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AUSTRALIAN BORDERS LIKELY TO OPEN IN FIRST HALF OF 2021

The budget forecast prepared by the Treasurer Josh Frydenberg and Finance Minister Mathias Cormann assumes that travel restrictions will be lifted between 1 January 2021 and 30 June 2021.

This news would be welcome by many as it will allow temporary and permanent migrants to return to Australia. However, all incoming travellers are still required to undergo two-week mandatory quarantine.

Since the implementation of international travel bans in March 2020, all arrivals on visitor and temporary migration visas have been prevented (exemptions apply). The ban also prevented Australian citizens and permanent residents from departing Australia (exemptions apply).

Based on the announced policy the current plan (Between July to December 2020), is to lift the travel ban for Australian citizens, permanent residents, New Zealanders and some international students. However, Treasurer Josh Frydenberg cautioned that the policy is subject to change due to the evolving situation of coronavirus.

“The assumptions are that it very gradually starts to come back, that quarantine is applied, that you start potentially bringing in international students,”

“Of course the environment with respect to the coronavirus is very fluid.”

“Decisions haven’t been taken about the start date for that.”

The key reason for this plan is to bring back international students who are stranded overseas. Continuous delay in bringing in students would affect universities drastically (even with the recent changes to support international students). The international education industry is the fourth-largest industry in Australia. Students bring approximately \$39 billion into the Australian economy.

If the government are opening borders in January 2021, it could also mean that overseas processing of permanent resident applications may resume.

The budget forecast also predicted that the net overseas migration will fall to 31,000 in 2020-21. Net overseas migration is affected by international travel restrictions and constraints on the ability of applicants to meet visa application requirements, and is assumed to fall from 232,000 in 2018-19 to be 154,000 in 2019-20 and 31,000 in 2020-21.