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Senate Inquiry into the Welfare of International Students

Submission by Education Adelaide



Senate Inquiry into the Welfare of International Students

Education Adelaide on behalf of South Australia's international education providers, the State Government, Adelaide City Council and related concerned groups highlights the social, cultural and economic value of international education and urges the Senate Inquiry to balance these benefits against the current challenges in the industry.

This submission provides an overview of the depth of support for international students and the education industry and provides a series of recommendations to address these challenges.

Education Adelaide makes these recommendations to the Inquiry based on our experiences and those of our stakeholders and students. These recommendations are designed to improve the quality of the student experience and restore confidence in Australia's education brand. There is also an examination of the international student experience and a series of examples of best practice in international student engagement, particularly in Adelaide.

The submission refers to the Senate Standing Committee on Education, Employment and Workplace Relations' terms of reference for the Inquiry, as section headings.

- Student safety
- Adequate and affordable accommodation
- Social inclusion
- Student visa requirements
- Adequate international student supports and advocacy
- Employment rights and protection from exploitation

Further submissions from education providers address specific aspects of the Senate Inquiry's Terms of Reference. These are included as a supplementary document.

Executive statement

Education Adelaide plays a unique role in promoting and maintaining international student welfare in South Australia.

While Education Adelaide exists to market South Australia as a study destination to overseas students, it also acts as a broker of information for all parties including education providers (public and private), the State and Federal Governments and their agencies and of course for international students and their families.

Education Adelaide believes that the recent problems in the international education industry provide the Federal Government with an opportunity to review the ESOS Act and to widen the terms to deliver a strategic review of international education. We believe that the review should be along the lines of the Bradley Review for Higher Education and must cover infrastructure requirements, the relationship between education and skilled migration, and recommendations about the policy settings, regulations and resources required to appropriately support international students and this valuable industry.

The Bradley Review of Higher Education calls for a change in strategy – one that's being called a 'third phase' of internationalisation – that includes a whole of government approach and better support for international students.

To this end, Education Adelaide calls on the Federal Government and key players to develop a policy on international education that recognises the social, cultural and economic benefits of international education to Australia. We believe that few people understand the importance of international students and the invaluable role that they play in our community.

Education Adelaide suggests that other states should strongly consider introducing public transport concessions that are currently provided to international students in South Australia. This would be a quick win for equity and fairness.

Education Adelaide calls on the Senate Committee to consider introducing an Office of Training Advocate (OTA) function and service in all states – run by the states - for all international students. The OTA, in South Australia, has proven an invaluable source of information and advocacy for international students and members of the public.

Education Adelaide supports the Australian Council for Private Education and Training (ACPET) call for government to move away from the requirement for vocational students to complete 900 hours of work experience as a pathway to permanent residency. We agree this requirement is open to abuse and easily falsified. Further, we support ACPET's suggestion of the expanded use of the temporary graduate 485 visa under which students would prove 12 months of work experience by furnishing pay slips and other tangible evidence.

Education Adelaide welcomes the Federal Government's plan to mandate that universities and training providers publicly list all education agents used by them to recruit students.

We urge the creation of greater synergy and communication between the Department of Immigration and Citizenship (DIAC), Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR) and the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) given the intersection of Australia's foreign policy, immigration and population strategies and international education.

To counter negative press from overseas, we suggest the Federal Government pool resources to rebuild, re-launch and reinforce Brand Australia to position Australia as a quality education destination. This should include a crisis management public relations strategy with appropriate resources. Additionally, Australian Education International (AEI) should allocate a robust annual budget for marketing the Study in Australia brand.

South Australia prides itself on being a socially innovative state. As an example of social inclusion we have provided an interview with two University of South Australia students who have launched a magazine for international students (Appendix 1). *The Insider* is now available in Adelaide and Melbourne. The submission also includes details of the University of Adelaide's highly regarded Peer Mentor program.

Introduction

Education Adelaide on behalf of more than 40 of South Australia's international education providers, the State Government, Adelaide City Council and other groups, asserts the social, cultural and economic value of international education.

South Australia's international students have the full support of the State Government, Adelaide City Council, universities, TAFE SA, public and private schools and the wider community. We consider international students as 'students studying in Australia'.

Education Adelaide places a premium on ensuring the structural integrity of international education in Australia and particularly in South Australia. We recognise and acknowledge the real socio-economic value international students contribute to the South Australian community by:

- Bringing positive social changes such as the development of a more multicultural, cosmopolitan community in the state;
- Providing a vitality and multicultural mix that energises Adelaide and is transforming the CBD;
- Forming strong friendships with South Australians and providing the business community with not only high quality potential employees but excellent business links throughout the world;
- Boosting the research capacity of institutions, helping stimulate associated business investment in research and development and enhancing Australia's knowledge economy.
- Helping South Australia meet its population growth targets;
- Reversing the state's ageing population profile;
- Beating the skills shortage by increasing the pool of skilled migrants so that South Australia capitalises on major economic opportunities, especially in the areas of mining and defence;
- Encouraging other skilled workers to migrate to South Australia from overseas;
- Creating development to provide student accommodation and services;
- Boosting Adelaide airport's passenger traffic by nearly 56,000 and generating more than 112,000 bed nights annually.
- Generating nearly \$800m in export income, the fourth largest export earner SA and employing nearly 6,500 people.

Education Adelaide recognises that the problems facing the onshore and offshore international student market are complex. The growth in international student numbers has been phenomenal. Australia is now the third largest provider of international education behind the USA and the UK.

It's important to note, until recently, Australia has enjoyed a reputation for providing a good quality education in a supportive environment.

