



# MEDIA RELEASE

1 April 2020

## Urgent assistance needed for international students

The future of Australia's third largest export industry is at serious risk if governments continue to ignore the plight of international students stranded in Australia, TAFE Directors Australia (TDA) said today.

The CEO of TDA Craig Robertson said many international students in both higher education and vocational education and training (VET) have been left without financial support after their part time jobs have been lost as a result of business shutdowns due to COVID-19.

"These students have come to Australia to learn and acquire skill, and through no fault of their own, have seen their learning interrupted and their livelihoods threatened," he said.

Many education and training providers have been forced to delay programs or move online. In the VET sector, the transition to online learning is more challenging because much of the learning is hands-on and the rules do not always permit online delivery or assessment.

International education [contributed \\$37.6 billion](#) to the Australian economy last financial year, and is the country's third biggest export and largest service-based export, supporting 240,000 jobs.

Mr Robertson said that education and training institutes were doing their best to support international students at this difficult time, but it will not be enough.

"Many international students are part of the estimated 1.1 million temporary migrant workers who do not qualify for support under the government's Job Seeker safety net or the Job Keeper wage subsidy.

"Now is the time for governments which have ridden on the wave of economic growth brought by international students to help them in this time of need," Mr Robertson said.

TDA is seeking a number of measures to support international students including:

- Extending government financial support to international students who are facing hardship;
- Establishing channels through approved international providers or the charity sector to distribute relief to students in need of support;
- Calling on the federal government to re-affirm its underwriting of the Tuition Protection Scheme to safeguard students' pre-paid fees and ensure they can transfer providers, if needed;
- Removing delivery and assessment requirements in VET qualifications which can hamper delivery;

- Ensuring timely and clear announcements on policies for visas renewals for students in Australia, fee waivers for renewals required due to COVID-19 actions and access to post-study work rights for students unable to meet the current conditions;
- Issuing clear messaging from authorities that no exploitative, discriminatory or violent behaviours towards international students will be tolerated.

“The success of the international education industry in Australia is recognised world-wide, and it is entirely appropriate that we do what we can to assist thousands of students who have now been placed in a very difficult situation,” Mr Robertson said.

“Our reputation in the competitive world of international education stands or falls on the way we respond. The capacity of the sector to bounce back will depend on the way this is handled in these challenging times.

“It is right for Australia to support its residents first, but now is the time to think about all in our care,” Mr Robertson said.

See [TDA's full statement](#)

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TAFE Directors Australia is the peak national body representing 28 TAFE institutes, including six dual sector universities with TAFE divisions.