MEDIA RELEASE
Tuesday 12 July 2011

Help for overseas students in private education

Overseas students in Australia who have problems with private education and training can now take their complaints to the newly created Overseas Students Ombudsman (OSO), if they cannot resolve problems with their education providers directly.

The Overseas Students Ombudsman is now a role for the Commonwealth Ombudsman, Allan Asher.

“This is an important service for an often vulnerable group,” said Mr Asher, launching the Ombudsman service at the first Council for International Students Australia (CISA) conference in Melbourne today.

“Together with State Ombudsmen who provide a complaints service for overseas students in public education, we are providing a much-needed safety net for those in private education.

“It means that students who are the victim of unfair or unreasonable action by private education providers now have a free, independent and impartial complaints service,” Mr Asher said.

The OSO provides the service to overseas students already in Australia, and those planning to come soon.

“It is appropriate to launch the Overseas Students Ombudsman service at CISA’s first conference as both organisations are the result of recommendations of the Baird Review of education services for overseas students in 2010.

“Students may want to complain about issues surrounding fees and refunds, course progress or attendance, cancellation of enrolments or accommodation or work arranged by providers. They may also want to complain about education agents working for their provider,” Mr Asher said.

“We will resolve complaints and provide information to education providers on best-practice complaint handling, drawing on the Commonwealth Ombudsman’s more than 30 years’ experience in complaint investigation. Importantly, we will also publish reports on problems and broader issues in international education identified through investigations.”

The Overseas Students Ombudsman provides a free, fair and impartial service.

The new role is one of a series of measures recommended by the Baird Review of the Education Services for Overseas Students (ESOS) Act 2000, and is also reflected in the COAG International Students Strategy for Australia 2010-2014. The Ombudsman role came into effect from 9 April, following the passage of legislation.

More information is available at www.oso.gov.au

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Follow the Ombudsman on Twitter - http://twitter.com/CwealthOmb
A major new service for overseas students of private education and training in Australia will be launched at 10am on Tuesday 12 July by the Overseas Students Ombudsman, Mr Allan Asher.

Allan Asher, who is also the Commonwealth Ombudsman, will launch the student complaint investigation service as part of his keynote address to the first national conference of the Council of International Students Australia (CISA) at Victoria University in Melbourne. CISA is the peak student representative body for all international students in Australia.

**Location:** Room C1101, Victoria University, City Flinders, 300 Flinders Street, Melbourne (opposite Flinders Street Railway station)

**Time:** 9am Tuesday 12 July

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**Overseas Students Ombudsman - background information**

- It is estimated that there are around 100,000 overseas students of private education providers currently in Australia. According to the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR) there were 102,262 Studying Confirmations of Enrolment with private education providers as at 7 July 2011. Allowing for a very small number of students who would have more than one current studying enrolment, we believe the 100,000 figure is a feasible estimate.

- There are around 900 private education providers.

- The Overseas Students Ombudsman has jurisdiction in all states and territories except South Australia where different arrangements apply. The South Australian Training Advocate deals with complaints from overseas students about private education providers.

- State ombudsmen deal with complaints from overseas students in public education, including most universities, in all states and territories.

- The major source countries of overseas students in private education and training currently include China, India, Korea, Brazil, Thailand, Malaysia and Vietnam.

- The legal basis for the Ombudsman role is the *Education Services for Overseas Students (ESOS) Legislation Amendment Act 2011*, passed by the Australian Parliament on 21 March 2011. The legislation received royal assent on 8 April 2011 enabling the Overseas Students Ombudsman to become operational from 9 April 2011.

- The legislation gives the Ombudsman the power to investigate complaints about private registered education providers in connection with overseas students who intend to study or are already studying in Australia on a student visa.

- The Government is providing $4.8 million over four years to the Office of the Commonwealth Ombudsman to provide the Overseas Students Ombudsman service.