

# DRAFT NATIONAL STRATEGY FOR INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION

Response to the Consultation

May 2015

**RESEARCH  
AUSTRALIA**

AN ALLIANCE FOR DISCOVERIES IN HEALTH



## ABOUT RESEARCH AUSTRALIA

Research Australia is an alliance of 160 members and supporters advocating for health and medical research in Australia. Research Australia's activities are funded by its members, donors and supporters from leading research organisations, academic institutions, philanthropy, community special interest groups, peak industry bodies, biotechnology and pharmaceutical companies, small businesses and corporate Australia. It reflects the views of its diverse membership and represents the interests of the broader community.

Research Australia's mission is to make health and medical research a higher priority for the nation. We have four goals that support this mission:

- A society that is well informed and values the benefits of health and medical research.
- Greater investment in health and medical research from all sources.
- Ensure Australia captures the benefits of health and medical research.
- Promote Australia's global position in health and medical research.

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# DRAFT NATIONAL STRATEGY FOR INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION

## RESPONSE TO THE CONSULTATION

### INTRODUCTION

In April 2015 the Minister for Education and Training, the Hon. Christopher Pyne MP issued the *Draft National Strategy for International Education* for consultation.

The Discussion Paper made specific reference to Australian universities' reputation for research excellence as a key factor in making Australia an attractive destination for overseas students. Research Australia's response specifically addresses this aspect of the Discussion paper and the strategy.

The consultation invited the electronic submission of responses to a number of specific questions. The questions, and Research Australia's responses, are reproduced below. Only those questions to which Research Australia provided a response are reproduced.

## RESPONSES TO THE QUESTIONS

### **Please outline your (or your organisation's) interest in Australian international education. Add any other relevant content.**

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Our membership includes the majority of the universities undertaking health and medical research and providing postgraduate research training.

### **Does the vision statement in the draft strategy represent Australia's aspirations for international education?**

Research Australia welcomes the recognition in the report of the importance of Australian universities' reputation for research excellence as a key factor in making Australia an attractive destination for overseas students. The continued excellence of Australian research is an area where the strategy for international education aligns with Australia's broader national interest. The importance of Australian publicly funded research to our largest services export provides further weight to the existing arguments for greater public investment in research in our higher education institutions.

If there is a component of the Vision that is lacking, it is the scope for international students to enrich the experience of Australian students studying domestically and to contribute to the advancement of Australian research.

### **Are any significant goals for international education not adequately covered?**

The goals for international education identified by the Strategy are generally appropriate.

## Can you identify the strategic actions which best support your goals for international education?

The Strategy recognises the Australia's reputation for research excellence as an important factor in attracting international students. Under Action 1.2, the Strategy commits the Government to providing base research funding, competitive grants and research fellowships; and to investing in the National Collaborative Research Infrastructure Strategy. The reality is that the indirect costs of research continue to be underfunded; funding for competitive grants from both the NHMRC and ARC have been falling in real and/or nominal terms for several years and are projected in the latest Budget to continue to do so; and NCRIS funding is a year to year proposition with no adjustment for inflation and is being funded in the next year by cutting the funding available to universities for indirect research costs under the Sustainable Research Excellence Program. If Australia is serious about its reputation for research excellence, the most important action it can take is to urgently address the decline in public research funding. This includes **providing longer term planning for research infrastructure and funding certainty in the order of 7 years, not year to year.**

In similar manner, the proposed initiatives under Action 2.2 to promote international research collaboration are welcome but will not be succeed if they simply divert funds from existing NHMRC and ARC competitive grants programs.

## What would you like to see progressed as a priority for the strategy in the first year?

Increase Australian Government funding for research, in particular providing longer term (i.e. 7 year) certainty in funding for the NCRIS.

## Is there anything else you would like to raise that will help develop the final National Strategy for International Education?

Australia's continued desirability as a destination for international students is dependent on many factors but the reputation for excellence and the international standing of our universities is paramount. As the paper acknowledges, this reputation is closely linked to the excellence of Australian research but it cannot be maintained without more support from the Commonwealth Government. At a minimum, the Government needs to reverse the decline in funding levels for competitive research grant programs over the Budget forward estimates period and provide viable long term funding for NCRIS.

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