliance in the future, if desired). Alternatively they could be excluded to manage costs and consistency with Student Visa settings.

Service delivery options

- Services Australia – international students seeking support would be required to register with Services Australia who have experience delivering one off payments of this type, but obviously not to this cohort.
- Study Hubs – payments could be administered as a grant to Study Hubs located in most jurisdictions (or another body, like a peak where there is no Hub present) and the hub provide payments in conjunction with their student welfare role.
- Providers – grants providers to providers to pay directly to the student to maintain this relationship.

Payments as grants delivered either through Study Hubs or by providers would involve administration by the Community Grants Hub.

Other options considered

- Extending equivalent income support arrangements for domestic students to international students. This is not recommended as it creates a precedent for extending income support to a large cohort of non-citizens and undermines the financial independence requirement of the student visa.
- Grants to providers to refund fees. This is not recommended due to potentially prohibitively high costs.

From: s 22 s 22
Sent: s 22 Saturday 4 April 2020 1:19 PM
To:
Subject: Stuff for International Student Hardship Fund [DLM=For-Official-Use-Only]
Attachments: CISA-Welfare-Package-Proposal.pdf; Crisis support for international students experiencing loss of income due to COVID19 (002).docx; Austrade Student Welfare and Hardship Fund Concept - S and T views.docx; International Student Hardship Fund.docx

For-Official-Use-Only

s 22

COVID-19 Taskforce – Financial Viability
Department of Education, Skills and Employment
Email: s 22
Ph: s 22

Please note I am working remotely and email is the best way to contact me.



CISA Welfare Package Proposal

This is an extremely stressful times for everyone due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Most international students face a higher risk of job insecurity and susceptible to greater financial impact due to the economic downturn as a result of the COVID-19 outbreak. During these unprecedented times, international students too require increased and accelerated financial concession to stimulate adequate income and ease down their budgetary pressure. CISA strongly urges all stakeholders to ensure the impact on the livelihoods of international students are equally considered in the various support schemes and welfare packages that are being offered.

CISA puts forth following recommendations based on immediate and pressing concerns that international students have raised:

- 1. Welfare Payment**
 - The \$550 welfare assistance to be made available for international students as well.
- 2. Rent & Utilities Assistance**
 - International students to be covered in the Evictions Moratorium and rent relief arrangements.
- 3. Visa Extension**
 - Leniency on visa requirements around study load.
 - Extensions for all subclass 500 student visas at no cost.
- 4. Reduction in tuition fees and course load**
 - A reduction of fees or reimbursement of part of fees paid.
 - Students to be able to convert to part-time study conversions without consequences.
- 5. Financial assistance, loans, scholarships, bursaries**
 - Dedication of more funds, and requirement leniency for international students to receive financial aid, loans, bursaries and scholarships.
- 6. Internship and placement support**
 - Flexibility around placement and internship requirements.
 - Increased support for students to secure placement, internships and graduate programs.
- 7. Mental health support**
 - Provision of free counselling for international students.
 - OSHC to increase the number of covered counselling sessions for international students.
- 8. OSHC coverage**
 - Coverage of all COVID-19 related medical expenses.
 - Free influenza vaccine.
- 9. Care packages**
 - Provision of care packages and support system for students in self-isolation.
- 10. Student helplines**
 - 24/7 information helplines to direct students to the relevant information they require.

Endorsed by,

Crisis support for international students experiencing loss of income due to COVID-19

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OVERVIEW OF PROPOSAL

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RATIONALE

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ASSESSMENT OF NEED AND VULNERABILITY

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ELIGIBILITY

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Some education providers (particularly the universities and schools) have established student service support mechanisms, while other providers, particularly in the ELICOS/VET sector have operations which do not include significant student support.

Those with student support services are well equipped to deal with individual/immediate cases of support but are not resourced to provide ongoing financial, educational, and emotional support for 6-9months (the predicted timeframe for the Australian COVID-19 health/economic response).

International students who are enrolled with CRICOS registered education providers, could be monitored through the PRISMS student management system and other systems.

Purpose Built Student Accommodation Providers

The announcement that evictions from rental properties will be put on hold for six months will help some international students. However, we know that others remain at risk of homelessness. Many of Australia's Purpose Built Student Accommodation (PBSA) providers have capacity at this time. Funding to PBSAs would support crisis accommodation services for international students and ensure stronger pastoral care for those most vulnerable students.

COMMUNICATING WITH INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS AND PROVIDERS

Funding under this proposal would be utilised to scale existing, and establish new, digital communications channels to provide key information and referral to international students during the crisis. Communications would also emphasise the sector's concern for students'

² GIVIT works with charities and agencies operating at the coalface and has experience in reconciling government/business funds to individuals via charities. Qld Department of Communities and some Federal Government departments have experience in engaging with GIVIT to disperse funds / resources during disasters.

welfare and acknowledge the significant contributions they make to Australia communities and the economy.

Digital channels will provide information and links to national, jurisdictional, and local services encompassing services such as housing, meals, health (including mental health), counselling, and legal advice. These communications would not explicitly identify international students as eligible recipients of support, but would be disseminated through international student facing channels.

Digital platforms will also enable international students to better connect with Study Destination Agency student liaisons including staff and/or international and domestic student peers

A key feature of digital channels will be the linking up of International Student Ambassadors (Study Destination Agencies and education provider levels) so build in additional support and resourcing for student leaders through a national community of practice model.

Digital channels will also facilitate the gathering and communicating of good news and reputation protection stories by extending the existing **#InThisTogether** call to action. This consists of a collaborative platform for state and territory partners, education providers, partners and domestic and international students and the local community, to continue sharing our messages of support and examples of good practice. National messaging will be integrated with states and territories, institutions and education providers.

Sentiment tracking

To gauge and track the impact of these interventions and to enable continuous targeting of interventions to greatest need, this proposal seeks to develop and mobilise national sentiment tracking processes including quarterly surveys to international student ambassadors as well as analysis of issues that emerge through social media and other channels.

INDICATIVE COSTING

TBC

IMPLEMENTATION

To be developed once scope is agreed.

RISKS AND SENSITIVITIES

Our customers are in Australia

This imperative is common to all jurisdictions and some jurisdictions and education providers are implementing measures to assist students. The risk of leaving it to states and territories to respond separately will result in an inconsistent approach across the country. Internationally, we will all be tarred by the same brush if we leave students behind in parts of the country.

Social licence – don't explicitly badge support as directed to international students. However, through established channels raise awareness of international students of the support that is available to all (rather than that which is only available to citizens and permanent residents).

ATTACHMENTS

Include existing programs and examples of success

International Student Hardship Fund

An International Student Hardship Fund would be established and funded jointly by the Commonwealth, State and Territory Governments to provide temporary emergency financial support to international students at risk of or experiencing financial hardship during the COVID-19 outbreak. This Fund will support all Australian Governments' actions to stop the spread of COVID-19 by supporting international students experiencing financial hardship and affected by a loss of work to comply with public health measures. The Commonwealth contribution to the Fund (50 per cent) would be transferred to each state and territory for administration on a pro-rata basis.

Eligibility

International students (except those in the schools sector) who have been in Australia studying for more than twelve months on a student visa would be eligible to apply for a lump-sum financial hardship support payment from the state or territory government where they reside where they can demonstrate:

- Loss of income due to loss of work; and
- Financial hardship which could include the following factors:
 - Inability to make rent or accommodation payments;
 - Inability to make essential payments such as food, medical/health, utilities;
 - Inability to access family or other financial support due to the extraordinary circumstances created by the COVID-19 pandemic; and
 - Inability to afford to repatriate to country of origin of their own accord.

Evidence requirements

An international student will be required to make an application stating that they have lost their job and income, and are suffering financial hardship indicating their particular circumstances (taking into account factors mentioned above). Evidence of financial hardship and loss of work would be required and could include:

- Bank statements showing a drop in savings or loss of income (which could include family bank accounts);
- Separation certificate from their employer (if provided); and
- Evidence of bills or other payments they have been unable to or at risk of not making.

Evidence requirements should support a student's claim to be experiencing financial hardship and not place undue burdens or cost on either the student or their employer to prove hardship. Whilst extensive eligibility criteria, application processes and evidence requirements can ensure the validity of a payment it could also increase delivery costs and slow the delivery of assistance to the student undermining the intent of the fund to provide short-term assistance.

Application process

State and territory governments would be responsible for managing the application process. This could involve the relevant jurisdiction nominating a body (whether government or non-government) to:

- Receive applications on an agreed application form consistent with agreed evidence requirements;
- Assess the application against agreed eligibility criteria as set out above; and

- Make payments to the student.

Funding mechanism

The International Student Hardship Fund would be equally funded between Commonwealth, State and Territory Governments on a pro-rata basis based on the student population in a jurisdiction. Any amount already provided to international students by education providers consistent with their *Education Services for Overseas Students Act 2000* obligations cannot be subtracted from the contribution of a state or territory government. Should a state or territory government have already provided hardship assistance they would be eligible to include this amount in their total contribution to the fund (no state or territory government has announced a financial hardship assistance fund to date).

Options for transferring Commonwealth funds to the States and Territories

Based on established Federal Financial Relations processes there would need to be a new National Partnership Agreement between the Commonwealth, states and territories (whether together or individually) for the Commonwealth to transfer funds to the states.

Inter-governmental Agreement on Federal Financial Relations

The Commonwealth can transfer funds to States and Territories under the *Inter-governmental Agreement on Federal Financial Relations* (IGA FFR) through three types of agreements. Funds can be transferred through *National Agreements* and/or *National Specific Purpose Payments* (which agree indicators and roles and responsibilities of all governments in the delivery of services) or through *National Partnership Agreements* (NPA) on specific topics. A National Agreement or National Specific Purpose Payment are not appropriate in this regard given they tend to deal with areas of shared service delivery and established for a longer period of time. NPAs are time limited and have three types for different policy contexts:

- National Partnerships to support national reform objectives;
- Implementation Plans to support a National Partnership to allow jurisdictional differences in the delivery of national reform initiatives; or
- Project Agreements which are a simpler form of NPA for low value or low risk payments (which could be considered in this situation given it is time limited transfer to the states).

There are relevant examples of NPAs for a short term and particular purpose as precedent for establishing an NPA for this issue such as the *NPA on COVID-19 Response* and the *NPA on Grants Assistance to Primary Producers Impacted by the North Queensland Floods*. The NPA will specify roles and responsibilities, amount of funding to be transferred and for what purpose the funding can be spent on. The *NPA on COVID-19 Response* allows the Commonwealth to contribute to the additional costs incurred by state health systems incurred in responding to the COVID-19 outbreak. It does not offer a mechanism to make payments to states for providing financial support to individuals experiencing hardship because of the COVID-19 outbreak.

Commonwealth would match contributions by states and territories

Individual states and territories could determine their level of support which would be matched by the Commonwealth up to a maximum contribution (see below). The Commonwealth could make an initial offer of a maximum contribution amount that the states and territories could match on a pro-rata basis based on students residing in their jurisdiction. This initial offer could be based on a consistent payment amount (more details below).

Whilst agreeing consistent levels of funding between states and territories would ensure a more consistent and equal payment for students, negotiating such an outcome when each state and territory government has a different budget situation could be difficult to reach agreement and slow down the delivery of assistance to international students in a timely way.

A consistent payment amount would be set to allow them to meet day-to-day needs recognising the principle that international students are required to have sufficient means to support themselves. A range of options have been recommended by stakeholders. For example, CISA recommended extending the fortnightly Coronavirus Supplement to international students for six months. We recommend a payment equivalent to two thirds of the fortnightly rate of Youth Allowance (Independent Living) paid for three months as a lump sum with the option to review this level of assistance after three months. **This would be the equivalent of a payment of \$1980 per student.** This has the benefit of a transparent calculation and an assumption that international students have access to funds to support themselves.

Costs

Assuming a level of payment consistent of \$1980 per student, the total cost of the Fund could be up to \$257.4 million and shared on a pro-rata basis based on international student population in each jurisdiction which signed up to the Fund. Assuming 50 per cent Commonwealth contribution the maximum cost for the Commonwealth could be up to \$128.7 million. It is open to government to lower the cap if preferred which could be achieved lowering the percentage share of the Youth Allowance (Independent Living) rate.

Notes on costs

- Only International Students (those on a student visa) would be eligible to apply for support.
- There are up to 561,154 post-secondary international students in Australia (including first years).
- Based on previous years commencement data we assume that new commencements as a proportion of total enrolments is around one third at the March census date. Applying this assumption there could be up to an estimated 168,346 first year students who would not be eligible to receive a payment as they are deemed to have sufficient funds to support themselves in the short term consistent with their visa conditions.
- According to the 2018 International Student Census 44 per cent of international students indicated they work to support themselves whilst studying in Australia.
- We assume the majority of international students work in sectors most affected by the COVID-19 outbreak and estimate that 75 per cent of those students have lost their job.
- On this basis we have assumed up to 130,000 students could be eligible for a payment.
- States and territories would be responsible for delivery of the payment including any costs for receiving and assessing applications and making the cost to the student (whether delivered in-house by government or contracted out to an NGO).

s 22

From:
To:
Subject: FW: Request from DoHA; number of international students in first year of study [SEC=OFFICIAL] [SEC=UNCLASSIFIED]
Date: Saturday, 4 April 2020 3:34:48 PM

UNCLASSIFIED

From: s 22
Sent: Wednesday, 1 April 2020 6:03 PM
To: ATKINS, David <s 47F>
Cc: s 22
Subject: RE: Request from DoHA; number of international students in first year of study [SEC=OFFICIAL]

OFFICIAL

Hi David,

The question doesn't fit the sector very well. For example: lots of courses, including in HE, are less than one year duration; we get school students who's 'first year' in Australia is Year 11; and HE students who's 'first year' in Australia is to start a Masters or a PhD.

Anyhow, I think to all intents and purposes a count of commencements is probably the best answer to the question.

Our latest data is February 2020. It's unpublished so for internal use only.

Year-to-date February

Sector	Enrolments 2020	Commencements 2020	Commencements as % of all enrolments
Higher Education	342,563	57,560	17%
VET	180,399	41,932	23%
Schools	19,297	6,929	36%
ELICOS	57,981	19,775	34%
Non-award	24,979	13,193	53%
Grand Total	625,219	139,389	22%

It's important to realise things change in March, where we capture most first semester HE enrolments. In 2019, the picture was:

Jan-19	Feb-19	Mar-19	Commencements as % of all enrolments (for March)
3,578	58,024	94,164	26%
20,288	38,075	46,519	29%
6,055	6,774	6,816	33%
11,301	20,789	30,658	44%
2,966	13,535	16,798	57%
44,188	137,197	194,955	31%

Hope that helps,

s 22

s 47F

International Research and Analysis Unit
 Strategy and Data Division
 Australian Government Department of Education, Skills and Employment
 Phone: s 22 | Mobile: s 22
 email: s 22

From: ATKINS, David <s 47F>
Sent: Wednesday, 1 April 2020 1:58 PM
To: s 22
Cc: s 22
Subject: Request from DoHA; number of international students in first year of study [SEC=OFFICIAL]

OFFICIAL

s 22

DoHA has just called to ask if we can estimate the number of international students in first year of study (all sectors – good if we breakdown by sector but not essential)

Would you have anything along these lines available? We will also give thought to a PRISMS query, although there are many issues with PRISMS as a source for this sort of thing.

Thanks,

David

David Atkins (Dr.)

Assistant Secretary

International Frameworks

International Division

Australian Government Department of Education, Skills and Employment

Phone s 47F | Mobiles s 47F

www.dese.gov.au

Contemporary Indigenous Artwork by Dennis Anderson, representing the Rainbow Serpent

The Department of Education, Skills and Employment acknowledges the traditional owners and custodians of country throughout Australia and their continuing connection to land, waters and community. We pay our respects to them and their cultures, and Elders past, present and emerging.

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s 22

From: s 22
Sent: Saturday, 4 April 2020 7:34 PM
To: s 22
Cc: SANDERCOCK,Karen; HARTIGAN,Brooke; s 22 ; s 22
Subject: RE: Consultation: Federal Financial Relations and NPA arrangements [SEC=OFFICIAL:Sensitive]
Attachments: International Student Hardship Fund.docx

OFFICIAL: Sensitive

Thanks s 22

I have copied in s 22 from our Commonwealth State Relations Division who can assist. I have let him know your email was coming

Thanks
s 22

s 47F Treasury Coronavirus Co-ordination Team
 phone: s 22
 mobile:

OFFICIAL: Sensitive

From: s 22 >
Sent: Saturday, 4 April 2020 7:14 PM
To: s 22
Cc: SANDERCOCK,Karen s 47F >; HARTIGAN,Brooke s 47F >
Subject: Consultation: Federal Financial Relations and NPA arrangements [SEC=OFFICIAL:Sensitive]
Importance: High

OFFICIAL: Sensitive

Hi s 22

My name is s 22 and I work with Brooke Hartigan in the DESE COVID-19 Response Taskforce. I am hoping you can direct me to someone within Treasury (either tonight or tomorrow morning – sorry!) to confirm my assumptions about the IGA on Federal Financial Relations and the situations when the Cth would enter an NPA to effect a transfer of funds to the states.

I attach a draft policy paper canvassing options for the provision of funds to states and territories to pay a temporary hardship payment to international students. In the paper I have included a section on how to go about transferring funds to the states through an NPA or some other mechanism. I have taken the information from the Council on Federal Financial Relations website but want to check my description before providing to our Office.

Are you able to assist in directing me to someone to quickly discuss this with?

Kind regards
s 22

s 47F
 COVID-19 Taskforce

International Division
Australian Government Department of Education, Skills and Employment
Mobile ^{s 22}
www.dese.gov.au

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A consistent payment amount would be set to allow them to meet day-to-day needs recognising the principle that international students are required to have sufficient means to support themselves. A range of options have been recommended by stakeholders. For example, CISA recommended extending the fortnightly Coronavirus Supplement to international students for six months. We recommend a payment equivalent to two thirds of the fortnightly rate of Youth Allowance (Independent Living) paid for three months as a lump sum with the option to review this level of assistance after three months. **This would be the equivalent of a payment of \$1980 per student.** This has the benefit of a transparent calculation and an assumption that international students have access to funds to support themselves.

Costs

Assuming a level of payment consistent of \$1980 per student, the total cost of the Fund could be up to \$257.4 million and shared on a pro-rata basis based on international student population in each jurisdiction which signed up to the Fund. Assuming 50 per cent Commonwealth contribution the maximum cost for the Commonwealth could be up to \$128.7 million. It is open to government to lower the cap if preferred which could be achieved lowering the percentage share of the Youth Allowance (Independent Living) rate.

Notes on costs

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- There are up to 561,154 post-secondary international students in Australia (including first years).
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- On this basis we have assumed up to 130,000 students could be eligible for a payment.
- States and territories would be responsible for delivery of the payment including any costs for receiving and assessing applications and making the cost to the student (whether delivered in-house by government or contracted out to an NGO).

s 22

From: ATKINS,David
Sent: Saturday 4 April 2020 10:38 PM
To: WELSH,Karen; POWER,Travis; SANDERCOCK,Karen;
 HARTIGAN,Brooke
Subject: RE: International Student Hardship Fund [SEC=OFFICIAL, DLM= Sensitive] [SEC=OFFICIAL]

All

On the question of scope, do we want to consider student visa holders and graduate visa holders or just student visa holders? The later would be picked up if all temp visa holders are addressed.

Thanks david

From: s 22 >
Date: 4 April 2020 at 6:29:22 pm AEDT
To: WELSH,Karen s 47F >, POWER,Travis s 47F >,
 SANDERCOCK,Karen <s 47F >, HARTIGAN,Brooke
 <s 47F
Cc: ATKINS,David <s 47F
Subject: RE: International Student Hardship Fund [SEC=OFFICIAL, DLM= Sensitive]

**OFFICIAL
 Sensitive**

Thanks Karen, very helpful questions and helping me to tighten up the paper. Yes loss of work and link to hardship is deliberate as we are saying that ordinarily students should have sufficient funds to support themselves (including through work) but because of the extraordinary situation brought about by COVID they no longer do. It might be a bit harsh as there would be situations because of COVID where a person who was supported by their family can no longer support themselves because of what happened at home. In my thinking the work requirement will focus the cohort more narrowly to try and target those most in need. I know its not perfect but I worry it would be too wide otherwise... hmmm

Yes just for student visas, will update the paper so this is clear.

I agree about the repatriation point and was going to follow Travis' suggestion that they can't afford the flight home rather than travel restrictions which are beyond most people's control and exceptions will usually be made for citizens returning home. Do you think the ability to afford a flight home is relevant along with the other criteria?

From: WELSH,Karen s 47F >
Sent: Saturday, 4 April 2020 6:12 PM
To: s 22 POWER,Travis s 47F
 SANDERCOCK,Karen s 47F ; HARTIGAN,Brooke s 47F
Cc: ATKINS,David s 47F
Subject: RE: International Student Hardship Fund [SEC=OFFICIAL:Sensitive] [SEC=OFFICIAL: Sensitive]

Thanks s 22 , a few random thoughts in case useful - I read this as the loss of a job as being the key criteria and then additionally they have to demonstrate hardship as a result. So hardship if they have never held a job or are still earning is not enough..?

Is this just for students on student visas? What about those who have been in the country for 12 months potentially initially on a tourist visa to do ELICOS then switch , so just a question of when the 12 months would kick in.

I think the inability to repatriate as a criteria is difficult as it will be quite fluid - borders may be closed for some countries but allow foreign nationals home, and flights may be available intermittently. Some govts are also talking about arranging flights for their students to return ... so ability to repatriate is likely quite subjective?

Just a few thoughts - great work in thinking though the complexity of issues!

Karen

From: s 22
Date: 4 April 2020 at 5:30:15 pm AEDT
To: POWER,Travis s 47F >, SANDERCOCK,Karen
s 47F >, HARTIGAN,Brooke <s 47F
Cc: ATKINS,David s 47F >, WELSH,Karen <s 47F
Subject: RE: International Student Hardship Fund [SEC=OFFICIAL:Sensitive]

OFFICIAL: Sensitive

Thanks Travis, that's really helpful. Karen, Brooke and I have talked and I would have worked up a new way to calculate the amount – now looking at a maximum Cth contribution of \$125m and should a state nominate a lower amount then the Cth would match that amount. This is based on a suggestion of a consistent payment amount rather than leaving it for states to nominate in their jurisdiction which would create inconsistency. I like your point about pro-rata matching by the states, I will add this point in.

Good point re the eligibility factors, I will update as you suggest.

Suggestions are very welcome, thank you!

s 22

From: POWER,Travis s 47F >
Sent: Saturday, 4 April 2020 5:09 PM
To: s 22 >; SANDERCOCK,Karen
s 47F >; HARTIGAN,Brooke s 47F
Cc: ATKINS,David s 47F WELSH,Karen s 47F >
Subject: RE: International Student Hardship Fund [SEC=OFFICIAL:Sensitive]

OFFICIAL: Sensitive

s 22

Nice work to generate something so quickly.

Without trying to put too many cooks in the kitchen on this one, a few thoughts:

- Cost is v high, and might be hard for states to match. Not sure that it will pass the pub test, nor align with the vibe of the PM's statement. The ACT support package for the whole economy is only in the 100s of millions, for example. If the ACT has 5% of students, they would be up for \$25m.
- Needs to be a consistent approach across states.
- Could another option be that the Government sets aside a specific amount (say \$150-200m) to be matched by the states on a pro-rata basis according to student numbers, giving a total of, say, \$400m. To be dispersed on a needs basis, as per your criteria.
- Not sure about including paying debt as a criteria. Will allow almost anyone to make it fit. And will expand uptake. Perhaps link it to lost job or demonstrated hardship (food, utilities, accommodation, travel home).

Happy to contribute further if helpful.