Education Adelaide recognises that word of mouth is the most powerful form of marketing so it is imperative education providers, governments and government agencies improve the quality of the student experience.

Significantly, Education Adelaide asks the Senate Committee to explore opportunities to improve the quality of the international student experience and support this important industry, relative to the Government's support for other industries of similar significance and value.

Denise von Wald
Chief Executive
Education Adelaide

Recommendations

1. Conduct a review of Australia's international student industry

Education Adelaide commends the Federal Government's decision to bring forward the review of the ESOS Act. Education Adelaide believes any review should have wider terms of reference and take a broader, long-term perspective on the needs of international students, as well as the development and resource requirements of the international education industry.

In addition, Education Adelaide calls on the Federal Government and other key stakeholders to develop a policy on international education that reflects and recognises the social, cultural and economic benefits of the sector to Australia.

2. Explore opportunities for regional dispersal and diversity strategies

The Federal Government, education providers and peak bodies should explore opportunities for greater regional dispersal to improve student outcomes, as well as continuing to increase student numbers and expand the industry.

Education providers and peak industry bodies are also encouraged to develop diversity strategies which source students from new markets and encourage them to enrol in a broader range of subjects.

3. Support a quality assurance framework

Education Adelaide recommends the Federal Government supports the introduction of a new quality assurance framework. This would include a framework to create greater consistency and compliance, with State-based resources that reflect the local increase in international students and education providers.

Further, Education Adelaide recommends all providers be required to make publicly available audit results, processes and resources for students, particularly related to student welfare and safety.

4. Establish an Office of Training Advocate in all states and territories

Introduce an Office of Training Advocate service for all students in Australia, run by the state and territory governments.

5. Provide travel concessions to all international students

Education Adelaide suggests that other state and territory governments strongly consider immediately introducing public transport concessions for international students. These concessions currently are provided to all full-time students in South Australia and result in savings of around \$700 per student per year.

6. Personal safety education

All institutions should introduce personal safety orientation programs to include: the 'do's and don'ts' of conduct in high-risk areas in the CBD or outer suburbs; the risks associated with some forms of work; and the risks associated with using public transport after hours. This should cover the basic assumptions of socio-economic factors, urban geography and the incidence of crime.

7. Eliminate the 900 hours of work experience as a pathway to permanent residence

Education Adelaide supports the Australian Council for Private Education and Training's call to abolish the requirement for vocational students to complete 900 hours of work experience as a pathway to permanent residence.

We support the expanded use of the temporary graduate 485 visa, which requires students to prove 12 months of work experience by providing pay slips and other tangible evidence of their employment record.

8. International marketing campaign to protect and grow the Study in Australia brand

To counter negative overseas media coverage, Education Adelaide proposes a powerful branding campaign showing Australia as a quality education destination and emphasising the social, cultural, economic and diplomatic benefits the industry brings. While acknowledging Australian Education International's (AEI) 'Study in Australia 2010' program, we propose AEI allocate a substantial budget for marketing the Study in Australia brand. Any marketing initiative also should include a crisis and issues management public relations strategy.

9. Create greater and closer communication between agencies

Education Adelaide believes there is a need to create greater synergy and communication between DIAC, DEEWR and DFAT in line with the close links between Australia's foreign policy, immigration and population strategies and international education.

Education Adelaide
www.studyadelaide.com

Education Adelaide is charged with developing and expanding South Australia's share of the national education export market. It promotes Adelaide as a centre of education excellence and highlights the many advantages for international students who choose to live, study and work in Adelaide.

Education Adelaide's membership program also provides more than 42 participating institutions (including South Australia's three public universities, Carnegie Mellon University from the United States, University College London and Cranfield University from the United Kingdom) with key market intelligence and access to a diverse range of innovative, dynamic marketing opportunities and community support programs for students.

Education Adelaide has four key goals. These are:

1. To significantly enhance the recognition of Adelaide as Australia's best learning environment in key markets within the region;
2. To foster the growth of existing institutions and identify and facilitate the establishment of new education providers (and associated infrastructure) in areas of high demand (much of this work is done in conjunction with the Department of Trade's Invest Attraction Unit);
3. To provide students with a world class education experience and social environment. Go beyond the welcome and work with partners to create a distinctive and stimulating education city for students; and
4. To be the preferred provider of international education and training market intelligence for South Australia's education industry.

Setting the scene – South Australia

International education is South Australia's fourth largest export earner, generating \$805 million in 2008 and supporting more than 6,000 local jobs. The industry is critically important to the development of the knowledge economy. Forecasts predict that international education has the capacity to be a \$2 billion export earner for South Australia by 2014. South Australia's own Strategic Plan spells out the importance and sets an ambitious target of doubling the State's share of the international student market by 2014.

Premier Rann's long-term vision for international education is supported by two strategies:

- To establish Adelaide as a university city of the future and attract highly ranked, foreign universities to establish campuses and niche programs, and
- To establish Adelaide as an international education destination, and by doing so, attract a greater share of Australia's overseas students. The importance of the industry is also measured by its contribution to the broader economic, social and cultural goals of society.

Last year, Education Adelaide launched the *South Australian International Education Industry Plan 2008-2014*, believed to be the first of its kind in Australia,

with more than 95 per cent of the state's international education providers involved in the consultation process.

Crucially, more than 70 per cent of the industry provided details of their own institution's plans for the future – their aspirations and capacity for growth and barriers to target markets.

Tellingly, the plan is not simply about student numbers. It is about quality, diversity, research, scholarships and providing the right support infrastructure to maximise the entire student experience.

