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Select Committee on Temporary Migration
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Go8 Submission on Temporary Migration

The Group of Eight (Go8) thanks the Select Committee for the opportunity to comment on the inquiry into Temporary Migration in Australia. Please note that this submission represents the views of the Go8 network, and member universities may make their own, more detailed submissions.

The Go8 represents Australia's leading research-intensive universities. As a collective, we:

- Are consistently the highest ranked Australian universities across the major international ranking systems (Academic Ranking of World Universities; Times Higher World University Rankings; QS World University Rankings);
- Educate one in three international students who choose to study higher education onshore in Australia;
- Educate more than one quarter of all higher education students in Australia;
- Contribute a total economic impact of around \$66 billion per year;
- Account for more than half of all collaborative Australian research papers;
- Employ 65% of Australia's 2019 highly cited (HiCi) university researchers; and
- Attract industry research funding that is twice that of the rest of the sector combined.

As such, and like many other research-intensive universities worldwide, international connections – whether through partnerships, collaborations, or the mobility of international staff and students – underpin many aspects of our operations.

Terms of Reference: government policy settings, including their impact on the employment prospects and social cohesion of Australians;

Temporary migration policies are essential in facilitating and supporting many of these international connections.

Every year, students from around 160 countries travel to Australia to enrol at Go8 universities, attracted by our strong reputation and performance in global ranking systems. These students have been estimated by London Economics to support more than 73,000 jobs in Australia and contribute \$18 billion to the national education exports annually, with every three Go8 international enrolments generating around \$1 million in economic impact.¹

Upon graduation, many then go on to seek the opportunity to continue to contribute to the economy via post-study work rights, which allow for up to four years living and working in Australia. Some will seek a permanent migration

¹ https://www.go8.edu.au/Go8_London-Economics-Report.pdf



outcome, however a 2018 Federal Treasury paper found that this only equates to around 16% in the longer term.² This suggests the vast majority of graduates reside in Australia on a temporary basis.

International exchange is also a fundamental pillar of high quality academic and research performance in a globalized, 21st century environment. Joint collaborations, project work and visiting scholar programmes allow the best and brightest minds from across the globe to work with domestic talent to solve problems relevant to Australia and elsewhere. Engagements such as these contribute to Australia's global reputation and relevance, and help to underpin the quality of Go8 research, 99 per cent of which is rated at world class or above by ERA.

As noted in previous Go8 parliamentary submissions, the benefits of a strong internationally connected sector are widespread, and include:

- **Building strong people to people relationships:** Education and research collaborations, and the ongoing personal connections that they facilitate, provide a powerful mechanism for building Australia's soft power capacity across the globe. As noted in the *Foreign Policy White Paper of 2017*, soft power allows for the "ability to influence the behaviour or thinking of others through the power of attraction and ideas",³ an ability that will only become more important in the current geo-political context.
- **By demonstrating the exceptional quality of our research, and capacity for solving global problems:** Producing high quality research brings multiple benefits, including improving Australia's performance in international ranking systems, and helping to cement our reputation for expertise with respect to issues of global interest and significance, such as health and medical care, quantum computing, crop and pasture production, counter-terrorism measures, and so on. Examples include a collaboration between the University of Adelaide and Haryana Agricultural University in India to protect wheat crops from rust;⁴ a surgical glue developed by researchers at The University of Sydney and Harvard and Northeastern universities that can seal a gunshot wound in 60 seconds;⁵ and work into developing models to improve preparedness for wildfires between the University of Melbourne and partners in the EU.⁶
- **By creating real change in global communities:** The Go8 publication *Excellence in India* provides a number of case studies outlining successful projects funded by the AISRF, that have not only forged strong connections across international teams, but have resulted in findings with a meaningful application for both countries. The application of results such as these, resulting in effective solutions to issues that improve people's lives, helps to promote Australia's international reputation as a high quality provider of research findings and innovative solutions.⁷
- **Attracting the best and brightest minds to come to Australia and boost our research capacity even further:** The stronger Australia's international reputation for research quality, the greater our capacity to attract the best and brightest minds to come to Australia, and build their careers here to the benefit of our nation. Including PhD students in collaborative projects, such as those funded by the AISRF and ACSRF, can also help to create longevity, building expert subject matter expertise and professional connections at an early career stage to ensure that these continue into the future. Providing targeted scholarships for PhD students from key regional partners can assist in attracting the highest quality students to Australia.

