



DEAKIN UNIVERSITY

**SUBMISSION TO THE SENATE INQUIRY INTO THE
WELFARE OF INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS**

August 2009

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1. INTRODUCTION

Deakin University is pleased to have an opportunity to make a submission to the Senate Inquiry into the Welfare of International Students. Ensuring that international students enjoy a high quality educational experience whilst in Australia is extremely important for many reasons. First and foremost, it is important for ethical and moral reasons. It is also important because of the contribution international students make to enriching the intellectual, social and cultural environment of university campuses and the broader community. And it is important because many Australian universities derive a significant proportion of their annual revenue from international students¹ so that their continued recruitment is crucial to them and to state and national economies. Australia will only continue to derive these benefits if it delivers a student experience that international students see as valuable from an academic perspective and in terms of their safety and general welfare.

This submission seeks to address all of the Inquiry's Terms of Reference. However, as Deakin offers only university level education and support, its focus is on international students studying at that level. Deakin would be pleased to provide any further information the Inquiry may deem appropriate, or to assist in any other way it can.

¹ In the case of Deakin University, it is estimated that in 2009 the income derived from international students (onshore enrolments, enrolments through offshore partnerships and from DUELI) will amount to \$104.85m, or 20% of its total income: see *Deakin University, Business Plan 2008-2010* at 54.

2. SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation 1

That State Governments take appropriate steps to properly regulate and police the private accommodation sector to eliminate exploitive and unconscionable practices.

Recommendation 2

That consideration be given to establishing a quality accreditation process, open to private rental providers, that could be used by education providers to recommend rental providers to students seeking accommodation.

Recommendation 3

That the Victorian and New South Wales Governments provide transport concessions to all international students that are identical with those provided to domestic students.

Recommendation 4

That the Victorian Government extend for students its Zone 1 ticket limit, which is currently set at a 12 kilometre radius from the central business district, so that it encompasses all major Higher Education and VET providers and their campuses within the Greater Metropolitan Melbourne Region.

Recommendation 5

That universities be permitted to charge students a services and amenities fee, the revenue from which would be used to support the provision of services and amenities for all students.

Recommendation 6

That noting the importance to Australia of the provision of international education and the current fragmented approach to its regulation, support, promotion and oversight, a new Parliamentary Secretary for International Education be appointed to help coordinate these activities.

Recommendation 7

That the Federal Government undertake a program to increase the awareness of employer groups and professional associations of the advantages of employing international students and graduates.

3. LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

The following abbreviations are used in this Submission:

DEEWR	Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations
DIAC	Department of Immigration and Citizenship
DIIRD	Department of Innovation, Industry and Regional Development
DSL	Division of Student Life (Deakin)
DUELI	Deakin University English Language Institute
DUSA	Deakin University Student Association
ECOE	Electronic Confirmation of Enrolment
ESOS	Education Services for Overseas Students Act 2000
FAPDC	Faculty Academic Progress and Discipline Committee
FLP	First Links Peer Support Leader
HDR	Higher Degree by Research
ICSO	International Customer Service Officer
ISA	International Student Adviser
MIBT	Melbourne Institute of Business and Technology
OPS	Orientation Peer Support
PASS	Peer Assisted Study Success program
PR	Permanent Residency
RO	International Reception Officer
VSU	Voluntary Student Unionism

4. DEAKIN UNIVERSITY

Deakin University aims to be a catalyst for positive change for the individuals and communities it serves.² This includes its international students who it recognises are a long way from family and the other support that a home community provides and who, therefore, may require additional services and support.

Deakin's goal in the area of 'Internationalisation' is 'to have an international outlook in relation to teaching and research and to enhance international capabilities and intercultural understanding among students, staff and the wider community, so as to be a university of choice for international and Australian students and staff'³. To achieve this goal the University pursues a variety of inter-related strategies including 'delivering effective services which enhance the student experience and enable students to develop their academic potential, build their credentials as global citizens and obtain employment within Australia or internationally on completion of their program of study'⁴.

