

## Discussion questions

### 1. What are the key priorities for a new Australian Strategy for international education?

■ contends the key priorities of the new Australian Strategy for International Education should be:

- a. Clear direction and consistent messaging and commitment embraced by all governments and all sectors across the industry that will support sustainability in international education. Strong and consistent messaging offshore by all levels of government in Australia that all international students are welcomed and supported in Australian schools.
- b. Diversification of source countries, of programs (including full and short programs) and the types of international engagement including online learning, offshore including curriculum licensing, professional learning & outbound programs.
- c. The student must always be at the centre – an essential aspect that has always been the key objective of the school sector, in particular in their strategic planning. Schools seek to ensure academic success, but also a positive experience for every student. For school students, face-to-face teaching will always be important. Online can play a part, but maintaining the benefits of the people-to-people connections is very important, especially for school learners. Young people are still developing their core beliefs.
- d. Greater community engagement & building awareness of the benefits of international education, starting in schools. Nationally, we must move beyond focusing on the financial and jobs benefits of international education, but instead focus on growing a much greater and wider community awareness of the benefits to local students of internationalisation in classrooms and across institutions throughout the industry.
- e. In the short to medium term, welcome eligible currently enrolled international students back to Australia as soon as practicable whilst ensuring the safety of the Australian community. Continue to support students to return to study in Australia using the existing travel exemption for year 11/12 students, and expand the exemption criteria to provide a framework that welcomes all school-age international students to Australia.

### 2. Students should be at the centre of the new Strategy. How can Australian education providers deliver the best possible student experience both now and in the future?

Enhanced development of outbound programs. The strategy should recognise the relationship between outbound opportunities for Australian students and allowing them to gain intercultural competencies. This has a flow on effect to community sentiment towards international students, partnerships and to the student experience. Connecting these aspects is the role that outbound international education can play in the strategy.

### **3. What changes are needed to make Australia more globally competitive over the next decade?**

- i. Policy and regulatory flexibility are important in enabling providers to innovate. How can we utilise these settings to pursue opportunities, and in what other ways can we work together to ensure Australia remains globally competitive?

█ is calling for a consistent approach across governments – state and federal that strongly supports international education and provides positive messaging to schools and local communities. This could include the introduction of an Australia-wide Accreditation process including certification for schools that meet benchmarks for international engagement. A recognised Australian secondary school Certificate could be created that would be an additional document to the state-based certificates, not a replacement. Australian providers would then use the Australian secondary school certificate as a marketing tool to compete with SAT & A levels provided in competitor countries.

Further, █ has identified a range of areas where changes are needed to enhance the competitiveness of Australia’s international education sector to help ensure it is responsive and future-focused. The strategy could provide direction and guidance in these areas:

- a. Regulatory barriers including the length (e.g. primary school), cost and availability of visas; and restrictive migration policies for post gradation compared to Australia’s major competitors.
- b. Unintended consequence of some legislation, policies and regulation, resulting in an offshore perception of a lack of support for international activities and engagement within Australia. A recent example is the Commonwealth’s Foreign Arrangements Scheme, requiring sister school arrangements with government schools off shore to be declared and in some cases requiring DFAT approval before entering into an arrangement. These arrangements now complicate the sister school process and will likely discourage the establishment of new linkages with off shore government schools.
- c. More and stronger linkages for school students are required between schools and universities and VET providers. Strong pathways provide opportunities for international students and will encourage more international students to commence their Australian education in schools. Australian schools deliver more culturally and linguistically adjusted international students to Australian universities.

### **4. How can providers, governments and stakeholders work together to achieve diversification opportunities (for example of disciplines, source countries, study destinations and delivery models)?**

█ suggests that Austrade is in an ideal position to lead diversification activities in non-traditional markets and with Commonwealth support, provide incentives to providers to participate.

Diversification, in terms of both source markets and programs, maximises Australia’s ability to meet the diverse needs and learning styles of our international students, both onshore and offshore. Blended delivery models with combinations of online (including virtual, real time, on-demand), onshore and offshore within the one program will need to be embraced in the future.

As source markets drive these changes, the traditional 'onshore' delivery model (which likewise means high cost, fulltime and away from home) may no longer align with what the market dictates. The strategy needs to embrace these rapid changes in demand from international students.

With an expected high uptake of online learning platforms, support for these new technologies as platforms to deliver on diversification in markets and programs, will be required from a national level to facilitate transition to the increase prevalence in electronic delivery effectively.

A possible long-term shift to a hybrid delivery model (online/offshore) will need a revised sector operating model, national regulatory framework and pricing structure. The Federal Government could provide support for developing, trialling and adopting new technologies as platforms to deliver on diversification in markets and programs.

## **5. What are the necessary skills for the future that students should be prepared for?**

- i. How can Australia improve employability outcomes for international students, ensuring they have the necessary skills to compete in a globally competitive labour market?

International education is key to the development of human capital and the development of the skills of intercultural understanding. Global competency start at school level. Young people start to develop these skills during their school years.

Some [REDACTED] members have reported feedback from the higher education sector that international students who spend longer periods studying at an Australian school before progressing to tertiary studies in Australia often have stronger links with and commitment to, Australia.

It is essential for schoolteachers to grasp the importance of global education and competencies for students. A program of professional learning including off shore activity would be valuable in achieving this.

## **6. How do we create a uniquely Australian education experience?**

- i. What is our value proposition for both international and domestic students?
- ii. How do we offer an Australian education experience while complementing the value of Australian offshore and online education?

Promotion and awareness raising offshore of the support systems available to international students in Australian schools to enhance their academic studies, including strong wellbeing support arrangements in each and every school and the opportunity for international students to develop their "soft skills". The nature and breadth of support Australian schools provided to all students during COVID provides examples of the kind of additional support Australian schools provide for all school students.

The theme of safety for students in Australia provides a unique value proposition. The Australian economy has survived very well in the world through the GFC and now COVID. We have the rule of law, respected and justly applied. We are not at risk of civil unrest. We have a universal health system and food security systems in place.

There are many senior officials in countries throughout South East Asia and the Pacific who benefited from an Australian education during the Colombo Plan era, and the strategy could make use of these as exemplars of the benefits of an Australian education.

**7. Community support for the international education sector is important for the sector's social licence. How can the benefits this sector provides to Australia be better understood by wider community?**

International students will return not because our borders will be open, but because we are clear and committed to ensuring that they are truly welcomed, feel valued and supported.

The strategy could include a focus on communication and connection with stakeholder groups in Australia. This must include work on the community sentiment (social licence) for international students to return to Australia and will require, not just overseas messaging, but national, state, and local campus communications. The strategy needs a strong emphasis on communicating the value and benefits international students bring to our schools, universities, and wider communities.

Support the development and delivery of innovative community engagement and communications to build awareness of the benefits of international students in our education system, as well as the economic and employment benefits to our nation, and increase industry and community understanding of the benefits to local students and the broader community of welcoming international students.

Australia has a time zone advantage over North American and European markets in attracting Asian region students and we have a rich diversity of Asian cultures in the fabric of Australian society. This presents an opportunity to build stronger linkages with international students.

More discussion on the contributions international students across each education sector make to the wider community through charity/community work, leadership etc. The wider community generally thinks of university students when thinking of international students.

**8. What else should the Council for International Education and the Australian Government consider in developing the new Strategy?**

As already stated ██████ strongly promotes the importance of face-to-face learning and people-to-people links.

The strategy needs to identify opportunities for deliberate and targeted cross-agency, international education stakeholder and business community discussions, partnerships and

relationships to establish a co-ordinated ('Team Australia') approach to international education.