



Communiqué

The Australian Council for Private Education and Training (ACPET), English Australia (EA), the International Education Association of Australia (IEAA), the Independent Schools Council of Australia (ISCA), TAFE Directors Australia (TDA) and Universities Australia (UA) have met and agreed to cooperate to further strengthen and develop the Australian international education industry.

The peak bodies have resolved to act with common purpose to work with government around a common agenda to resolve current short term problems and to:

- Maximise the net educational, social, diplomatic, cultural and economic benefits of international education to the Australian economy and to the Australian community
- Build community understanding and support for international education based on many decades of mutual benefits to Australia through education relations with other countries and involving over a million international students.

10 Point Action Agenda

As an initial step the peak bodies have agreed on a 10 point action agenda for discussion and negotiation with government:

1. A clear affirmation at the highest level of Australian governments of the quality of the Australian education system and of the education and support services delivered to international students by the majority of Australian education providers, both public and private.
2. A commitment by the Australian Government to high level consultation between Government and the peak bodies and the peak bodies jointly, before the end of September 2009 and before major strategy, policy and legislative decisions are made, to discuss matters of immediate concern, and ongoing consultation between the Council of Australian Governments International Education Taskforce and the peak bodies.

3. Commitment to establish an ongoing, effective government-industry partnership, which would include:
 - regular, high level consultation by government with industry as a whole
 - increased co-investment for strategic development of Australian international education
 - consideration of an appropriate structure to achieve this
 - demonstrated effective enforcement by government of existing regulatory and quality assurance regimes
 - a joint undertaking by government and industry to enhance the international student experience
 - a joint undertaking by government and industry to enhance the Australian community's understanding of the importance and benefits of international education
 - more and better industry research and more reliable data to measure levels of activity, outcomes and benefits of international education.
4. Coherent and whole of government approaches to the role of international education in Australia's migration program particularly in addressing skills shortages.
5. Priority action to establish and deliver a national "student safe" campaign for domestic and international students.
6. Priority action to establish and deliver a nationally consistent and accurate information advisory system for international students.
7. Agreed mechanisms for better management of recruitment agents, recognising the diverse needs of the different education sectors.
8. Priority action to foster and support international students to achieve an effective international student voice, through appropriate consultative mechanisms.
9. Priority action to foster and support greater engagement of international students with the Australian community.
10. An immediate, effective nationally coordinated approach to resolution of the issues currently facing international education.

Australia's education system in general and the provision of education and support services to international students by the great majority of Australian education providers, both public and private, are of a very high quality. This should be publicly affirmed by government. Actions by government should be focused essentially in areas of greatest risk.

An overarching concern of the peak bodies is the currently fragmented approach to matters of quality assurance and regulation of the industry. There is a lack of coherence in regulatory jurisdictions, responsibilities and practices.

Moreover, there has been inadequate investment in the resources needed to develop, manage and effectively regulate the industry. This fragmentation has been damaging, first and foremost to students, but also to the industry as a whole.

The problem is not so much poor Australian legislation as lack of proper and effective enforcement of legislative provisions, particularly the ESOS Act and the associated National Code, both of which are widely regarded as world class protection for international students.

The focus should not be on the development of further and more prescriptive regulation so much as on effective application of existing legislation.

More broadly, a longer term international education development strategy is required along the lines of the recently released Jackson Report, *Informing the National Long-Term Tourism Strategy*.

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