Thanks

Travis

Travis Power

Assistant Secretary
Partnerships Branch | International Division
Australian Government Department of Education, Skills and Employment
Phone ^{s 47F} | Mobile ^{s 47F}

From: ^{s 22}

Sent: Saturday, 4 April 2020 4:06 PM

To: SANDERCOCK, Karen <^{s 47F}>; HARTIGAN, Brooke
^{s 47F} >

Cc: POWER, Travis ^{s 47F} >; ATKINS, David ^{s 47F} >; WELSH, Karen
^{s 47F}

Subject: International Student Hardship Fund [SEC=OFFICIAL:Sensitive]

Importance: High

OFFICIAL: Sensitive

Hi Karen and Brooke

Here is my first cut of a policy proposal for an International Student Hardship Fund.

I have covered the following in the paper:

- Eligibility criteria
- Evidence requirements
- Application process

- Terms of funding contribution from Cth, States and Territories
 - With an option of setting a consistent payment amount – helpful for at least getting a rough cost
- Funding transfer mechanism options (all under the IGA on Federal Financial Relations noting few other options for funding transfer but have focussed on examples of how to do a focussed and short-term NPA)
- Assumptions about the numbers of students who might be eligible
- Costing assumptions and a possible upper cost limit based on consistent payment amount (noting that not setting an amount makes a possible cost challenging to calculate but we could assume that taking this jurisdiction by jurisdiction approach would result in a lower cost overall for the Fund and for the Cth).

I attach an email from ^{s 22} which has informed my assumption about the number of “first years”.

Happy to discuss and talk through anything that is unclear.

I have not yet talked to TSY re funding transfer mechanisms but can do if you are broadly comfortable with this proposal.

Thanks

^{s 22}

^{s 47F}

COVID-19 Taskforce
International Division
Australian Government Department of Education, Skills and Employment
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- The Commonwealth contribution (50 per cent) would be transferred to each state and territory for administration.

Eligibility

- International students (except those in the schools sector) who have been in Australia studying for more than twelve months would be eligible to apply for a financial hardship support payment from the state or territory government where they reside where they can demonstrate:
 - Loss of income due to loss work; and
 - Financial hardship which could include the following factors:
 - Inability to make rent or accommodation payments;
 - Inability to make debt repayments;
 - Inability to make essential payments such as food, medical/health, utilities;
 - Inability to access family or other financial support due to the extraordinary circumstances created by the COVID-19 pandemic; and
 - Inability to repatriate to country of origin due to lack of available financial resources or due to travel restrictions.

Evidence requirements

- An international student will be required to make an application stating that they have lost their job and income, and are suffering financial hardship indicating their particular circumstances (taking into account factors mentioned above).
- Evidence of financial hardship and loss of work would be required and could include:
 - Bank statements showing a drop in savings or loss of income (which could include family bank accounts);
 - Separation certificate from their employer (if provided); and
 - Evidence of bills or other payments they have been unable to or at risk of not making.
- Evidence requirements should support a student's claim to be experiencing financial hardship and not place undue burdens or cost on either the student or their employer to prove hardship.
- Whilst extensive eligibility criteria, application processes and evidence requirements can ensure the validity of a payment it could also increase delivery costs and slow the delivery of assistance to the student undermining the intent of the fund.

Application process

- State and territory governments would nominate a body (whether government or non-government) to:
 - Receive applications on an agreed application form consistent with agreed evidence requirements;
 - Assess the application against agreed eligibility criteria as set out above; and
 - Make payments to the student.

Funding mechanism

- The International Student Hardship Fund would be equally funded between Commonwealth, State and Territory Governments.
- Amounts already provided to international students by education providers consistent with their ESOS Act obligations cannot be subtracted from the contribution of a state or territory government.
 - Should a state or territory government have already provided hardship assistance they would be eligible to include this amount in their total contribution to the fund (no state or territory government has announced a financial hardship assistance fund to date).

Commonwealth would match contributions by states and territories

- Individual states and territories would determine their level of support which would be matched by the Commonwealth. Whilst agreeing consistent levels of funding between states and territories would ensure a more consistent and equal payment to students, negotiating such an outcome when each state and territory government has a different budget situation would likely slow down the delivery of assistance to international students in a timely way.
- An alternative approach could be the application of a consistent payment amount a student may receive that would allow them to meet day-to-day needs recognising the principle that international students are required to have sufficient means to support themselves. Options include:
 - Extension of the \$550 fortnightly Coronavirus Supplement to international students for a period of up to six months – suggested by some stakeholders.
 - Apply the maximum fortnightly amount of Youth Allowance (Independent Living) \$460.20 for six months.
 - Emergency relief payments to meet short-term crisis need.

Options for transferring Commonwealth funds to the States and Territories

- Political agreements between the Commonwealth and states and territories (whether together or individually) are required for a transfer of funds.

Inter-governmental Agreement on Federal Financial Relations

- Commonwealth can transfer funds to States and Territories under the *Inter-governmental Agreement on Federal Financial Relations* (IGA FFR) through three types of agreements.
- Funds can be transferred through *National Agreements* and/or *National Specific Purpose Payments* (which agree indicators and roles and responsibilities of all governments in the deliver of services) or *National Partnership Agreements* (NPA) on specific topics. A National Agreement or National Specific Purpose Payment are not appropriate in this regard given they tend to deal with areas of shared service delivery and established for a longer period of time.
- NPAs are time limited and have three types for different policy contexts:
 - National Partnerships to support national reform objectives;
 - Implementation Plans to support a National Partnership to allow jurisdictional differences in the delivery of national reform initiatives; or
 - Project Agreements which are a simpler form of NPA for low value or low risk payments (which could be considered in this situation given it is time limited transfer to the states).

- There are relevant example of NPAs for a short term and particular purpose relevant to this situation such as the *NPA on COVID-19 Response* and the *NPA on Grants Assistance to Primary Producers Impacted by the North Queensland Floods*.
 - The NPA specifies roles and responsibilities, amount of funding to be transferred and for what purpose the funding can be spent on.
 - *NPA on COVID-19 Response* only relates to additional costs incurred by state health systems incurred in responding to the COVID-19 outbreak rather than payments to states for providing financial support to individuals experiencing hardship because of the COVID-19 outbreak.

Costing assumptions

- Only International Students (those on a student visa) would be eligible to apply for support.
- There are up to 561,154 post-secondary international students in Australia (including first years).
- Based on previous years commencement data we assume that new commencements as a proportion of total enrolments is around one third at the March census date. Applying this assumption there could be up to an estimated 168,346 first year students who would not be eligible to receive a payment as they are deemed to have sufficient funds to support themselves in the short term consistent with their visa conditions.
- According to the 2018 International Student Census 44 per cent of international students indicated they work to support themselves whilst studying in Australia.
- We assume the majority of international students work in sectors most affected by the COVID-19 outbreak and estimate that 75 per cent of those students have lost their job.
- On this basis we have assumed up to 130,000 students could be eligible for a payment.
- States and territories would be responsible for delivery of the payment including any costs for receiving and assessing applications and making the cost to the student (whether delivered in-house by government or contracted out to an NGO).
- Assuming a level of payment consistent with the Coronavirus supplement fortnightly rate for six months, the total cost of the Fund could be up to \$930 million.
- Assuming 50 per cent Commonwealth contribution the total cost for the Commonwealth could be up to \$465 million.
- This is a maximum amount and is calculated on a consistent level of contribution which cannot be assumed if states and territories are allowed to set their own contribution amount which the Commonwealth would be match.

s 22

From: ATKINS,David
Sent: Saturday, 4 April 2020 10:40 PM
To: WELSH,Karen; ^{s 22} ; POWER,Travis; SANDERCOCK,Karen;
HARTIGAN,Brooke
Subject: RE: International Student Hardship Fund [SEC=OFFICIAL:Sensitive] [SEC=OFFICIAL: Sensitive]

All

Regarding repatriation, a metric would be availability of direct flights or transit points (like Singapore) being open?

Thanks david

From: WELSH,Karen ^{s 47F}
Date: 4 April 2020 at 6:11:44 pm AEDT
To: ^{s 22} POWER,Travis
^{s 47F} , SANDERCOCK,Karen <^{s 47F} ,
HARTIGAN,Brooke ^{s 47F}
Cc: ATKINS,David ^{s 47F}
Subject: RE: International Student Hardship Fund [SEC=OFFICIAL:Sensitive] [SEC=OFFICIAL: Sensitive]

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Just a few thoughts - great work in thinking though the complexity of issues!

Karen

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Date: 4 April 2020 at 5:30:15 pm AEDT
To: POWER,Travis ^{s 47F} , SANDERCOCK,Karen
^{s 47F} , HARTIGAN,Brooke ^{s 47F}
Cc: ATKINS,David ^{s 47F} , WELSH,Karen ^{s 47F}
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From: POWER, Travis <s 47F>
Sent: Saturday, 4 April 2020 5:09 PM
To: s 22 ; SANDERCOCK, Karen
s 47F >; HARTIGAN, Brooke s 47F >
Cc: ATKINS, David s 47F ; WELSH, Karen s 47F
Subject: RE: International Student Hardship Fund [SEC=OFFICIAL:Sensitive]

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Happy to contribute further if helpful.

Thanks

Travis

Travis Power

Assistant Secretary

Partnerships Branch | International Division
Australian Government Department of Education, Skills and Employment
Phone +s 47F | Mobile +s 47F

From: s 22

Sent: Saturday, 4 April 2020 4:06 PM

To: SANDERCOCK, Karen <s 47F>

>; HARTIGAN, Brooke

Cc: POWER, Travis s 47F
WELSH, Karen s 47F

>; ATKINS, David <s 47F>

Subject: International Student Hardship Fund [SEC=OFFICIAL:Sensitive]

Importance: High

OFFICIAL: Sensitive

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Happy to discuss and talk through anything that is unclear.

I have not yet talked to TSY re funding transfer mechanisms but can do if you are broadly comfortable with this proposal.

Thanks

^{s 22}

^{s 47F}

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s 22

From: WELSH,Karen
Sent: Sunday, 5 April 2020 11:15 AM
To: s 22
Subject: RE: International Student Hardship Fund [SEC=OFFICIAL, DLM= Sensitive] [SEC=OFFICIAL]

Have been thinking about the issue of whether a student can afford a flight as an eligibility criteria (and it is twisting my mind a little ...)

I don't think it should be an eligibility criteria unless the policy intent is that we actually want them to depart. Is the view that if they can't support themselves but can depart, then they should do that, and we are only interested in helping those who are truly stuck with no way out? In that case then whether they can leave would be a criteria.

But that's only one angle. If the policy intent of this measure is to allow them to stay here and keep studying, and protect our reputation as a welcoming supportive destination for international students, then we actually want them to stay even if they could access a flight... in which case you wouldn't make ability to return home a criteria.

I think. Maybe

From: s 22
Date: 4
To: WELSH,Karen s 47F
 SANDERCOCK,Karen s 47F
 s 47F
 >, POWER,Travis s 47F
 >, HARTIGAN,Brooke
Cc: ATKINS,David s 47F
Subject: RE: International Student Hardship Fund [SEC=OFFICIAL, DLM= Sensitive]

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Thanks Karen, very helpful questions and helping me to tighten up the paper. Yes loss of work and link to hardship is deliberate as we are saying that ordinarily students should have sufficient funds to support themselves (including through work) but because of the extraordinary situation brought about by COVID they no longer do. It might be a bit harsh as there would be situations because of COVID where a person who was supported by their family can no longer support themselves because of what happened at home. In my thinking the work requirement will focus the cohort more narrowly to try and target those most in need. I know its not perfect but I worry it would be too wide otherwise... hmmm

Yes just for student visas, will update the paper so this is clear.

I agree about the repatriation point and was going to follow Travis' suggestion that they can't afford the flight home rather than travel restrictions which are beyond most people's control and exceptions will usually be made for citizens returning home. Do you think the ability to afford a flight home is relevant along with the other criteria?

From: WELSH,Karen s 47F
Sent: Saturday, 4 April 2020 6:12 PM
To: s 22
 POWER,Travis s 47F

SANDERCOCK, Karen ^{s 47F}>; HARTIGAN, Brooke <^{s 47F}Cc: ATKINS, David ^{s 47F}**Subject:** RE: International Student Hardship Fund [SEC=OFFICIAL:Sensitive] [SEC=OFFICIAL: Sensitive]

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Just a few thoughts - great work in thinking though the complexity of issues!

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From: ^{s 22}**Date:** 4 April 2020 at 5:30:15 pm AEDT**To:** POWER, Travis ^{s 47F}

>, SANDERCOCK, Karen

, HARTIGAN, Brooke ^{s 47F}**Cc:** ATKINS, David <^{s 47F}>, WELSH, Karen <^{s 47F}**Subject:** RE: International Student Hardship Fund [SEC=OFFICIAL:Sensitive]

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^{s 22}**From:** POWER, Travis <^{s 47F}**Sent:** Saturday, 4 April 2020 5:09 PM**To:** ^{s 2}
^{s 47F}

SANDERCOCK, Karen

>; HARTIGAN, Brooke <^{s 47F}

>

Cc: ATKINS,David ^{s 47F}

>; WELSH,Karen ^{s 47F}

Subject: RE: International Student Hardship Fund [SEC=OFFICIAL:Sensitive]

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 Assistant Secretary
 Partnerships Branch | International Division
 Australian Government Department of Education, Skills and Employment
 Phone ^{s 47F} | Mobile +^{s 47F}

From: ^{s 22}

Sent: Saturday, 4 April 2020 4:06 PM

To: SANDERCOCK,Karen ^{s 47F}
^{<s 47F}

>; HARTIGAN,Brooke

Cc: POWER,Travis ^{<s 47F}
^{s 47F}

>; ATKINS,David ^{s 47F}

>; WELSH,Karen

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From: ATKINS,David
Sent: Sunday, 5 April 2020 11:18 AM
To: s 22 ; WELSH,Karen; POWER,Travis; SANDERCOCK,Karen
Subject: RE: International Student Hardship Fund [SEC=OFFICIAL, DLM= Sensitive]
Attachments: McKinsey on state relief funds.pdf

**OFFICIAL
Sensitive**

People

I found this from McKinsey and Co on state and local govt relief funds in the US. The implementation section has some useful points.

Thanks,
David

From: s 22
Sent: Saturday, 4 April 2020 6:29 PM
To: WELSH,Karen <s 47F> ; POWER,Travis <s 47F> ; SANDERCOCK,Karen <s 47F>
 ; HARTIGAN,Brooke <s 47F>
Cc: ATKINS,David <s 47F>
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Public Sector Practice

US coronavirus relief funds: A guide for state and local governments

State and local leaders can consider several steps now to capture the full humanitarian and fiscal benefits of the roughly \$2 trillion federal relief package.

by Trey Childress, Stuart Skeates, and Todd Wintner



© vorDa/Getty Images

The ratification of the historic Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act floated a life raft of \$2 trillion to \$2.2 trillion¹ to many US businesses, families, and local governments reeling from the economic shutdown (exhibit).

Some of these benefits, including \$300 billion in direct payments to households, are expected to hit the economy as soon as mid-April. Others may take a month or longer before agency rulemaking, allocations, and recipient certifications allow funds to reach the hands of end beneficiaries.

McKinsey's preliminary analysis of the CARES Act estimates that nearly half of all appropriations in the legislation will be distributed through state and local governments. These funds will primarily cover spikes in demand for state and local services—for example, the more than 6.6 million Americans who filed for unemployment in the last week of March alone²—but also help state agencies and local organizations recoup lost revenue, as with transportation grants to help the nation's airports stay afloat amid a drop in passenger demand. CARES Act provisions directed at federal agencies, such as the expansion of subsidized loan programs from the Small Business Administration, are also of great interest to state and local governments because they directly benefit vulnerable constituents and present opportunities for complementary relief measures.

If the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 taught us anything, it is that time matters. State and local governments must act swiftly to get money into the hands of beneficiaries. This urgency is one of humanitarian necessity: similar to the previous relief packages, most of the CARES Act programs provide immediate health-related response measures (for example, enhancing hospital capacity). Disbursing money quickly is also an economic imperative: 50 percent of Americans work for or own a small business and, on average, these businesses have only 27 days of cash flow.³ In the aftermath of the Great Recession, states accumulated a total of \$500 billion in budget

shortfalls, state tax revenue fell 17 percent below the previous year's levels, and personal income taxes dropped 27 percent⁴—despite federal transfers that helped soften the blow.

In this article, we discuss the steps state and local governments can consider to maximize the impact of the CARES Act. These actions include assigning leaders to spur accountability, establishing mechanisms to coordinate with federal counterparts, planning for financial inflows, providing appropriate resources for agencies to handle the influx of demand, and overcommunicating with the individuals, businesses, and organizations that might benefit.

Distribution complexity will vary by benefit and program

Given the multiple types of distribution mechanisms—each with its own complexities—and the volume of funds to be distributed, state and local governments must prepare for a likely capacity challenge.

One bucket of support, which we estimate to be less than 10 percent of the money allocated to state and local governments, augments existing benefit programs that require minimal additional capacity to distribute. An example would be increasing the Federal Matching Assistance Percentage, which determines the degree to which the federal government finances states' Medicaid programs. Increasing the matching rate for state funds would allow the federal government to provide states with much-needed relief from entitlement obligations.

A second bucket of support will require a moderate increase in capacity to get money out the door. We estimate this approach to include 65 to 75 percent of funds allocated to state and local governments. This funding often requires state or local governments to derive or amend their own allocation and allotment processes for third-party beneficiaries (for example, hospitals and nonprofits) that will deliver direct services. Sometimes the state's own capacity, such as eligibility verification for new unemployment benefits, will need to be augmented.

¹ Total is an estimated range as some programs are based on volumes and therefore there are not defined amounts allocated in the bill.

² "COVID-19 impact," U.S. Department of Labor, April 2, 2020, [dol.gov](https://www.dol.gov).

³ Ross Baird, Colin Higgins, and Bruce Katz, "Rethinking disaster relief for small businesses," *New Localism*, March 18, 2020, thenewlocalism.com.

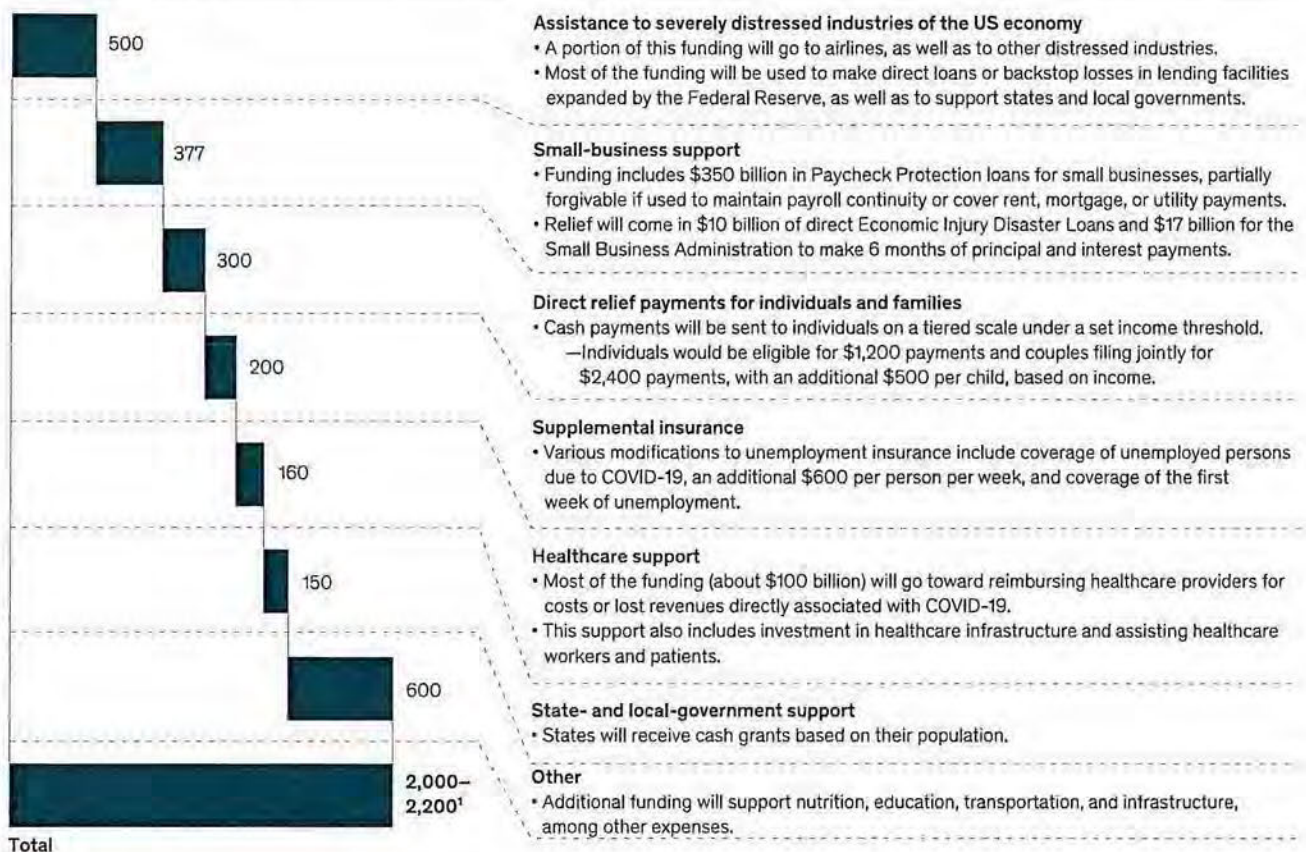
⁴ Tracy Gordon, "State and local budgets and the Great Recession," Brookings Institution, December 31, 2012, [brookings.edu](https://www.brookings.edu).

Exhibit

The CARES Act will provide economic support across six core areas.

Breakdown, \$, billions

Areas of focus in the bill:



Note: Preliminary estimates; allocations may change through regulatory updates.

¹ Total may not sum, because of rounding. It is an estimated range because some programs are based on volumes and therefore there are not defined amounts allocated in the bill.

Source: Advisory Board; CNN; Holland & Knight; *National Review*; *Politico*; *Wall Street Journal*

A final bucket of support—which we estimate may near 25 percent of these funds—will likely require significant investment in new capabilities (and perhaps innovation) to reach beneficiaries. One example is the expansion of funding for food purchases and demonstration projects to increase flexibility for schools to provide free meals. School districts around the country have scrambled to build creative solutions for distributing these meals during a time of physical distancing and widespread school closures.⁵

State and local governments can consider steps to maximize the impact of the legislation

All levels of government are fully immersed in responding to the most immediate humanitarian needs, so leaders can consider several steps now to ensure maximum impact from additional funds. Many of these actions are based on the experience of state and local governments' responses to the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act as well as the early

⁵ Anya Kamenetz and Cory Turner, "Schools race to feed students amid coronavirus closures," NPR, March 20, 2020, npr.org.

experience of states in developing their COVID-19 crisis nerve center.⁶

Assign leaders to spur accountability and improve transparency

- *Appoint a relief and recovery lead* to coordinate across state and local agency officials. This appointee should be senior enough to convene principal-level leaders in each responsible agency. This appointee is often a deputy chief of staff or chief operating officer.

- *Establish a response lead in each agency* to manage the response (including federal-agency interaction) for the department. This leader is often a deputy commissioner or secretary.

Establish mechanisms to coordinate with federal agencies

- *Track agency-level rulemaking and appropriations.* States can continue to rely on tools such as the Federal Funds Information for States that provide leaders with real-time information on disbursements and restrictions.
- *Reach out to federal agencies early.* Contact US government leaders in national, regional, and state offices as appropriate; in doing so, establish a protocol to maintain open lines of communication as resources go online.
- *Centrally track applications and deadlines required by various federal agencies.* Doing so will allow states to recoup qualified expenditures or receive up-front payments.

Plan for financial inflows

- *Track already-authorized emergency costs* to both ensure full understanding of expenditures related to COVID-19 and receive reimbursement from relief packages where applicable.
- *Project benefit demand* to evaluate financial impact as well as operational considerations.

- *Identify sources of working capital* (for example, emergency reserve appropriations and interfund borrowing) at the agency level to finance spending surges before federal money becomes available, particularly in the case of reimbursement programs.

