

Ref: N4.13.6 – 12 February 2024

Hon. Jason Clare MP
Minister for Education
PO Box 6022 – House of Representatives
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Minister

RE: Australia's Education Strategy For Industry & Student Visa Processing Outcomes

As you will be aware, the Independent Tertiary Education Council Australia (ITECA) is the peak body representing independent providers in the skills training, higher education, and international education sectors. It is in this context that ITECA writes concerning the processing of applications for a student visa from Indian nationals residing in their home country by the Australian Department of Home Affairs.

ITECA firmly supports the objectives outlined in the Australian Government's framework document entitled *A Partnership for the Future: Australia's Education Strategy for India*. This is considered by ITECA to be a landmark document that offers a framework for strengthening the bilateral relationship between Australia and India, particularly in the field of education. The Strategy's emphasis on government-to-government efforts to enhance market access and reduce regulatory barriers is particularly commendable. It underpins new opportunities for education delivery, promising a sustained focus on collaborative educational ventures between the two countries.

It is with concern, however, that ITECA notes a significant discrepancy between the aims of the Strategy and the recent student visa processing data. According to the Department of Home Affairs, the visa grant rate for Indian students in December 2023 was 0.0%. This alarming statistic seems to contradict the Strategy's commitment to prioritising quality delivery and student experience for Indian students, regardless of their location and delivery method.

The apparent misalignment between the visa processing policies and the Strategy's objectives suggests a critical oversight. While the Strategy portrays a forward-looking partnership intent on welcoming Indian students and their skills to Australian shores, the visa grant rates tell a different story. This disparity could inadvertently signal to potential Indian students and partners that Australia is stepping back from its commitment to being an accessible and quality education destination of choice.

We strongly urge the Australian Government to address this incongruity with urgency. Aligning visa processing policies with the educational Strategy is not just about administrative and policy consistency but about living up to the promises made to Indian students and Australian tertiary

Independent Tertiary Education Council Australia Limited
ABN 63 054 953 758

Street Address: Level 7 – 10 Hobart Place, Canberra, ACT, 2600
Postal Address: GPO Box 450, Canberra, ACT, 2601

t: 1300 421 017 f: 1300 421 018
e: ceo@iteca.edu.au
www.iteca.edu.au

education institutions. The Australian Government's strategies and policies must focus on outcomes that manifest in tangible actions that reflect Australia's commitment to nurturing its educational relationship with India. This is not currently the case as there is an absence of alignment and cohesion by the Australian Government.

To this end, ITECA is ready to engage in a constructive dialogue to assist in any capacity to bridge the gap between policy aims and practical outcomes. We believe that with collaborative effort and a reevaluation of current visa processing policies, we can fully realise the noble objectives set out in the Strategy.

ITECA looks forward to your prompt action and our members look for a positive outcome that reinforces Australia's reputation as a premier destination for international education. We would appreciate the opportunity to meet on this matter and your office can contact my Executive Assistant via email at executive.assistant@iteca.edu.au or by telephone on 1300 421 017 to discuss a mutually suitable time.

Yours faithfully

Troy Williams FIML MAICD
Chief Executive