



24 September 2019

Sophie Dunstone
Committee Secretary
Senate Legal and Constitutional Affairs Legislation Committee
PO Box 6100
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600
legcon.sen@aph.gov.au

Dear Ms Dunstone,

**Re: Inquiry into the New Skilled Regional Visa (Consequential Amendments) Bill 2019
[Provision]**

Universities Australia welcomes the opportunity to make a submission to the Senate inquiry into the above legislation. UA is the peak body for Australia's 39 comprehensive universities, distributed across both regional and metropolitan areas which educate more than a million students. In addition to their education mission, universities also play a significant civic role in their local community, and in many regions are a major employer and play a key role in the facilitation of jobs and economic growth.

Universities Australia supports the use of the migration program to encourage migration to regional Australia. In-bound migration to regional Australia is vital to economic and social capacity building.

International students contribute to the economic well-being of regional communities. Migration is also an important source of high-quality academic staff and research students for regional universities who, in turn, enhance the reputation and standing of these institutions and further contribute to the communities in which they are based.

Universities Australia welcomes any initiative that encourages skilled migrants to consider rural and regional Australia as a destination for employment and settlement. We acknowledge the policy intent to ensure that provisional skilled regional visa holders are not disadvantaged compared to holders of permanent skilled visas.

While supportive of the policy intent, UA advises caution when finalising the settings for these visas to ensure that the conditions associated with the new skilled regional visas are not so restrictive as to act as a deterrent to potential visa applicants. Visa settings which do not provide a degree of flexibility to allow for changes in individual personal or professional circumstances may be counterproductive.

Yours sincerely,

Catriona Jackson
Chief Executive