

## **COMMUNIQUE**

### **STUDY VISA CRACK-DOWN OFFSHORE NOW IMPACTING TAFE INSTITUTES**

TAFE Directors Australia wishes to notify Federal authorities that despite assurances of a “risk management” approach to the re-registration of Australian education institutions, agents in India and China have reported discriminatory conduct towards those students seeking to enroll in vocational education and training programs, including those seeking to attend TAFE Institutes.

At a meeting of the Australian TAFE International Network (ATIN), hosted by TAFE Directors Australia on 13 October 2009, members reported that Department of Immigration and Citizenship (DIAC) officials have recently been refusing student visa and Confirmation of Enrolment applications far in excess of those being granted.

The current review of the ESOS Act, requiring a blanket re-registration of all providers, was accompanied with assurances from Federal authorities of a “risk management” approach, with authorities determined to target unscrupulous operators.

TAFE Directors Australia is now aware that despite these assurances, market activity from India and China in particular shows students seeking to attend TAFE Institutes are being disadvantaged compared with those students applying for study with an Australian university. This is causing major confusion and disappointment among both the students and the reputable agents endorsed by TAFE institutes.

ATIN members recounted several examples of discriminatory action by DIAC officials who have not sought clarification from prospective international students who may be keen to attend a financially secure Australian TAFE Institute:

- One key TAFE agent in India has stopped submitting any student visa files for processing since 28 August 2009 as the Australian High Commission has started contacting students by phone and asking questions about their finances and study plan
- In the past two months, agents have had to process more requests for refunds as a result of an increase in the number of visa refusals. The number of refund requests now outweighs the requests for eCoEs (Confirmation of Enrolments).

TAFE Directors Australia calls on officials from DIAC and the Department of Education, Employment and Workforce Relations (DEEWR) which administers the ESOS Act, to cease discrimination towards students wishing to study with an Australian TAFE institute.

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