We acknowledge that many of the plan's most ambitious targets will require education providers to work with one another, with State and Local Governments and the community to deliver the results.

Please note since the plan was launched the State Government has supported a number of the key recommendations including the waiver of public school fees for dependents of foreign government scholarship holders.

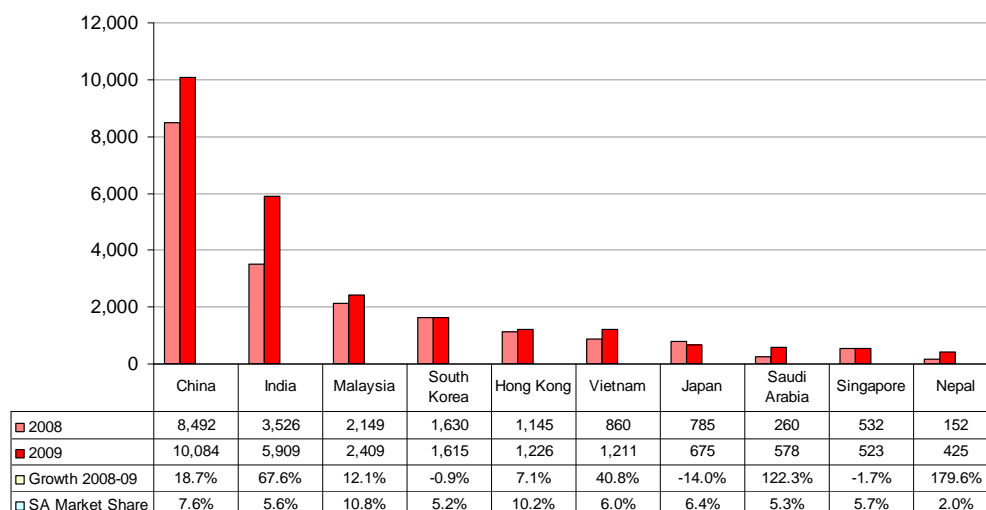
Over the past few years, the growth of international student numbers in South Australia has outstripped the national average. It is estimated that around 32,000 international students will study in South Australia this year; that's nearly six times the 5,584 students recorded in 1998, when Education Adelaide was established.

According to Australian Education International (AEI) statistics for year to date July 2009, international student numbers in South Australia increased by 23.1 per cent over the past year. Our national market share has grown from 4.2 per cent in 2002 to 5.4 per cent in 2009.

South Australia's top 10 source countries represent more than 83 per cent of international student enrolments.

At 88 per cent, South Australia has the highest concentration of Asian students than any other state or territory. Small numbers of students come from Europe (4.2 per cent), the Americas (3 per cent), North Africa and the Middle East (3.3 per cent) and Sub-Saharan Africa (1.4 per cent).

Chart: South Australia's Top 10 International Student Markets, YTD July 2008-09.



Review of the entire international student industry

Education Adelaide commends the Federal Government's decision to bring forward the review of the ESOS Act. Education Adelaide suggests that any review should have wider terms of reference and should take a broader, long term perspective on the current and future development needs for the international education industry.

We support Seamus Fagan's submission as Chair of English Australia that international education now needs a "review comparable to the Bradley Review of Higher Education and the Jackson Review of Tourism. A review confined to the ESOS Act would be restricted to consumer protection issues. Education Adelaide's view is that broader considerations related to the long term development of the industry need to be addressed in addition to the ESOS focus on consumer protection."

A review of this multi-billion dollar industry is timely and urgent. As a part of significant review one would expect the development of a policy for international education and a long term vision and/or Plan for the industry.

A supportive national policy framework would underpin and facilitate South Australia's own goals and targets.

It could be argued, with the extraordinary and potentially unsustainable increases in international VET student numbers, particularly in Sydney and Melbourne, providers may be well served to explore opportunities for greater regional dispersal for improved student outcomes in an effort to continue to increase student numbers and grow the industry in Australia.

The Government should also support a quality assurance framework with appropriate resources to ensure a measure of consistency and with significant resources to ensure compliance. It's imperative that the resources to police compliance be commensurate with the increase in the number of education providers accredited and the volume of international students educated. Education Adelaide anticipates that this will be addressed in the ESOS review.

Further, Education Adelaide recommends all providers be required to make publicly available audit results, processes, and resources for students, particularly related to student welfare and safety.

The Government and its agencies may also be well served by seeking support from peak industry bodies and frameworks to manage those institutions, and agents, who have significant numbers of non-visa compliant students to protect Australia's education reputation and brand.

Also crucial is a continued commitment by the Federal Government to grow the industry collaboratively.

Education Adelaide believes there is a need to create greater synergy and communication between DIAC, DEEWR and DFAT in line with the close links between Australia's foreign policy, immigration and population strategies and international education.

As demand for higher education in Australia continues to grow, other challenges arise, including international to domestic student ratios and concentration of students from source countries.

With Asia supplying about 65 per cent of international students and half of them studying management and commerce (*The Age*, Melbourne 26/07/08), diversification strategies are vital.

With this in mind, we note the focus on new and emerging markets by AEI such as Latin America and the Middle East. These two in particular have also been selected by South Australia using a number of qualifying indicators (e.g. government-to-government relationships, economic competitiveness, population growth, demand for international education, research and education institution relationships) as good source markets for international students and education linkages.