- *Begin the allocation process* by cataloging existing programs, municipalities, and nongovernmental agencies that will be the ultimate recipients of many funding streams. Also, start discussions on distribution criteria and application processes before funds are available.

- *Weigh appropriate fraud, waste, and abuse controls*, particularly for programs with new eligibility requirements, such as unemployment benefits.

Provide appropriate resources for agencies to handle the influx of demand

- *Redeploy staff* to areas of higher demand to alleviate bottlenecks in relief fund distribution; state and local governments might even consider augmenting full-time employees with recently furloughed or unemployed private-sector workers as a means of further economic stimulus.
- *Test all aspects of systems*, such as IT infrastructure and administration capacity, that are likely to experience record levels of use in services—for example, from applications for unemployment insurance and aid through the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program.
- *Evaluate and upgrade IT infrastructure*, including fast-tracking procurement for third-party vendors where needed to accelerate capabilities.

Communicate, communicate, communicate

- *Build a simple, one-stop web portal* with clear, up-to-date links to state and federal resources (overseen by the relief and recovery lead mentioned above) for individuals, businesses, and community organizations seeking information.

⁶ For more on crisis nerve centers, see Adi Kumar, Leah Pollack, Navjot Singh, and Catharina Wrede Braden, "Crisis nerve centers: Supporting governments' responses to coronavirus," March 2020, on McKinsey.com.

- *Establish a hotline* to support agencies in addressing questions related to relief funds.
- *Require agencies to submit citizen outreach strategies* to reach relevant segments such as loan recipients eligible for relief. Agencies can also go beyond explanations of benefits to connect vulnerable institutions and firms to service providers (for example, identifying local lenders certified by the Small Business Administration).

government leaders who hope the next wave of relief will focus on longer-term economic stimulus to the same degree that the CARES Act provides near-term relief. We will continue to monitor developments and share additional guidance as the landscape changes.

Establishing these basic organizational structures and operating processes will leave governments better able to respond to a prolonged economic shutdown. It is ultimately in the hands of state and local leaders to put relief legislation to work to get the money flowing.

Based on what we see today, state and local governments are likely to see revenue shocks as severe, or worse, than those experienced during the Great Recession. We have heard from many local

Trey Childress is a consultant in McKinsey's Chicago office; **Stuart Skeates** is a consultant in the Washington, DC, office, where **Todd Wintner** is a partner.

The authors wish to thank Eric Schweikert, Sophia Sterling-Angus, and Megan White for their contributions to this article.

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s 22

From: WELSH,Karen
Sent: Sunday, 5 April 2020 11:55 AM
To: s 22
Subject: RE: International Student Hardship Fund [SEC=OFFICIAL, DLM= Sensitive] [SEC=OFFICIAL]

Fraught indeed, but interesting policy issues! Thanks s 22 .
 K

From: s 22
Date: 5 April 2020 at 11:37:20 am AEST
To: WELSH,Karen <s 47F>
Subject: RE: International Student Hardship Fund [SEC=OFFICIAL, DLM= Sensitive]

**OFFICIAL
 Sensitive**

I agree with you. I was more trying to say that not being able to leave nor afford an airfare is one indicator of hardship rather than a requirement for them to try and leave and if they can't then they get a payment. Not sure if that makes sense? I have changed it to be an inability to leave as that leads us more towards the argument that they are stuck here and destitute which is a threat to their safety and public health...I think we should just say, this amount is nothing to support a \$35b industry and we have a duty to ensure these students who contribute so much to Australia are safe and well and we want to protect our rep but I get the sense the government is not on the same wave length yet... s 22 has made this point in the Age article published yesterday...

Hopefully my change makes it clearer that it is a factor for considering hardship rather than a hard, you should leave before we give you assistance... it's fraught...

From: WELSH,Karen <s 47F>
Sent: Sunday, 5 April 2020 11:15 AM
To: s 22
Subject: RE: International Student Hardship Fund [SEC=OFFICIAL, DLM= Sensitive] [SEC=OFFICIAL]

Have been thinking about the issue of whether a student can afford a flight as an eligibility criteria (and it is twisting my mind a little ...)

I don't think it should be an eligibility criteria unless the policy intent is that we actually want them to depart. Is the view that if they can't support themselves but can depart, then they should do that, and we are only interested in helping those who are truly stuck with no way out? In that case then whether they can leave would be a criteria.

But that's only one angle. If the policy intent of this measure is to allow them to stay here and keep studying, and protect our reputation as a welcoming supportive destination for international students, then we actually want them to stay even if they could access a flight... in which case you wouldn't make ability to return home a criteria.

I think. Maybe

From: ^{s 22}
Date: 4 April 2020 at 6:29:22 pm AEDT
To: WELSH,Karen <^{s 47F}>, POWER,Travis ^{s 47F}
 SANDERCOCK,Karen ^{s 47F} >, HARTIGAN,Brooke
^{s 47F} >
Cc: ATKINS,David ^{s 47F} >
Subject: RE: International Student Hardship Fund [SEC=OFFICIAL, DLM= Sensitive]

**OFFICIAL
 Sensitive**

Thanks Karen, very helpful questions and helping me to tighten up the paper. Yes loss of work and link to hardship is deliberate as we are saying that ordinarily students should have sufficient funds to support themselves (including through work) but because of the extraordinary situation brought about by COVID they no longer do. It might be a bit harsh as there would be situations because of COVID where a person who was supported by their family can no longer support themselves because of what happened at home. In my thinking the work requirement will focus the cohort more narrowly to try and target those most in need. I know its not perfect but I worry it would be too wide otherwise... hmmm

Yes just for student visas, will update the paper so this is clear.

I agree about the repatriation point and was going to follow Travis' suggestion that they can't afford the flight home rather than travel restrictions which are beyond most people's control and exceptions will usually be made for citizens returning home. Do you think the ability to afford a flight home is relevant along with the other criteria?

From: WELSH,Karen <^{s 47F}> >
Sent: Saturday, 4 April 2020 6:12 PM
To: ^{s 22} >; POWER,Travis <^{s 47F}> >;
 SANDERCOCK,Karen <^{s 47F}> >; HARTIGAN,Brooke <^{s 47F}> >
Cc: ATKINS,David <^{s 47F}> >
Subject: RE: International Student Hardship Fund [SEC=OFFICIAL:Sensitive] [SEC=OFFICIAL: Sensitive]

Thanks ^{s 22} a few random thoughts in case useful - I read this as the loss of a job as being the key criteria and then additionally they have to demonstrate hardship as a result. So hardship If they have never held a job or are still earning is not enough..?

Is this just for students on student visas? What about those who have been in the country for 12 months potentially initially on a tourist visa to do ELICOS then switch , so just a question of when the 12 months would kick in.

I think the inability to repatriate as a criteria is difficult as it will be quite fluid - borders may be closed for some countries but allow foreign nationals home, and flights may be available intermittently. Some govts are also talking about arranging flights for their students to return ... so ability to repatriate is likely quite subjective?

Just a few thoughts - great work in thinking though the complexity of issues!

Karen

From: s 22
Date: 4 April 2020 at 5:30:15 pm AEDT
To: POWER, Travis s 47F >, SANDERCOCK, Karen
s 47F , HARTIGAN, Brooke <s 47F >
Cc: ATKINS, David s 47F >, WELSH, Karen <s 47F >
Subject: RE: International Student Hardship Fund [SEC=OFFICIAL:Sensitive]

OFFICIAL: Sensitive

Thanks Travis, that's really helpful. Karen, Brooke and I have talked and I would have worked up a new way to calculate the amount – now looking at a maximum Cth contribution of \$125m and should a state nominate a lower amount then the Cth would match that amount. This is based on a suggestion of a consistent payment amount rather than leaving it for states to nominate in their jurisdiction which would create inconsistency. I like your point about pro-rata matching by the states, I will add this point in.

Good point re the eligibility factors, I will update as you suggest.

Suggestions are very welcome, thank you!

s 22

From: POWER, Travis <s 47F >
Sent: Saturday, 4 April 2020 5:09 PM
To: s 22 >; SANDERCOCK, Karen
<s 47F >; HARTIGAN, Brooke s 47F >
Cc: ATKINS, David <s 47F >; WELSH, Karen s 47F
Subject: RE: International Student Hardship Fund [SEC=OFFICIAL:Sensitive]

OFFICIAL: Sensitive

s 22

Nice work to generate something so quickly.

Without trying to put too many cooks in the kitchen on this one, a few thoughts:

- Cost is v high, and might be hard for states to match. Not sure that it will pass the pub test, nor align with the vibe of the PM's statement. The ACT support package for the whole economy is only in the 100s of millions, for example. If the ACT has 5% of students, they would be up for \$25m.
- Needs to be a consistent approach across states.
- Could another option be that the Government sets aside a specific amount (say \$150-200m) to be matched by the states on a pro-rata basis according to student numbers, giving a total of, say, \$400m. To be dispersed on a needs basis, as per your criteria.

- Not sure about including paying debt as a criteria. Will allow almost anyone to make it fit. And will expand uptake. Perhaps link it to lost job or demonstrated hardship (food, utilities, accommodation, travel home).

Happy to contribute further if helpful.

Thanks

Travis

Travis Power

Assistant Secretary
Partnerships Branch | International Division
Australian Government Department of Education, Skills and Employment
Phone +s 47F | Mobile +s 47F

From: s 22 >
Sent: Saturday, 4 April 2020 4:06 PM
To: SANDERCOCK,Karen <s 47F >; HARTIGAN,Brooke
s 47F >
Cc: POWER,Travis s 47F >; ATKINS,David <s 47F >; WELSH,Karen
s 47F
Subject: International Student Hardship Fund [SEC=OFFICIAL:Sensitive]
Importance: High

OFFICIAL: Sensitive

Hi Karen and Brooke

Here is my first cut of a policy proposal for an International Student Hardship Fund.

I have covered the following in the paper:

- Eligibility criteria
- Evidence requirements
- Application process
- Terms of funding contribution from Cth, States and Territories
 - With an option of setting a consistent payment amount – helpful for at least getting a rough cost
- Funding transfer mechanism options (all under the IGA on Federal Financial Relations noting few other options for funding transfer but have focussed on examples of how to do a focussed and short-term NPA)
- Assumptions about the numbers of students who might be eligible

- Costing assumptions and a possible upper cost limit based on consistent payment amount (noting that not setting an amount makes a possible cost challenging to calculate but we could assume that taking this jurisdiction by jurisdiction approach would result in a lower cost overall for the Fund and for the Cth).

I attach an email from ^{s 22} which has informed my assumption about the number of “first years”.

Happy to discuss and talk through anything that is unclear.

I have not yet talked to TSY re funding transfer mechanisms but can do if you are broadly comfortable with this proposal.

Thanks

^{s 22}

^{s 47F}

COVID-19 Taskforce
International Division
Australian Government Department of Education, Skills and Employment
Mobile ^{s 22}
www.dese.gov.au

The Department of Education, Skills and Employment acknowledges the traditional owners and custodians of country throughout Australia and their continuing connection to pay our respects to them and their cultures, and Elders past, present and emerging.

s 22

From: HEFEREN,Rob
Sent: Sunday, 5 April 2020 12:18 PM
To: s 22
Cc: SANDERCOCK,Karen; HARTIGAN,Brooke
Subject: Re: Policy proposal for MO: International Student Hardship Fund
 [SEC=OFFICIAL:Sensitive] [SEC=OFFICIAL: Sensitive]

Thanks ^{s 22} . This looks great.

Would you be available for a call to talk things through around 12.30? And Karen - would you like me to connect you in?

Rob

From: ^{s 22}
Date: 5 April 2020 at 11:42:15 am AEST
To: HEFEREN,Rob ^{s 47F}
Cc: SANDERCOCK,Karen ^{s 47F} , HARTIGAN,Brooke
^{s 47F}
Subject: Policy proposal for MO: International Student Hardship Fund [SEC=OFFICIAL:Sensitive]

OFFICIAL: Sensitive

Rob

Yesterday, the Minister's Office requested a short paper outlining a proposal for an International Student Hardship Fund with indicative costs. Please find attached a draft proposal for your feedback/forwarding to the Office.

I am happy to clarify anything in the paper and make further changes if you like.

Regards

s 22

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International Student Hardship Fund

Reasons for assistance

Students rely on income from part-time and casual work

Although it is a well-established requirement of the student visa that international students have sufficient funds to support themselves whilst studying in Australia, it also provides international students with the ability to undertake part-time and casual work. This is one of the attractive features of Australia's international education system. International students rely on part-time and casual work to meet a range of their living costs after paying their fees.

Lack of other support options due to the COVID-19 outbreak

International students who lost their job are not eligible for other financial support from government and are not eligible for the recently announced JobKeeper Payment. Their own personal circumstances, or that of their family, may have also changed because of the COVID-19 outbreak meaning previously available support is no longer available.

Call for support from the sector, states and territories

There are increasing calls in the international education sector, and from state governments, to support international students in response to the crisis created by the COVID-19 outbreak. Reasons for support relate to student financial vulnerability, public health protection, and from a reputation point of view to assist the sector to recover once the crisis passes. State and territory officials have also been discussing a possible support package.

Assistance already provided

In addition to the recent announcement allowing international students early access to their superannuation, states and territories are moving towards putting evictions on hold for six months providing students with relief from rent payments. Consistent with their *Education Services for Overseas Students Act 2000* (ESOS) obligations, the majority of education providers (especially universities) are providing a range of support options such as fee reductions and access to short-term emergency funds.

PROPOSAL

An International Student Hardship Fund would be established and funded jointly by the Commonwealth, State and Territory Governments to provide temporary short-term emergency financial support to international students at risk of or experiencing financial hardship during the COVID-19 outbreak. This Fund will support all Australian Governments' actions to stop the spread of COVID-19 by supporting international students experiencing financial hardship and affected by a loss of work to comply with public health measures. The Commonwealth contribution to the Fund (50 per cent) would be transferred to each state and territory for administration on a pro-rata basis.

Eligibility

International students (except those in the schools sector) who have been in Australia studying for more than twelve months on a student visa (subclass 561) would be eligible to apply for a lump-sum financial hardship support payment from the state or territory government where they reside where they can demonstrate:

- Loss of income due to loss of work; and

- Financial hardship which could include the following factors:
 - Inability to make rent or accommodation payments;
 - Inability to make essential payments such as food, medical/health, utilities;
 - Inability to access family or other financial support due to the extraordinary circumstances created by the COVID-19 pandemic; and
 - Inability to repatriate to their country of origin.

Evidence requirements

An international student will be required to make an application stating that they have lost their job and income, and are suffering financial hardship indicating their particular circumstances (taking into account factors mentioned above). Evidence of financial hardship and loss of work would be required and could include:

- Bank statements showing a drop in savings or loss of income (which could include family bank accounts);
- Separation certificate from their employer (if provided); and
- Evidence of bills or other payments they have been unable to or at risk of not making.

Evidence requirements should support a student's claim to be experiencing financial hardship and not place undue burdens or cost on either the student or their employer to prove hardship. Whilst extensive eligibility criteria, application processes and evidence requirements can ensure the validity of a payment it could also increase delivery costs and slow the delivery of assistance to the student undermining the intent of the fund to provide short-term assistance.

Application process

State and territory governments would be responsible for managing the application process. This could involve the relevant jurisdiction nominating a body (whether government or non-government) to:

- Receive applications on an agreed application form consistent with agreed evidence requirements;
- Assess the application against agreed eligibility criteria as set out above; and
- Make payments to the student.

Funding mechanism

The International Student Hardship Fund would be equally funded between Commonwealth, State and Territory Governments on a pro-rata basis based on the student population in a jurisdiction. Any amount already provided to international students by education providers consistent with their *Education Services for Overseas Students Act 2000* obligations cannot be subtracted from the contribution of a state or territory government. Should a state or territory government have already provided hardship assistance they would be eligible to include this amount in their total contribution to the fund (no state or territory government has announced a financial hardship assistance fund to date).

Options for transferring Commonwealth funds to the States and Territories

Based on established Federal Financial Relations processes there would need to be a new National Partnership Agreement between the Commonwealth, states and territories (whether together or individually) for the Commonwealth to transfer funds to the states.

Inter-governmental Agreement on Federal Financial Relations

The Commonwealth can transfer funds to States and Territories under the *Inter-governmental Agreement on Federal Financial Relations* (IGA FFR) through three types of agreements. Funds can be transferred through *National Agreements* and/or *National Specific Purpose Payments* (which agree indicators and roles and responsibilities of all governments in the delivery of services) or through *National Partnership Agreements* (NPA) on specific topics. A National Agreement or a National Specific Purpose Payment are not appropriate in this regard given they tend to deal with areas of shared service delivery and established for a longer period of time. NPAs are time limited and there are normally three types for different policy contexts:

- National Partnerships to support national reform objectives;
- Implementation Plans to support a National Partnership to allow jurisdictional differences in the delivery of national reform initiatives; or
- Project Agreements which are a simpler form of NPA for low value or low risk payments (which could be considered in this situation given it is time limited transfer to the states).

However, despite the clear requirement for an agreement with states and territories to transfer funds under the IGA FFR, Treasury has advised it would be possible to comply with these requirements through an exchange of letters between Commonwealth, state and territory ministers.

The Prime Minister could take the proposal to the National Cabinet to expedite agreement with states and territories. An exchange of letters process was used during the Bushfires Crisis in early 2020 to expedite funding transfers in a crisis situation. The exchange of letters process needs to constitute an agreement under the IGA FFR but it offers a more straight forward and faster process that could be utilised in this situation.

Commonwealth would match contributions by states and territories

Individual states and territories could determine their level of support which would be matched by the Commonwealth up to a maximum contribution (see below). The Commonwealth could make an initial offer of a maximum contribution amount that the states and territories could match on a pro-rata basis based on students residing in their jurisdiction. This initial offer could be based on a consistent payment amount (more details below).

Whilst agreeing consistent levels of funding between states and territories would ensure a more consistent and equal payment for students, negotiating such an outcome when each state and territory government has a different budget situation could be difficult to reach agreement and slow down the delivery of assistance to international students in a timely way.

A consistent payment amount could be set to allow students to meet day-to-day needs recognising the principle that international students are required to have sufficient means to support themselves. A range of options have been recommended by stakeholders. For example, CISA recommended extending the fortnightly Coronavirus Supplement (\$550) to international students for six months. We recommend a payment equivalent to two thirds of the fortnightly rate of Youth Allowance (Independent Living) - \$460.20 - paid for three months as a lump sum with the option to review this level of assistance after three months. **This would be the equivalent of a payment of \$1980 per student.** This has the benefit of a transparent calculation and an assumption that international students have access to funds to support themselves.

Costs

Assuming a level of payment consistent of \$1980 per student, the total cost of the Fund could be up to \$257.4 million and shared on a pro-rata basis based on international student population in each jurisdiction which signed up to the Fund. Assuming 50 per cent Commonwealth contribution the maximum cost for the Commonwealth could be up to \$128.7 million. This means the Commonwealth would support a payment of just under \$1000 per student. It is open to government to lower the cap if preferred which could be achieved by lowering the percentage share of the Youth Allowance (Independent Living) rate.

Key obstacles to the proposal

The key obstacle to driving the proposal forward is that there is no obvious source of funding to fund the Commonwealth's contribution to the Fund. This would require an additional call on the Commonwealth budget.

A further obstacle could be reaching agreement on the detail of the Fund and its administration with states and territories. Although this may not be as strong as would ordinarily be expected given a push by state and territory officials for the establishment of a support package for international students, there still could be resistance around the contribution amount and their administration of the system.

Notes on costs

- Only International Students (those on a student visa subclass 561) would be eligible to apply for support.
- There are up to 561,154 post-secondary international students in Australia (including first years).
- Based on previous years commencement data we assume that new commencements as a proportion of total enrolments is around one third at the March census date. Applying this assumption there could be up to an estimated 168,346 first year students who would not be eligible to receive a payment as they are deemed to have sufficient funds to support themselves in the short term consistent with their visa conditions.
- According to the 2018 International Student Census 44 per cent of international students indicated they work to support themselves whilst studying in Australia.
- We assume the majority of international students work in sectors most affected by the COVID-19 outbreak and estimate that 75 per cent of those students have lost their job.
- On this basis we have assumed up to 130,000 students could be eligible for a payment.
- States and territories would be responsible for delivery of the payment including any costs for receiving and assessing applications and making the cost to the student (whether delivered in-house by government or contracted out to an NGO).

From: s 22
To: s 22
Cc: HEFFEREN, Rob; SAUNDERCOCK, Karen
Subject: Draft proposal for International Student Hardship Fund [SEC=OFFICIAL:Sensitive]
Date: Sunday, 5 April 2020 2:01:29 PM
Attachments: [International Student Hardship Fund Proposal.docx](#)
[image001.png](#)

OFFICIAL: Sensitive

s 22

As flagged by Rob, please find attached a draft proposal for establishing an International Student Hardship Fund. In addition to outlining key features of how the fund could work, possible eligibility criteria and costs, it provides details on the funding mechanism for how the Commonwealth could transfer funds to states and territories.

We are happy to clarify anything in the paper.

Regards

s 22

s 47F
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Australian Government Department of Education, Skills and Employment
Mobile s 22
www.deese.gov.au

Contemporary Indigenous Artwork by Dennis Anderson, representing the Rainbow Serpent

The Department of Education, Skills and Employment acknowledges the traditional owners and custodians of country throughout Australia and their continuing connection to land, waters and community. We pay our respects to them and their cultures, and to their past, present and emerging.

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- National Partnerships to support national reform objectives;
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- Project Agreements which are a simpler form of NPA for low value or low risk payments (which could be considered in this situation given it is time limited transfer to the states).

However, despite the clear requirement for an agreement with states and territories to transfer funds under the IGA FFR, Treasury has advised it would be possible to comply with these requirements through an exchange of letters between Commonwealth, state and territory ministers. The Prime Minister could take the proposal to the National Cabinet to expedite agreement with states and territories. An exchange of letters process was used during the Bushfires Crisis in early 2020 to expedite funding transfers in a crisis situation. The exchange of letters process needs to constitute an agreement under the IGA FFR but it offers a more straight forward and faster process that could be utilised in this situation.

Commonwealth would match contributions by states and territories

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Whilst agreeing consistent levels of funding between states and territories would ensure a more consistent and equal payment for students, negotiating such an outcome when each state and territory government has a different budget situation could be difficult to reach agreement and slow down the delivery of assistance to international students in a timely way.

A consistent payment amount could be set to allow students to meet day-to-day needs recognising the principle that international students are required to have sufficient means to support themselves. A range of options have been recommended by stakeholders. For example, CISA recommended extending the fortnightly Coronavirus Supplement (\$550) to international students for six months. We recommend a payment equivalent to two thirds of the fortnightly rate of Youth Allowance (Independent Living) - \$460.20 - paid for three months as a lump sum with the option to review this level of assistance after three months. **This would be the equivalent of a payment of \$1980 per student.** This has the benefit of a transparent calculation and an assumption that international students have access to funds to support themselves.

Costs

Assuming a level of payment consistent of \$1980 per student, the total cost of the Fund could be up to \$257.4 million and shared on a pro-rata basis based on international student population in each jurisdiction which signed up to the Fund. Assuming 50 per cent Commonwealth contribution the maximum cost for the Commonwealth could be up to \$128.7 million. This means the Commonwealth would support a payment of just under \$1000 per student. It is open to government to lower the cap if preferred which could be achieved by lowering the percentage share of the Youth Allowance (Independent Living) rate.

Key obstacles to the proposal

The key obstacle to driving the proposal forward is that there is no obvious source of funding to fund the Commonwealth's contribution to the Fund. This would require an additional call on the Commonwealth budget.

A further obstacle could be reaching agreement on the detail of the Fund and its administration with states and territories. Although this may not be as strong as would ordinarily be expected given a push by state and territory officials for the establishment of a support package for international students, there still could be resistance around the contribution amount and their administration of the system.

