

International education and students

An Australian success story — driving economic growth, filling workforce gaps and strengthening Australia’s place in the world.

International education and students make Australia stronger. The sector is a major export industry, workforce enabler and strategic advantage for the nation.

At a time of productivity challenges, labour shortages and growing geopolitical competition, international education is helping secure Australia’s future.

**It’s not a policy problem to manage
— it’s a national strength to back.**

Economic impact

A \$55 billion export powerhouse



\$55 billion

export revenue generated in 2025



#2 export industry

second only to mining

International education is one of Australia’s most valuable export sectors and a major contributor to national prosperity. It helps fund the Australia we know and love, generating enough economic activity to:



**Pay 595,000
nurses annually**



**Fund the NDIS
for a year**

Supporting jobs nationwide



250,000

jobs supported across all major sectors, including:

- education
- hospitality
- retail
- tourism
- accommodation
- local services.

Fueling economic growth



contributed over half

of GDP growth in 2023

As Australia recovered from the COVID-19 pandemic, international students singlehandedly kept the economy out of recession, contributing **0.8 percentage points of Australia’s 1.5 per cent GDP growth.**

International education and students help underpin the services and infrastructure Australians rely on every day.



Supporting local businesses and communities



\$14 billion

international student visitor spend in 2025

which equates to



37 per cent

of all international visitor spend

International students support local economies through everyday spending on:

- housing
- transport
- food
- retail
- entertainment.

Driving tourism



69 per cent

of international tourism spend is generated by international education (source: Austrade)

Net contributors to the budget

International students:

- pay income tax
- pay GST
- spend heavily in local economies
- have limited access to government benefits.

International students contribute more to public finances than they draw from them.

Workforce and skills

Helping keep Australia working

4.3 per cent

unemployment

International students help businesses fill critical labour shortages, keeping Australia's unemployment rate low.

69 per cent

of international students

work part-time in critical sectors, including:

- accommodation and food services
- retail trade
- health care and social assistance.

Backing regional Australia

While only eight per cent of international students study in regional Australia, those who do are more likely to:

- study health and education
- fill regional workforce shortages
- pursue migration pathways aligned to community need.

Building Australia's future workforce

Only a minority of international students seek permanent residency. Those who stay often:

- enter professions in shortage
- become long-term taxpayers
- help build sovereign capability and productivity.





Diplomacy and strategic value

International students are one of Australia's greatest sources of soft power. Our international education sector is a strategic advantage, strengthening Australia's diplomacy, regional influence and global standing.

Building lifelong connections



international students educated
by Australian universities
over the last decade

Many return home with:

- strong ties to Australia
- positive perceptions of our country
- lifelong professional connections.

Strengthening regional relationships

Many ASEAN leaders and senior officials studied in Australia. These alumni ties help:

- strengthen diplomacy
- support trade relationships
- deepen regional trust and cooperation.

Supporting national security

International education contributes to:

- regional stability
- strategic partnerships
- economic resilience
- Australia's Indo-Pacific engagement.

Recognised as a strategic national asset

Successive governments have identified international education as central to Australia's:

- soft power
- diplomacy
- regional influence
- strategic interests.

Australia cannot afford to take international education for granted.

This great Australian success story helps:

- **power** the economy
- **fill** workforce shortages
- **keep** businesses open
- **strengthen** Australia's global influence.

International education is not just an export.
It's a strategic national asset — one that helps drive Australia's prosperity, competitiveness and standing in the world — **and it must be recognised, protected and backed accordingly.**