Student safety

Australia remains safe for international students

All students regardless of their country of birth have a right to feel safe. Education Adelaide recognises that some students have real concerns about their safety and these should be resolved quickly. Despite briefings in the students' home country, many international students arrive knowing little about the basic assumptions most Australians take for granted regarding safety, urban geography and 'gang cultures'. Education Adelaide recommends that educational institutions be mandated, as part of orientation, to provide students with information about how to keep themselves safe.

While personal safety is obviously a major issue for international students, the extent of violence against them needs to be put in context. It was recently reported that up to 54 international students lose their lives in Australia annually. This represents a death rate of approximately 0.15 per 1,000 population, which is significantly less than death rates for the general Australian population of student age. For example, the death rate for persons aged 20-24 is 0.5 per 1,000 population.

Any student death is a tragedy and a preventable death is an indictment. While Adelaide is widely acknowledged as one of the safest cities in Australia, students are advised on a number of occasions, and in a variety of ways, to exercise diligence and care.

Additionally, all students are briefed on the role of the police service and students from countries where the police or armed forces are viewed with suspicion, are encouraged to view Australian police differently.

Since 2007 to year's end 2008 South Australia Police (SAPOL) reported two international student deaths in South Australia compared to 62 nationally in the same period (although significantly, 11 of those were offshore). One of the deaths was the result of an accident – an Indian student was swept off the rocks at Granite Island, Victor Harbor.

There are no international student specific victims of crime statistics available as police do not record the race or ethnicity of victims of crime.

Education Adelaide takes all allegations of assaults against students seriously. In response to recent attacks on Indian students Education Adelaide posted the following news update on our website:

<http://studyadelaide.com/News/2009/06/01/Notice-to-all-international-students.aspx>

In response to assaults against students in the eastern states, Premier Mike Rann, wrote to Indian students studying in South Australia, emphasising his support and highlighting the extra support networks available including students' training institutions, SAPOL and the OTA. The letter is included in Appendix 2.

Of concern is a recent web survey by IDP Education of 800 students from China, Indonesia, Vietnam and Malaysia that found 32 percent now felt less safe (compared to before the media reporting of the Indian student assaults) The perception of safety has been seriously eroded and AEI and education providers must address this issue.

Chief Executive of IDP Anthony Pollock said that while second semester enrolments for this year "have held up very well, the enquiry levels and the initial contacts that you'd be expecting at this time of year have been significantly reduced."

Even so, according to the same survey, 75 per cent of Indian students in Australia – and about 80 per cent of students from other countries – would recommend Australia to their friends. This tends to show that while there is real concern about student safety, the responses are coming from a host of variables. It suggests that the overall experience of living, studying and working in Australia has not been critically damaged.

Undoubtedly though, Australia's education brand has been damaged and Education Adelaide recommends significant resources and appropriate action be taken immediately to address the damage. (See Recommendation 8 on page 6).

Education Adelaide recommends that all institutions introduce personal safety orientation programs to cover the basic assumptions of socio-economic factors, urban geography and the incidence of crime.

Specifically, with regards to support, Education Adelaide provides additional assistance to international students and stakeholders. 'Support' is categorised in two areas: community and student support, and incident and issues management.

Education Adelaide's year-long student activities are designed to enhance students' life experiences. As well as social activities like visits to AFL matches and the annual Lord Mayor's Welcome, Education Adelaide arranges career-focused events such as employment workshops.

Education Adelaide also plays an active role in the unlikely event that international students are victims of crime, communicating with family members of victims of crime, the victim (where appropriate) relevant stakeholders, SAPOL and DFAT representatives. We do this to ensure the appropriate level of care is provided and to help establish strategies and measures aimed at preventing violence against students.

In May 2006, the Social Development Committee tabled a report of the Legislative Council titled *The Impact of International Education Activities in South Australia*.

In addition to recommendations relating to marketing, recruitment and the delivery of a quality education, the Committee recommended improvements in the areas of accommodation, counselling, advocacy, social integration and the welfare of international students.

The Committee also reported that it is important to have reliable and comprehensive feedback about all aspects of the international student experience to identify problems early and address them quickly and in an ongoing manner. As a result, South Australia is the only state to provide support for international students via the Office of the Training Advocate (OTA), which is discussed later in this submission. (See Recommendation 4 on page 5).

Support from education providers

In June this year, the Australian Council for Private Education and Training (ACPET), Education Adelaide, OTA and student support group ISANA, ran a networking forum for international student counsellors called *Working for the wellbeing of overseas students*. About 80 representatives from Adelaide's universities, TAFE SA, private VET sector and English language colleges attended.

The forum identified key issues facing international students including the safety and welfare of international students. All suggestions were provided to The South Australian Government Taskforce on Enhancing the Overseas Student Experience.

More of these networking sessions will be held in the future.

Education Adelaide has also created the *International Students' Survival Guide* and a comprehensive website that contains vital information about living in Adelaide including: settling into South Australia, health and safety, work and immigration issues and useful contacts.

And for Muslim students, Education Adelaide has published the *Muslim Students' Guide to Adelaide*. The guide provides information including: Muslim student services on campus, location of mosques, understanding Australian culture, where to find Halal food and restaurants, and key contacts including prominent Islamic websites.

Education Adelaide recognises that a significant part of learning and cultural interaction takes place away from the campus environment. Education providers host a range of activities for international students and provide crucial support for students as prescribed by the ESOS Act.

Education Adelaide complements these initiatives by organising cross-institutional and culturally diverse events and activities for international students. Events include, for example, tickets to AFL, cricket and soccer matches, and arts exhibitions and performances.

