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Students figure large in forecasts for net migration

BERNARD LANE THE AUSTRALIAN JUNE 30, 2014 12:00AM



International students on the Gold Coast take part in an "amazing race". Picture: Glenn Hampson Source: News Corp Australia

OVERSEAS student arrivals will increase and departures fall away as a result of work incentives and other visa changes, the immigration department predicts.

Arrivals are expected to rise rapidly to 123,100 by the year ending June 30, 2018, according to recent forecasts for net overseas migration (NOM).

Following the 2011 Knight visa review, students wanting to come to Australia for higher education have enjoyed streamlined visa approvals and the incentive of two to four years' work rights after graduation.

These changes are reflected in the latest **forecasts**

<http://www.immi.gov.au/media/publications/statistics/immigration-update/nom-mar-2014.pdf> for NOM arrivals and departures.

The department says NOM arrivals are expected to reach 536,400 over the four years from December 2014 with increasing student arrivals "the major driver".

But slow economic growth and high unemployment will see a fall in arrivals under the temporary work skilled visa category.

As more students graduate and take up post-study work rights, the department expects to see a

dramatic effect in NOM departures.

“Take up of this (post-study work) visa is expected to be high from March 2015,” it says.

“As a result, student departures are expected to decrease markedly over the next year.

“Student departures are then expected to increase, as student arrivals increase, reaching 35,100.”

From July 2013 to end-March this year, there were 493 **grants** (<http://www.immi.gov.au/media/statistics/study/index.htm>) of these post-study work visas.

Of these, 28 per cent (140) went to Indians, a bigger share than for students from the No. 1 inbound higher education market of China (99).

Visa grants are still in small numbers because many eligible students would have just begun their degree programs in March 2012.

Meanwhile, over the next four years, the department expects that the weak economy will see an increase in departures for others on temporary visas, notably in the temporary work skilled and working holiday categories.

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