In delivering academic and support services to its international students, Deakin calls on the expertise of a number of distinct areas of the University:

- Its four **Faculties** are responsible for delivering all academic programs.
- **Deakin International** is the Division within the University that has primary responsibility for the recruitment of overseas students, providing pre-arrival information and, in conjunction with the Division of Student Life (DSL) and Deakin University Students' Association (DUSA) (see below) their arrival into Australia and their orientation and induction into Deakin. Deakin International is also responsible for facilitating and ensuring the University's compliance with the *Education Services for Overseas Students Act 2000* and the *National Code of Practice 2007*.
- The **Division of Student Life** provides a wide range of non-academic services to all students at Deakin; including international students.
- The **Deakin University Student Association** is the independent body run by and for Deakin's students that offers a wide variety of services aimed at enhancing its members' student experience at Deakin.

Other than where it is appropriate to make specific reference to one or more of these areas, the text of this Submission will not differentiate between these or any other relevant areas of the University.

To help to provide context for this submission, Tables 1–4 summarise Deakin's international student population in 2008. Where appropriate, domestic enrolments are also included for comparison.

As Table 1 shows, international students comprised 6,905 of the 36,347 individual students enrolled at Deakin in 2008; this equates to 19% of the total enrolment. The overwhelming majority of these international students, 5,844 – or 85% of all international students – studied at Deakin's Melbourne Campus at Burwood where they represented 32% of the total enrolment at that Campus.

² See Deakin University Strategic Plan *Delivering Effective Partnership*, at page 2 (*Attachment A*),

³ Deakin University Strategic Plan *Delivering Effective Partnerships*, page 20.

⁴ Deakin University Strategic Plan *Delivering Effective Partnerships*, page 20, Strategy 3.2

Table 1 2008 Student Course Enrolments by Campus and Citizenship						
Campus	Number of Enrolments			% of Enrolments		
	Domestic	International	Total	Domestic	International	Total
Melbourne Campus at Burwood	12,324	5,844	18,167	68%	32%	100%
Geelong Campus at Waurm Ponds	3,925	498	4,423	89%	11%	100%
Geelong Waterfront Campus	1,886	194	2,080	91%	9%	100%
Warrnambool Campus	1,037	32	1,069	97%	3%	100%
Off Campus	10,269	338	10,607	97%	3%	100%
Grand Total	29,442	6,905	36,347	81%	19%	100%

As the following Table shows, approximately one in four of Deakin's international students come from China, with a further one in five coming from India. The top ten home locations shown in this Table provided Deakin with 5,673 students in 2008, or approximately 82% of its total international student enrolment.

Table 2 2008 International Student Enrolments – Top 10 Home Locations		
Rank	Home Country	Number
1	China (excluding SARs and Taiwan)	1,786
2	India	1,318
3	Sri Lanka	652
4	Hong Kong	521
5	Indonesia	361
6	Malaysia	335
7	Zimbabwe	233
8	USA	191
9	Vietnam	146
10	Singapore	130

In 2008 Deakin University had students enrolled from a total of 105 countries.

Approximately one in four of Deakin's international students has Chinese as his or her natural language, with a further one in five speaking either Hindi or Sinhalese. The top ten natural languages spoken by Deakin's international students, as shown in Table 3, were spoken by 4,756 students in 2008 or approximately 69% of its total international student enrolment.

Table 3 2008 International Student Enrolments – Top 10 Languages		
Rank	Natural Language (excluding English)	Number
1	Chinese	1,749
2	Hindi	728
3	Sinhalese	557
4	Cantonese	475
5	Mandarin	351
6	Indonesian	319
7	Shona	170
8	Gujarati	163
9	Vietnamese	132
10	Malay	112
<i>In 2008 Deakin students represented 84 natural languages (other than English)</i>		

Of the top ten courses listed in the following Table 4, five were located in Deakin's Faculty of Business and Law. These five courses had a total enrolment of 3,422 international students in 2008 representing almost exactly one in every two of the international students studying at Deakin.

Table 4 2008 International Student Enrolments - Top 10 Courses		
Rank	Course Name	Number
1	Bachelor of Commerce	2,435
2	Bachelor of Nursing	459
3	Master of Professional Accounting / Master of Commerce	367
4	Master of Business Administration (International)	213
5	Master of Commerce	210
6	Master of Professional Accounting	197
7	Master of International Finance / Master of Professional Accounting	129
8	Bachelor of Arts	107
9	Bachelor of Information Technology (Computer Science/Software Development)	96
10	Study Abroad Program (Arts and Education)	90

The following seven Sections (5 to 11) of this Submission cover the issues set out in the Terms of Reference, the heading for each Section being identical with one of the Terms of Reference (and presented in the same order).