Notes on costs

- Only International Students (those on a student visa subclass 561) would be eligible to apply for support.
- There are up to 561,154 post-secondary international students in Australia (including first years).
- Based on previous years commencement data we assume that new commencements as a proportion of total enrolments is around one third at the March census date. Applying this assumption there could be up to an estimated 168,346 first year students who would not be eligible to receive a payment as they are deemed to have sufficient funds to support themselves in the short term consistent with their visa conditions.
- According to the 2018 International Student Census 44 per cent of international students indicated they work to support themselves whilst studying in Australia.
- We assume the majority of international students work in sectors most affected by the COVID-19 outbreak and estimate that 75 per cent of those students have lost their job.
- On this basis we have assumed up to 130,000 students could be eligible for a payment.
- States and territories would be responsible for delivery of the payment including any costs for receiving and assessing applications and making the cost to the student (whether delivered in-house by government or contracted out to an NGO).

s 22

From: HEFEREN,Rob
Sent: Sunday, 5 April 2020 3:19 PM
To: BRUNIGES,Michele
Cc: SANDERCOCK,Karen; s 22
Subject: Fwd: Draft proposal for International Student Hardship Fund [SEC=OFFICIAL:Sensitive]
 [SEC=OFFICIAL: Sensitive]
Attachments: International Student Hardship Fund Proposal.docx

Michele

As I flagged yesterday, attached is the short paper on the proposed hardship fund.

s 22 pulled this together yesterday and today, and s 22, Karen and I had a quick chat earlier today.

FYI in case Minister contacts you about it, and, of course, any comments welcome. I suspect this won't be high on his priorities for tomorrow, but just in case.

Rob

From: s 22
Date: 5 April 2020 at 2:01:29 pm AEST
To: s 22
Cc: HEFEREN,Rob <s 47F>, SANDERCOCK,Karen
 s 47F
Subject: Draft proposal for International Student Hardship Fund [SEC=OFFICIAL:Sensitive]

OFFICIAL: Sensitive

s 22

As flagged by Rob, please find attached a draft proposal for establishing an International Student Hardship Fund. In addition to outlining key features of how the fund could work, possible eligibility criteria and costs, it provides details on the funding mechanism for how the Commonwealth could transfer funds to states and territories.

We are happy to clarify anything in the paper.

Regards

s 22

s 47F
 COVID-19 Taskforce
 International Division
 Australian Government Department of Education, Skills and Employment
 Mobile s 22
www.dese.gov.au

International Student Hardship Fund

Reasons for assistance

Students rely on income from part-time and casual work

Although it is a well-established requirement of the student visa that international students have sufficient funds to support themselves whilst studying in Australia, it also provides international students with the ability to undertake part-time and casual work. This is one of the attractive features of Australia's international education system. International students rely on part-time and casual work to meet a range of their living costs after paying their fees.

Lack of other support options due to the COVID-19 outbreak

International students who lost their job are not eligible for other financial support from government and are not eligible for the recently announced JobKeeper Payment. Their own personal circumstances, or that of their family, may have also changed because of the COVID-19 outbreak meaning previously available support is no longer available.

Call for support from the sector, states and territories

There are increasing calls in the international education sector, and from state governments, to support international students in response to the crisis created by the COVID-19 outbreak. Reasons for support relate to student financial vulnerability, public health protection, and from a reputation point of view to assist the sector to recover once the crisis passes. State and territory officials have also been discussing a possible support package.

Assistance already provided

In addition to the recent announcement allowing international students early access to their superannuation, states and territories are moving towards putting evictions on hold for six months providing students with relief from rent payments. Consistent with their *Education Services for Overseas Students Act 2000* (ESOS) obligations, the majority of education providers (especially universities) are providing a range of support options such as fee reductions and access to short-term emergency funds.

PROPOSAL

An International Student Hardship Fund would be established and funded jointly by the Commonwealth, State and Territory Governments to provide temporary short-term emergency financial support to international students at risk of or experiencing financial hardship during the COVID-19 outbreak. This Fund will support all Australian Governments' actions to stop the spread of COVID-19 by supporting international students experiencing financial hardship and affected by a loss of work to comply with public health measures. The Commonwealth contribution to the Fund (50 per cent) would be transferred to each state and territory for administration on a pro-rata basis.

Eligibility

International students (except those in the schools sector) who have been in Australia studying for more than twelve months on a student visa (subclass 561) would be eligible to apply for a lump-sum financial hardship support payment from the state or territory government where they reside where they can demonstrate:

- Loss of income due to loss of work; and

- Financial hardship which could include the following factors:
 - Inability to make rent or accommodation payments;
 - Inability to make essential payments such as food, medical/health, utilities;
 - Inability to access family or other financial support due to the extraordinary circumstances created by the COVID-19 pandemic; and
 - Inability to repatriate to their country of origin.

Evidence requirements

An international student will be required to make an application stating that they have lost their job and income, and are suffering financial hardship indicating their particular circumstances (taking into account factors mentioned above). Evidence of financial hardship and loss of work would be required and could include:

- Bank statements showing a drop in savings or loss of income (which could include family bank accounts);
- Separation certificate from their employer (if provided); and
- Evidence of bills or other payments they have been unable to or at risk of not making.

Evidence requirements should support a student's claim to be experiencing financial hardship and not place undue burdens or cost on either the student or their employer to prove hardship. Whilst extensive eligibility criteria, application processes and evidence requirements can ensure the validity of a payment it could also increase delivery costs and slow the delivery of assistance to the student undermining the intent of the fund to provide short-term assistance.

Application process

State and territory governments would be responsible for managing the application process. This could involve the relevant jurisdiction nominating a body (whether government or non-government) to:

- Receive applications on an agreed application form consistent with agreed evidence requirements;
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Funding mechanism

The International Student Hardship Fund would be equally funded between Commonwealth, State and Territory Governments on a pro-rata basis based on the student population in a jurisdiction. Any amount already provided to international students by education providers consistent with their *Education Services for Overseas Students Act 2000* obligations cannot be subtracted from the contribution of a state or territory government. Should a state or territory government have already provided hardship assistance they would be eligible to include this amount in their total contribution to the fund (no state or territory government has announced a financial hardship assistance fund to date).

Options for transferring Commonwealth funds to the States and Territories

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- According to the 2018 International Student Census 44 per cent of international students indicated they work to support themselves whilst studying in Australia.
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s 22

From: s 22
Sent: Sunday, 5 April 2020 3:33 PM
To: s 22
Cc: HEFEREN,Rob; SANDERCOCK,Karen
Subject: RE: Draft proposal for International Student Hardship Fund [SEC=OFFICIAL:Sensitive]
Attachments: International Student Hardship Fund Proposal.docx

OFFICIAL: Sensitive

Thank you, s 22. A fantastic first draft in challenging circumstances much appreciated.

I attach some comments I had in my first read. I was making comments as I read so some of my questions are answered by later sections of the paper. For the moment, take this as feedback and if it is easy to incorporate do so, but if it is redundant or changes things radically hold off on incorporating it yet.

Rob,

I'll call you in a moment on this.

Thanks.

s 22

Office of the Hon Dan Tehan MP
 Minister for Education
 Parliament House Canberra ACT 2600 Australia
 M s 22 E s 22

From: s 22
Sent: Sunday, 5 April 2020 2:01 PM
To: s 22
Cc: HEFEREN,Rob s 47F >; SANDERCOCK,Karen s 47F
Subject: Draft proposal for International Student Hardship Fund [SEC=OFFICIAL:Sensitive]

OFFICIAL: Sensitive

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We are happy to clarify anything in the paper.

Regards

s 22

s 47F
 COVID-19 Taskforce
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 Australian Government Department of Education, Skills and Employment
 Mobile s 22

www.dese.gov.au

The Department of Education, Skills and Employment acknowledges the traditional owners and custodians of country throughout Australia and their continuing connection pay our respects to them and their cultures, and Elders past, present and emerging.

International Student Hardship Fund

As a class of short-term visitor visa holders, Reasons for assistance

Students rely on income from part-time and casual work

Although it is a well-established requirement of the student visa that international students have sufficient funds to support themselves whilst studying in Australia, it also provides international students with the ability to undertake part-time and casual work. This is one of the attractive features of Australia's international education system. International students rely on part-time and casual work to meet a range of their living costs after paying their fees.

Lack of other support options due to the COVID-19 outbreak

International students (visa subclass 500) who lost their job are not eligible for other financial support from the Commonwealth government and are not eligible for the recently announced including JobSeeker and JobKeeper payments. A condition of the student visa is that holder have sufficient funds to support themselves for one year. The government has announced that visa holders here for longer than a year may access their superannuation they have accumulated. Further, for certain industry sectors such as nursing and aged care, restriction of working to 40 hours per fortnight have been relaxed.

Nonetheless, due to changed global circumstances due to their own personal circumstances, or that of their family, may have also changed because of the COVID-19 outbreak, some visa holders may be unable to access overseas family support due to economic shutdown overseas, unable to return their home country or leave Australia due to travel restrictions and limited flights, unable to work part-time in traditional student sector employment areas such as hospitality, and have limited to no superannuation due to much of the employment in this sector not incurring payments. In short, due to the outbreak some international students are facing financial hardship. (we still need concrete evidence that some are. To date, it has only be supposition). meaning previously available support is no longer available.

Call for support from the sector, states and territories

There are increasing calls in the international education sector, and from state governments, to financially support international students facing financial hardship in response to the crisis created by the COVID-19 outbreak. Reasons for support relate to student financial vulnerability, public health protection, and from a reputation point of view to assist the sector to recover once the crisis passes. State and territory officials have also been discussing a possible support package.

Assistance already provided

In addition to the recent announcement allowing international students early access to their superannuation, states and territories are moving towards putting evictions on hold for six months providing students with relief from rent payments. A number of universities have established limited hardship funds to which students—both domestic and international—may apply for assistance. (Again, do we have any data on whether any students have availed themselves for these funds?) Further, some local communities, for example the Sydney Nepalese community, have similarly offered to support students facing hardship. Consistent with their Education Services for Overseas Students Act 2000 (ESOS) obligations, the majority of education providers (especially universities) are providing a range of support options such as fee reductions and access to short-term emergency funds.

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Commented [s 22]

Commented [s 22]: ESOS Act does not require this. Also, important that we refer to fee deferrals not fee reductions. The providers can take either option but we do not want to set up a stakeholder expectation of a reduction.

PROPOSAL

An International Student Hardship Fund would be established and funded jointly by the Commonwealth, State and Territory Governments to provide temporary short-term emergency financial support to international students ~~who can show they are at risk of or experiencing significant financial hardship during the COVID-19 outbreak. This Fund will support all Australian Governments' actions to stop the spread of COVID-19 by supporting international students experiencing financial hardship and affected by a loss of work to comply with public health measures.~~ The Commonwealth ~~would match contribution by States and Territories to a maximum amount of \$XXm. contribution to the Fund (50 per cent) would be transferred to each state and territory for administration on a pro-rata basis.~~

Commented s 22 Too long of a bow.

Eligibility

International students (except those in the schools sector) who have been in Australia studying for more than twelve months on a student visa (subclass 561) would be eligible to apply for a lump-sum financial hardship support payment from the state or territory government where they reside where they can demonstrate:

Commented s 22 Why are these excluded?
s 47F

- Loss of income due to loss of work; and
- Financial hardship which could include the following factors:
 - o Inability to make rent or accommodation payments;
 - o Inability to make essential payments such as food, medical/health, utilities;
 - o Inability to access family or other financial support due to the extraordinary circumstances created by the COVID-19 pandemic; and
 - o Inability to repatriate to their country of origin.

s 22 Why lump sum? Is this based on on going need and isn't the likelihood of abuse of giving a lump sum greater?
s 47F
Commented s 22 Good.

Evidence requirements

An international student will be required to make an application stating that they have lost their job and income, and are suffering financial hardship indicating their particular circumstances (taking into account factors mentioned above). Evidence of financial hardship and loss of work would be required and could include:

- Bank statements showing a drop in savings or loss of income (which could include family bank accounts);
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Commented s 22 States to cover delivery costs. And cumbersome element is inbuilt to show true financial need.

Application process

State and territory governments would be responsible for managing the application process. This could involve the relevant jurisdiction nominating a body (whether government or non-government) to:

Commented s 22]: Do we want to set the agenda for this to go to the Study@ centres in each jurisdiction which already have student welfare offices. This is a tough call because these offices are mostly about marketing, but the idea that each state will do it differently is messy. The call for these funds is coming from these state offices, so it is worth having them responsible rather than passing the buck.

- Receive applications on an agreed application form consistent with agreed evidence requirements;
- Assess the application against agreed eligibility criteria as set out above; and
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Funding mechanism

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Commented [r 22]: If I'm reading this correctly it is proposing a central Cmwh fund that is then divided. I think it needs to be separate funds in each state and territory. Cmwh only hands over the funds and only after the states' put in their respective funding.

Options for transferring Commonwealth funds to the States and Territories

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Commented [§ 22]: I like this, but worth a conversation on the amount. There are three basic costs for a student: 1. Accommodation, 2. Living expenses, and 3. Tuition. This fund only should assist with 2 as Accommodation is being dealt with in the general COVID response and providers should wear Tuition deferrals. Focusing on Living Expenses, what is the statutory amount? Is it 2/3 of \$550?

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Commented [§ 22]: I agree with the maths here, but one of the key elements of this proposal is it is _need basis_. Thus, the calculation is not on the number of international students in Australia, it is the number of international students who can show financial hardship. I have no idea what that percentage is, but we might work with the sector to see if we can get a sense of one provider and then extrapolate out.

- According to the 2018 International Student Census, 44 per cent of international students indicated they work to support themselves whilst studying in Australia.
- We assume the majority of international students work in sectors most affected by the COVID-19 outbreak and estimate that 75 per cent of those students have lost their job.
- On this basis we have assumed up to 130,000 students could be eligible for a payment.
- States and territories would be responsible for delivery of the payment including any costs for receiving and assessing applications and making the cost to the student (whether delivered in-house by government or contracted out to an NGO).

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Commented s 221: Are these fair assumptions? For example, aged care, nursing assistance, cleaners, are all dominated by international student workers and these sectors have not seen job losses, but actual worker need. I think we need to investigate this a bit more. There is some research in this area as to what jobs international students were doing before the Covid hit.

s 47F

s 22

From: HEFEREN,Rob
Sent: Sunday, 5 April 2020 4:16 PM
To: BRUNIGES,Michele
Cc: SANDERCOCK,Karen; s 22
Subject: Fwd: Draft proposal for International Student Hardship Fund [SEC=OFFICIAL:Sensitive]
 [SEC=OFFICIAL: Sensitive]
Attachments: International Student Hardship Fund Proposal.docx

Michele

I've just spoken with s 22 on a few issues. s 22 paper rammmed home the need for some serious \$\$ if the Minister is going to placate the sector. I think the realisation that it might be too hard has hit home. We'll finalise nonetheless - just in case.

So we've agreed on a bit of a 'plan B.' Minister has a meeting with the UA Board Monday. Before ERC. At that he will seek their assistance in telling the Department what use is being made of their emergency funds for international students. So at least we can have some line of sight as to how many students are in dire straits. I'll talk to Karen about seeing if we can set up a dedicated email to take messages from students in strife. This might be too difficult, depending on traffic, but we can have a think about what can be done.

s 22 was going to see if Minister had time Tuesday to pow wow on this. We're both conscious of your ERC load with Minister Cash as well, so it might be too much for you to be involved as well, but we'll see what timing suits the Minister.

s 22 was sure the Minister wanted to do something to help students in difficulty, but understood how hard that might prove to be.

Rob

From: s 22
Date: 5 April 2020 at 3:32:41 pm AEST
To: s 22
Cc: HEFEREN,Rob <s 47F>, SANDERCOCK,Karen
 s 47F
Subject: RE: Draft proposal for International Student Hardship Fund [SEC=OFFICIAL:Sensitive]

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I'll call you in a moment on this.

Thanks.
 s 22

Office of the Hon Dan Tehan MP
Minister for Education
Parliament House Canberra ACT 2600 Australia
M s 22 E s 22

From: s 22
Sent: Sunday, 5 April 2020 2:01 PM
To: s 22
Cc: HEFEREN,Rob s 47F >; SANDERCOCK,Karen s 47F
Subject: Draft proposal for International Student Hardship Fund [SEC=OFFICIAL:Sensitive]

OFFICIAL: Sensitive

s 22

As flagged by Rob, please find attached a draft proposal for establishing an International Student Hardship Fund. In addition to outlining key features of how the fund could work, possible eligibility criteria and costs, it provides details on the funding mechanism for how the Commonwealth could transfer funds to states and territories.

We are happy to clarify anything in the paper.

Regards

s 22

s 47F

COVID-19 Taskforce
International Division
Australian Government Department of Education, Skills and Employment
Mobile s 22
www.dese.gov.au

The Department of Education, Skills and Employment acknowledges the traditional owners and custodians of country throughout Australia and their continuing connection pay our respects to them and their cultures, and Elders past, present and emerging.

International Student Hardship Fund

As a class of short-term visitor visa holders, ~~Reasons for assistance~~

Students rely on income from part time and casual work

Although it is a well-established requirement of the student visa that international students have sufficient funds to support themselves whilst studying in Australia, it also provides international students with the ability to undertake part time and casual work. This is one of the attractive features of Australia's international education system. International students rely on part time and casual work to meet a range of their living costs after paying their fees.

Lack of other support options due to the COVID-19 outbreak

~~International students (visa subclass 500) who lost their job are not eligible for other financial support from the Commonwealth government and are not eligible for the recently announced including JobSeeker and JobKeeper payments. A condition of the student visa is that holder have sufficient funds to support themselves for one year. The government has announced that visa holders here for longer than a year may access their superannuation they have accumulated. Further, for certain industry sectors such as nursing and aged care, restriction of working to 40 hours per fortnight have been relaxed.~~

~~Nonetheless, due to changed global circumstances due to Their own personal circumstances, or that of their family, may have also changed because of the COVID-19 outbreak, some visa holders may be unable to access overseas family support due to economic shutdown overseas, unable to return their home country or leave Australia due to travel restrictions and limited flights, unable to work part-time in traditional student sector employment areas such hospitality, and have limited to no superannuation due to much of the employment in this sector not incurring payments. In short, due to the outbreak some international students are facing financial hardship. (we still need concrete evidence that some are. To date, it has only be supposition) meaning previously available support is no longer available.~~

Call for support from the sector, states and territories

There are increasing calls in the international education sector, and from state governments, to financially support international students facing financial hardship in response to the crisis created by the COVID-19 outbreak. Reasons for support relate to student financial vulnerability, public health protection, and from a reputation point of view to assist the sector to recover once the crisis passes. State and territory officials have also been discussing a possible support package.

Assistance already provided

In addition to the recent announcement allowing international students early access to their superannuation, states and territories are moving towards putting evictions on hold for six months providing students with relief from rent payments. A number of universities have established limited hardship funds to which students—both domestic and international—may apply for assistance. (Again, do we have any data on whether any students have availed themselves for these funds?) Further, some local communities, for example the Sydney Nepalese community, have similarly offered to support students facing hardship. ~~Consistent with their Education Services for Overseas Students Act 2000 (ESOS) obligations, the majority of education providers (especially universities) are providing a range of support options such as fee reductions and access to short term emergency funds.~~

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Commented [r 22]:

Commented [s 22]: ESOS Act does not require this. Also, important that we refer to fee deferrals not fee reductions. The providers can take either option but we do not want to set up a stakeholder expectation of a reduction.

PROPOSAL

An International Student Hardship Fund would be established and funded jointly by the Commonwealth, State and Territory Governments to provide temporary short-term emergency financial support to international students ~~who can show they are at risk of or experiencing significant financial hardship during the COVID-19 outbreak. This Fund will support all Australian Governments' actions to stop the spread of COVID-19 by supporting international students experiencing financial hardship and affected by a loss of work to comply with public health measures.~~ The Commonwealth ~~would match contribution by States and Territories to a maximum amount of \$XXm. contribution to the Fund (50 per cent) would be transferred to each state and territory for administration on a pro-rata basis.~~

Commented [s 22]: Too long of a bow.

Eligibility

International students (except those in the schools sector) who have been in Australia studying for more than twelve months on a student visa (subclass 561) would be eligible to apply for a lump-sum financial hardship support payment from the state or territory government where they reside where they can demonstrate:

Commented s 22 : Why are these excluded?

- Loss of income due to loss of work; and
- Financial hardship which could include the following factors:
 - o Inability to make rent or accommodation payments;
 - o Inability to make essential payments such as food, medical/health, utilities;
 - o Inability to access family or other financial support due to the extraordinary circumstances created by the COVID-19 pandemic; and
 - o Inability to repatriate to their country of origin.

s 47F

s 22 Why lump sum? Is this based on on going need and isn't the likelihood of abuse of giving a lump sum greater? s 47F

Commented s 22]: Good.

Evidence requirements

An international student will be required to make an application stating that they have lost their job and income, and are suffering financial hardship indicating their particular circumstances (taking into account factors mentioned above). Evidence of financial hardship and loss of work would be required and could include:

- Bank statements showing a drop in savings or loss of income (which could include family bank accounts);
- Separation certificate from their employer (if provided); and
- Evidence of bills or other payments they have been unable to or at risk of not making.

Evidence requirements should support a student's claim to be experiencing financial hardship and not place undue burdens or cost on either the student or their employer to prove hardship. Whilst extensive eligibility criteria, application processes and evidence requirements can ensure the validity of a payment it could also increase delivery costs and slow the delivery of assistance to the student undermining the intent of the fund to provide short-term assistance.

Commented [s 22]: States to cover delivery costs. And cumbersome element is inbuilt to show true financial need.

Application process

State and territory governments would be responsible for managing the application process. This could involve the relevant jurisdiction nominating a body (whether government or non-government) to:

Commented [s 22]: Do we want to set the agenda for this to go to the Study@ centres in each jurisdiction which already have student welfare offices. This is a tough call because these offices are mostly about marketing, but the idea that each state will do it differently is messy. The call for these funds is coming from these state offices, so it is worth having them responsible rather than passing the buck.

- Receive applications on an agreed application form consistent with agreed evidence requirements;
- Assess the application against agreed eligibility criteria as set out above; and
- Make payments to the student.

Funding mechanism

The International Student Hardship Fund would be equally funded between Commonwealth, State and Territory Governments on a pro-rata basis based on the student population in a jurisdiction. Any amount already provided to international students by education providers consistent with their *Education Services for Overseas Students Act 2000* obligations cannot be subtracted from the contribution of a state or territory government. Should a state or territory government have already provided hardship assistance they would be eligible to include this amount in their total contribution to the fund (no state or territory government has announced a financial hardship assistance fund to date).

Commented [§ 22]: If I'm reading this correctly it is proposing a central Cmwth fund that is then divided. I think it needs to be separate funds in each state and territory. Cmwth only hands over the funds and only after the states' put in their respective funding.

Options for transferring Commonwealth funds to the States and Territories

Based on established Federal Financial Relations processes there would need to be a new National Partnership Agreement between the Commonwealth, states and territories (whether together or individually) for the Commonwealth to transfer funds to the states.

Inter-governmental Agreement on Federal Financial Relations

The Commonwealth can transfer funds to States and Territories under the *Inter-governmental Agreement on Federal Financial Relations* (IGA FFR) through three types of agreements. Funds can be transferred through *National Agreements* and/or *National Specific Purpose Payments* (which agree indicators and roles and responsibilities of all governments in the delivery of services) or through *National Partnership Agreements* (NPA) on specific topics. A National Agreement or a National Specific Purpose Payment are not appropriate in this regard given they tend to deal with areas of shared service delivery and established for a longer period of time. NPAs are time limited and there are normally three types for different policy contexts:

- National Partnerships to support national reform objectives;
- Implementation Plans to support a National Partnership to allow jurisdictional differences in the delivery of national reform initiatives; or
- Project Agreements which are a simpler form of NPA for low value or low risk payments (which could be considered in this situation given it is time limited transfer to the states).

