



Mon 14/02/2022 8:59 PM

Andrew.Robertson

Advice on International Students

Dear Chris

CONTROLLED BORDER TRANSITION ARRANGEMENTS FOR INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS

On 19 January 2022, I provided advice to the Premier regarding the transition of the WA border, which I recommended should be postponed to after 05 February 2022 and reviewed within 4 weeks, in order to achieve optimal health management of the anticipated outbreak and mitigate the expected impact on the community. Since this time, the vaccination rate has increased and the outbreak in the Perth and Peel regions has increased by only a modest amount, with the majority of local cases continuing to be found in people who are in quarantine, rather than 'mystery' or unlinked cases.

I understand that the State is under increasing pressure from various industries to allow groups to enter WA. From a Public Health perspective, there is a potential benefit to having a staged approach to entry into WA, which would increase our international and domestic arrivals gradually, although, I expect the benefits of this will be short lived, as our own local cases increase.

On consideration of various groups that have wanted to achieve access to the State ahead of the border opening, it has been brought to my attention that International Students, as a cohort, would be a reasonable group to allow entry. International Students have suffered as a result of the prolonged border closure and this has had a flow-on effect to Universities and then to the industries for which they may work and/or contribute to, through research. The International Student cohort is a relatively small cohort, so the additional cases of COVID-19 that might occur in the State as a result of this cohort could be estimated to be small.

My office has recently undertaken discussions with the Department of Jobs, Tourism, Science and Innovation in which they sought advice on behalf of the major five Universities in WA to get International Students into the State and quarantine them safely. It would seem the Universities have various suitable contingencies to accommodate international students in a manner that would not put the community at an increased risk. Their quarantine restrictions would need to be the same as other international or domestic travellers, and suitable premises that satisfy the Police would need to be used for quarantine. I do not recommend they share premises outside of a usual family or known "household" group.

International students are generally exceptionally well supported by the Universities during the initial arrival into WA, and their entry and quarantine should not require many additional resources. Many international students are already located in Australia, with many in other jurisdictions in anticipation of the proposed 5 February border opening, so their arrival would not necessarily need to be above the international flight cap, although, this could be considered. These students are effectively 'in limbo' awaiting our border reopening, with the Universities eagerly awaiting their arrival prior to classes starting for the 2022 academic year.

It is my recommendation that International Students as a cohort, should be allowed to enter the State, for the purposes of commencing their studies in March 2022.

Yours sincerely

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