

Media Release

18 March 2010

International students important to skills migration

TAFE Directors Australia (TDA), the peak body for the 58 TAFE Institutes in Australia, has argued that study in Australia as a pathway to permanent residency is a legitimate and cost effective means of meeting Australia's current and future skills needs.

In a response to a discussion paper from the Department of Immigration and Citizenship (DIAC) on the General Skilled Migration Points Test, TDA said there are advantages that flow from migrants spending time in Australia in a learning environment prior to entering the workforce.

Chair of TDA, Mr Bruce Mackenzie, said that issues caused by a small number of unscrupulous private providers should not taint the rest of the industry.

"Removing the link between international student education and permanent residency is a simplistic response to the unethical actions of a small number of private providers and their agents."

In its response, TDA recommends that the Points Test differentiate between Australian and overseas qualifications by awarding preference and higher points to those with local qualifications.

"We believe that the opportunity to study in Australia and gain the relevant knowledge, skills and attitudes to successfully perform in the workplace has distinct advantages over a qualification gained overseas.

"Limiting Australia's ability to source skilled migrants from those who have trained and lived in Australia would have an impact on our ability to actively respond to skills needs."

The response also outlines TDA's firm belief that because all occupations on the Skilled Occupations List have been identified by industry as experiencing skills shortages, they should therefore be treated equally under a revised Points Test.

TDA agrees with the DIAC discussion paper that giving those with higher degree qualifications extra points may disadvantage trade qualified applicants.

TDA also says there would be value in awarding bonus points for applicants that meet optimum English language requirements for specific occupations, and also relaxing the age limit for applicants to take into account workforce experience, particularly in the Australian workforce.

TDA's submission is at: http://www.tda.edu.au/resources/TDA_submission_DIAC_GSM.pdf

Contact: Bruce Mackenzie, TAFE Directors Australia, (03) 9564-1503 or 0417 147 016