

12 May 2021

The Hon Alan Tudge MP
Minister for Education and Chair of the Council for International Education
Department of Education, Skills and Employment
By email: education-ies@dese.gov.au

Dear Minister

Australian Strategy for International Education 2021-2030 Consultation Paper

The Association of Independent Schools of South Australia (AISSA) welcomes the opportunity to respond to the Australian Strategy for International Education 2021-2030 Consultation Paper. Twenty-four South Australian Independent schools are registered to enrol full fee paying overseas students and the sector also enrolls a number of school aged dependents of international students undertaking higher education qualifications.

It is deeply disappointing that the consultation paper appears largely focussed on settings which would promote the higher education sectors and does not appear to value the key role of the school sector both in terms of its benefits to international school students and, in particular, their parents, and in providing an important conduit for the other international education sectors. South Australian Independent schools offer high quality education and care programs for children and young people and throughout the COVID-19 pandemic have provided significant additional educational and pastoral support and care to full fee paying overseas students both onshore and offshore. In particular, schools have supported a considerable number of students who have had to remain in Australia without their families for what is now almost 17 months.

The AISSA strongly recommends that the 2021-2030 strategy specifically recognises the importance of the school sector in the international education sector and its role in providing overseas school-aged students with high quality education programs and, importantly, in a safe and caring environment.

It is critical that the return of international students onshore as soon as possible is seen as a priority and a plan developed in order to provide confidence among international students and providers of international education programs in Australia's commitment to international education. There is significant concern across the sector that Australia will lose international students to other countries. In the interim the AISSA recommends the current exemption to travel restrictions for Years 11 and 12 International Students be extended to younger students.

While online learning is appropriate in some settings and for some students it is not a substitute for the value of face-to-face learning in a school setting and the benefits of experiencing living in Australia. Having international students onshore enables students to participate fully in the curriculum, including extra-curricular activities, and life in Australia with corresponding benefits for domestic students and Australian society in general.

Regulation and cost continue to be a barrier in regard to more schools entering the international education market. Schools already operate in a highly regulated environment and there is significant duplication between requirements for school registration and other legislative obligations and the requirements under the National Code of Practice for Providers of Education and Training to Overseas Students 2018. It should be recognised that schools are not high-risk providers of education and this should be reflected both in the National Code and any changes to visa settings.

Given the importance of international education to schools in the Independent school sector I seek a meeting between the Council and AISSA member schools engaged in the international education sector on this critical strategy.

Yours sincerely



Carolyn Grantskalns
Chief Executive