



Media release: English Australia's response to the government announcement around ending 'visa hopping' in the migration system

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The Minister for Home Affairs, The Hon Clare O'Neil, yesterday released a [statement](#) flagging yet more changes that restrict access to student visas. English Australia does not support these changes and acknowledges the views of its members that these changes form part of a sequence of government measures that are driving Australia towards a recession it does not need to have in the midst of a cost-of-living crisis.

English Australia notes that decades of investment, and the wonderful natural and cultural attractions Australians are so proud of, ensure that many tourists who come to Australia want to stay a little longer. Many tourists enjoy the fantastic services high-quality English Australia member colleges provide. Many of these tourists want to stay longer and achieve a life-changing level of English before they return to their home country. English Australia sees this as a success that should be applauded, not banned.

English Australia also notes that for many years prospective students have come to Australia on tourist visas, alone and with their families, so they can visit a location and an educational institution to ensure it is a good fit for their needs. These prospective students and their families are considering investing considerable funds and years of the formative period of their lives in Australia. It seems reasonable and understandable they want to be 100% sure they are making a well-informed decision. English Australia believes this represents the definition of a genuine student and should be applauded, not banned.

The statement by the Minister for Home Affairs instead claims that these people are subverting the visa system. English Australia and its members do not accept this statement. No evidence has been provided to support the claim that these applications are non-genuine to a greater degree than other cohorts or offshore applicants. No data or research has been provided to show student visa holders who previously held a visitor visa have any significant tendency to fail to comply with their visa obligations to a greater degree than other cohorts or offshore shore applicants.

English Australia notes that this represents yet another dramatic change being made without a basis in data or research and that yet again there has been no economic impact study on likely results of the changes.

English Australia draws attention to the Minister's statement referring to "strengthened offshore student visa integrity measures". English Australia has confirmed with the department that the only significant difference between the onshore and the offshore visa processing mechanisms is that offshore applicants who are refused a visa have no right to review or appeal that decision and so any unreasoned, unreasonable, or unlawful decisions cannot be forced into the light to be re-considered fairly and lawfully. Statistics of visa decisions reviewed and reversed by the Administrative Appeals Tribunal demonstrate that the number of invalid decisions is significant.



English Australia does not suggest that all visitor visa holders who apply for a student visa are genuine. English Australia believes that the Genuine Student requirement detailed in Ministerial Direction 106, a key part of the visa application process, is adequately designed to ensure that any application for a student visa is only granted where there are genuine study purposes. Further, the ESOS Framework requires that the institutions that agree to enrol these students, take appropriate steps to ensure they are genuine applicants.

English Australia believes this latest change unfairly punishes the many genuine students who initially come to Australia as tourists and then decide they wish to study here. It punishes high quality providers who invest in the services and programs that attract these applicants. It does this because government appears to believe that utilising the current system is too problematic if its decisions can be overturned by the AAT when they are unreasonable, unreasoned, or unlawful.

English Australia notes that the Minister's statement makes clear that the aim of these changes is to achieve a halving of net overseas migration by next financial year. English Australia notes that economists have argued that halving net migration is highly likely to drive Australia into a recession. English Australia also notes that the effort to halve the net migration is a part of the government's effort to hold migrants responsible for the housing crisis that is gripping Australia, and we call for an urgent injection of facts into this discussion. Research has demonstrated that international students have neither caused nor significantly impacted the housing crisis. Treasurer Jim Chalmers recently publicly acknowledged that any reduction of migrants would only have an impact on the housing crisis "at the margins at best". Government have commissioned no economic impact study of the changes they are introducing to show meaningful consideration of the consequences.

English Australia calls on government to take urgent measures to avoid driving Australia into a recession it doesn't need to have by causing severe and lasting damage to one of Australia's great economic success stories. International education is Australia's 4th largest export and the largest service export, it represents a significant proportion of the export earnings on the second largest service export (tourism), it employs more than a quarter of a million Australians, it funds the lion's share of research at universities, it subsidises the facilities, staffing, and program development for domestic students at universities, and it provides a much needed part-time labour force for Australia's retail, hospitality, child and aged-care and construction sectors. The sector also has enormous soft diplomacy impact through the 86% of international students who graduate and return to their home countries to start careers with a life-long connection with Australia.

English Australia urgently calls on government to change course, to support and applaud the international education sector, and avoid driving Australia into a recession we do not need to have in the midst of a housing and cost-of-living crisis.

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