However, despite the clear requirement for an agreement with states and territories to transfer funds under the IGA FFR, Treasury has advised it would be possible to comply with these requirements through an exchange of letters between Commonwealth, state and territory ministers. The Prime Minister could take the proposal to the National Cabinet to expedite agreement with states and territories. An exchange of letters process was used during the Bushfires Crisis in early 2020 to expedite funding transfers in a crisis situation. The exchange of letters process needs to constitute an agreement under the IGA FFR but it offers a more straight forward and faster process that could be utilised in this situation.

Commonwealth would match contributions by states and territories

Individual states and territories could determine their level of support which would be matched by the Commonwealth up to a maximum contribution (see below). The Commonwealth could make an

initial offer of a maximum contribution amount that the states and territories could match on a pro-rata basis based on students residing in their jurisdiction. This initial offer could be based on a consistent payment amount (more details below).

Whilst agreeing consistent levels of funding between states and territories would ensure a more consistent and equal payment for students, negotiating such an outcome when each state and territory government has a different budget situation could be difficult to reach agreement and slow down the delivery of assistance to international students in a timely way.

A consistent payment amount could be set to allow students to meet day-to-day needs recognising the principle that international students are required to have sufficient means to support themselves. A range of options have been recommended by stakeholders. For example, CISA recommended extending the fortnightly Coronavirus Supplement (\$550) to international students for six months. **We recommend a payment equivalent to two thirds of the fortnightly rate of Youth Allowance (Independent Living) - \$460.20 - paid for three months as a lump sum with the option to review this level of assistance after three months. This would be the equivalent of a payment of \$1980 per student.** This has the benefit of a transparent calculation and an assumption that international students have access to funds to support themselves.

Costs

Assuming a level of payment consistent of \$1980 per student, the total cost of the Fund could be up to \$257.4 million and shared on a pro-rata basis based on international student population in each jurisdiction which signed up to the Fund. Assuming 50 per cent Commonwealth contribution the maximum cost for the Commonwealth could be up to \$128.7 million. This means the Commonwealth would support a payment of just under \$1000 per student. It is open to government to lower the cap if preferred which could be achieved by lowering the percentage share of the Youth Allowance (Independent Living) rate.

Key obstacles to the proposal

The key obstacle to driving the proposal forward is that there is no obvious source of funding to fund the Commonwealth's contribution to the Fund. This would require an additional call on the Commonwealth budget.

A further obstacle could be reaching agreement on the detail of the Fund and its administration with states and territories. Although this may not be as strong as would ordinarily be expected given a push by state and territory officials for the establishment of a support package for international students, there still could be resistance around the contribution amount and their administration of the system.

Notes on costs

- Only International Students (those on a student visa subclass 561) would be eligible to apply for support.
- There are up to 561,154 post-secondary international students in Australia (including first years).
- Based on previous years' commencement data we assume that new commencements as a proportion of total enrolments is around one third at the March census date. Applying this assumption there could be up to an estimated 168,346 first year students who would not be eligible to receive a payment as they are deemed to have sufficient funds to support themselves in the short term consistent with their visa conditions.

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Commented [s 22]: I like this, but worth a conversation on the amount. There are three basic costs for a student: 1. Accommodation, 2. Living expenses, and 3. Tuition. This fund only should assist with 2 as Accommodation is being dealt with in the general COVID response and providers should wear Tuition deferrals. Focusing on Living Expenses, what is the statutory amount? Is it 2/3 of \$550?

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Commented [s 22]: I agree with the maths here, but one of the key elements of this proposal is it is _need basis_. Thus, the calculation is not on the number of international students in Australia, it is the number of international students who can show financial hardship. I have no idea what that percentage is, but we might work with the sector to see if we can get a sense of one provider and then extrapolate out.

- According to the 2018 International Student Census, 44 per cent of international students indicated they work to support themselves whilst studying in Australia.
- We assume the majority of international students work in sectors most affected by the COVID-19 outbreak and estimate that 75 per cent of those students have lost their job.
- On this basis we have assumed up to 130,000 students could be eligible for a payment.
- States and territories would be responsible for delivery of the payment including any costs for receiving and assessing applications and making the cost to the student (whether delivered in-house by government or contracted out to an NGO).

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Commented [s 22]: Are these fair assumptions? For example, aged care, nursing assistance, cleaners, are all dominated by international student workers and these sectors have not seen job losses, but actual worker need. I think we need to investigate this a bit more. There is some research in this area as to what jobs international students were doing before the Covid hit.

s 47F

From: SANDERCOCK, Karen
Sent: Sunday, 5 April 2020 7:28 PM
To: s 22
Subject: RE: Draft proposal for International Student Hardship Fund [SEC=OFFICIAL:Sensitive]

OFFICIAL: Sensitive

Thanks s 22 , I think that looks good based on what we know so far. Happy for you to send on to s 22 . K

From: s 22
Sent: Sunday, 5 April 2020 6:58 PM
To: SANDERCOCK, Karen s 47F >
Subject: FW: Draft proposal for International Student Hardship Fund [SEC=OFFICIAL:Sensitive]

OFFICIAL: Sensitive

Hi Karen
 I have gone through s 22 comments and accepted his changes, clarified others and highlighted where we will need more data/research.
 Most of what he wanted was simple to accept/change. I did some research on the payment rate as per his comments and found DHA data (based on CPI) about expected budget for living as opposed to fees and accommodation costs. Its double what we suggested as the payment amount. Its obvious his assumptions are that there will be few students in the requiring assistance category. Will need to look into that tomorrow.
 Let me know if you think it is ok to go back to s 22 or if you want to send on.
 Thanks 😊
 s 22

From: s 22
Sent: Sunday, 5 April 2020 3:33 PM
To: s 22
Cc: HEFEREN, Rob s 47F >; SANDERCOCK, Karen <s 47F
Subject: RE: Draft proposal for International Student Hardship Fund [SEC=OFFICIAL:Sensitive]

OFFICIAL: Sensitive

Thank you, s 22 . A fantastic first draft in challenging circumstances much appreciated.

I attach some comments I had in my first read. I was making comments as I read so some of my questions are answered by later sections of the paper. For the moment, take this as feedback and if it is easy to incorporate do so, but if it is redundant or changes things radically hold off on incorporating it yet.

Rob,

I'll call you in a moment on this.

Thanks.
 s 22

Office of the Hon Dan Tehan MP
 Minister for Education
 Parliament House Canberra ACT 2600 Australia
 M +s 22 E s 22

From: s 22
Sent: Sunday, 5 April 2020 2:01 PM
To: s 22
Cc: HEFEREN,Rob <s 47F >; SANDERCOCK,Karen s 47F
Subject: Draft proposal for International Student Hardship Fund [SEC=OFFICIAL:Sensitive]

OFFICIAL: Sensitive

s 22

As flagged by Rob, please find attached a draft proposal for establishing an International Student Hardship Fund. In addition to outlining key features of how the fund could work, possible eligibility criteria and costs, it provides details on the funding mechanism for how the Commonwealth could transfer funds to states and territories.

We are happy to clarify anything in the paper.

Regards
s 22

s 47F
COVID-19 Taskforce
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The Department of Education, Skills and Employment acknowledges the traditional owners and custodians of country throughout Australia and their continuing connection pay our respects to them and their cultures, and Elders past, present and emerging.

International Student Hardship Support Funds

As a class of short-term visitor visa holders, international students (visa subclass 500) are not eligible for financial support from the Commonwealth government including JobSeeker and JobKeeper payments. A condition of the student visa is that holder have sufficient funds to support themselves for one year. The government has announced that visa holders here for longer than a year may access their superannuation they have accumulated. Further, for certain industry sectors such as nursing and aged care, restriction of working to 40 hours per fortnight have been relaxed.

Nonetheless, due to changed global circumstances due to COVID-19 outbreak, some visa holders may be unable to access overseas family support due to economic shutdown overseas, unable to return their home country or leave Australia due to travel restrictions and limited flights, unable to work part-time in traditional student sector employment areas such hospitality, and have limited to no superannuation due to much of the employment in this sector not incurring payments. In short, due to the outbreak some international students are facing financial hardship ~~(we still need concrete evidence that some are. To date, it has only be supposition).~~

Call for support from the sector, states and territories

There are increasing calls in the international education sector, and from state governments, to financially support international students facing financial hardship in response to the crisis created by the COVID-19 outbreak. Reasons for support relate to student financial vulnerability, public health protection, and from a reputation point of view to assist the sector to recover once the crisis passes. State and territory officials have also been discussing a possible support package.

Assistance already provided

In addition to the recent announcement allowing international students early access to their superannuation, states and territories are moving towards putting evictions on hold for six months providing students with relief from rent payments. A number of universities have established limited hardship funds to which students—both domestic and international—may apply for assistance. ~~(Again, do we have any data on whether any students have availed themselves for these funds?)~~ Further, some local communities, for example the Sydney Nepalese community, have similarly offered to support students facing hardship.

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PROPOSAL

~~An~~ International Student Hardship Support Funds in each state and territory would be established and funded jointly by the Commonwealth, State and Territory Governments to provide temporary short-term emergency financial support to international students who can show they are experiencing significant financial hardship during the COVID-19 outbreak. ~~The Commonwealth will provide match contribution by States and Territories to a maximum amount of \$128.7 million up to \$5 million in unallocated funds from the Enhancing Growth Initiative (EGI) and~~

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Eligibility

s 47F

International students (except those in the schools sector ~~given these students are unlikely to be affected by loss of work due to COVID-19~~) who have been in Australia studying for ~~more than twelve months~~ on a student visa (subclass 500~~64~~) would be eligible to apply for financial support a fortnightly lump sum financial hardship support payment from the state or territory government where they reside where they can demonstrate:

s 22 Why lump sum? Is this based on on going need and isn't the likelihood of abuse of giving a lump sum greater? s 47F

- Loss of income due to loss of work; and
- Financial hardship which could include the following factors:
 - Inability to make rent or accommodation payments;
 - Inability to make essential payments such as food, medical/health, utilities;
 - Inability to access family or other financial support due to the extraordinary circumstances created by the COVID-19 pandemic; and
 - Inability to repatriate to their country of origin.

Evidence requirements

An international student will be required to make an application stating that they have lost their job and income, and are suffering financial hardship indicating their particular circumstances (taking into account factors mentioned above). Evidence of financial hardship and loss of work would be required and could include:

- Bank statements showing a drop in savings or loss of income (which could include family bank accounts);
- Separation certificate from their employer (if provided); and
- Evidence of bills or other payments they have been unable to or at risk of not making.

Evidence requirements should support a student's claim to be experiencing financial hardship and not place undue burdens or cost on either the student or their employer to prove hardship. ~~Whilst extensive eligibility criteria, application processes and evidence requirements can ensure the validity of a payment it could also increase delivery costs and slow the delivery of assistance to the student undermining the intent of the fund to provide short term assistance.~~

Commented s 22 : States to cover delivery costs. And cumbersome element is inbuilt to show true financial need.

Application process

State and territory governments would be responsible for managing the application process. This could involve the relevant jurisdiction nominating a body, ~~(whether government like the respective Study@ centre in the jurisdiction or non-government) organisation to:~~

- Receive applications on an agreed application form consistent with agreed evidence requirements;
- Assess the application against agreed eligibility criteria as set out above; and
- Make payments to the student.

s 22

Commented Do we want to set the agenda for this to go to the Study@ centres in each jurisdiction which already have student welfare offices. This is a tough call because these offices are mostly about marketing, but the idea that each state will do it differently is messy. The call for these funds is coming from these state offices, so it is worth having them responsible rather than passing the buck.

Funding mechanism

The International Student Hardship Funds would be established in each jurisdiction and equally funded between Commonwealth, State and Territory Governments on a pro-rata basis based on the student population in a jurisdiction. Any amount already provided to international students by education providers ~~consistent with their Education Services for Overseas Students Act 2000 obligations~~ cannot be subtracted from the contribution of a state or territory government. Should a state or territory government have already provided hardship assistance they would be eligible to include this amount in their total contribution to the fund (no state or territory government has announced a financial hardship assistance fund to date).

Commented s 22 : I have clarified that a fund would be established in each jurisdiction. The Cth would transfer its contribution for the particular jurisdiction to the state government which would then administer the payments.

Commented s 22: If I'm reading this correctly it is proposing a central Cmwth fund that is then divided. I think it needs to be separate funds in each state and territory. Cmwth only hands over the funds and only after the states' put in their respective funding.

Options for transferring Commonwealth funds to the States and Territories

Based on established Federal Financial Relations processes there would need to be a new National Partnership Agreement between the Commonwealth, states and territories (whether together or individually) for the Commonwealth to transfer funds to the states.

Inter-governmental Agreement on Federal Financial Relations

The Commonwealth can transfer funds to States and Territories under the *Inter-governmental Agreement on Federal Financial Relations* (IGA FFR) through three types of agreements. Funds can be transferred through *National Agreements* and/or *National Specific Purpose Payments* (which agree indicators and roles and responsibilities of all governments in the delivery of services) or through *National Partnership Agreements* (NPA) on specific topics. A National Agreement or a National Specific Purpose Payment are not appropriate in this regard given they tend to deal with areas of shared service delivery and established for a longer period of time. NPAs are time limited and there are normally three types for different policy contexts:

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- Project Agreements which are a simpler form of NPA for low value or low risk payments (which could be considered in this situation given it is time limited transfer to the states).

However, despite the clear requirement for an agreement with states and territories to transfer funds under the IGA FFR, Treasury has advised it would be possible to comply with these requirements through an exchange of letters between Commonwealth, state and territory ministers. The Prime Minister could take the proposal to the National Cabinet to expedite agreement with states and territories. An exchange of letters process was used during the Bushfires Crisis in early 2020 to expedite funding transfers in a crisis situation. The exchange of letters process needs to constitute an agreement under the IGA FFR but it offers a more straight forward and faster process that could be utilised in this situation.

Commonwealth would match contributions by states and territories

Individual states and territories could determine their level of support which would be matched by the Commonwealth up to a maximum contribution (see below). The Commonwealth could make an initial offer of a maximum contribution amount that the states and territories could match on a pro-rata basis based on students residing in their jurisdiction. This initial offer could be based on a consistent payment amount (more details below).

Whilst agreeing consistent levels of funding between states and territories would ensure a more consistent and equal payment for students, negotiating such an outcome when each state and territory government has a different budget situation could be difficult to reach agreement and slow down the delivery of assistance to international students in a timely way.

A consistent payment amount could be set to allow students to meet day-to-day needs recognising the principle that international students are required to have sufficient means to support themselves. A range of options have been recommended by stakeholders. For example, CISA recommended extending the fortnightly Coronavirus Supplement (\$550) to international students for six months. We recommend a payment equivalent to two thirds of the fortnightly rate of Youth Allowance (Independent Living) – (which is currently \$460.20 per fortnight) – paid for three months as a lump sum with the option to review this level of assistance after three months. This would be

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Commented [s 22] I like this, but worth a conversation on the amount. There are three basic costs for a student: 1. Accommodation, 2. Living expenses, and 3. Tuition. This fund only should assist with 2 as Accommodation is being dealt with in the general COVID response and providers should wear Tuition deferrals. Focusing on Living Expenses, what is the statutory amount? Is it 2/3 of \$550?

Commented [s 22]: The Department of Home Affairs has a suggested amount of money required for living costs (separate to fees and accommodation) for the purposes of visa application of \$21,000 a year. This equates to around \$807.70 a fortnight. I suggested Youth Allowance (Independent Living) as it would be similar to income support available to Australian students studying at university. It is reduced to two-thirds in recognition of expectation that international students have sufficient funds to support themselves.

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the equivalent of a payment of \$1980 per student. This has the benefit of a transparent calculation and an assumption that international students have access to funds to support themselves.

Costs

Assuming a level of payment consistent of \$1980 per student, the total cost of the Fund could be up to \$257.4 million and shared on a pro-rata basis based on international student population in each jurisdiction which signed up to the Fund. Assuming 50 per cent Commonwealth contribution the maximum cost for the Commonwealth could be up to \$128.7 million. This means the Commonwealth would support a payment of just under \$1000 per student. It is open to government to lower the cap if preferred which could be achieved by lowering the percentage share of the Youth Allowance (Independent Living) rate.

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Commented [§ 22]: We can revisit the assumptions I set out below and see if we can get better data.

Key obstacles to the proposal

The key obstacle to driving the proposal forward is that there is no obvious source of funding to fund the Commonwealth's contribution to the Fund. This would require an additional call on the Commonwealth budget.

A further obstacle could be reaching agreement on the detail of the Fund and its administration with states and territories. Although this may not be as strong as would ordinarily be expected given a push by state and territory officials for the establishment of a support package for international students, there still could be resistance around the contribution amount and their administration of the system.

Notes on costs

- Only International Students (those on a student visa subclass 50061) would be eligible to apply for support.
- There are up to 561,154 post-secondary international students in Australia (including first years).
- Based on previous years' commencement data we assume that new commencements as a proportion of total enrolments is around one third at the March census date. Applying this assumption there could be up to an estimated 168,346 first year students who would not be eligible to receive a payment as they are deemed to have sufficient funds to support themselves in the short term consistent with their visa conditions.
- According to the 2018 International Student Census 44 per cent of international students indicated they work to support themselves whilst studying in Australia.
- We assume the majority of international students work in sectors most affected by the COVID-19 outbreak and estimate that 75 per cent of those students have lost their job.
- On this basis we have assumed up to 130,000 students could be eligible for a payment.
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s 47F

Commented [§ 22]: We will see what data and research is available to update these assumptions.

From: s 22
To:
Subject: FW: Partnership approach to student welfare – access to Commonwealth \$1billion fund for student welfare [DLM=Sensitive]
Date: Monday, 6 April 2020 9:33:57 AM
Attachments: [image001.jpg](#)
[image002.jpg](#)
[image003.jpg](#)
[image004.jpg](#)
[image005.jpg](#)
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[image019.jpg](#)
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Sensitive

From: SANDERCOCK,Karen <s 47F >
Sent: Saturday, 4 April 2020 12:33 PM
To: s 22
Cc: HARTIGAN,Brooke <s 47F >
Subject: RE: Partnership approach to student welfare – access to Commonwealth \$1billion fund for student welfare [DLM=Sensitive]

Sensitive

Thanks s 22 , this looks broadly right. Comments below. K

From: s 22
Sent: Saturday, 4 April 2020 12:27 PM
To: SANDERCOCK,Karen s 47F >
Cc: HARTIGAN,Brooke s 47F
Subject: RE: Partnership approach to student welfare – access to Commonwealth \$1billion fund for student welfare [SEC=UNOFFICIAL] [DLM=Sensitive]

Sensitive

OK, no worries re s 22 paper I will assume it is broadly consistent with the views below and the CSTIETF paper.

In my mind the elements for the short paper are:

1. Eligibility for support
 - a. Criteria which demonstrate financial hardship **yes**
 - b. Evidence requirements for proving financial hardship **yes**
2. Application process
 - a. Managed by S & Ts with agreed guidelines and criteria (as above) **yes**
 - b. Quantum of funding for individual students: 2 options:
 - i. Agreed set amount for six months (maybe as a lump sum easier than

- instalments)
- ii. Amount set by S & Ts **yes, with AG not to specify student amount**
3. Funding mechanism
 - a. Commonwealth transfer to states under IGA FFR matching agreed funding from the states or some other specific purpose payment **[to check with TSY] yes**
 - i. Question whether an NPA or some other agreement is required between all states or bilaterally?
 - ii. Question whether there is a simpler mechanism of a transfer between Cth and individual states without protracted NPA or other agreement negotiations? **this would be better than a separate fund being established with rules needing to be agreed by all parties – this would be complex and very slow** **agreed**
 - b. Commonwealth would match amount nominated by the individual states
 - i. Leads to inconsistency but Cth or States could agree a consistent level of support – question about timeliness in getting support to students **complex and slow if we have to agree**
 - c. Ability for states to subtract any hardship payments made directly to students already BUT neither Cth nor S & Ts cannot subtract support from providers – welfare rationale for not interrupting relationship between provider and student
 - i. Argument that state/cth fund is about filling gaps for all students experiencing hardship and not about duplicating or replacing role of provider in maintaining student welfare. **yes**

Am working this up into a paper now.

s 22

From: SANDERCOCK, Karen <s 47F >
Sent: Saturday, 4 April 2020 12:02 PM
To: s 22
Cc: HARTIGAN, Brooke <s 47F
Subject: FW: Partnership approach to student welfare – access to Commonwealth \$1billion fund for student welfare [SEC=UNOFFICIAL]

s 22, as yet I can't find the proposal from s 22 though I'm sure I've seen it.

Forwarding the below trail re S and T views, in case anything is useful re the payment mechanism. s 22 has confirmed the thing the Minister is most focussed on is the how, of a payment, and to ensure S and T delivery re limited AG capacity to roll out a grants mechanism at present.

K

From: POWER, Travis s 47F
Sent: Thursday, 2 April 2020 4:11 PM
To: SANDERCOCK, Karen <s 47F >; ATKINS, David s 47F
Subject: FW: Partnership approach to student welfare – access to Commonwealth \$1billion fund for student welfare [SEC=UNOFFICIAL]

For info – the CSTIETF discussion is running still. See below the proposal for a meeting tomorrow to include s 47F

Grateful for views – I can't see how a CSTIETF is going to be helpful, but perhaps a call to s 22 might be in order to cool enthusiasm a bit? But I don't really know where the other discussions are upto internally, so I need a bit of a steer on handling.

TP

Travis Power

Assistant Secretary

Partnerships Branch | International Division

Australian Government Department of Education, Skills and Employment

Phone s 47F | Mobile s 47F

From: s 22

Sent: Thursday, 2 April 2020 4:01 PM

To: POWER, Travis s 47F

Cc: s 22

Subject: FW: Partnership approach to student welfare – access to Commonwealth \$1billion fund for student welfare [SEC=UNOFFICIAL]

Travis, what do you think about another CSTIETF tomorrow, as per the email trail.

s 22

From: s 22

Sent: Thursday, 2 April 2020 3:57 PM

To: s 22

s 22

Cc: s 22
s 22

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; WELSH, Karen s 47F

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s 22

Subject: RE: Partnership approach to student welfare – access to Commonwealth \$1billion fund for student welfare [SEC=UNOFFICIAL]

Thanks s 22

Team, can I suggest we have another CSTIETF meeting tomorrow to discuss this? We can be the vehicle that can drive this.

May I also suggest that in this meeting we include s 22 who is doing a very quick snapshot for us on the level of students being impacted and s 22 from DFAT who is the head of the COVID-19 taskforce.

I think we organise an hour as soon as we can. I will get onto putting something in the diary.

Stand by.

s 22

Study Queensland, Trade and Investment Queensland

E: s 22

P:

M

W: studyqueensland.qld.gov.au

From: s 22

Sent: Thursday, 2 April 2020 12:50 PM

To: s 22

s 22

Cc: s 22

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Subject: RE: Partnership approach to student welfare – access to Commonwealth \$1billion fund for student welfare [SEC=UNOFFICIAL]

UNOFFICIAL

Hi All

Thanks very much for your engagement and input to the attached draft proposal for a national approach to supporting international student welfare.

As always, we see our role as that of convenor, especially when it comes to shaping united approaches that will help build and maintain our reputation. We are also heartened to see that this issue was put on the national agenda through the CSTIETF via the extraordinary meeting called by s 22 as chair of the CSTIETF. We have spoken to s 22 and she has confirmed she will continue to take this through the CSTIETF process. We are also happy to introduce s 22, from DESE who has returned from posting and is leading DESE's work on this issue.

Our call to action is this; please review the attached and return to us with any revisions, comments etc. via tracked changes. We will continue our coordinating role with a view to finalising this proposal ahead of our regular Friday weekly wrap. We recommend that the proposal is then submitted via the CSTIETF and that it is also briefed up to the executive within your jurisdictions. As you know the \$1 billion fund has been designed to support impacted sectors, regions and communities. It's key that you are looped into your jurisdictions processes for putting forward concepts for the most need.

But what we can do right now - whilst we work through any other broader solutions?