Another very successful program operating in South Australia is the University of Adelaide's award-winning Peer Mentor program that was designed to ease students into university life. Forming friendships or just having an Australian student to talk to and answer peer questions resolves much ambiguity and confusion in the life of an international student.

The program includes an orientation section including tours, workshops, social events and information sessions. Mentors (Australian students in their second year and beyond) talk to international students in a relaxed and informal environment.

This program has been so successful it is being rolled out across faculties to cope with demand from Australian students wishing to be involved as mentors and from international students seeking to expand their friendship groups and better adjust to life in Adelaide.

Adequate and affordable accommodation

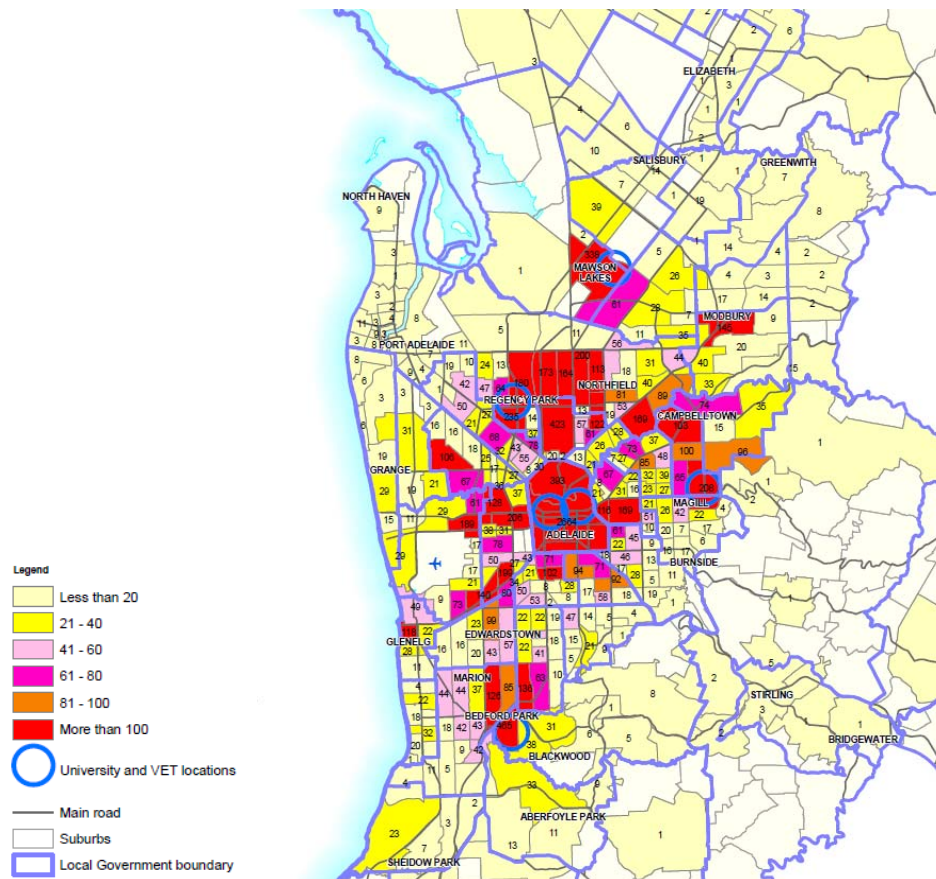
Some commentators on the issue of violence against Indian students have noted that the pattern in which some students live and the type of work they undertake has played a role in making them relatively more vulnerable to opportunistic attack.

In 2006, Education Adelaide undertook the first Heat Map Study to chart the accommodation patterns of international students.

The study highlighted the importance of adequate housing and supporting infrastructure to ensure Adelaide continues to offer good quality and accessible and safe accommodation for international students.

The response from our education providers was comprehensive, with residential information gathered from 90 per cent of all tertiary international students studying in South Australia.

The information showed more than 3,050 international students are living in the Adelaide City Council area (Adelaide and North Adelaide), an increase of 39.3 per cent since 2006. Students also tend to live along transport corridors and close to their education institution. Indeed, between 20 and 30 per cent of university students live in the same suburb as the campus where they are studying.



Education Adelaide is working with Adelaide City Council to facilitate the continued expansion of suitable and affordable accommodation.

Adelaide City Council has also shown strong commitment to increasing the number of international students in South Australia. Led by Lord Mayor Michael Harbison, the Council's own strategic plan outlines a lead role both directly promoting opportunities to developers and working strategically to increase student accommodation. Eight student accommodation projects across the city have been completed since 2001, providing rooms for an extra 1,643 students. These developments have helped ensure an adequate supply of good quality accommodation and at a price point that students can afford.

Several studies and surveys of international students show accommodation – the price, quality and location – is a leading source of dissatisfaction.

With an international student share of 5.4 per cent, it remains to be seen if Adelaide has the appropriate frameworks, infrastructure support and resources to effectively service a much larger student population.

Clearly more must be done to ensure the appropriate infrastructure – physical and social – is in place to accommodate and engage large numbers of international students across Australia.

Adelaide's focus on mapping supply and demand with regards to international student accommodation could be replicated in cities around Australia and arguably, would led to a better outcomes for students and the community.

Social inclusion

This is a large and complex area. One initiative that should be immediately implemented is the introduction of travel concessions for all international students. This would provide students with more retail spending power and send a signal that Australia does not discriminate against international students.

This proposal is supported by a wide range of authorities and organisations, including the International Education Association of Australia. In a July 7, 2009 media release, the Association says: **"All state governments need to accept that travel concessions for international students are a safety as well as a social inclusion issue and should move quickly to put concessions in place in those states without them."** (See Recommendation 5 on page 5).

