



Meeting of Global Reputation Taskforce 3 February 2020

The Global Reputation Taskforce of the Council for International Education held its first meeting on Monday 3 February 2020. Initially announced on 21 January by the Hon Dan Tehan MP, Minister for Education, in response to the bushfire crisis and other future challenges to the reputation and operation of the sector, the Taskforce's remit has since expanded to include challenges posed by the spread of the novel coronavirus (2019-nCoV).

The Taskforce is chaired by the Hon Phil Honeywood, convener of the Expert Members of the Council for International Education and Chief Executive of the International Education Association of Australia. It comprises senior representatives from sector bodies and all states and territories, with the secretariat provided by the Department of Education, Skills and Employment. Today's meeting focussed on the novel coronavirus and agreeing to the scope of the taskforce.

Minister Tehan and Senator the Hon Simon Birmingham, Minister for Trade, Tourism and Investment, updated the Taskforce today on developments and actions that the Australian government is taking, based on advice of the Australian Health Protection Principal Committee. The Ministers intend to address future meetings.

The Taskforce committed to offering every international student who is either set to arrive or already here in Australia, the highest level of support and care. The Taskforce also extended its sympathies to the people of Wuhan and Hubei who are most directly impacted during this time.

Government agencies have collaborated on developing information for students and providers, including factsheets, establishing a hotline for students in Australia (1300 981 621, 8 am-8 pm AEDT), providing information in-country through the Australian diplomatic networks and launching an email information service [international.students@dese.gov.au]. The Australian Government's Study in Australia website provides aggregated resources from all agencies, with state and territory destination agencies also linking back to these resources [<https://www.studyinaustralia.gov.au/>].

The Taskforce welcomed commitment of the Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency and the Australian Skills Quality Authority (ASQA) to flexibly apply regulations. Notably, providers will be allowed to offer options of online education and flexibility around commencement for affected students so that they may fulfil their visa requirements. ASQA also updated the taskforce on their latest advice to providers and students.

The Taskforce raised a number of ideas to support the sector and help students manage this difficult situation, committing to personally support affected students. It noted the importance of providing clear communication to students and agents. States and territories are actively supporting homestays who are caring for self-quarantined students and the Taskforce supports this and other efforts these jurisdictions have underway.

The Taskforce agreed on the importance of working closely with Chinese partners to best manage the interests of affected students already here, those remaining in China and those who may be in other countries.

It also agreed to ensure that students who have legitimately arrived in Australia since 1 February (when quarantine measures were upgraded) are supported so that they may complete their courses of study.

Participants noted the importance of data quantifying the number of affected students in Australia and abroad. This will help providers and states and territories gauge student movements and ensure they receive the appropriate care.

The Taskforce will reconvene next week, and continue to do so as needed, to provide advice to government and ensure that students and the sector are supported.