Our first operating principle is for us to gather and amplify information about state and territory responses and seek to protect our reputation as we move through these challenging times and whilst policy agencies work through options and solutions. So can we do the following –

1. We know each of you are working on how to package up current solutions - the recent example from Study NSW shows how quickly you are all moving. <https://www.study.sydney/news-and-stories/news/covid-19-international-student-welfare-support>. Please send through to the web team any new links that we can include for your jurisdiction (studyinaustralia@austrade.gov.au)
2. To save further repetition we will create a page on the student facing link and the resources-hub at SIA - to make that directly available. We will also task PN to create a short campaign CTA focused on student support and welfare overall and linking back to your states and under the banner of #InThisTogether
3. Given the interests from agents in our first webinar this week, we may wish to do a follow up to focus on student welfare and support, in mid-April

There are still a number of elements to be further enhanced in the concept – we will continue to record and reflect those - so please send through any other comments and or additions me by COB Friday 3 April.

Thanks

s 22

Australian Trade and Investment Commission (Austrade)
s 22

| www.austrade.gov.au

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From: s 22

Sent: Thursday, April 2, 2020 11:02 AM

To: s 22

s 22

Cc: s 22

s 22

s 47F

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s 22

Subject: RE: Partnership approach to student welfare – access to Commonwealth \$1billion fund for student welfare

Hi All,

We are currently working on a State based response to supporting students most likely via community groups. However as with everyone below, we are really keen to support a national approach with a tangible benefit for students, as media coverage and student action online is starting to really highlight the void here at the moment.

Once the approach and ask has been identified, we are ready to support as quickly as needed with any actions required.

Kind Regards,

s 22

s 22

[Level 1, 26 Franklin Street, Adelaide SA 5000 Australia](#)
[GPO Box 2814, Adelaide SA 5001](#)
[studyadelaide.com](#)

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From: s 22
Sent: Thursday, 2 April 2020 11:22 AM
To: s 22

s 22

Cc: s 22
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s 22 ; s 47E
s 47E >: s 22
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Subject: Re: Partnership approach to student welfare – access to Commonwealth \$1billion fund for student welfare

Good morning all

We would definitely support a nationally coordinated and consistent approach to international student welfare – in terms of both lobbying/advocacy and the establishment of national responses.

A bid against the \$1 billion relief fund would appear a good option (once we've established we would not be banging on a locked door) but what are we bidding for exactly?

There are plenty of great ideas and suggestions below. What happens next? Are s 22 and s 22 going to try to distil the suggestions into the 'agreed position from all states and territories would maximise our chances of securing some of that funding' that s 22 called for about 3 metres below?

For my part, I would favour a national stimulus package for the whole sector, with dedicated resources for student welfare, in recognition of the sector's value to the national economy and to global relations. And our moral obligations to our students. But StudyPerth will support the consensus view, when it emerges.

All the best

s 22

s 22

A: Level 5, 28 The Esplanade, Perth WA 6000

W: studyp Perth.com.au

s 22

From: s 22

Date: Thursday, 2 April 2020 at 7:58 am

To: s 22

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Cc: s 22

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Subject: RE: Partnership approach to student welfare – access to Commonwealth \$1billion fund for student welfare

Dear all,

Thanks s 22 and s 22 for raising some very pertinent points.

We are keen to support any nationally coordinated approach to ensuring international students are supported through this crisis. While understanding the challenges ahead, we are equally concerned at the lack of any national-level announcements and material aid supporting impacted students. In terms of reputational benefit and to avoid any sensitivities, it may be better to keep any national approach international student centric rather than channelled through the sector.

It is heartening to hear the various ways each S&T are also working to correct the gap, and are, from a global reputation perspective, keen to work with each other to ensure we have strong measures in place, and to amplify this loud and clear to the students and sector.

In Victoria, we are ramping up our support (material and non-material), as well as increasing our communication of the support in place. We are currently oversubscribed with the care packages that were announced weeks back and adapting with the changing and more acute needs of students.. Within our available resources and building on existing supports through the Study Melbourne Student Centre, we are focused on ensuring the most vulnerable of our international students can be looked after. We are looking at options to assist students with emergency food and shelter through partnerships at a state level if they have a critical need (such as emergency relief packages for vulnerable Victorians in self isolation), as well as continuing our provision of mental health services and accommodation/employment legal services. Mental health, accommodation issues and financial hardship are emerging issues and a gap that require an immediate response. In particular, we have identified students in sublets and over-crowded accommodation who may not have security under tenancy acts.

The Victorian Government has also announced the [Working for Victoria Fund](#) to help workers who have lost their jobs find new short term or casual roles. International students can register their interest to participate.

Looking forward to our work together to ensure that international students aren't marginalised in our solutions, and otherwise adversely impacted.

Regards,

s 22

| International Education | Global Victoria

Department of Jobs, Precincts and Regions

Level 33, 121 Exhibition Street, Melbourne, Victoria Australia 3000

M: s 22

s 22

studymelbourne.vic.gov.au

[Facebook](#) | [Instagram](#) | [Twitter](#) | [LinkedIn](#) | [YouTube](#) | [WeChat](#)

From: s 22

Sent: Tuesday, 31 March 2020 6:58 PM

To: s 22

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Cc: s 22

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From: s 22

Sent: Tuesday, 31 March 2020 11:50 AM

To: s 22

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Cc: s 22

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Subject: RE: Partnership approach to student welfare – access to Commonwealth \$1billion fund for student welfare

I agree with the suggestions below and would add the following to consider.

Each of these students is attached to a cricos registered provider, which can be monitored through the existing PRISMS student management system and other systems. In order to support the students in the best possible way and have an intact industry on the other side of this pandemic we propose the following:

For every student who has a current status of “studying” in PRISMS or another system, the government provide \$150 per week per student to each institution.

With these funds, the institution will support students, keep all staff employed, pay their rents, transition students to on-line learning (and back again) This will be instead of all other government programs currently on offer for the pandemic mitigation.

Additional payments to students could also go through institutions, to keep students connected to their institutions and let the students and providers manage the support services. The scale of what we're talking about is unmanageable and providers already have ways and means of supporting students.

On the Gold Coast, we have two service providers primed to offer short term emergency food and a roof over their head. Funding this support will be the challenge and any proactive outcome would be appreciated.

Kind regards

s 22

Australia's Favourite Classroom – with three year post-study work rights
43 Nerang Street, Southport QLD 4215 | PO Box 3475, Australia Fair QLD 4215

P: s 22 | **M:** s 22

E: s 22

studygoldcoast.org.au

cid:image019.jpg@01D60A79.4471AF30

From: s 22

Sent: Tuesday, 31 March 2020 10:10 AM

To: s 22

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Cc: s 22

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Subject: RE: Partnership approach to student welfare – access to Commonwealth \$1billion fund for student welfare

I am very keen on this as well.

One thing – perhaps the Federal Government could consider some pro-rata payments to states and territories to distribute in this fashion as best they see fit. One suggestion – save it being a welfare payment but rather a stimulus package to the sector which has built business models around the IET student fees.

I haven't circled back on key messages but essentially it is as follows:

- International students make up one in 50 people in Australia and are an important part of our social fabric in communities and regions.
- Last year, there were more than 600,000 international students spread across the nation, contributing to our classrooms, workforce and communities.
- Our universities – which fund research, build innovation, deliver community spaces, support regional arts and sporting events, and contribute extensively to productivity and local employment – are at risk of closure if the welfare of international students is not considered.
- Welfare support is better maintained when colleges and universities (and the supportive eco-system) remains open and functional (albeit delivered slightly differently under the circumstances) and students remained enrolled.
- The reputational risk to Australia is considerable and will impact more than IET – to include trade and investment – if we do not provide some consideration of support the 500, 000 students who are here, and cannot get home, and are unlikely to be able to do so for the next six months.
- This could escalate into a severe public health humanitarian issue if students drop out of colleges and universities (by choice, or college closes) and are forced to find crisis accommodation and aren't enrolled and have that extra layer of support.
- To assist in keeping our schools open and therefore supporting the deep-rooted sector which caters for more than international students, we need to consider assistance to international students.
- This is not a financial crisis contained to Australia – and therefore this cohort of people, who chose to call this country their second home during more prosperous days, deserve some consideration as we all are impacted by the spread (and mitigation measures) of COVID-19.

We can build off these and it would be great if we have some data to back them up?

Also as discussed we were going to try and do some modelling on the students and the type of impact.

Severely impacted: Latin American/European students in shared accommodation on student and tourist visas studying short term course and relying on work to pay for fees.

Moderately impacted:

s 22

Study Queensland, Trade and Investment Queensland

E: s 22

P:

M

W: studyqueensland.qld.gov.au

-

From: s 22

Sent: Tuesday, 31 March 2020 7:48 AM

To: s 22

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Cc: s 22

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Subject: RE: Partnership approach to student welfare – access to Commonwealth \$1billion fund for

student welfare

Hi All

Just further to this, I'm speaking with s 22 of s 22 just acquired by s 22 – they are open to helping. While the changes in the tenancy laws will help, we know from our international legal service that students are being evicted illegally here and I'm sure elsewhere. Many of the PBSA providers have capacity. If we all contributed \$ from C'wth States and Territories and then we could offer a crisis accommodation service for students at risk to get them through this period. Rather than just work on a scheme here in NSW let's see if we can work with them to set this up nationally. Other providers I'm sure would also be keen. It's also good for their brands in the long term to be helping with the most basic of human rights.

If we are keen I can progress discussions with the PBSA sector through my SAA hat.

Happy to get people's thoughts on this.

Cheers

s 22

From: s 22

Sent: Monday, 30 March 2020 9:51 PM

To: s 22

Cc: s 22

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Subject: Partnership approach to student welfare – access to Commonwealth \$1billion fund for student welfare

Dear s 22

Heartfelt thanks to you and the team for continuing to drive the national response. The student welfare discussion paper is a valuable document documenting the most pressing challenges students are facing and potential solutions.

Partnership approach to student welfare – access to Commonwealth \$1billion fund for student welfare

As s 22 mentioned today, we are keen to support as much as possible, a nationally coordinated and consistent approach to supporting the international education sector, in particular student welfare. The \$1 billion relief fund for Australian tourism, education and agriculture announced in the PM's first stimulus package appears to be a great way to achieve this. We share your view that an agreed position from all states and territories would maximise our chances of securing some of that funding.

With that in mind, we suggest that the proposed IE sector 'bid' for the Commonwealth focus on international student welfare, specifically food and shelter.

- Food and shelter are the most essential and pressing needs identified in the discussion paper. We've all seen how fast the situation has deteriorated for our vulnerable students. Food and a roof over their head are first in line in Maslow's Pyramid. From a reputational perspective, we will forever be judged on how we respond to students' needs in this time of crisis.
- This imperative is common to all jurisdictions. It's fantastic that some jurisdictions already have measures in place which can help students with this (congrats s 22 and the NT on your worker and wellbeing fund). But the risk of leaving it to states and territories to respond separately will lead to an inconsistent approach across the country. Internationally, we will all be tarred by the same brush if we leave students behind in parts of the country.
- The issue has not yet been addressed by the Commonwealth. The country's largest services export remains a bit of a blind spot for the Commonwealth COVID-19 funding response. Action in this space would demonstrate support in way that cuts across all education sectors by focussing on student needs, in line with the National Strategy's objective of delivering the best possible student experience. As a country, we have benefited economically from the sector's strong growth, we now have a chance to fulfil our duty of care to students who are stranded with nowhere else to go and whose families back home may also have lost the means to help them.
- A nationally consistent approach should be achievable by partnering with national-level service providers. There are organisations with a national or quasi-national footprint the Government could work with to help students access food and shelter (e.g. Foodbank, Red Cross, hotel chains and even large Purpose Built Student Accommodation providers like Scape/Urbanest/Iglu/CLV/UniLodge in SA/QLD/NSW/VIC/ACT/WA). I appreciate the Commonwealth is keen to avoid creating new and/or complicated ways to deliver funding so we could negotiate this with partners (e.g. use assumptions/modelling to estimate the numbers of students who might need the help and make a one-off payment to an organisation like FoodBank

to administer delivery of food hampers to individuals who register for the service).

- As discussed today, we don't need to badge the support as directed at international students...it can simply be a measure to help those hardest hit by the situation so they don't fall through the cracks (including other temporary migrants).
- The measure would complement existing announcements that support providers to keep their doors open and employers paying wages.

We are speaking to potential service providers about the need and would be glad to share feedback from these discussions with Austrade and others if there is consensus to progress this idea.

Appreciate this is but one of many issues we are dealing with concurrently but what a strong message of support we could send to all our students and to the world if we can all agree nationally on a shared, tangible approach to student welfare.

Thanks
s 22



s 22
, Study NSW
Trade, Tourism, Investment & Precincts
52 Martin Place, Sydney (enter via 127 Phillip Street)
GPO Box 5469, Sydney NSW 2001
p: +s 22
w: www.study.sydney | www.invest.nsw.gov.au

From: s 22
Sent: Monday, 30 March 2020 10:39 AM
To: s 22
s 22

On Behalf Of s 22

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Cc: s 22
s 22

Subject: For your review please: Supporting international student welfare key messages and resources document [SEC=OFFICIAL]

OFFICIAL

Dear All

Further to End of Week update WebEx meeting – we ask that you review the attached document and provide feedback to s 22 by 2pm today.

s 22 will then collate the information in readiness for the WebEx meeting at 4.30pm AEDT today

Kind regards

s 22

Partnerships, Marketing & Comms and International Education
Australian Trade and Investment Commission (Austrade)

Level 16, 307 Queen Street, Brisbane, QLD 4000, Australia

T s 22 | M s 22

s 22 | www.austrade.gov.au

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s 22

From: MARTIN,Rajan
Sent: Tuesdav. 7 April 2020 1:31 PM
To: s 22
Cc: s 22
Subject: RE: HEPPP [SEC=OFFICIAL]

Hi s 22

Happy to chat. Dom flagged this this morning and I've spoken to s 22 whose team looks after HEPPP policy in my Branch. I think it may be challenging given the current focus of HEPPP being on low SES domestic students but I've asked s 22 to see what could be done and come up with some possible options.

I'm scheduled to catch up with Dom at 3:30 and will discuss this amongst other things. Happy to talk afterwards.

Cheers

Rajan Martin
 Assistant Secretary
 Governance, Quality and Access Branch
 Phone s 47F
 Mobile s 47F
 s 47F

EA: s 22

From: s 22
Sent: Tuesday, 7 April 2020 12:05 PM
To: MARTIN,Rajan s 47F
Subject: HEPPP [SEC=OFFICIAL]

OFFICIAL

Hi Raj

My name is s 22 s 47F
 s 47F . I am working in the Department's COVID-19 Response Taskforce.

Rob Hefren and Dom English recommended I get in touch with you to have a chat about a piece of work I am doing for the MO to pull together a proposed package of supports or assistance for international students experiencing financial hardship during this outbreak of COVID-19. I had worked up an option of sharing costs with the states of an international students hardship fund but now the Office is interested in other ideas as well.

During the Exec meeting with Rob this morning, Dom mentioned that HEPPP might be an option and that it was worth having a discussion with you.

Would you have some time for a quick chat about some of the issues we are considering and whether HEPPP provides an option?

Thanks
 s 22

COVID-19 Response Taskforce
International Division
Australian Government Department of Education, Skills and Employment
Phone s 22 | Mobile s 22
www.dese.gov.au

The Department of Education, Skills and Employment acknowledges the traditional owners and custodians of country throughout Australia and their continuing connection pay our respects to them and their cultures, and Elders past, present and emerging.

s 22

From: POWER, Travis
Sent: Wednesday, 8 April 2020 3:06 PM
To: s 22 ATKINS, David; WELSH, Karen
Cc: SANDERCOCK, Karen; HARTIGAN, Brooke; s 22
Subject: RE: Options table for supporting international students at risk of financial hardship [SEC=OFFICIAL]

OFFICIAL

s 22

Thanks. A few thoughts. Happy to talk.
 Travis

- In particular, might be worth distinguishing between proposed expenditure and proposed funding sources. EGI, Destination Australia are only funding sources, not the actual program itself.

Offsets

- EGI – has around \$2m this year, and possibly \$2.5m next year. That won't go anywhere near the demand on this issue and would be discredited pretty quickly if that is all we offered. But could be part of a solution.
- Destination Australia – would get pushback from unis and others, as they will see mobility programs as an important part of a bounceback. But we could manage that issue. ELICOS and VET sectors unlikely to object as most are not eligible to participate. Would require decision of government and new program to be established.
- Note there are other programs that could also be examined for offsets, particularly the **Rural and Regional Enterprise Scholarships (\$17.8m this FY)** and **Bob Hawke and Tim Fischer John Monash Scholarships (\$10m)**. None of these are particularly palatable options, but could be considered.

Other issues

- A meeting with students is a different category than the other initiatives. Would be possible to do it regardless of approach taken. But it will end up increasing pressure, not diminishing pressure.
- Most other countries doing some kind of income support, rather than hardship program.
- Not sure loans are particularly viable option given most students will return home before they have an income that would allow repayments. Scale of loans would be small with high admin costs. High default rate (students would leave rather than pay) resulting in high program costs that would make a grants program more effective. Admin would be v difficult.

Travis Power
 Assistant Secretary
 Partnerships Branch | International Division
 Australian Government Department of Education, Skills and Employment
 Phone s 47F | Mobile s 47F

From: s 22 >
Sent: Wednesday, 8 April 2020 2:06 PM
To: ATKINS, David s 47F ; WELSH, Karen s 47F ; POWER, Travis s 47F
Cc: SANDERCOCK, Karen s 47F ; HARTIGAN, Brooke s 47F s 22

Subject: Options table for supporting international students at risk of financial hardship [SEC=OFFICIAL]

Importance: High

OFFICIAL

Hi everyone

Please find attached an options table for addressing calls for support for international students at risk of financial hardship.

If you have any immediate and quick reactions to the options, or can think of something else we don't have there, please let me know by around 4pm (sorry for tight timeframe, we are keen to get it up to Rob this evening). Don't feel like you need to provide lots of written feedback, feel free to call if you had an idea you wanted to add. Equally if you don't have additional thoughts, that's fine too. I am sure we can add a bit later.

For the version to go up we would likely recommend a way forward which Karen S and I have discussed. I haven't included here as I didn't want to colour your thoughts. Obviously not all of these are desirable or maybe even practical, but it is a compilation of possible options.

Thanks

s 22

COVID-19 Response Taskforce
International Division
Australian Government Department of Education, Skills and Employment
Phone s 22 | Mobile s 22
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The Department of Education, Skills and Employment acknowledges the traditional owners and custodians of country throughout Australia and their continuing connection pay our respects to them and their cultures, and Elders past, present and emerging.

Direct Support for International Students

Topic	Theme	Implementation	Delivery Mechanism	Value
International Student Hardship Fund(s) Each state and territory would establish and operate its own fund – with funding matched by the Commonwealth (up to a cap based on student numbers). Provide temporary short-term emergency financial support to international students who can show they are experiencing significant financial hardship during the COVID-19 outbreak.	Income Support	State and territory governments would be responsible for managing the application processes and making of fortnightly payments. Possibly utilising "Study@" centres.	IGA FFR - Funding delivered to S&Ts via a National Partnership Agreement or exchange of letters	Up to \$129 million

s 22

s 22

From: s 22
Sent: Thursday, 9 April 2020 8:16 AM
To: s 22
Subject: FW: International student welfare [SEC=UNCLASSIFIED]

UNCLASSIFIED

From: SANDERCOCK, Karen s 47F
Sent: Wednesday, 8 April 2020 8:12 PM
To: s 22
Cc: WELSH, Karen s 47F ; HARTIGAN, Brooke s 47F
Subject: Fwd: International student welfare [SEC=OFFICIAL]

s 22

Helpful advice from s 22 below.

My thinking is we address this by recasting the paper on the hardship fund, with new parameters re EGI support of a maximum of about \$5m (we'll work out exact amount with Travis).

Let's talk tomorrow.

K

From: s 22 >
Date: 8 April 2020 at 7:38:29 pm AEST
To: HEFEREN, Rob s 47F >, SANDERCOCK, Karen s 47F
Subject: International student welfare [SEC=OFFICIAL]

Rob and Karen

Just spoke with the Min re intl student welfare and there is a modest change of mood in favour of doing something. It is coming from natl cabinet, ie of the states initiative.

If Karen can progress what we talked about tonight Min would like to see something late tomorrow. His main concern remains who administers it and likes the idea of giving it to the primary study@ hub in each state (eg Study Adelaide for SA).

He's like it to match contributions from states, not expectation of providers matching.

I'd like to see a consistent definition of financial hardship rather than each applying it's own.

Finally he's talking about a very small amount \$500 k to \$3 or \$5 mil so we'll still need to keep sector expectations in check.

Thanks

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s 22

From: s 22
Sent: Thursday, 9 April 2020 12:46 PM
To: s 22
Cc: MARTIN,Rajan
Subject: RE: HEPPP and international students - options [SEC=OFFICIAL]

OFFICIAL

Hi s 22

I understand this is progressing with the National Priorities Pool. Our preferred option is to offer up savings from the National Priorities Pool, to offset the new measure for international students.

Could you please give me a call to discuss, when you have a moment?

Thanks,

s 22

Director
 Phone s 22 | Mobile s 22

From: s 22
Sent: Wednesday, 8 April 2020 4:40 PM
To: MARTIN,Rajan s 47F
Cc: ENGLISH,Dom s 47F ; s 22
 HARTIGAN,Brooke s 47F ; ATKINS,David s 47F
 SANDERCOCK,Karen s 47F
Subject: RE: HEPPP and international students - options [SEC=OFFICIAL]

OFFICIAL

Thank you very much Raj. I appreciate yours and s 22 time in discussing this with me earlier today and your thoughts below.

Will be sure to loop back to you all on the options table I mentioned earlier today.

Regards

s 22

From: MARTIN,Rajan s 47F
Sent: Wednesday, 8 April 2020 4:28 PM
To: s 22
Cc: ENGLISH,Dom s 47F >; s 22
Subject: HEPPP and international students - options [SEC=OFFICIAL]
Importance: High

Hi s 22

As promised, below is information on options for use of HEPPP funding that could be included in briefing on possible supports for international students. Both options would require changes to the Other Grants Guidelines under HESA (a disallowable instrument).

As discussed, sensitivities / risks include criticism from stakeholders around diverting program focus from low SES domestic students. Also relevant is the announcement of changes to HEPPP as part of the government response to the Napthine Review which will see the HEPPP focus broaden to include regional and Indigenous students.

Option 1: Allocate funds from the National Priorities Pool (a component of HEPPP)

National Priorities Pool funding could be allocated to universities to support students including international students experiencing financial hardship as a result of COVID19. This support could be in the form of bursaries to provide immediate rent and necessities relief to support them through a period of unemployment. The funding could be allocated evenly across all 37 Table A universities, or according to a formula factoring in the estimated numbers of international students in financial hardship. This option would have a low administrative burden, as the funding could either be approved with respect to a year or with respect to a project by the Minister using the existing processes.

National Priorities Pool has unallocated funding of approx. \$5.8m in 2020. This was intended to support the 2019 and 2020 National Priorities Pool round costs for the 2020 calendar year. Amount redirected to support international students would be a choice for government but if possible it would be good to retain some funds for the 2020 National Priorities Pool, including to support implementation of Napthine changes.

Option 2: Expand the eligibility of HEPPP

In 2020, \$134.6m of HEPPP funding is allocated to universities to support domestic undergraduate low SES students. The Government could expand the eligibility of HEPPP to include support to international students experiencing financial hardship, with universities determining the best support for their students. Expanding the eligibility of the HEPPP to international students would need to be time limited (eg to end of calendar year) and focussed specifically on addressing the impact of COVID19. Depending on the level of oversight required, implementation might also impose an administrative burden on universities.

Happy to discuss.