Transport concessions for international students in Adelaide save students on average at least an additional \$700 per year which they in turn can spend on accommodation, taxis for use after hours and social, sporting and cultural activities.

Education Adelaide recognises the importance of social inclusion and recommends the Government undertakes a range of activities including; providing scholarships, encouraging the mutual recognition of qualifications and marketing to domestic students the opportunities to undertake part of their degree outside of Australia to increase the two-way flow of students.

International students in Adelaide have access to a year-long program of free events, competitions and activities, funded by the State Government, education

institutions and sponsors. Activities include a day of AFL football, trips to Adelaide Zoo and Art Gallery of South Australia.

Education Adelaide also offers a range of South Australian experiences to international students including:

- Three Day Flinders Ranges Camp Experience
- Guided tour of Adelaide Festival Centre
- Day trip to Victor Harbor
- Introduction to Australian Wine (for those over 18 years of age and to aid students to gain work in the hospitality industry)

This year, Education Adelaide held a half-day employment workshop for international students aimed at improving students' job hunting skills, informing them of Australian migration visa changes and giving them a greater insight into employment opportunities across Australia.

Student visa requirements and pathways to permanency

Research shows that there are strong links between international education and skilled migration, with a growing proportion of former overseas students taking out Australian Permanent Residency (PR) and General Skilled Migration.

According to DIAC statistics, the number of permanent visas granted onshore to former overseas students who graduated in Australia is increasing annually, reaching 22,858 in 2006-7. This represented 59.9 per cent of the 38,163 permanent skilled visas granted to onshore applicants in Australia in 2006-7. A large number of former overseas students also apply for skilled migration through other provisional visa types.

This link from education to migration is crucial for South Australia.

Along with a raft of training programs to up-skill our domestic population to cater for continued growth in the defence and resource sector, an increase in the number of skilled migrants will also be essential to sustain these and other industries as the state faces the challenge of a rapidly ageing population.

As a number of economists, including Access Economics, have noted the nation can't turn the migration tap on and off at will. They also argue there is a direct correlation between migration and economic growth.

While Education Adelaide agrees Australia's reputation as a provider of quality education needs to be uncoupled from messages about pathways to migration, Australia needs to acknowledge international students provide a good supply of skilled migrants as these students are usually well educated, speak English and have already established themselves in the country.

Education Adelaide asks the Senate Inquiry to bear in mind the value of international students as potential skilled migrants when making any recommendations that would effectively make it more even difficult for good quality graduates to migrate and make a contribution to Australian society.

Adequate international student support and advocacy

SA Office of the Training Advocate – international students' safety net
www.trainingadvocate.sa.gov.au

South Australia provides a unique service to international students (and others) with a confidential information and advocacy service. In real terms, international students can seek information about their rights and air their grievances in a forum where their complaints will be acted upon. (See Recommendation 4 on page 5).

The Office of the Training Advocate (OTA) was established under the Training and Skills Development Act 2008 to provide services that are individually tailored to clients. OTA's services include; accommodation, dissatisfaction with quality or content of study course, part time employment, visa conditions and support.

International students have access to a toll free number, or can visit the office directly with any concerns they might have during their studies in South Australia.

OTA also provides an analysis of the information received from students and the type of investigations, in order to inform government about ways to improve the system and to raise the quality of student service provision.

Education Adelaide believes the creation of this independent service should be noted by the Senate Committee as it provides confidential advice to international students (and others) across the AQF credential spectrum. Of the approximately 28,000 students living in South Australia in 2008, OTA reported that for the period 1 September 2008 – 25 August 2009 it assisted 130 (or 0.5% of total population) international education clients.

Student Satisfaction

A 2007 study of more than 1,200 international students in South Australia for Education Adelaide showed that:

- Since arriving in Adelaide, students' expectations were mostly positive and exceeded expectations in the areas of cost of living and safety and moderately exceeded in the areas of education and academic reputation and access to/choice of places.
- Two thirds of current students surveyed would recommend Adelaide as a place to study.
- Students identified good study environment, comfortable setting and friendly and welcoming people as the most likely recommendations they would make to others.

Employment rights and protections from exploitation

Recent allegations have been made on SBS and ABC TV and in *The Age* and *The Australian* newspapers of international students – especially in private VET colleges – being exploited by unscrupulous employers.

In 2005 vocational students were required to do 900 hours work experience, but there was no requirement that they be paid. International students remained bound to the system as completion of those courses became a pathway to permanent residency in Australia.

Since 2001 the number of private colleges in Australia has risen from 664 to 4892. Of the nearly 415,000 international students currently in Australia, just over 18% are from India and of these around two thirds are studying with private providers.

Education Adelaide supports ACPET's recommendation that the requirement for students to perform 900 hours of work experience as a pathway to permanent residency is scrapped and more transparent forms of work experience including pay slips be used as evidence.

Education Adelaide has also been pro-active in promoting the services of the Workplace Ombudsman.

The Workplace Ombudsman ensures that rights of all workers, including international students are protected and enforced fairly.

Education Adelaide drafted a letter on behalf of Lieutenant Governor of South Australia and Chair of Multicultural SA, Mr Hieu Van Le, to South Australian businesses highlighting the importance of employers understanding their rights and obligations to all workers.

It also raised Australia's Workplace Ombudsman Nicholas Wilson's concerns that some unscrupulous employers were exploiting young workers and international students, and included details of the National Young Workers Targeted Campaign.

Support from the business community

Research shows international students who live or work with Australians report greater levels of satisfaction with their education experience.

