

SUBMISSION TO THE SENATE SELECT COMMITTEE ON TEMPORARY MIGRATION

04 March 2020

Senator Raff Ciccone
Committee Chair
Department of the Senate
PO Box 6100
Canberra ACT 2600
Australia

Dear Senator,

Monash University welcomes the opportunity to provide a submission to the Senate Select Committee on Temporary Migration.

The focus of this submission is on international students and the Post Study Work Right (PSWR) visa. Monash University supports Universities Australia's submission to this Committee on temporary migration and recognises the positive contribution that temporary migration has on the Higher Education sector, wider society and the Australian economy.

Since its inception in 1958, Monash University has grown into a network of campuses, education centres and partnerships spanning the globe. With a presence on three continents, and approximately 80,000 students from over 170 countries, we are today Australia's largest university. Monash's international reach provides our students with unique global opportunities.

Monash University is a founding member of the Group of Eight, comprising Australia's leading universities. The breadth of our academic expertise, diversity of the student cohort, size and scale of our alumni network, and our on-campus resources all combine to provide a wealth of opportunity and experience.

The Select Committee's Terms of Reference are addressed as follows:

Government policy settings, including their impact on the employment prospects and social cohesion of Australians

As temporary migration is highly susceptible to changes in policies affecting permanent migration, it can impact the number of overseas students electing to study in Australia. International students inject billions of dollars into the Australian economy annually through their fees and expenditure on accommodation, utilities and hospitality.

The Australian Government and its relevant agencies should undertake community promotion initiatives to publicise the economic and social benefits that international students and graduates on PSWR visas bring. PSWR visas cannot be reviewed in isolation as they are an important driver for international students who are responsible for significant job creation.

The impact of temporary skilled and unskilled migration on Australia's labour market

Monash University does not advocate any major changes to the current visa policies related to temporary skilled and unskilled migration. The Committee should consider improving PSWR visa pathways and flexibility, including the extension of PSWR visas to graduates who have studied in Australia for one year. Implementing such changes will place Australia in a more competitive position with the United Kingdom and Canada, and increase its appeal as a study destination.

Policy responses to challenges posed by temporary migration

Monash University supports Universities Australia's submission claim to this Committee that there is no solid evidence that temporary residents are causing transport or accommodation strain. In 2018, according to the Australian Government Department of Education and Training, there were 693,750 international students studying in Australia, while the total population at that time was 25.2 million (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2019)¹. The entire international student population accounted for 2.75 per cent of the total population in December 2018. International students are a major source of revenue for the Higher Education sector. This revenue funds capital projects, teaching and research that benefits both domestic and international students, and society as a whole. The need for this revenue has grown over the last 10 years due to reductions in government research funding and more recently, the reintroduction of capping for Commonwealth Supported Places.

International students have financially contributed to improved campus infrastructure, including the creation and updating of on-campus accommodation; their direct investment contributes to greater employment opportunities and improved economic outcomes for local businesses.

Whether permanent migration offers better long-term benefits for Australia's economy, Australian workers and social cohesion

Monash University is committed to fostering a welcoming environment that provides all students with the opportunity to participate fully in campus life. Diversification of the student cohort at Monash University leads to greater social cohesion and an enhanced student experience. Diversity and inclusion at Monash is underpinned by the [Focus Monash Strategic Plan 2015–2020](#) and the [Monash University Ethics Statement](#).

Guided by the vision articulated in these documents, our staff and students will reflect the world we are working towards: diverse, inclusive, innovative and sustainable. We celebrate and appreciate our staff and student community by providing opportunities to acknowledge the diverse experiences and contributions made by our whole community through training, workshops, networks and awards. Belle Lim, PhD student at Monash was awarded the [2019 International Student of the Year – Premier's Award](#).

[The Monash Migration and Inclusion Centre](#) takes an interdisciplinary, evidence-based approach to understanding migration and social, economic and cultural inclusion. It is vital that the Government provides research funding to inform policy debates.

Monash University recognises the major contribution that permanent migration has made to the development of Australia's economy, global political standing and social cohesion. We believe that sustainable and focused permanent migration will continue to lead to improved trade opportunities and the growth of existing and emerging markets, as well as fostering more globally aware and networked local communities.

¹ Australian Bureau of Statistics (20 June 2019). *Media Release*.
<https://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/lookup/3101.0Media%20Release1Dec%202018>

The impact of wage theft, breaches of workplace rights and conditions, modern slavery and human trafficking on temporary migrants

A recent report released jointly by the Federal Treasury and Department of Home Affairs stipulated that international students are not the source of permanent skilled migrants they once were. In fact, more than 80 per cent of international students prefer to return to their home country (or another destination) to work after studying in Australia².

Monash University supports the promotion of fair work and the protection of temporary migrant rights. The University has a history of engaging with law enforcement agencies in the provision of orientation and ongoing support to our student community. We welcome Australian Government initiatives to assert the importance of remaining vigilant against criminal and unethical practices or the abuse of temporary residents.

Any related matters

In support of the Higher Education sector, it is vital that the Australian Government strives to improve perceptions of international education, both domestically and offshore, as well as improving, where possible, Australia's attraction as a key study destination.

Despite recent visa-related improvements, including the introduction of the Simplified Student Visa Framework, it is imperative the Government addresses global perceptions of Australia as having a slow and difficult visa application process.

Visa applicants are being rejected for having migration aspirations, even though the Australian Government has encouraged regional point-based visa initiatives. Visa rejection issues were raised by the Hon Christopher Pyne MP in 2013 and it remains a contentious issue that requires greater clarity by the Australian Government; in particular the Hon Christopher Pyne MP stated that:

“numerous complaints from Higher Education providers about extensive delays to visa processing times were received. Some students were being denied a student visa simply because they indicated on application forms that they aspired one day to apply for permanent residency through the skilled migration program ... This Government will also seek to reverse the broad public perception which emerged under Labor that somehow foreign students must be prevented from getting a student visa on the basis they might one day aspire to live permanently in our great country ... They are exactly the kind of people we want, and should want, at the front of our migration list – not at the end.”³

Education providers are discouraged from providing information on migration. This can make students vulnerable to exploitation as they may seek advice and support from unscrupulous individuals and businesses.

Monash University recommends that the Committee reviews relevant prohibitions and provides clearer parameters on migration information that can be given to international students with migration aspirations.

² <https://research.treasury.gov.au/sites/research.treasury.gov.au/files/2019-08/Shaping-a-Nation-1.pdf>

³ The Hon Christopher Pyne MP [A new architecture for international education, Australian International Education Conference Canberra](https://ministers.education.gov.au/pyne/new-architecture-international-education-australian-international-education-conference-canberra), Wednesday 9 October 2013. <https://ministers.education.gov.au/pyne/new-architecture-international-education-australian-international-education-conference-canberra>



I believe an ongoing consultation process is needed to ensure that any final and specific recommendation(s) to change temporary visas or associated regulations is informed of potential consequences.

Further information regarding this submission can be provided

Yours sincerely

Professor Margaret Gardner AC
President and Vice-Chancellor