² <https://research.treasury.gov.au/sites/research.treasury.gov.au/files/2019-08/Shaping-a-Nation-1.pdf>, p.21

³ *Foreign Policy White Paper*, p.109

⁴ https://go8.edu.au/files/docs/article/go8_excellence-in-india_web.pdf

⁵ <https://go8.edu.au/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/Allies-In-Excellence.pdf>

⁶ <https://go8.edu.au/the-group-of-eight-and-eu>

⁷ https://go8.edu.au/files/docs/article/go8_excellence-in-india_web.pdf



The importance of maintaining these temporary people flows can be attested to by developments in the UK, which has recently instigated two new visa classes: the Global Talent visa, a fast-track process aimed at attracting talented scientists into the UK;⁸ and the restoration of post study work rights for graduates of UK universities.⁹ These decisions were made with the intention of positioning Britain for a world in which the prosperity and competitiveness of economies will be increasingly driven by technological and scientific expertise, driven by high quality research and innovation.

This has also been recognised by the United States. To Kelvin Droegemeier, Director of the Office of Science & Technology at the White House, it is “Breakthroughs in medicine, communications, transportation, physics, engineering, biology, and many other fields... [that] will help tackle the greatest challenges of our time and allow Americans to live safer, healthier, and more economically prosperous lives”.¹⁰ In a letter to the United States Research Community in September last year, he stated that “I know firsthand that the open and internationally collaborative nature of the United States research enterprise has been critical to our success in research, and that this success has underpinned our Nation’s prosperity and security”.¹¹

Similarly, it will be critical to maintain our temporary migration pathways if Australia is to remain a prosperous, competitive and engaged nation, and attractive collaborative partner for countries such as the US and UK.

- **The Go8 therefore recommends that the government maintain temporary migration visa settings, such as the post study work rights visa, and visa settings to facilitate the exchange and mobility of skilled professionals, academics and researchers.**

Terms of Reference: whether permanent migration offers better long-term benefits for Australia’s economy, Australian workers and social cohesion.

As noted above, our nation has been highly successful in attracting large cohorts of international students onshore to pursue study at Australian institutions. Many go on to seek post study work rights to allow them to use their newly developed skills and knowledge within the Australian economy. However, data indicates that most eventually either return home or pursue employment options elsewhere.

This suggests that it is beneficial to offer a range of options for prospective migrants, both temporary and permanent. Students and graduates contribute economically for the duration of the time they are in Australia, while experiencing our culture and building life-long relationships, within one of “the most successful multicultural society in the world”.¹² In an era of globalisation and global talent mobility, providing students with the opportunity to access a world class education, in a successful, peaceful, diverse society should not be underestimated. Our capacity to nurture the future leaders and professionals of the Indo-Pacific region, while building deep and lasting interpersonal connections, is one of the nation’s greatest soft power assets.

Permanent migration pathways offer Australia the opportunity to supplement domestic talent with skills and knowledge from around the world, to boost existing industries and develop new ones.

⁸ https://www.bbc.com/news/science-environment-51258068?utm_campaign=latitude%28s%29&utm_medium=email&utm_source=Revue%20newsletter

⁹ <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/uk-announces-2-year-post-study-work-visa-for-international-students>

¹⁰ <https://www.whitehouse.gov/articles/america-leading-world-science-technology/>

¹¹ <https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/OSTP-letter-to-the-US-research-community-september-2019.pdf>

¹² <https://www.homeaffairs.gov.au/LifeinAustralia/Documents/MulticulturalAffairs/english-multicultural-statement.pdf>



Together, they enable Australia to promote our value as a regional partner and support the ongoing prosperity of the Australian people.

- **The Go8 therefore recommends that both temporary and permanent migration options are required for a strong, engaged and competitive economy.**

The Go8 looks forward to being involved in further consultations about this important strategic area. We welcome any further opportunities to contribute to this important process.

Yours sincerely

VICKI THOMSON
CHIEF EXECUTIVE