



AUSTRALIAN BUSINESS DEANS COUNCIL

30 November 2022

Online submission

Dear Employment Taskforce,

Re: Employment Whitepaper Consultation

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the scope and themes of the proposed Employment White Paper.

The Australian Business Deans Council (ABDC) is the peak body and collective voice of Australia's university business schools that graduate 17% of all domestic students — and 46% of international students. Our mission is to make business schools better.

In this submission, the ABDC wishes to provide context and factors to consider concerning two themes identified in the Terms of Reference:

- 5.3 Skills, education and training, upskilling and reskilling, including in transitioning sectors and regions.
- 5.4 Migration settings as a complement to the domestic workforce.

Skills, education and training, upskilling and reskilling, including in transitioning sectors and regions.

A focal area for business schools is supporting skills, education and training in meeting Australia's net-zero targets. Business schools play a key role in shaping the new governance, risk management, leadership and operational practices needed to transition the economy to net zero.

The ABDC has endorsed a [Declaration on Climate Action](#) to establish education standards and identify the threshold attributes of graduates to contribute to net zero transition. In this, the ABDC is collaborating with the Australia-New Zealand Chapter of Principles of Responsible Management Education (PRME) to build forums to share best practices and coordinate action.

The ABDC has also appointed a [Climate Action Fellow](#) to boost climate change action and improve industry engagement.

While there is an understandable emphasis on the occupations in which Australia is experiencing acute skills shortages, the Employment Whitepaper's recommendations should balance that with the need for general and technical skills to support the net-zero transition.

This could involve the government working with higher education, vocational education and business to define the elements of capabilities that are transferable across industries and occupations. This would provide the basis for more flexible forms of assessment better suited to the adaptability and the rapidly changing nature of our future workforce.

The Employment Whitepaper should investigate what policy changes may be desirable to simplify approvals by TEQSA of short courses and micro-credentials. Opportunities to upskill



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and reskill should be delivered in flexible ways — for example, ‘stacking’ short courses or micro-credentials to provide whole or partial degrees depending on student need.

Migration settings as a complement to the domestic workforce.

As the peak body for Australian business schools, the ABDC represents a significant part of Australia’s international education sector, with our members graduating 46% of international students who study in Australia.

International students contribute significantly to the Australian economy and our multicultural community when enrolled on our domestic campuses.

A primary factor influencing international student enrolment in Australian universities is the opportunity to access employment post-study through a post-study work rights (PSWR) visa. While there is considerable demand among international graduates of our universities to stay in Australia and contribute to the Australian economy, the current PSWR settings need to provide a coherent path to permanent residency and not prevent students from accessing employment in the areas in which they have trained.

Recent extensions to this PSWR scheme in some areas of study are welcome. Still, we need migration settings that provide a pathway to permanent residency that are of benefit to, and easily understood by, potential employers of our international graduates.

As higher education policy expert Dr Andrew Norton says: ‘In recent years employer-sponsored visas have made up 30 to 38 per cent of the overall skilled migration program, but only 7 to 10 per cent of former 485 visa skilled migration, suggesting that employers aren’t rushing to retain former international students.’

It can take time for any graduate to be employed successfully in a field of study. Short post-study work rights with no clear pathway to permanent residency can make it unviable for employers to invest time and resources in onboarding international graduates and discourage highly skilled international students from remaining in Australia.

The ABDC contends there should be carefully targeted campaigns — that involve all stakeholders, including governments and the higher education sector — to promote the value of international students as interns and the ability of international graduates to meet employer needs.

Regards,

Professor Keryn Chalmers
President, Australian Business Deans Council