



John Barilaro

Deputy Premier

Dominic Perrottet

Treasurer

Stuart Ayres

Minister for Jobs, Investment, Tourism and Western Sydney

MEDIA RELEASE

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PILOT PLAN TO RETURN INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS

A pilot plan that will see the phased return of fully vaccinated international students to NSW has been given the green light by the Commonwealth Government, with the first flight touching down by the end of this year.

Accommodation provider Scape has been confirmed to house the returning students for a 14-day quarantine in Redfern, at a building retrofitted to accommodate up to 650 students to COVIDSafe standards approved by NSW Health and NSW Police.

Deputy Premier and Minister for Regional New South Wales, Industry and Trade John Barilaro said the staggered return of students was stage one of a pilot that would slowly expand and evolve, as vaccination rates continue to rise in NSW and internationally.

“The international education sector sustains thousands of jobs across NSW, and I’m proud that NSW is leading the way with the return of international students to our shores,” Mr Barilaro said.

“The safety of the people of NSW is paramount and we are taking no risks. All participating students will be required to be fully vaccinated with a TGA-recognised COVID-19 vaccine, and strict quarantine protocols will be in place.

“Importantly, this plan will not come at the expense of any Australian citizen or resident wishing to return home.”

Treasurer Dominic Perrottet said the program was vital to the State’s economic recovery, creating jobs and restoring growth.

“International education plays an important role in connecting NSW to the world,” Mr Perrottet said. “As we implement a range of efforts to reboot our economy, rebuilding the sector - which was worth \$14.6 billion to NSW in 2019 - is a key part of our efforts.”

Education partners including Australian Catholic University, Macquarie University, The University of Newcastle, The University of Sydney, UNSW, UTS, University of Wollongong and Western Sydney University, plus independent providers the International College of Management Sydney, Kaplan, Navitas, RedHill and Study Group, have signed up to the industry-funded pilot plan.

Minister for Jobs, Investment, Tourism and Western Sydney Stuart Ayres said NSW was the top destination in Australia for international students.

“More than 57,000 students are currently overseas, with many desperate to return, resume their studies, part-time jobs, connect with friends and continue their journey in our world-leading institutions,” Mr Ayres said.

The first phase of the pilot plan is anticipated to bring back 500 international students to NSW on chartered flights, paid for by the students, by the end of the year.

Scape CEO Anouk Darling said the company was proud to be involved in the pilot.

“Our Scape team are proud to partner with the NSW Government and our world class education sector, here in NSW, to welcome our returning international students into our most advanced and COVID-safe student accommodation facility at Scape Redfern,” Ms Darling said.

The announcement was welcomed by the higher education sector with Professor Barney Glover AO, Governor of the NSW Vice-Chancellors’ Committee thanking the NSW Government.

“After over 18 months of planning, we are delighted that both the Australian and NSW Government are supportive of a pilot plan for an incremental reopening of our borders to our international students,” Mr Glover said.

Council of International Students Australia President, Belle Lim, welcomed the detailed planning and collaborative approach.

“We all want international students back on campus, enjoying the unique learning, work and life experience that only studying in Australia can deliver. We support the cautious approach and look forward to growing the number of students returning to NSW over time,” Ms Lim said.

CEO of Independent Higher Education Australia Simon Finn said the private higher education sector welcomes the pilot’s launch and commends the NSW Government’s unwavering focus on community safety, international student welfare and rebuilding the state economy.

“By working with the Independent Higher Education Australia (IHEA) on this pilot from the beginning, the NSW Government has demonstrated its commitment to supporting both the private and public education sector,” Mr Finn said.

Participating education providers will contact students to progress an expression of interest for the pilot plan.

Vision of international students can be found [here](#).

MEDIA: Sarah Bannerman | Deputy Premier | 0458 808 117
Amber Muir | Treasurer | 0447 695 520
Sophie Hull | Minister Ayres | 0447 583 756