New Visa Committee conducts first meeting

The implementation of recommendations from the Knight Review of Student Visas was discussed at the first meeting of the Education Visa Consultative Committee (EVCC) held last week in Canberra.

The meeting was chaired by the Department of Immigration and Citizenship (DIAC), and included representatives from all peak bodies, state and territory governments, the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations, and Austrade.

DIAC provided an update on their plans for implementing the Knight Review recommendations, the new arrangements for English language tests, and the latest student visa trends and statistics.

Readers should be aware a number of the Knight recommendations will be implemented from 5 November this year. These include the reduction of financial requirements for students applying from Level 3 & 4 countries, the removal of English-level requirements for English language (ELICOS) applicants, and publication of criteria to establish whether applicants are genuine temporary entrants.

More information on the changes is available from the Department of Immigration and Citizenship’s website at: www.immi.gov.au/students/knight/.

A number of committee members, including TDA, expressed concern over the lack of consultation regarding the formulation of genuine temporary entrant criteria. DIAC agreed to provide further information on the criteria prior to the 5 November implementation. The criteria are expected to be based on similar criteria used for visitor visas and TDA recommends a publication produced by the Fitzroy Legal Service which gives a comprehensive summary of what could be included.

The meeting also received an update on a review of the Assessment Level Framework. This will include an External Reference Group, which includes TDA representation, and will focus on the current effectiveness of the Framework and the merits of an education provider-based risk management approach. The terms of reference can be read here.

The EVCC will reconvene in February next year with the intention of meeting bi-monthly while many of these initiatives are planned and implemented.