Cheers

Rajan Martin

Assistant Secretary

Governance, Quality and Access Branch

Phone +61 8 474 4747

Mobile +61 8 474 4747

61 8 474 4747

EA: 922

s 22

From: s 22
Sent: Thursday, 9 April 2020 1:08 PM
To: s 22
Subject: International Student Support Funds Proposal_9 April [SEC=UNCLASSIFIED]
Attachments: International Student Support Funds Proposal_9 April.docx

UNCLASSIFIED

International Student Hardship Support Funds

As a class of short-term visitor visa holders, international students (visa subclass 500) are not eligible for financial support from the Commonwealth government including JobSeeker and JobKeeper payments. A condition of the student visa is that holder have sufficient funds to support themselves for one year. The government has announced that visa holders here for longer than a year may access their superannuation they have accumulated. Further, for certain industry sectors such as nursing and aged care, restriction of working to 40 hours per fortnight have been relaxed.

Nonetheless, due to changed global circumstances due to COVID-19 outbreak, some visa holders may be unable to access overseas family support due to economic shutdown overseas, unable to return their home country or leave Australia due to travel restrictions and limited flights, unable to work part-time in traditional student sector employment areas such hospitality, and have limited to no superannuation due to much of the employment in this sector not incurring payments. In short, due to the outbreak some international students are facing financial hardship. *(we still need concrete evidence that some are. To date, it has only be supposition).*

Call for support from the sector, states and territories

There are increasing calls in the international education sector, and from state governments, to financially support international students facing financial hardship in response to the crisis created by the COVID-19 outbreak. Reasons for support relate to student financial vulnerability, public health protection, and from a reputation point of view to assist the sector to recover once the crisis passes. State and territory officials have also been discussing a possible support package.

Assistance already provided

In addition to the recent announcement allowing international students early access to their superannuation, states and territories are moving towards putting evictions on hold for six months providing students with relief from rent payments. A number of universities have established limited hardship funds to which students—both domestic and international—may apply for assistance. *(Again, do we have any data on whether any students have availed themselves for these funds?)*. Further, some local communities, for example the Sydney Nepalese community, have similarly offered to support students facing hardship.

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PROPOSAL

~~AA~~ International Student Hardship Support Funds in each state and territory would be established and funded jointly by the Commonwealth, State and Territory Governments to provide temporary short-term emergency financial support to international students who can show they are experiencing significant financial hardship during the COVID-19 outbreak. The Commonwealth provide match contribution by States and Territories to a maximum amount of \$128.7 XXmillion up to \$5 million in unallocated funds from the Enhancing Growth Initiative (EGI) and.

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Eligibility

s 47F

International students (except those in the schools sector given these students are unlikely to be affected by loss of work due to COVID-19) who have been in Australia studying for more than twelve months on a student visa (subclass 50061) would be eligible to apply for financial support a fortnightly lump sum financial hardship support payment from the state or territory government where they reside where they can demonstrate:

s 22 Why lump sum? Is this based on on going need and isn't the likelihood of abuse of giving a lump sum greater? s 47F

- Loss of income due to loss of work; and
- Financial hardship which could include the following factors:
 - Inability to make rent or accommodation payments;
 - Inability to make essential payments such as food, medical/health, utilities;
 - Inability to access family or other financial support due to the extraordinary circumstances created by the COVID-19 pandemic; and
 - Inability to repatriate to their country of origin.

Evidence requirements

An international student will be required to make an application stating that they have lost their job and income, and are suffering financial hardship indicating their particular circumstances (taking into account factors mentioned above). Evidence of financial hardship and loss of work would be required and could include:

- Bank statements showing a drop in savings or loss of income (which could include family bank accounts);
- Separation certificate from their employer (if provided); and
- Evidence of bills or other payments they have been unable to or at risk of not making.

Evidence requirements should support a student's claim to be experiencing financial hardship and not place undue burdens or cost on either the student or their employer to prove hardship. ~~Whilst extensive eligibility criteria, application processes and evidence requirements can ensure the validity of a payment it could also increase delivery costs and slow the delivery of assistance to the student undermining the intent of the fund to provide short term assistance.~~

Commented [§ 22]: States to cover delivery costs. And cumbersome element is inbuilt to show true financial need.

Application process

State and territory governments would be responsible for managing the application process. This could involve the relevant jurisdiction nominating a body, (whether government like the respective Study@ centre in the jurisdiction or non-government)- organisation to:

- Receive applications on an agreed application form consistent with agreed evidence requirements;
- Assess the application against agreed eligibility criteria as set out above; and
- Make payments to the student.

Commented [§ 22]: Do we want to set the agenda for this to go to the Study@ centres in each jurisdiction which already have student welfare offices. This is a tough call because these offices are mostly about marketing, but the idea that each state will do it differently is messy. The call for these funds is coming from these state offices, so it is worth having them responsible rather than passing the buck.

Funding mechanism

The International Student Hardship Funds would be established in each jurisdiction and equally funded between Commonwealth, State and Territory Governments on a pro-rata basis based on the student population in a jurisdiction. Any amount already provided to international students by education providers ~~consistent with their Education Services for Overseas Students Act 2000~~ obligations cannot be subtracted from the contribution of a state or territory government. Should a state or territory government have already provided hardship assistance they would be eligible to include this amount in their total contribution to the fund (no state or territory government has announced a financial hardship assistance fund to date).

Commented [§ 22 5]: I have clarified that a fund would be established in each jurisdiction. The Cth would transfer its contribution for the particular jurisdiction to the state government which would then administer the payments.

Commented § 22 : If I'm reading this correctly it is proposing a central Cmwh fund that is then divided. I think it needs to be separate funds in each state and territory. Cmwh only hands over the funds and only after the states' put in their respective funding.

Options for transferring Commonwealth funds to the States and Territories

Based on established Federal Financial Relations processes there would need to be a new National Partnership Agreement between the Commonwealth, states and territories (whether together or individually) for the Commonwealth to transfer funds to the states.

Inter-governmental Agreement on Federal Financial Relations

The Commonwealth can transfer funds to States and Territories under the *Inter-governmental Agreement on Federal Financial Relations* (IGA FFR) through three types of agreements. Funds can be transferred through *National Agreements* and/or *National Specific Purpose Payments* (which agree indicators and roles and responsibilities of all governments in the delivery of services) or through *National Partnership Agreements* (NPA) on specific topics. A National Agreement or a National Specific Purpose Payment are not appropriate in this regard given they tend to deal with areas of shared service delivery and established for a longer period of time. NPAs are time limited and there are normally three types for different policy contexts:

- National Partnerships to support national reform objectives;
- Implementation Plans to support a National Partnership to allow jurisdictional differences in the delivery of national reform initiatives; or
- Project Agreements which are a simpler form of NPA for low value or low risk payments (which could be considered in this situation given it is time limited transfer to the states).

However, despite the clear requirement for an agreement with states and territories to transfer funds under the IGA FFR, Treasury has advised it would be possible to comply with these requirements through an exchange of letters between Commonwealth, state and territory ministers. The Prime Minister could take the proposal to the National Cabinet to expedite agreement with states and territories. An exchange of letters process was used during the Bushfires Crisis in early 2020 to expedite funding transfers in a crisis situation. The exchange of letters process needs to constitute an agreement under the IGA FFR but it offers a more straight forward and faster process that could be utilised in this situation.

Commonwealth would match contributions by states and territories

Individual states and territories could determine their level of support which would be matched by the Commonwealth up to a maximum contribution (see below). The Commonwealth could make an initial offer of a maximum contribution amount that the states and territories could match on a pro-rata basis based on students residing in their jurisdiction. This initial offer could be based on a consistent payment amount (more details below).

Whilst agreeing consistent levels of funding between states and territories would ensure a more consistent and equal payment for students, negotiating such an outcome when each state and territory government has a different budget situation could be difficult to reach agreement and slow down the delivery of assistance to international students in a timely way.

A consistent payment amount could be set to allow students to meet day-to-day needs recognising the principle that international students are required to have sufficient means to support themselves. A range of options have been recommended by stakeholders. For example, CISA recommended extending the fortnightly Coronavirus Supplement (\$550) to international students for six months. We recommend a payment equivalent to two thirds of the fortnightly rate of Youth Allowance (Independent Living)– (which is currently \$460.20 per fortnight–) paid for three months as a lump sum with the option to review this level of assistance after three months. This would be

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Commented [5:22]: I like this, but worth a conversation on the amount. There are three basic costs for a student: 1. Accommodation, 2. Living expenses, and 3. Tuition. This fund only should assist with 2 as Accommodation is being dealt with in the general COVID response and providers should wear Tuition deferrals. Focusing on Living Expenses, what is the statutory amount? Is it 2/3 of \$550?

Commented [5:22:8]: The Department of Home Affairs has a suggested amount of money required for living costs (separate to fees and accommodation) for the purposes of visa application of \$21,000 a year. This equates to around \$807.70 a fortnight. I suggested Youth Allowance (Independent Living) as it would be similar to income support available to Australian students studying at university. It is reduced to two-thirds in recognition of expectation that international students have sufficient funds to support themselves.

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the equivalent of a payment of \$1980 per student. This has the benefit of a transparent calculation and an assumption that international students have access to funds to support themselves.

Costs

Assuming a level of payment consistent of \$1980 per student, the total cost of the Fund could be up to \$257.4 million and shared on a pro-rata basis based on international student population in each jurisdiction which signed up to the Fund. Assuming 50 per cent Commonwealth contribution the maximum cost for the Commonwealth could be up to \$128.7 million. This means the Commonwealth would support a payment of just under \$1000 per student. It is open to government to lower the cap if preferred which could be achieved by lowering the percentage share of the Youth Allowance (Independent Living) rate.

Key obstacles to the proposal

The key obstacle to driving the proposal forward is that there is no obvious source of funding to fund the Commonwealth's contribution to the Fund. This would require an additional call on the Commonwealth budget.

A further obstacle could be reaching agreement on the detail of the Fund and its administration with states and territories. Although this may not be as strong as would ordinarily be expected given a push by state and territory officials for the establishment of a support package for international students, there still could be resistance around the contribution amount and their administration of the system.

Notes on costs

- Only International Students (those on a student visa subclass 500~~64~~) would be eligible to apply for support.
- There are up to 561,154 post-secondary international students in Australia (including first years).
- Based on previous years' commencement data we assume that new commencements as a proportion of total enrolments is around one third at the March census date. Applying this assumption there could be up to an estimated 168,346 first year students who would not be eligible to receive a payment as they are deemed to have sufficient funds to support themselves in the short term consistent with their visa conditions.
- According to the 2018 International Student Census 44 per cent of international students indicated they work to support themselves whilst studying in Australia.
- We assume the majority of international students work in sectors most affected by the COVID-19 outbreak and estimate that 75 per cent of those students have lost their job.
- On this basis we have assumed up to 130,000 students could be eligible for a payment.
- States and territories would be responsible for delivery of the payment including any costs for receiving and assessing applications and making the cost to the student (whether delivered in-house by government or contracted out to an NGO).

Commented [s 22]: I agree with the maths here, but one of the key elements of this proposal is it is _need basis_. Thus, the calculation is not on the number of international students in Australia, it is the number of international students who can show financial hardship. I have no idea what that percentage is, but we might work with the sector to see if we can get a sense of one provider and then extrapolate out.

Commented [s 22 10]: We can revisit the assumptions I set out below and see if we can get better data.

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Commented [s 22]: Are these fair assumptions? For example, aged care, nursing assistance, cleaners, are all dominated by international student workers and these sectors have not seen job losses, but actual worker need. I think we need to investigate this a bit more. There is some research in this area as to what jobs international students were doing before the Covid hit.

s 47F

Commented [s 22 13]: We will see what data and research is available to update these assumptions.

s 22

From: MARTIN,Rajan
Sent: Thursday, 9 April 2020 5:20 PM
To: ENGLISH,Dom; s 22
Cc: s 22
Subject: FW: Support for International Students Experiencing Financial Hardship - table of options - 9 April.docx [SEC=OFFICIAL]
Attachments: Support for International Students Experiencing Financial Hardship - table of options - 9 April.docx

Thanks s 22 – this looks fine to me.

Dom, not sure if you want to also clear? The attached is consistent with what we discussed this morning.

Cheers

Rajan Martin
Assistant Secretary
Governance, Quality and Access Branch
Phone +s 47F
Mobile s 47F
s 47F

EA: s 22

From: s 22
Sent: Thursday, 9 April 2020 4:34 PM
To: MARTIN,Rajan s 47F ; s 22
Subject: Support for International Students Experiencing Financial Hardship - table of options - 9 April.docx [SEC=OFFICIAL]

OFFICIAL

Raj, s 22 – updated table with your clarifications included, s 22

Thanks
s 22

Support for International Students Experiencing Financial Hardship

The below options provide a possible suite of actions Government could take to support international students who may be experiencing financial hardship as a result of the extraordinary circumstances created by the COVID-19 outbreak. The options are cumulative and can be combined as a package over time depending on the scope of support international students require during the COVID-19 outbreak.

Given the scope of financial hardship experienced by international students is unknown at this point, Government could select more focussed options that build on sector and community efforts to support those international students which are the most vulnerable and experiencing hardship.

Unspent EGI and HEPPP funds could be used to provide support to international students requiring assistance which could be delivered through the sector to provide short-term small scale bursaries to students and/or in conjunction with matched support by state and territory governments.

Given HEPPP is focussed solely on the university sector, a small amount of HEPPP National Priority Pool funding could be directed to Table A universities to provide small bursaries to international students to supplement existing action by the sector. In return, Government could ask universities to refund a portion of the international student's tuition fees directly to the student to increase the amount of support.

Unallocated EGI funds in 2019-20 and 2020-21 could be allocated as bursaries available to students in smaller scale education institutions such as private ELICOS, VET and NUHEP providers who may not have the same welfare and support framework as Australia's large universities. A combination of both these options would provide almost whole-of-sector coverage and provide credible Commonwealth leadership on this issue. Supporting international students in need would also help to preserve Australia's positive reputation as an international study destination to assist in the recovery effort post-COVID-19.

Commonwealth leadership and funding could be used to leverage additional funding from states and territories seeking to partner with the Commonwealth to support international students experiencing financial hardship. This could be by way of matched funding to provide support to international students in their jurisdiction (noting Commonwealth investments of EGI funds and HEPPP). EGI funds could be transferred to states and territories for administration through the Study@ Centres (and matched) under Schedule 1 AB of the *Financial Framework (Supplementary Powers) Regulation 1997*.

<p>International Student Support Funds Each state and territory would establish and operate its own fund – with funding matched by the Commonwealth (up to a cap based on student numbers). Provide temporary short-term emergency financial support to international students who can show they are experiencing significant financial hardship during the COVID-19 outbreak.</p>	Income Support	State and territory governments would be responsible for managing the application processes and making of fortnightly payments. Possibly utilising "Study@" centres.	EGI Framework - Schedule 1 AB FF(SP) Regulations	Unspent EGI funds in 2019-20 and 2020-21 could be allocated from the Commonwealth with states and territories encouraged to also contribute funding to provide support. Note: Relief and Recovery Fund administered by Infrastructure could be a source of funding for this or a similar measure.
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s 22

s 22

From: s 22
Sent: Thursday, 9 April 2020 7:17 PM
To: s 22
Cc: HEFEREN,Rob; SANDERCOCK,Karen; HARTIGAN,Brooke; ATKINS,David;
 s 22
Subject: Re: Support for international students experiencing financial hardship due to COVID-19
 [SEC=OFFICIAL:Sensitive] [SEC=OFFICIAL: Sensitive]

Thanks s 22 . I'll review but 6.16 means we missed our chance. I'll try to get it in front of him next Tuesday.
 s 22

From: s 22
Date: 9 April 2020 at 6:16:26 pm AEST
To: s 22
Cc: HEFEREN,Rob s 47F , SANDERCOCK,Karen
 s 47F , HARTIGAN,Brooke s 47F
 ATKINS,David s 47F , s 22
Subject: Support for international students experiencing financial hardship due to COVID-19
 [SEC=OFFICIAL:Sensitive]

OFFICIAL: Sensitive

s 22

Please find attached two documents setting out options for providing support to international students.

- Paper on international student support funds – this paper details the option you discussed with Karen last night (and includes your comments from earlier today); and
- Options table setting out a few ideas which could be cumulative or alternatives and which complements the paper.

Please let us know if you need any clarification.

Thanks

s 22

s 47F

COVID-19 Response Taskforce
 International Division
 Australian Government Department of Education, Skills and Employment
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www.dese.gov.au

The Department of Education, Skills and Employment acknowledges the traditional owners and custodians of country throughout Australia and their continuing connection pay our respects to them and their cultures, and Elders past, present and emerging.

International Student Support Funds

As a class of short-term visitor visa holders, international students (visa subclass 500) are not eligible for financial support from the Commonwealth government including JobSeeker and JobKeeper payments. A condition of the student visa is that holder have sufficient funds to support themselves for one year. The government has announced that visa holders here for longer than a year may access their superannuation they have accumulated. Further, for certain industry sectors such as nursing and aged care, restriction of working to 40 hours per fortnight have been relaxed.

Nonetheless, due to changed global circumstances due to COVID-19 outbreak, some visa holders may be unable to access overseas family support due to economic shutdown overseas, unable to return their home country or leave Australia due to travel restrictions and limited flights, unable to work part-time in traditional student sector employment areas such hospitality, and have limited to no superannuation due to much of the employment in this sector not incurring payments. In short, due to the outbreak some international students are facing financial hardship.

Call for support from the sector, states and territories

There are increasing calls in the international education sector, and from state governments, to financially support international students facing financial hardship in response to the crisis created by the COVID-19 outbreak. Reasons for support relate to student financial vulnerability, public health protection, and from a reputation point of view to assist the sector to recover once the crisis passes. State and territory officials have also been discussing a possible support package.

Assistance already provided

In addition to the recent announcement allowing international students early access to their superannuation, states and territories are moving towards putting evictions on hold for six months providing students with relief from rent payments. A number of universities have established limited hardship funds to which students—both domestic and international—may apply for assistance. Further, some local communities, for example the Sydney Nepalese community, have similarly offered to support students facing hardship.

PROPOSAL

The Commonwealth could provide funding to providers, where they have established support schemes in place, and to states and territories (which can administer payments on behalf of those providers which do not have established welfare and support infrastructure in place) to provide temporary short-term emergency support to international students who can show they are experiencing significant financial hardship during the COVID-19 outbreak. The Commonwealth would provide up to \$4.8 million in unallocated funds from the Enhancing Growth Initiative (EGI) with the expectation of matched funding from states and territories. This proposal could take inspiration from the approach taken during the Bushfire Crisis for providing additional support to school students through both Beyond Blue (\$8 million of funding provided) and through states and territories for chaplaincy services.

Eligibility

International students (except those in the schools sector given these students are unlikely to be affected by loss of work due to COVID-19) who have been in Australia studying on a student visa (subclass 500) would be eligible to apply for financial support from the relevant state or territory government where they can demonstrate:

- Loss of income due to loss of work; and
- Financial hardship which could include the following factors:
 - Inability to make rent or accommodation payments;
 - Inability to make essential payments such as food, medical/health, utilities;
 - Inability to access family or other financial support due to the extraordinary circumstances created by the COVID-19 pandemic; and
 - Inability to repatriate to their country of origin.

Evidence requirements

An international student will be required to make an application stating that they have lost their job and income, and are suffering financial hardship indicating their particular circumstances (taking into account factors mentioned above). Evidence of financial hardship and loss of work would be required and could include:

- Bank statements showing a drop in savings or loss of income (which could include family bank accounts);
- Separation certificate from their employer (if provided); and
- Evidence of bills or other payments they have been unable to or at risk of not making.

Evidence requirements should support a student's claim to be experiencing financial hardship and not place undue burdens or cost on either the student or their employer to prove hardship.

Application process

Education providers with established support schemes, and/or state and territory governments would be responsible for managing the application process. Where a provider does not have the necessary infrastructure, this could involve the relevant jurisdiction nominating a body, whether government like the respective Study Hub or centre in the jurisdiction or non-government organisation to:

- Receive applications on an agreed application form consistent with agreed evidence requirements;
- Assess the application against agreed eligibility criteria as set out above; and
- Make payments to the student.

Funding mechanism

The Minister would transfer unspent EGI funds from 2019-20 and 2020-21 as a grant to providers, states and territories which have established international student support funds or programs (noting a number of jurisdictions are moving in this direction) on a proportional basis based on international student population. Commonwealth funding would complement action being taken by the sector and states and territories to take a national approach to supporting international students in Australia experiencing difficulties due to the outbreak of COVID-19.

Options for transferring Commonwealth funds to the States and Territories

The Australian International Education – Enabling Growth and Innovation provision of Schedule 1AB of the *Financial Framework (Supplementary Powers) Regulation 1997* enables funding to be provided for a range of activities directed to promoting, strengthening and growing Australian international education sector as an export industry which can include granting funding to state and territory governments.

Costs

As mentioned above, the Commonwealth would provide funding from unallocated funds in 2019-20 and 2020-2021 in EGI of up to \$4.8 million. This funding would be provided in two tranches with an initial \$1.92 million available immediately and a \$2.88 million available from 1 July 2020. This amount could be an initial investment and could be increased, modestly, should there be demonstrated need noting that the scope of potential financial hardship being experienced by international students is not well known.

Further support for international students enrolled in Australia's universities could be provided from underspends in the HEPPP National Priorities Pool in 2019-20. Funding of up to \$3 million could be directed to 37 Table A universities under the *Higher Education Services Act* to provide emergency bursaries for international students. This would provide a modest top-up of bursary funds for international students (noting additional income support available to domestic students). This would complement sector efforts to support their international students and encourage institutions to provide more support as a way of protecting sector reputation (noting many institutions are offering support to their students).

A further source of funds to fund this initiative could be the SSFA given COVID-19 restrictions would be affecting the delivery of many of the funded projects.

Support for International Students Experiencing Financial Hardship

The below options provide a possible suite of actions Government could take to support international students who may be experiencing financial hardship as a result of the extraordinary circumstances created by the COVID-19 outbreak. The options are cumulative and can be combined as a package over time depending on the scope of support international students require during the COVID-19 outbreak.

Given the scope of financial hardship experienced by international students is unknown at this point, Government could select more focussed options that build on sector and community efforts to support those international students which are the most vulnerable and experiencing hardship.

Unspent EGI and HEPPP funds could be used to provide support to international students requiring assistance which could be delivered through the sector to provide short-term small scale bursaries to students and/or in conjunction with matched support by state and territory governments.

Given HEPPP is focussed solely on the university sector, a small amount of HEPPP National Priority Pool funding could be directed to Table A universities to provide small bursaries to international students to supplement existing action by the sector. In return, Government could ask universities to refund a portion of the international student's tuition fees directly to the student to increase the amount of support.

Unallocated EGI funds in 2019-20 and 2020-21 could be allocated as bursaries available to students in smaller scale education institutions such as private ELICOS, VET and NUHEP providers who may not have the same welfare and support framework as Australia's large universities. A combination of both these options would provide almost whole-of-sector coverage and provide credible Commonwealth leadership on this issue. Supporting international students in need would also help to preserve Australia's positive reputation as an international study destination to assist in the recovery effort post-COVID-19.

Commonwealth leadership and funding could be used to leverage additional funding from states and territories seeking to partner with the Commonwealth to support international students experiencing financial hardship. This could be by way of matched funding to provide support to international students in their jurisdiction (noting Commonwealth investments of EGI funds and HEPPP). EGI funds could be transferred to states and territories for administration through the Study@ Centres (and matched) under Schedule 1AB of the *Financial Framework (Supplementary Powers) Regulation 1997*.

<p>International Student Support Funds Each state and territory would establish and operate its own fund – with funding matched by the Commonwealth (up to a cap based on student numbers). Provide temporary short-term emergency financial support to international students who can show they are experiencing significant financial hardship during the COVID-19 outbreak.</p>	<p>Income Support</p>	<p>State and territory governments would be responsible for managing the application processes and making of fortnightly payments. Possibly utilising "Study@" centres.</p>	<p>EGI Framework - Schedule 1AB FF(SP) Regulations</p>	<p>Unspent EGI funds in 2019-20 and 2020-21 could be allocated from the Commonwealth with states and territories encouraged to also contribute funding to provide support. Note: Relief and Recovery Fund administered by Infrastructure could be a source of funding for this or a similar measure.</p>
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s 22

s 22

From: s 22
Sent: Thursday, 16 April 2020 4:46 PM
To: SANDERCOCK, Karen s 47F
Subject: FW: Victorian Package for International Students [SEC=OFFICIAL]

OFFICIAL

Karen

Worth adding to the States and Territories portion of the summary on hardship support for international students.

