



26th September 2024

Committee Secretary

Education and Employment Legislation Committee

Dear Committee Members,

International Student Cap on Aviation Flight Schools

Founded in 1914, the Royal Victorian Aero Club (RVC) is Australia's oldest pilot training organisation and one of the oldest in the world. We are a non-profit company limited by guarantee. We are regulated both as a Registered Training Organisation (RTO) and by the Civil Aviation Safety Authority (CASA) we are pleased to make a submission to the inquiry into the *Education Services for Overseas Students (ESOS) Amendment (Quality and Integrity) Bill 2024*.

We write to express our dismay at the likely impact of applying the government's caps on international student visas to Australia's reputation in the aviation training world.

Pilot training is unlike any other Vocational Education Training (VET) training, it is highly regulated and very expensive. Aspiring commercial pilots looking to be trained in Australia undertake a diploma not to get the diploma, but to obtain a commercial pilot's licence in the most efficient manner and in a country whose licenses are respected globally.

Students who wish to game the student visa system will not be studying pilot training due to the cost of the training courses. Foreign graduates cannot work in Australia and typically return to their country of origin to find work. An excellent example is in India and China where there is an incredible pilot shortage.

Australia is rightly recognised as a globally appealing place for pilot training. We are assisting address a global shortage of pilots, the standard of training is excellent and costs are globally competitive. While pilot licences are issued nationally, commercial and airline transport pilot licences issued in Australia meet an international standard and are relatively easily converted in another country which is why the student come to Australia to train.

This global reputation will suffer as a result of applying this policy to flying schools.

The announcement made by the Minister of Education included; *"This is about setting up the system in a better and fairer way so it's not only a lucky few universities that benefit but the whole sector,"* this statement appears at odds with the decision to limit RVAC to only three international students next year despite many years of successful international student education and excellent audit results from Commonwealth Register of Institutions and Courses for Overseas Students (CRICOS) and Australian Skills Quality Authority (ASQA).

A number of elements of last month's Aviation White Paper are being undermined by these cuts. The Minister of Infrastructure said *"Aviation is a complex and diverse ecosystem, built on the back of the General Aviation sector. General Aviation businesses provide the skills, innovation and expertise that underpins Australian aviation, and are the training ground for our next generation of aviation professionals. The government is committed to growing General Aviation into the future."* and *"Shortages of aviation workers are holding back parts of the aviation industry*

and putting pressure on remaining teams. We will work with the industry to simplify training pathways without compromising safety, and to plan for future skills and workforce needs.”

At RVAC international students are enrolled in the same course as domestic students and deliver economies of scale during training. International students do not hinder the delivery of domestic training, they build diversity, inclusion and assist with the post COVID growth in the aviation training sector.

RVAC has developed a relationship with an international airline to train their pilots here in Australia. The result will increase RVAC employment opportunities by 40% within three years and millions of dollars likely to be spent in a regional area of Victoria. This cap on international students could end an otherwise excellent opportunity for growth and introduces sovereign risk to our contract negotiations.

We note there are a number of exemptions to the National Planning Level and urge the committee to add pilot training to that list.

Yours faithfully

Anthony Jones

President

Royal Victorian Aero Club