THE HON DAN TEHAN MP
Minister for Education

THE HON GREG HUNT MP
Minister for Health

THE HON JAMES MERLINO MP
Victorian Minister for Education
Deputy Premier of Victoria

PROFESSOR BRENDAN MURPHY
Australian Chief Medical Officer

MEDIA RELEASE

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Facilitating China-based students to attend Year 11 and 12

Senior high school students who remain in China due to Australian travel restrictions have been offered a strict pathway to resume their studies in recognition of the importance of the final two years of school.

Year 11 and Year 12 students who are completing their senior secondary schooling can apply for an exemption to the 1 Feb 2020 COVID19 travel restrictions applied to foreign nationals who have been in mainland China.

The decision was taken based on the best medical advice available and with the safety of Australians as the number one priority.

The Australian Health Protection Principal Committee (AHPPC), which includes State, Territory, and Federal Chief Medical Officers, has recommended a strict framework to allow small numbers of additional people to enter Australia from China.

This follows the unanimous recommendation of the AHPPC for such a proposal given “the apparent slowing in case numbers in other provinces of mainland China, suggestive of better containment”

This framework will be adopted to allow entry for these student and includes strict requirements that students only be permitted entry to Australia if they follow the same strict isolation conditions that apply to Australian citizens and permanent residents who return from China.

All Australian governments understand the importance of education and we are all working to minimise the impact of COVID-19 on students.

In recognition of their strict school attendance requirements under state and territory regulations, which if not met would prevent them from completing their senior secondary
qualifications, the Australian Border Force (ABF) Commissioner may grant an exemption on a case-by-case basis, which was also a requirement of the medical experts on the AHPPC.

There are about 400 Year 12 students and 360 Year 11 students already enrolled in Australian schools who cannot enter the country due to travel restrictions. Some of these students may need an accompanying parent or adult sibling where welfare arrangements have not been made by the schools.

The inclusion of these students on a case-by-case basis does not apply to anyone from Hubei province. It is only for other regions and is in line with the medical advice that these areas pose a minimal risk due to the much lower number of reported cases.

Students arriving in Australia will be subject to the same enhanced border measures that apply for Australian citizens and permanent residents returning from China and will be provided with information on the self isolation requirements they will be subject to and how to seek medical attention if they experience symptoms whilst in self isolation.

Should they wish to, state and territory governments will be able to seek exemptions to COVID-19 travel restrictions for year 11 and 12 school students who meet the below criteria:

a. The Australian Department of Education, Skills and Employment, in conjunction with states and territories, confirms the students are enrolled in year 11 or 12.

b. Each state and territory health agency provides assurance the student’s (and guardian’s if necessary) quarantine arrangements meet all health requirements within their jurisdiction.

c. Neither student nor guardian is unwell, and have not demonstrated any sign of illness for more than 14 days.

d. Neither student nor guardian has visited Hubei province, China, since the outbreak of COVID-19.

e. The Australian Border Force and the Department of Home Affairs confirm the student (and their guardian if necessary) have valid and existing visas in place and security checks have been completed.

f. The Australian Border Force considers each individual meets the criteria for exemption and advises the Australian Departments of Education, Skills and Employment and Health. A weekly report consolidating the number of people to whom the Australian Border Force has granted and refused an exemption by state and territory will be provided to the Australian Departments of Education, Skills and Employment and Health.

g. The Australian Department of Education, Skills and Employment, will inform their state and territory counterparts of the outcome of the application for exemption.

h. State and territory education agencies will inform schools who will then inform students of exemptions or otherwise, as well as state and territory health authorities.

i. The Australian Border Force will provide uplift authority for exempt travellers.

j. The Australian Department of Agriculture will conduct health/biosecurity screening of all students and guardians at the border.

k. Students and guardians complete 14 day self-quarantine in line with state or territory requirements (at the point of entry into Australia).

l. State and territory health authorities monitor local quarantine requirements (at the point of entry).

m. If students or guardians breach quarantine arrangements, their visa may be subject to cancellation.
ENDS

Media contact:
Tehan: Byron Vale 02 6277 7350 | minister.tehan.media@dese.gov.au
Merlino: Matthew Dixon 0438 190 148 | matthew.dixon@minstaff.vic.gov.au