

## Inquiry into Australia's tourism and international education sectors

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James Cook University (JCU) welcomes the opportunity to provide comment to the Trade Subcommittee of the Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade.

We take this opportunity to brief the Subcommittee on JCU's approach to international education and seek to highlight the benefits that can accrue to northern Queensland and Australia of leveraging our activity.

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### **JCU International Profile**

JCU is unique within the Australian university sector given a) our Singapore campus, b) our world-leading academic specialisations, and c) our regional development mission in northern Queensland and the Asia Pacific and Tropics more broadly.

JCU students (domestic and international) have the opportunity for mobility between campuses – City State/Capital/Regional – allowing access to a broad range of high quality educational and industry experiences with shared curriculum and teaching across Australian and Singaporean campuses; this represents a strong value proposition for students.

JCU has expertise to export to support neighbouring countries (particularly the Indo Pacific and South East Asia) to meet their targets for regional, rural and remote skilled workforce development (for example health systems and delivery). Expertise in generalist, multi-disciplinary training is required for the Tropics.

### **Our outbound profile**

JCU has the second highest participation rate, of all Australian universities, of students travelling overseas as part of their studies, and the highest rate for students travelling to the Indo Pacific (60%, national average is 49%). 65% of JCU outbound international experiences are for internships/ work-integrated-learning/placements (national average is 20%).

There is further opportunity to develop JCU's domestic student international experiences through the Singapore campus with placements, internships and WIL in Singapore in IT, business and finance providing the basis for internationalising the sustainable development of northern Queensland.

Our participation rates for equity groups in these high-quality international learning experiences are significantly higher than the national average. This is a remarkable achievement, supported by programs such as the New Colombo Plan, more so given that JCU, unlike many metro universities, is not financially able to offer institutional scholarships to support this mobility.

- New Colombo Plan
  - 2020 - 176 students in 11 projects
  - 2021 - 327 students in 16 projects
  - 2022 - 122 students in 7 projects
  - Currently: 583 students in 47 projects = \$1,922,000

More than half the total number of students studying abroad are in the Solomon Islands and PNG, with strong representation also in Fiji and Thailand.

JCU's Indigenous student participation in international study is 20% (national average is 18%), JCU's low-SES student participation is 27% (national average is 18%).

### **Our Inbound Profile**

Students from North America, South Asia and Europe are the greatest source regions coming to study in northern Queensland in disciplines where we are world leading. Students choose JCU to study environmental studies, marine science and tropical health & medicine using facilities such as the Orpheus Island Research Station, the Daintree Rainforest Observatory, the Cyclone Testing Station (disaster preparedness) and specialist rural and remote medical training. These students are not typically interested in Post Study Work Rights.

Students from PNG, Asia Pacific, Africa and the Tropics more broadly also chose JCU in a range of study areas reflecting our commitment to the Tropics and to our northern neighbouring countries – these students are often supported through the Australia Awards and bring international experiences and vibrancy to our campuses. They typically return to their home countries to take up professional roles of importance and do not generally seek Post Study Work Rights.

This makes JCU different to other universities in the sector, and international students (from over 104 countries) have a very strong sense of belonging given the integrated mix of international and domestic students in the cohort.

2022 commencing to JCUA (Townsville & Cairns) = Total 605

- The Americas 193
- South Asia 126
- Europe 113
- Africa, Middle East and Oceania 82
- Greater China 49
- ASEAN & Central Asia 42

### **Our Singapore Campus**

JCU has operated in Singapore since 2003. The campus was established in Singapore through a partnership with the Standards, Productivity and Innovation Board (known as SPRING Singapore), and became wholly-owned by JCU in 2011. The shared vision for Singapore and JCU was to promote quality education for the benefit of countries in the Asia Pacific. JCU's position within Singapore

represents a long-term commitment making it unique in the City State, where other institutions have come and gone.

Singapore is our second largest campus, after Townsville, with over 4,500 students. There is a focus on Business, Information Technology, Psychology, Education, Science, Commerce, Accounting, Aquaculture, Environmental Science, Games Design, Tourism and Hospitality – as well as Pathways and HDR programs. The campus hosts Study Abroad students & Inter-campus Exchange Programs for 4 or 8 months.

The Singapore campus hosts a diverse student body coming from 40+ countries. 2022 commencing students at JCUS came from:

- Greater China 1,342
- ASEAN & Central Asia 440
- South Asia 187
- Europe and Americas 87
- Africa, Middle East and Oceania 4

The Singapore campus has a growing research profile having been successful in two grants from A\*Star for aquaculture through the Tropical Futures Institute (including one for S\$10m).

Importantly, the campus has facilitated business delegations from North Queensland who have travelled for meetings to explore, for example, the opportunities available under the Singapore Australia Free-Trade Agreement and the Australia-Singapore Military Training Initiative.

## **Tourism**

JCU's Australian campuses and world-class research assets ([Orpheus Island](#), the [Daintree Rainforest Observatory](#), and [Fletcherview Station](#)) are critical infrastructure that supports the promotion of northern Queensland as an important site of destination-travel. Townsville, in itself, is a world-leading centre of marine science with the location of the Australian Institute of Marine Science, the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority and James Cook University creating a critical mass that jointly positions the world-leading research and practice activity in this regional location. The Reef HQ Great Barrier Reef Aquarium redevelopment is a keystone project that is underway to support Townsville as an international education and tourist destination.

Tourism studies that JCU students can undertake in Australia and in Singapore are critical to providing the skilled workforce required for the broader Asia Pacific region. JCU's tourism research conducted by academics based in Australia and Singapore provides an important evidence base for local enterprise and government strategy in both countries (see for example, [this work](#) supported by DFAT).

JCU as an anchor institution in northern Queensland has long enabled the connection of local tourism enterprises to opportunities available in and with the Asia Pacific through making our facilities, people and research available, including through, for example, [business delegations](#).

**Key Recommendations/Opportunities:**

- That the New Colombo Plan continues to enable JCU's students to engage in high-quality industry-based experiences in countries of high political importance to Northern Australia.
- That the Australia Awards continues to enable scholars from the Tropics to study at JCU in areas of our research expertise and of critical importance to their home countries.
- That the Australian Government, through diplomatic and trade support, promotes JCU's international expertise in tropical health and medicine/workforce development, aquaculture, disaster resilience, and ecology and environmental management focussing on an uplift in capability in the Asia Pacific and Tropics more broadly.
- That the Australian Government develops policy relating to Post Study Work Rights that has the ability to support the place-based ambitions and needs of northern Queensland, and can take advantage of the unique international student profile that JCU has. Possibilities include extending PSWR to JCU students who complete their degrees at JCU Singapore in areas of Australian, or northern Queensland labour shortages (for example, Education).
- That the Australian Government leads industry supported recognition of Australian qualifications gained in Singapore, for example Psychology, in order that to provide new pathways for international education and skilled migration to Australia.
- That the Australian Government enables JCU's Singaporean-based students to complete internships and work experience in northern Queensland through appropriate visa frameworks.
- That the Australian Government leverages the research capacity, and student mobility, embedded and supported in JCU's campuses in Australia and Singapore, to enable sustainable tourism development in northern Australia and the Asia Pacific.