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Committee Secretary
Education and Employment Legislation Committee

Dear Committee Members,

International Student Cap on Aviation Flight Schools

The Royal Federation of Aero Clubs Australia (RFACA) represents community owned flying clubs across the country whose pilot members number in the thousands flying hundreds of different aircraft and we are pleased to make a submission to the inquiry into the *Education Services for Overseas Students (ESOS) Amendment (Quality and Integrity) Bill 2024* (the Bill).

There are multiple aeroclubs that offer flight training and have we have recently been informed of a cap on the quantity of international students. The aviation training sector is responsible for most of the employment in aeroclubs, especially in regional areas whom are only now recovering from the economic slump of COVID.

The Federation is disappointed the Education Services for Overseas Students Amendment (Quality and Integrity) Bill 2024 (ESOS Bill) will result in arbitrary caps being imposed on VET providers of flight training to international students. Our member clubs have received a letter that states "*Department of Employment and Workplace Relations considered your and the sector's circumstances.*" The Federation disagree with the consideration made by the Department as it will reduce the activity in the entire flight training sector.

The Aviation White Paper recently setout the following priorities for General Aviation (GA) that are directly impacted by the decision to reduce international student numbers on flight schools:

- **Improve training pathways for aviation maintenance engineers** through modular licensing, aligning training requirements, and recognising licences from authorities with similar standards to support reducing the shortage of engineers available to service the GA sector
- **Simplify the visa process for pilots and other highly skilled aviation workers** to address the shortage of pilots and instructors in the GA sector and allow easier entry into the Australian labour market

The consideration made by the Department of Employment and Workplace Relations appears inadequate when the Aviation White Paper states the above issues within the sector.

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.*"

The commercial pilot training for international students is dominated by universities, with their numbers capped they will market aggressively in the domestic sector to maintain their total student numbers. This will negatively impact all aeroclubs and any VET organisation that offers flight training in every region of Australia.

The recently announced Aviation White Paper was accompanied by these remarks from the Minister of Infrastructure, the Minister 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.”

The consideration made by the Department of Employment and Workplace Relations will systematically reduce activity in the flight training sector and exacerbate existing challenges expressed by the Minister of Infrastructure.

The Aeroclubs whom have international students are enrolled in the same course as domestic students and do not hinder the delivery of training, they build diversity and inclusion, economies of scale and provide meaningful employment opportunities for the grass roots of aviation.

Australia is a renowned location for flight training internationally, this cap on numbers makes Australia less attractive for international airlines to enter into agreements with flight training organisations in Australia and introduces a sovereign risk and discourages new entrants such as growing regional flying clubs to the market.

The reduction of international students cap on aviation flight training is to the detriment of the successful delivery of the recently announced Aviation White Paper and we respectfully request an exemption from these caps be applied to the aviation training industry, in particular aeroclubs offering flight training.

Thankyou for providing an opportunity to provide a submission and the Royal Federation of Aero Clubs of Australia can make itself available for any questions from the Committee.

Yours Faithfully

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