5. STUDENT SAFETY

General Observations

The issue of the safety and security of international students in Melbourne has recently received a great deal of media attention, especially in India. Whilst the commission of any crime against international students is reprehensible, the actual data paints a better picture than media reports would indicate. Thus, most official records and statistics show that on most measures, incidents causing harm to, or the injury or death of, international students occur with significantly lower frequency than they do for the corresponding domestic cohorts⁵.

Nevertheless, because international students are unfamiliar with many aspects of Australian life that domestic students take for granted, they are particularly at risk in certain areas including:

- motor vehicle accidents (through lack of familiarity with Australian road rules and road conditions);
- beachside accidents often leading to drowning (through lack of familiarity with the extremes of Australian beach and surf conditions);
- areas of cities and towns in respect of which special care should be exhibited either generally, or during certain times during the day; and
- mental health issues (arising from or exacerbated by loneliness, home sickness or intercultural or academic stress).

The safety and security of students divides naturally into two distinct categories: the safety of students whilst they are on campus, and their safety whilst off campus including travelling to and from campus. Universities such as Deakin have very comprehensive practices and procedures on each of their campuses to ensure that these are as safe and secure as they can reasonably be expected to be. Details of the security measures Deakin employs are set out in Attachment C. Although education providers cannot be held to be directly responsible for the safety and security of their students – domestic or international – when these students are away from campus, Deakin does ensure that the material and support services it makes available to its international students includes information and advice on safety more generally. This includes advice on safe and unsafe areas of Melbourne, safety on public transport, emergency contact details for relevant authorities and the rights of overseas students. More details are provided below.

Although this Submission is structured so as to correspond of the Terms of Reference, it is noted that many of the issues addressed are interdependent, rather than mutually exclusive. For example, student safety away from the campus may be integrally linked to student accommodation, part-time employment and means of transport.

Deakin University places great importance on the safety of all its students and has played a leading role in this regard. For example, in 2008 and 2009 it has convened two Forums on International Student Welfare in Victoria attended by Victorian universities, officials from the Consuls-General of India, Malaysia, China and Indonesia and a Deputy Secretary from the Victorian Department of Innovation, Industry and Regional Development (DIIRD). The purpose of these Forums has been to inform relevant consular representatives of the processes and actions undertaken by Victorian universities to ensure the welfare and safety of international students undertaking studies in Victoria, and to provide an interactive forum for consular representatives and representatives of Victorian universities to share information and to express views or concerns on issues relating to the safety and welfare for

⁵ *Campus Review*, Vol 19, No. 13, 7 July 2009

international students in Victoria. During these meetings, the consular representatives have agreed that, in general, Victorian universities were providing a very good level of support and orientation for their countries' students. However, concern has been expressed about the social inclusion of international students (refer Section 7 below) and the universities were asked to undertake programs to bring international and domestic students closer together.

Practices and Procedures at Deakin

Deakin's Vice-Chancellor and University Council regard the safety and security of all Deakin students as a paramount concern. As a result, they responded quickly to the incidents of violence that occurred earlier this year by issuing strong statements of support for international students and condemning the attacks on Indian students that took place in Melbourne. Also, the Vice-Chancellor and the President of the Deakin University Students' Association met students at Geelong and Burwood to discuss safety issues, reinforce the University's position in this regard and outline the measures in place to safeguard their safety. This was further enhanced by the Pro Vice-Chancellor (International) and Faculty Deans conducting information and feedback sessions for international students. Deakin's approach to the safety and security of its students is summarised in the document *Safety and Security Measures* included in Figure 1.

Without derogating from this response and in order to provide perspective, it is noted that the available data suggests that international students in Australia are less likely to become victims of crime than corresponding domestic cohorts. These statistics are consistent with Deakin's own experience. During the last six months Deakin has become aware of only two instances in which its international students were victims of crime and in neither of these was there any evidence that the attack was racially motivated. Nevertheless, any crime against the person is regrettable and appropriate action by the police to reduce its incidence would benefit all students, including international students, and be welcomed by this University. Deakin liaises regularly with the Police operating in areas surrounding its Campuses to ensure that they are fully aware of the security measures the University has in place. We believe that when Police are required to respond to an incident, wherever possible, such response should be consistent with and coordinated with action being taken by the University.

Although Deakin does not believe that its international students are more at risk than its domestic students, there is some anecdotal evidence that when international students do become victims of crime they are more reluctant to report the matter to the Police for fear that this could jeopardise their student visa. Deakin attempts to solve this problem by including presentations by the Police in its Registration and Enrolment Programs for new international students. These programs are discussed in more detail in Section 7 of this Submission.