We also know increasingly all students – domestic and international – are seeking greater opportunities for work experience and professional internships.

Recently, the Australian Indian Business Council (AIBC), in conjunction with Education Adelaide, conducted a focus group, which included the Indian Consul-General, to discuss how to connect Indian students with the Australian Business Community.

As a result, the AIBC will create a Student Membership category and will offer networking events and development opportunities specifically for Indian international students in Adelaide. If successful, the program will be rolled out through the AIBC nationally.

The Australia China Business Council's (ACBC) South Australian branch is also keen to forge greater links with international students and they will host a function for members and guests to meet South Australian businesses interested in bilateral trade opportunities in China or who have an interest in recruiting graduates with relevant experience and/or networks.

ACBC recognises that Australian and Chinese graduates studying in Adelaide have significant skills and networks that offer significant value for South Australian business seeking bilateral trade opportunities with China.

Providing international students opportunities to work part-time while they study and in some instances, employing them as professionals once they graduate, is key to the success in establishing Adelaide as Australia's learning city.

As highlighted previously Education Adelaide drafted a letter on behalf of Lieutenant Governor of South Australia and Chair of Multicultural SA, Mr Hieu Van Le to South Australian businesses that not only highlighted rights and responsibilities but also the important contribution international students make to the community and the significant role employers play in the overall student experience (Appendix 3).

Education Adelaide with education partners has arranged (and will continue to do so) employment workshops for international students. These four-hour workshops are very well attended and include a range of employment information ranging from how to find a job, how to conduct yourself in a job interview, workplace culture and presentations on visa changes.

Most students manage to earn about \$300 a week (after tax) during semester, and more during holidays. Below are average hourly pay rates for typical student jobs:

Supermarket check out	\$16-22
Supermarket shelf stacking	\$15-20
Waitress/waiter	\$12-15
Administration	\$18-25
Taxi driver	\$11-15
Fruit picking	\$18-20
Consol operator (petrol pump attendant)	\$16-22
Carer (aged-care facility)	\$20-30

Education Adelaide, with its education partners, is committed to communicating information about average hourly rates to students prior to their arrival in Adelaide. Information about the average cost of accommodation and other costs associated with study is also contained on Education Adelaide's website.

While there have been relatively few complaints in SA of unscrupulous practices by employers and private colleges, we recommend that the 900 hours of work experience be scrapped. (See Recommendation 7 on page 6).

Education Adelaide is also seeking to run workshops in the Volunteer sector. We believe our workshops and our tours are an important and unique 'value add' for the international students. They also provide an opportunity for overseas students to 'mix with the locals'.

Powerfully brand Australia as an education destination - rebuild the brand

Media coverage in India and increasingly around the globe has undoubtedly harmed Australia's reputation as a safe destination. Australia needs to address the underlying issues and work quickly to restore our reputation.

Education Adelaide and its stakeholders urge the Federal Government to powerfully brand Australia as a quality education destination for the social, cultural, economic and diplomatic benefits the industry brings. AEI should allocate a robust budget for marketing the "Study in Australia" brand to international students, their parents, agents and governments. (See Recommendation 8 page 6).

Further, by providing scholarships, Governments should encourage the two-way flow of students by providing scholarships, mutual recognition of qualifications and marketing to domestic students to undertake part of their degree outside of Australia.

Ongoing research: The South Australian Government Taskforce on Enhancing the Overseas Student Experience

In May 2009, the South Australian Government established a taskforce to investigate and address key issues affecting the experience that overseas students have while studying in Adelaide. Importantly, this taskforce was established before the widely reported incidents of violence against international students in Sydney and Melbourne.

The terms of reference anticipated those of the current Senate Inquiry into the Welfare of International Students. The terms of reference and membership of the taskforce are in Appendix 4.

Appendix 1

Case Study: Insider Magazine (for International Students)

University of South Australia (UniSA) students James Martin and Sam Trezise have launched *The Insider* magazine in Adelaide and Melbourne to give international students the latest information on places to go and things to do.

The Insider covers everything from finding the right doctor to joining a sporting team, the best night for a particular pub and even how to approach camping and adventure holidays.

"It's basically all about giving international students the inside information, the knowledge locals take for granted," Martin explains.

Martin came up with the idea when he was studying Marketing Management and International Studies at UniSA and working in a pub at night.

He noticed that local and international students at the pub would rarely mix and set about finding out why.

"It was clear that the process of settling into Adelaide, and other Australian cities, was very difficult for international students," he says. "Often the task of integrating socially and overcoming the cultural and language barriers were too great. As a result, many would fall back into the comfort of their own ethnic group and remain in it for their time here."

Martin says *The Insider* is helping change that and has been enthusiastically welcomed.

"We have talked to many international students, counsellors, teachers, businesses and local students who have loved the fact that at last they have something written by students, for students," he says.

"When international students arrive, they are bombarded with brochures and pamphlets. The brochures are all very focused on surviving in Adelaide, not about enjoying Adelaide.

"*The Insider* is a unique booklet that lets the students know exactly why Adelaide is a fun place to study, and encourages them to get out there and meet other local and international students.

"We also have a useful information section that highlights some unique problems and solutions that international students face, like how to avoid getting ripped off by your landlord and how to buy a car in Adelaide.

"Many international students have emailed me saying that *The Insider* had helped them plan events with their friends and got them outdoors meeting new people," Martin adds.

Appendix 2

Letter to Indian Students from the Premier of South Australia, Mike Rann



Hon. Mike Rann MP
Premier of South Australia

Dear

South Australia rightly has a reputation for providing world-class educational opportunities and is acknowledged as a safe and supportive State which warmly welcomes students from overseas.