Thanks.

s 22

Office of the Hon Dan Tehan MP
Minister for Education
Parliament House Canberra ACT 2600 Australia
M s 22

From: s 22
Sent: Thursday, 16 April 2020 4:30 PM
To: s 22
Subject: Fwd: Victorian Package for International Students

Hi,
Vic Govt have put this out (as it applies to international students) very quietly.

----- Forwarded message -----

From: s 22
Date: Thu, 16 Apr 2020 at 2:53 pm
Subject: Victorian Package for International Students
To: s 22
CC: s 22

Hi s 22

I had an interview with SBS just then and found out that Victorian Government confirmed that international students will be given special priority in this payment to Victorians who lost their jobs. I thought this might help us lobby and encourage the government and the sector in WA.

<https://www.vic.gov.au/workingforvictoria>

Regards,

s 22



--

Sent from Gmail Mobile

s 22

From: SANDERCOCK,Karen
Sent: Friday, 17 April 2020 4:10 PM
To: s 22
s 47F
Cc: s 22
s 47F

POWER,Travis

; ATKINS,David s 47F

; TAYLOR,Andrew

Subject: RE: Overview international student welfare TAFEs April 2020 [SEC=OFFICIAL]

OFFICIAL

Thanks for your email^{s 22} , and sorry to come late to the trail.

Appreciate your sending the document and I note your call for action on both hardship and messaging around costs of online learning.

We'll convey this to the Minister.

Best
Karen

s 22

s 22

s 22

s 22

From: POWER, Travis ^{s 47F}
Sent: Friday, 17 April 2020 3:29 PM
To: ^{s 22}

SANDERCOCK, Karen ^{s 22}

^{s 22}

^{s 22}

Subject: RE: Overview international student welfare TAFEs April 2020 [SEC=OFFICIAL]

OFFICIAL

Thanks ^{s 22} and ^{s 22}

Very helpful.

^{s 22}

Travis

Travis Power
Assistant Secretary
Partnerships Branch | International Division
Australian Government Department of Education, Skills and Employment
Phone ^{s 47F} | Mobile ^{s 47F}

From: ^{s 22}
Sent: Friday, 17 April 2020 1:03 PM
To: SANDERCOCK, Karen ^{s 47F}
Cc: POWER, Travis ^{s 47F}
^{s 47F}

>; ^{s 22}

ATKINS, David

Subject: Overview international student welfare TAFEs April 2020

Karen

You mentioned last week that the Minister was interested in what is happening in supporting international students. This may be too late in the briefing process, however, we've gone out to our members to ask for their feedback which is collated in the attached. I trust that it will help in some way. We acknowledge that it is largely unstructured from an 'evidence' viewpoint but we will now move to more systemic collection of information to help keep up to date with what's going on.

s 22

s 22 has done the hard work in pulling this together.

Trust you are keeping your head above water.

s 22

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Statement from TAFE Directors Australia

Supporting international students in Australia during the coronavirus crisis

1 April 2020

The future of Australia's third largest export earning industry is at serious risk if Australian governments continue to ignore the plight of international students stranded in Australia. Many are now without financial means to support themselves as they too have lost their part-time jobs from business close-down.

The success of the international education industry in Australia is recognised world-wide. Students travel to Australia to access leading education and training. Their contribution bolsters diversity in our education institutions and contribute to our dynamic society. These students and temporary visa holders have assisted our businesses. International students have been given rights to work in Aged-Care and supermarkets but Australians are also pursuing these jobs. There is no solution for the thousands of international students still in Australia.

Population growth through migration and temporary visas such as international students has been the main source of Australia's economic growth over recent years. Their spending has kept the economy turning over and buttressed our falling per capita GDP. Forty years of investment, leveraged off student contributions, could evaporate if overseas households see that we have failed to support their family members in this most tumultuous of times.

Many international students are part of the estimated 1.1 m temporary migrant workers who do not qualify for support under the Government's Job Seeker safety net or the Job Keeper wage subsidy. Even though the Government is providing support in *the Australian way* by scaling existing systems, temporary workers have fallen through the cracks. Yet they are likely to have contributed to our tax and superannuation systems.

Students have come to Australia to learn and acquire skills to set them up for life. Through no fault of their own, access to continue their learning is not certain as many providers have been forced to delay programs or to work on-line. In vocational education and training (VET) in particular, the transition to on-line is less certain as the rules of its qualifications limit this form of delivery or assessment.

Onshore international students are now unlikely to be able to return home. Without family or an established network to support them many are particularly vulnerable. We endorse the principle of keeping people lawful onshore and this extends to international students. Without government support to meet their costs of living, many will be forced into the informal economy and will be at heightened risk of exploitation which will further stain our reputation as a quality destination. They will also need access to health services as they seek to protect themselves and the community from the virus.

The Government needs to explore options to furnish support to these students. The tax system is an avenue as student work history and bone fides are known. The Government could remit financial support through registered international providers, or power up the not-for-profit and charities sector to step in with hardship support.

Without intervention, Australia's world-class Tuition Protection Service, which has supported students in case of provider closure, will be at risk. Without support, students will move to what they see as reliable providers or abandon their study and return home, putting more providers at financial risk.

It is right for Australia to support its residents first but now is the time to think about all in our care, on basic humanitarian grounds. Education and training institutes are doing as much as their limited resources will allow, but it will not be enough.

Now is the time for governments which have ridden on the wave of economic growth brought by international students to help them out in their time of need.

A call to action

TAFE Directors Australia therefore asks the Government to put the measures below in place.

1. Provide for at least the next six months individual financial support to international students in Australia on furnishing proof of hardship. International students with an existing tax record should be eligible for a means tested rescue package to assist with cost of living support, or job seeker support could be extended to these students.
2. Establish channels through approved international providers or the charity sector to distribute relief to students in need of support on clear eligibility grounds, for at least the next six-months.
3. Guarantee international students access to health services where their private cover is not adequate.
4. Employers now supported through the Government's generous Job Keeper scheme are encouraged to re-employ international students now they have some wages headroom.
5. The Government re-affirm its underwriting of the Tuition Protection Scheme to assure students that their pre-paid fees are secured and they can transfer providers if circumstances require it.
6. Commission adjustments to VET qualifications to remove work placements and workplace assessments where equivalent training outcomes can be achieved through virtual interaction and/or well-structured programs at a TAFE. This will ensure international students will be able to progress through their learning within the timeframe in which they were enrolled.
7. Ensure timely and clear announcements on policies for visas renewals for students in Australia, fee waivers for renewals required due to COVID-19 actions and access to post-study work visas for students unable to meet the current conditions due to the coronavirus crisis.
8. Put out clear messaging from Australian authorities that no exploitative, discriminatory or violent behaviours towards international students will be tolerated.

More measures may be needed as the situation evolves. Clarity of education and migration status of current and enrolling students and communication about the support available to students in Australia will help reduce heightened anxiety among students.

The high standing of Australian international education relies on the measures that will be put in place. Australia does not hold intrinsic rights on education services like it does with its minerals and resources. The service economy relies on loyalty and return business. Our reputation in the competitive world of international education stands or falls on the way we respond in these circumstances. The capacity of the sector to bounce back will depend on the response provided in these challenging times.

Support for International Students in Australia

The Australian Government is aware of the impact of COVID-19 on its international student population. These students are our friends, our classmates, our colleagues and members of our community. Australia values international students in building close people to people links between nations and for the mutual benefits this provides. As such, the Government has made a range of support measures available to help international students, including:

- providing flexibility where coronavirus has prevented international students from attending classes;
- world-class online and remote learning facilities through our universities and education providers;
- new and extended temporary work opportunities in critical sectors to support students experiencing financial hardship;
- ongoing access to mental health and other welfare and support services with details accessible at <https://www.dese.gov.au/news/coronavirus-covid-19>;
- access to superannuation savings, where applicable; and
- protection against eviction from rental accommodation on the same basis as is offered to all members of Australian society;

Additional support

The Government understands that further support is needed during challenging times and has recently committed an additional \$200 million in funding to support vulnerable members of the community, through increased access to emergency relief and other community support programs.

- This includes a specific allocation of \$7 million over the next six months for Red Cross to deliver emergency relief and casework support to people facing significant vulnerabilities who are on temporary visas (which will include international students).

Australian education sector support for international students

Complementing these efforts, many universities and other education providers are offering a range of support to students to cope with the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic including fee deferrals, deferred studies or payments, food and accommodation support, and mental health and other medical support. This support is estimated to amount to \$110 million.

It is estimated that at least 33 universities are offering their international students financial assistance. Examples are the announcement by Deakin University of an additional \$25 million in targeted support for international students facing financial hardship, and Monash University's announcement of a \$15 million student compassionate and hardship package which available to both domestic and international students.

Others are providing assistance typically in the form of bursaries between \$500 and \$3000. Study Australia's website www.studyinaustralia.gov.au provides additional information on support services available to international students.

State and territory efforts

Jurisdiction	Measure	Amount
QLD	International student support services: An additional \$1 million is available to increase student support services across Queensland to help impacted students returning to study. This support includes providing information, advice, and referrals on health care, employment, budget management, accommodation and legal service. https://www.tiq.qld.gov.au/iet-strategy/	\$1 million
WA	Housing support: WA Government has announced \$402m to go towards paying for a freeze to household fees and charges including: electricity, water and motor vehicle charges. International students are not excluded from the assistance.	\$402 million
VIC	Working for Victoria Fund: Will help Victorians who have lost their jobs due to the economic impacts of coronavirus (COVID-19) find new opportunities. International students are eligible to apply: https://www.vic.gov.au/workingforvictoria	\$500 million
Melbourne City Council	Councillors are developing ways to financially support overseas students, many of whom have lost casual jobs in retail and hospitality as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. No details to date.	
ACT	Rent and tenancy assistance: For ACT Renters, the ACT Government will encourage landlords to reduce rents by at least 25 per cent for tenants under rental stress by sharing the cost reduction of the rental on a 50/50 basis, capped at \$1300 per quarter (around \$100 week). International students are not excluded from applying.	\$500 million
ACT	Jobs for Canberrans' fund: The ACT Government will establish a 'Jobs for Canberrans' fund to allow ACT Government Directorates to continue employing people for cleaning, repairs, and maintenance projects. This fund will focus on providing secure work opportunities for people who have relied on casual work. International students are not excluded from applying.	TBC
NT	Worker and Wellbeing fund: This funding is to meet new and emerging gaps and will be available for people who were not already receiving income support payments prior to the COVID-19 economic downturn. International students are not excluded from applying. Study NT providing additional top up funds targeting international students.	\$5 million plus top up from Study NT

Supporting International Students in Australia

The Australian Government is aware of the impact of COVID-19 on its international student population. These students are our friends, our classmates, our colleagues and members of our community. Australia values international students in building close people to people links between nations and for the mutual benefits this provides.

Temporary visa holders are expected to be able to support themselves while in Australia. As part of their visa application, international students have had to demonstrate that they can support themselves completely in their first year. Many students will continue to rely on family support, part-time work where available and their own savings to sustain themselves in Australia during the COVID-19 crisis.

Despite this, we know students do work to support themselves and loss of income during this global pandemic can place students who could previously support themselves at risk of hardship.

Students who have been in Australia longer than 12 months who find themselves in financial hardship will be able to access their Australian superannuation. They can find out more information on this process by visiting the Australian Tax Office website at: www.ato.gov.au.

Generally International students are able to work up to 40 hours per fortnight. We have extended the hours people can work for those people working in critical sectors such as:

- those working in aged care and as nurses;
- those working in the major supermarkets have also had these hours extended to help get stock on shelves during the high demand. [Note: From 1 May, their hours will return to the maximum 40 hours a fortnight as more Australians are being recruited into these roles].
- further information is available on the Department of Home Affairs website at <https://covid19.homeaffairs.gov.au/> or by calling their Global Service Centre on 131 881.

The Prime Minister and the National Cabinet has announced that States and Territories will put a six-month ban on evictions for both residential and commercial tenants during the COVID-19 pandemic. This will ensure international students struggling to pay rent will have protection against eviction from rental accommodation on the same basis as is offered to all members of the community.

The Government has also worked with community organisations and education providers to ensure students have ongoing access to mental health and other welfare and support services with all details and referrals to services accessible through my Department's website <https://www.dese.gov.au/news/coronavirus-covid-19>.

In addition to these specific supports, the Australian Government is also supporting international students in Australia providing access to additional services if they are experiencing financial hardship, including:

- Providing an additional \$200 million in funding to support vulnerable members of the community, through increased access to emergency relief and other community support programs.
 - This includes a specific allocation of \$7 million over the next six months for Red Cross to deliver emergency relief and casework support to people facing significant vulnerabilities who are on temporary visas (which will include international students).

Furthermore the Australia Government is ensuring Australia's high quality and supportive higher education sector is strong to continue educating and supporting international students by providing financial relief and a funding guarantee to providers. This will, in turn, allow providers to support their students through institution-led initiatives.

International students also benefit from measures put in place by state and territory governments to ensure they are well supported:

- Queensland has allocated an additional \$1 million to increase student support services in that state to assist students to access advice around health care, employment, budget management, accommodation and legal services;
- Western Australia has announced a freeze on household fees and charges for utilities and essential services;
- Victoria's Working for Victoria Fund will assist all people living in Victoria who have lost their jobs to find new opportunities;
- The ACT is providing rental and tenancy assistance to alleviate rental stress and has announced it will establish a 'Jobs for Canberrans' fund to provide stable employment opportunities in essential sectors for those casual workers affected by the COVID-19 pandemic;
- The Northern Territory has established a Worker and Wellbeing Fund and Study NT will provide additional funds to support international students who lose their jobs.

We are aware further states will announce additional support measures shortly reinforcing how important international student welfare is for all Australian governments.

Complementing these efforts, many universities and other education providers are offering a range of support to students to cope with the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic including fee deferrals, deferred studies or payments, food and accommodation support, and mental health and other medical support. This support is estimated to amount to \$110 million. More details can be found through the Study Australia website: <https://www.studyinaustralia.gov.au/>.

International Student Hardship Fund

- This Fund will support all Australian Governments' actions to stop the spread of COVID-19 by supporting international students experiencing financial hardship and affected by a loss of work to comply public health measures.
- International students' experiences during this time of crisis will also shape international perceptions of Australia as a high quality study destination during the recovery period from COVID-19.

Eligibility



Australian Government
Department of Education, Skills and Employment

Ministerial Submission
For decision

To Minister for Education
CC Minister for Employment, Skills, Small and Family Business
Subject Allocating Enabling Growth and Innovation Program (EGI) funding: Support for international students experiencing financial hardship and meeting existing commitments
Purpose To seek your agreement to an international student support fund and to meet existing financial commitments under the EGI program.
Action date Please action by 30 April 2020.

Recommendation(s) - That you:

- 1) **approve** allocation of \$1.7 million from EGI in 2019–20 and \$2.3 million in 2020–21 to provide additional support to international students experiencing financial hardship **approved / not approved**
- 2) **agree** to the Department of Education, Skills and Employment consulting with state and territory governments on arrangements for co-funding international student financial support on the parameters in Attachment A **agreed / not agreed**

s 22

Signature: _____

___/___/2020

Comments (for MO use only)

Key issues

1. This brief seeks your approval to allocate remaining funds from the Enabling Growth and Innovation Program (EGI) in FY2019–20 and 2020–21 to:
 - Address gaps in support for international students enrolled in private education institutions (such as non-university higher education providers or NUHEPS, ELICOS and vocational education and training providers) facing financial hardship during COVID-19. This proposal would see the Commonwealth contribute funding (\$4.0m), matched by states and territories, into an International Student Support Fund to be administered by them for provision of temporary support to students with a demonstrated need. The details of the scheme, outlined at Attachment A, would need to be negotiated;

s 22

2. This allocation of EGI funds will involve changes to your previous commitment of 2019–20 funds in September 2019 (MS19-000502). You have the discretion to reprioritise funding as long as it is consistent with Program 2.7 International Education objectives and Schedule 1AB of the *Financial Frameworks (Supplementary Powers) Regulations*.

Background

3. International students enrolled in private education institutions which are NUHEPS, ELICOS and VET providers have been identified as a vulnerable cohort. These providers are less likely to have well-resourced student welfare infrastructure or resources to offer assistance for students in hardship.
4. As a class of short-term visitor visa holders, international students (visa subclass 500) are not eligible for financial support from the Commonwealth government including JobSeeker and JobKeeper payments. A condition of the student visa is that the holder have sufficient funds to support themselves for one year.
5. Nonetheless, due to COVID-19 some international students are facing significant hardship. They may not be able to access overseas family support due to economic shutdown overseas; unable to return to their home country or leave Australia due to travel restrictions and limited flights; unable to work part-time in traditional student sector employment areas (e.g. hospitality); and have limited to no superannuation due to much of the employment in this sector not incurring superannuation contributions.
6. Your advice to the Global Reputation Taskforce has made clear it is primarily the responsibility of providers and state and territory governments to appropriately support international students at this time. States have implemented a range of measures to assist (MS20-000605 refers). The Commonwealth has also announced measures including expanding work hours for those employed in certain jobs, allowing access to superannuation, and most recently, a further \$200 million investment extending emergency relief and other community support services to vulnerable members of the community, including international students.
7. Almost all universities are providing some form of support and emergency or financial relief to their students, including international students. The support ranges from fee relief, refunding/waiving Student Amenities and Services Fees, counselling and welfare services, and provision of financial assistance. The Commonwealth's Higher Education Support Package will assist universities to support their international students.
8. To ensure international students in private institutions are also supported, the department proposes to work with states and territories to establish a fund which would see Commonwealth funding directed to student support services, with states and territories required to match funding.
9. This, together with any forthcoming announcement on visa support measures called for by the sector (MS20-000605 refers), would address many sector concerns.

Reprioritising EGI funds to support international students & meet existing commitments

10. EGI provides \$3 million annually to deliver projects supporting implementation of the *National Strategy for International Education 2025*. We recommend you reprioritise \$4.0m across FY2019–20 and 2020–21 to an International Student Support Fund proposal. You should note this reprioritisation commits the discretionary funding available for international education and limits your ability to direct funding to assist the sector's recovery in 2020–21.

s 22

Next Steps

14. On the International Student Support Fund proposal, your early approval will allow action on this approach to commence immediately, and minimise risks of 2019–20 EGI funds being unspent by 30 June 2020. Subject to your approval we will commence discussions with states and territories on the proposal. Funds would be transferred to participating states and territories.

s 22

Stakeholders

16. Stakeholders to be consulted on the International Student Support Fund are: state and territory governments, Austrade and Expert Members of the Council for International Education,

Financial implications

17. Funds for the proposed expenditure are available in the EGI program and for the current 2019–20 program year must be spent before 30 June 2020.

Summary of attachments

Attachment A – proposal to provide support to international students experiencing financial hardship

s 22

Clearance

Cleared by: | Karen Sandercock
Created by: | s 22
Division: | | HERI | International

| s 47F
| s 22

Attachment A

International Student Support Funds

PROPOSAL

The Commonwealth would provide funding to states and territories to provide temporary short-term emergency support services to international students experiencing significant financial hardship during the COVID-19 outbreak. The Commonwealth would provide up to \$4.0 million in unallocated funds from the Enhancing Growth Initiative (EGI), with a requirement for matched funding from states and territories. Commonwealth funds would be used to support students enrolled in private non-university higher education providers (NUHEPs), vocational education and training (VET) and ELICOS providers, who do not have the same welfare infrastructure of large universities to provide support.

Given movements by universities and increasingly state governments to offer support to international students, Commonwealth funds would address a gap in the support currently available.

Eligibility

The proposal would reflect the approach taken during the Bushfire Crisis which provided funding for support of school students through Beyond Blue and through chaplaincy services. It would provide funding for support services to assist international students, rather than direct funding to students.

Funds would be provided to states and territories to a ceiling of \$4.0 million, based on the proportion of students in each jurisdiction. Funding would be available to international students at private providers, for access to foodbanks and other relief services.

States and territories would be required to match funding, and individual student access to funded services would be determined by the state and territory on the basis of factors such as:

- Student distress from loss of income due to loss of work; and
- Financial hardship:
 - Inability to make rent or accommodation payments;
 - Inability to make essential payments such as food, medical/health, utilities;
 - Inability to access family or other financial support due to the extraordinary circumstances created by the COVID-19 pandemic; and
 - Inability to repatriate to their country of origin.

Funding mechanism and allocation

Unspent EGI funds from 2019-20 and 2020-21 would be provided to states and territories, for delivery of student support services.

States and territories would identify the support services to be funded and be required to demonstrate matched funding to receive Commonwealth support. Commonwealth funding would not be able to be directed to fee waivers or other provider refunds to students. This would remain the responsibility of providers.

Commonwealth funding would be available up to the \$4.0 million cap over two financial years. It would be allocated based on each jurisdiction's share of the private international student population. This would ensure complementarity of Commonwealth and state and territory effort.

Attachment A

Proposed Commonwealth Contribution

Year-to-date enrolments		Year		Calculated share (adjusted)			Proposed Rebalancing		
Provider type	State	2019	%	2019-20	2020-21	Total	2019-20	2020-21	Total
Non-Government (Excl. Schools)	NSW	206,896	42.5%	720,000	975,000	1,690,000	625,000	875,000	1,500,000
	VIC	150,245	30.9%	525,000	710,000	1,235,000	455,000	660,000	1,115,000
	QLD	74,299	15.3%	260,000	350,000	615,000	260,000	350,000	610,000
	SA	17,470	3.6%	62,000	85,000	147,000	95,000	105,000	200,000
	WA	25,562	5.3%	90,000	121,000	212,000	110,000	125,000	235,000
	TAS	7,474	1.5%	26,000	35,000	60,000	50,000	65,000	115,000
	NT	1,519	0.3%	5,000	8,000	13,000	50,000	55,000	105,000
	ACT	3,251	0.7%	12,000	16,000	28,000	55,000	65,000	120,000
Total		486,716	100%	1,700,000	2,300,000	4,000,000	1,700,000	2,300,000	4,000,000

Transferring Commonwealth funds to the States and Territories

The Australian International Education – Enabling Growth and Innovation provision of Schedule 1AB of the *Financial Framework (Supplementary Powers) Regulation 1997* enables funding to be used for a range of activities directed to promoting, strengthening and growing Australian international education sector as an export industry which can include transferring funding to state and territory governments.

Funds would need to be transferred to states and territories consistent with the *Inter-governmental Agreement on Federal Financial Relations (IGA FFR)*. Ordinarily there would need to be a new National Partnership Agreement between the Commonwealth, states and territories (whether together or individually) for the Commonwealth to transfer funds to the states. However, despite the clear requirement for an agreement with states and territories to transfer funds under the IGA FFR, Treasury has advised it would be possible to comply with these requirements through an exchange of letters between Commonwealth, state and territory ministers. An exchange of letters process was used during the Bushfires Crisis in early 2020 to expedite funding transfers in a crisis situation. The exchange of letters process needs to constitute an agreement under the IGA FFR but it offers a more straight forward and faster process that could be utilised in this situation.

Costs

The Commonwealth would provide funding from unallocated funds in 2019-20 and 2020-2021 in EGI of up to \$4.0 million. Funding would be provided in two tranches with an initial \$1.7 million available immediately and a further \$2.3 million available from 1 July 2020.

Should government identify a need to increase support beyond \$4.0m, it would be open to government to redirect an unspent \$3 million allocation under the Higher Education Participation and Partnerships Program in 2019-20, noting this is currently available only to Table A higher education providers.

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MS20-000328

s 22

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