SAFETY AND SECURITY MEASURES

ADVICE AND INFORMATION

Deakin conducts a comprehensive program on safety and security as part of the orientation program for new international students

- This includes all aspects of safety – water, fire, and personal.
- As well as presentations by University staff, this program includes presentations by representatives from the various emergency services.
- Orientation kits are provided that include written material on these topics.

Emergency information cards

These are convenient business card size cards that provide students with a list of emergency contact telephone numbers should they ever need assistance.

Information dealing with safety issues is available on the Deakin University website

This is easy to locate and under an appropriate heading, for example, 'Out and About Safety'.

Deakin conducts seminars on safety involving representatives from local community policing units and local government representatives

Students' associations also undertake awareness-raising initiatives and work closely with other parts of the University to assist international students.

Deakin participates in the joint Victorian university initiative that involves the distribution of safety material to international students before they depart for Australia.

This enables students to arrive here better prepared for living in this country.

SECURITY ASSISTANCE

Security staff are available to escort students and staff between locations on the Campus should this be requested.

This service is available 24 hours per day.

Deakin arranges for local Police Officers to visit the University and provide information sessions

These sessions inform students of the services the Police can provide and to give advice about personal security issues; this advice is part of the regular orientation programs.

Review of lighting and safety access

Deakin conducts regular reviews of all lighting and safe access at the University.

MEETINGS AND CONSULTATION

Deakin conducts meetings for all international students studying at the University

These meetings facilitate discussions with students on any security issues they may have and their experiences at the University. They involve security staff, who can discuss the assistance they can provide to the students, as well as local Police Officers.

The Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic) meets regularly with representatives of the international student organisations.

These meetings cover all aspects of students' experience at the University and include security issues should they arise.

MEASURES TO CONSIDER

Transport

Deakin is undertaking a feasibility study into operating a special bus service for students between the University and strategic destinations, at least during the winter months.

Accommodation

Deakin is making arrangements for international students to be given priority when accommodation vacancies arise and investigating ways of increasing the number of places available for international students.

Telephone Hot Line to the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic)

The Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic) is available during office hours and out of hours to enable concerned parents to discuss any aspect of their child's study at University.

DIPLOMATIC AND CONSULAR ENGAGEMENT

Maintain contact with the Consuls-General in Melbourne

Deakin maintains close contact with Consuls-General based in Melbourne with particular regard to security issues, and invites the Consuls-General to the University to meet students.

Figure 1 Safety and Security Measures

In addition, as mentioned in point 3 of Figure 1, Deakin's Division of Student Life has published new security advice on its website under the heading 'Out and About Safety'; this information is included in Figure 2 below.

Out and About Safety

Appear confident

- When you are out and about, it is important to remember the core principles of personal safety, including confidence, body language, awareness of your surroundings, and trusting and acting on your instincts.
- Offenders tend to target vulnerability. If you appear uneasy with your surroundings, you are more likely to attract their attention. You will appear more confident through positive body language, such as adopting good posture, walking with purpose and being aware of your surroundings. Looking people in the eye, even for a brief moment, indicates that you are not intimidated by them. The idea is to appear 'streetwise' rather than scared or uneasy.
- Even if you don't feel comfortable, by using strong body language you will appear confident, rather than looking like 'an easy target'. You are also likely to feel more confident.

Carrying bags or valuables

If you are carrying or transporting bags or valuables, keep the following tips in mind:

- When walking, hold your wallet or handbag close to you where it cannot be easily reached or snatched. It is also a good idea to carry your bag on the side near the buildings, away from the road. Bag snatching is a crime of opportunity. If an item appears difficult to snatch, you can reduce the risk of being targeted.
- Consider the necessity of the items you carry in your handbag or wallet, and try to keep valuables to a minimum. It is a good idea not to keep all of your identification in the one place. You may also find it handy to keep a list of the items you carry in your handbag / wallet to report if stolen.
- Avoid marking your house or car keys with your name, address or car registration number.
- When visiting restaurants, cafes or theatres, avoid putting your bag or wallet on the next seat or floor, or hanging it over the back of a chair. Instead try to keep it in front of you, on the table, on your lap or between your feet.
- While grocery shopping, avoid leaving your valuables in an unattended trolley, even for a brief moment.
- If you need to leave your valuables in the car, make sure they are out of sight, or, preferably, lock them in the boot or glove compartment. Even a pile of loose change may be enough to entice an offender to break in to your car.