Each year, students from more than 130 countries, including India, study in Adelaide, contributing to the city's rich cultural and social lifestyle.

In return, international students have earned the enthusiastic friendship and respect of South Australians – and both the South Australia Government and the people of the State are striving to ensure your experiences here are overwhelmingly positive.

Among other initiatives, the Government has introduced a number of measures to underline the continued safety of international students and enhance your stay in Adelaide. In particular, the Minister for Further Education, Michael O'Brien, has established a task force to examine how we can provide the best education and lifestyle experience for international students. The task force's terms of reference specifically include a focus on student welfare and safety.

I can assure you that any form of discrimination or violence against international students will not be tolerated in South Australia.

Your safety is of the highest importance and the Police and other authorities are committed to protecting you and your rights.

In the unlikely event that you are a victim of crime, I would ask that you report it immediately to the Police so they can take the appropriate action.

In an emergency – where there is a danger to life or a crime in progress – you can contact the police by dialling 000 from any telephone.

To report a non-emergency crime, phone the Police Call Centre on 131 444 or ring your local police station.

And to help international students with other issues, the South Australian Government has established the Office of the Training Advocate to provide services individually tailored to meet your needs.

The Training Advocate delivers support and advice on all aspects of living and studying in Adelaide, including:

- Promotion of employment, education and training;
- Independent complaint handling process.

I encourage anyone who needs support to contact the Training Advocate's toll free helpline on 1800 006 488. Or you can email the office on trainingadvocate@saugov.sa.gov.au

All enquiries will be treated in the strictest confidence.

If you are at one of Adelaide's three public universities, the first place to seek assistance is through their international offices.

- Flinders University International Student Services Unit, ph: (08) 8201 2717;
- The University of Adelaide International Student Centre, ph: (08) 8303 4828;
- University of South Australia UniSA International, ph: (08) 8302 0022.

If you a student at TAFE or a private college, your first point of contact should be your student support officer.

Again, thank you for choosing South Australia as a study destination and remember that wherever your future takes you, South Australia aims to provide you with the best possible educational platform and a warm, generous welcome.

Yours sincerely



MIKE RANN
Premier

July 2009

Appendix 3

Letter to South Australian business community from Lieutenant Governor and Chairman of South Australia Multicultural and Ethnic Affairs Commission Hieu Van Le.



Government of South Australia
Multicultural SA

REF: MSA FILE 202/96

Office of the Chairman
South Australian
Multicultural and Ethnic
Affairs Commission
24 Flinders Street
Adelaide SA 5000
Tel 08 8226 1944
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multiculturalsa@saugov.sa.gov.au
www.multicultural.sa.gov.au

COPY

Dear

I am writing to highlight the important contribution international students make to our community and the significant role you play as an employer and member of the multicultural community.

Giving international students opportunities to work part-time while they study and in some instances, employing them as professionals once they graduate, is a key to our success in establishing Adelaide as Australia's learning city.

Since 2002, the number of international students in South Australia has more than doubled, with more than 30,000 studying here annually. They have come to Adelaide from 130 countries with big dreams and aspirations of becoming successful in their chosen fields. Some students also hope to stay here permanently.

Apart from the economic benefit of more than \$740 million a year and the 6,000 jobs these students generate, they play a key role in developing business links overseas, strengthening Australia's diplomatic and trade relations and broadening the cultural perspectives of Australian students.

You have also no doubt noted they have substantially increased the vibrancy and dynamism of Adelaide fuelling the need for accommodation, restaurants and cafes and retail outlets.

I have been advised by Education Adelaide that Australia's Workplace Ombudsman, Nicholas Wilson, is concerned that some unscrupulous employers, interstate, are exploiting young workers and international students.

Indeed, the Ombudsman has launched the National Young Workers Targeted Campaign and as a result has investigated and audited a number of businesses and recovered more than \$500,000 in unpaid wages in one state alone.

It's important you understand your rights and obligations to all workers. To assist you to appreciate your rights as an employer and your obligations to employees, a brochure is enclosed with this letter "Working in Australia: What Are My Workplace Rights". If you

have any questions, please contact the Workplace Ombudsman Help Line on 1300 724 200.

Your role in employing and supporting these students is highly valued

By helping create a safe, welcoming environment and by providing employment opportunities for students, our city and state will benefit directly and indirectly. These future leaders will provide social, trade, diplomatic and business relationships we are confident will benefit you, your business and your communities.

Kind regards,

Hieu Van Le
Chairman
South Australia Multicultural & Ethnic Affairs Commission

Appendix 4

Terms of reference and membership of South Australia's Enhancing the Overseas Student Experience in Adelaide Taskforce

The terms of reference explore areas of:

- Accommodation
- Employment and Employment Opportunities
- Student Welfare and Safety + Cultural and Social Engagement
- Quality and Coordination of Information Provision

The following agencies, departments and institutions have a seat at the table and the Taskforce is chaired by Mr Bill Spurr who is also the Chair of Education Adelaide:

- SA Department of Further Education, Employment, Science and Technology (DFEEST)
- SA Department of Trade and Economic Development (DTED)
- SA Department of Premier and Cabinet (DPC)
- Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT)
- Department of Immigration and Citizenship (DIAC)
- Adelaide City Council
- Education Adelaide
- Multicultural SA
- Australian Council for Private Education and Training (ACPET)
- Office of the Training Advocate
- TAFE SA
- The University of Adelaide
- University of South Australia
- Flinders University
- International students (x2)