
Opening Statement: Senate Education and Employment Legislation Committee inquiry into the provisions of the *Education Services for Overseas Students Amendment (Quality and Integrity) Bill 2024* (the ESOS Bill) held on 6 September 2024.

Good afternoon.

My name is Andrew Parfitt and I am Vice-Chancellor of the University of Technology Sydney.

In the interests of time, I'll simply raise a number of concerns I have about the recent allocation of indicative student cap numbers and suggest how the process could be improved to benefit the national interest.

Let me use UTS as a case study. The Department has indicated that we will likely be allocated 4800 new overseas commencements in 2025, which on the surface looks adequate, being similar to our numbers before the pandemic, as well as in 2023 and 2024.

But it doesn't recognise that we plan over a five-year rolling period and intended to moderately increase our international student enrolment next year by about 15%. This was part of a long-term COVID recovery strategy, for which we have been laying the groundwork to ensure we maintain diversification and quality in our international student cohort.

UTS and many other universities have been running significant deficits since COVID with a gradual return to surplus to minimise the impact on students and staff. The intent has been to gradually build our international student numbers back to a responsible 30% of our total, to return to a sustainable operating position by 2027. A single allocation for 2025 does not allow us to do this. We know of other universities in the same situation.

I would urge the Committee to firstly recommend that we pause the NPL implementation until we have a multi-year plan that accounts for universities' current circumstances and strategies, negotiates a reasonable final position and an agreement to achieve that in a defined timeframe.

In the meantime, I would urge the Committee to also require an increase in transparency around the interim arrangements and support the intent to ensure that quality applications from reliable institutions have priority.

Thank you.

Professor Andrew Parfitt
Vice-Chancellor and President
University of Technology Sydney