

Committee Secretary

Select Committee on Temporary Migration
PO Box 6021
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

Dear Committee,

The Australian Technology Network of Universities (ATN) welcomes the opportunity to contribute to this inquiry into the impact temporary migration has on the Australian economy, wages and jobs, social cohesion and workplace rights and conditions.

ATN is the peak body representing Australia's four most innovative and enterprising universities: University of Technology Sydney, Curtin University, RMIT University and University of South Australia.

ATN universities rank within the top 30 universities under 50 years old in the 2020 QS university rankings and top 100 universities under 50 years old in the 2019 Times Higher Education rankings. Our research is recognised internationally with 95% of our assessed research ranked at world class or above as demonstrated in the Excellence in Research for Australia (ERA) 2018 initiative.

Firstly, we address the impact of temporary migration on employment prospects, social cohesion and Australia's labour market. The temporary migration system is crucial to higher education because it allows both students and researchers to live, study and work in Australia. Many Australians receive similar and reciprocal benefits when they travel internationally.

Australia is an enticing destination for international students because they can study at globally recognised universities, gain work experience while they study, live and study in a safe and multicultural society, enjoy a high standard of living, and have the opportunity to work or do further study in Australia after they graduate.

Post-graduation work and study rights are an important feature of our current system of temporary migration,¹ as they are in other countries such as Canada and the United Kingdom. International students get an opportunity to practise and develop their skills in the workforce, or contribute through post-graduate research. We should use this as an opportunity for us to diversify, broaden and extend our economy.

¹ Degree graduates from an Australian institution can apply for two to four year visa to live, work and study in Australia - Temporary Graduate visa (subclass 485) (Post-Study Work stream).

Migrant workers do not harm the wages or participation rates of local workers.² On the contrary, a “one percentage point increase in the shares of migrants within an occupation or industry sector leads to an increase of 2.4 percentage points in the real wages of [Australian-born] workers. This suggests that skilled migrant workers drive positive benefits across Australia’s industry sectors through increased productivity, innovation and knowledge spillovers.”³

Temporary migration allows specialised and highly sought-after people with valuable expertise to come to Australia and enable high level research and innovation.⁴ International research collaborations which boost the knowledge, skills and productivity of the Australian economy rely on these people. Without temporary migration Australian researchers may have to migrate themselves for research collaboration, which risks Australia losing the benefits of having them and their research in Australia.

International education is Australia’s third largest export and largest service export,⁵ meaning that our economy (and, by extension, all Australians) benefit from it. Educating international students allows our universities to offer a fuller range of world class education to Australian students. International education also has benefits beyond the education sector – tourism, retail, hospitality and accommodation also benefit from these students and their families visiting Australia.

Secondly, we address the long-term benefits of permanent migration for Australia’s economy, Australian workers and social cohesion. A tangible and realistic pathway from temporary to permanent migration is needed to attract leading academics and researchers and encourage them to setup research centres in Australia.⁶ Australia’s universities and research institutes are collaborating and competing on a global scale and being able to attract highly skilled people from around the world boosts Australia’s research and innovation capacity.

The vast majority of international students return home after studying in Australia⁷ – this is an expected and positive outcome. Students returning home multiply the global connections with Australia, benefiting Australian businesses operating internationally, our standing in the international community and our research network. However, a balance is needed to ensure that Australia can retain and grow knowledge and skills in Australia as well.

² CEDA 2019, *Effects of temporary migration*, CEDA, Melbourne

³ Dockery, AM, Duncan A, Mavisakalyan A, Nguyen T and Seymour R 2019, ‘Finding a Place to Call Home: Immigration in Australia’, Bankwest Curtin Economics Centre, Bentley, *Focus on the States Series, Issue #7*, November 2019, p. 37

⁴ See, for example, Cochlear and CSL using temporary migration to boost advanced manufacturing in Australia. (CEDA 2019, *Effects of temporary migration*, CEDA, Melbourne, p. 20)

⁵ DFAT 2019, *Trade and investment at a glance 2019*, Australian Government, Canberra

⁶ Such as the Distinguished Talent visa (subclasses 124 and 858).

⁷ Only 16 per cent of student migrants move to a permanent visa after 20 years. (CEDA 2019, *Effects of temporary migration*, CEDA, Melbourne, p. 16)

Allowing some temporary migrants to transition into permanent residency encourages researchers and students to build long-lasting connections with Australia. Those with a pathway to permanent residency are more likely to build their relationships with other researchers and students, set up businesses and invest in Australia.

ATN would welcome the opportunity to provide further information on any of the issues raised in our brief submission, if requested.

Yours sincerely,

Luke Sheehy

Executive Director

Australian Technology Network of Universities

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