Talking to strangers

If approached by someone you don't know and you choose to answer questions or give directions, try to maintain an arm's length distance. Trust your instincts – if you feel uncomfortable, be assertive and do not be afraid to say 'no' and to continue on your way.

Automatic Teller Machines (ATMs)

When using an ATM, take the following precautions:

- Try to stand where you have the best view of what's going on around you while you wait for the machine to process your transaction. This way you avoid looking like an easy target.
- If you notice someone suspicious loitering around the ATM, use your body to shield the keyboard and screen to prevent them from discovering your personal identification number. Consider cancelling the transaction or taking out a smaller amount of money. It is also a good idea to report this person to the Police.
- If you think someone is following you after leaving the ATM, trust your instincts. Walk confidently and be prepared to carry out a safety plan, for example, moving to a more heavily populated area. You may choose to confirm your suspicions by crossing the street or changing direction.
- Count your money where it cannot easily be seen.
- If you need to use an ATM at night, try to find one that is well lit and not isolated.

Public telephones

When using a public telephone, maintain awareness of your surroundings by casually turning around to face passers-by once you have dialed. This reduces the possibility of someone approaching you unnoticed, and gives you a 'streetwise' appearance.

Lifts

If you are waiting to board a lift and have a bad feeling about a person in or boarding the lift, wait for the next lift or take the stairs. Maintain strong, confident body language and don't be afraid to look people in the eye for a brief moment to convey that you are not intimidated by them.

Out and About Safety (continued...)

If you are harassed while in a lift, your options include the following:

- Make direct eye contact with the person who is harassing you and telling them in a definite, confident tone that you are not interested and to leave you alone.
- Yell or scream loudly in an angry, aggressive tone to shock and scare off your harasser and convince them that you are not afraid (even if you are). This could also alert other passengers (if there is any) to what is happening and discourage the harasser, who generally will not want to be noticed by others.
- Get out at the next safe floor or populated area.
- Do whatever else you believe will keep you safest at the time.

For further strategies to deal with confrontation, refer to General Personal Safety Advice go to <http://www.deakin.edu.au/fmsd/services/security/>.

Walking or jogging alone

Your level of confidence is reflected in your body language. Therefore if you feel comfortable engaging in a particular activity, you will appear so. The reverse will occur if you don't feel confident. Therefore, you are encouraged to participate in activities where you feel comfortable. On the other hand, you can reduce your exposure to danger.

Some strategies you may wish to consider include:

- if you don't feel safe walking or jogging alone, consider going with a friend, dog, taking public transport or making other arrangements;
- if you continually use a particular route and this makes you feel uneasy, vary it;
- be continuously aware of your surroundings while maintaining a 'streetwise' appearance;
- ensure that your body language conveys confidence, including making brief eye contact with passers-by;
- use well-lit roads and paths where you are visible and where surrounding areas and other people are visible to you;
- consider moving in the direction that faces the traffic so a car cannot pull up behind you unnoticed;
- carry some form of identification and change for a public telephone, phone card, or a mobile phone;
- be aware that wearing headphones while exercising will decrease your ability to stay alert to your surroundings.

Being followed

If you believe you are being followed on foot, be prepared to carry out a personal safety plan. This may mean going to the nearest populated place such as a police station, shop, service station, hotel or even an occupied house. You may choose to confirm your suspicions by crossing the road or changing direction. If your suspicions are confirmed, call the police on 000 as soon as you get to a safe place.

If a car approaches you and you are threatened, it is suggested that you back away and run in the opposite direction. This will gain you vital seconds and make it more difficult for the car to follow. If you can, make a note of the registration number and description of the car, driver and any passengers. If this option is not available, do whatever you believe will best preserve your safety.

Hitch-hiking

Hitchhiking and giving lifts to strangers are dangerous and should be avoided.

Figure 2 Out and About Safety

When new international students commence their studies at Deakin they take part in an orientation program tailored for students from overseas that includes presentations and written material on safety and security. Presentations are delivered by Victoria Police, Deakin Security and reinforced by Deakin's team of International Student Advisers. Wallet sized cards with emergency and health and safety contact numbers are issued to all International students. Brochures are included in enrolment packs on water and fire safety and there are specific sessions conducted during the Campus International Registration and Enrolment Programs targeting water, fire and street safety and associated programs. Deakin is also represented on the Melbourne Fire Brigade International Student Advisory Committee. Subsequently common-sense safety messages with advice on how to minimise personal risk are regularly sent to international students to reinforce the information given during orientation.

On each of Deakin's four Campuses there is a strong, uniformed security presence twenty-four hours per day seven days per week. Full details of these on-campus security arrangements are provided in Attachment C. As well as protecting the main Campus buildings and grounds, there are dedicated security patrols for all on-campus residences. In addition to the main security service at the Melbourne Campus at Burwood, international students have access to an onsite Deakin security officer in the new international buildings on Elgar Road. On request, Deakin's security staff are available to provide security escorts for any member of the University to and from car parks, across the creek and bushland at the Melbourne Campus at Burwood, and to and from University residences.

As well as the professional security staff stationed on each Campus, University regulations provide senior staff with the authority to exclude people from the Campus and to investigate unacceptable behaviour on campus and apply appropriate penalties.

In the unfortunate event that any of Deakin's international students are victims of crime (or suffer a serious accident or tragic death) the University moves to implement its critical incident management procedure for international students within which the following support is available:

- 24 hour crisis response service through the team of International Student Advisers
- Medical assistance and referral
- Trauma counselling
- Financial assistance
- Special consideration if study is interrupted
- Assistance with communicating with the Police and other authorities.

In addition to these University-wide services, the teaching Faculties, course advisers and individual academic staff provide advice to students on safety issues.

Issues

Whilst Deakin is satisfied that it is doing as much as it reasonably can do to protect students' safety, it believes strongly that unresolved issues surrounding public transport have a significant impact on the safety of all students and international students in particular. The failure of the State Governments of Victoria and New South Wales to provide transport concessions for international students – in fact for all but full-time domestic undergraduate students – has implications for student safety as international students especially feel forced by cost considerations to choose less safe means to travel to and from university.

This is a particular problem for students attending Deakin's Melbourne Campus at Burwood. The current Zone 1 ticket will only allow students to travel as far as Warrigal Road, approximately 2.3 kilometres short of the Campus. To save scarce money, many international students choose to walk this distance, potentially putting themselves at risk, especially when doing so after dark. The matter of transport concessions is covered more fully in Section 7 of this Submission. Another Campus-specific transport issue arises at the University's Geelong Campus at Warrnambool which is situated some eight kilometres from the centre of Geelong and has no bus service at all after 5 pm each evening. These transport matters are the subject of recommendations in Section 7 of this Submission.

Another factor indirectly affecting the safety of international students is the current student visa restriction that prohibits them from working more than twenty hours per week in paid and voluntary work during the teaching trimester. There is anecdotal evidence that some international students, finding it difficult to finance their accommodation and living costs, choose to earn extra income by working more than the twenty hour maximum in jobs that are inherently risky, such as those that are paid only in cash, or which involve considerable work at night. This issue is also discussed in greater detail in Section 7 below. As well as raising security concerns, this practice contravenes the terms of the student's visa and places at risk their right to stay in Australia.

6. ADEQUATE AND AFFORDABLE ACCOMMODATION

General Observations

Adequate, affordable and appropriately located accommodation is necessary if international students are to enjoy a positive student experience in Australia. There is currently a well-documented shortage of rental accommodation in Victoria, especially in Melbourne. With rising house prices, the private rental market of affordable accommodation for students is very tight and expected to remain so. Other than at the margin, universities themselves do not have the financial resources to build and operate significant incremental student accommodation whilst the impact of the global financial crisis on the availability of both capital and loan funds has severely restricted the opportunities for commercial developers to provide such facilities.

For a variety of reasons, overseas students appear to be further disadvantaged in such a tight market and may be particularly vulnerable to less scrupulous landlords and private rental providers in matters related to access to accommodation, rents and landlord responsibilities. In such situations many overseas students may not be able to defend themselves through language problems, cultural differences, submissiveness or sheer desperation to find housing.

As well as the direct implications for international students, as noted in the previous Section, lack of accommodation can have flow-on effects for students' safety and, at the macro level, for education providers' ability to continue to increase their international enrolments in line with demand.

Rooming houses

It has become increasingly common for international students to find accommodation by leasing a room in a so-called *rooming house*. Rooming houses do not typically involve a real estate agent, and are typified by the direct agreement between the tenant and the landlord. The lack of formal tenancy processes often includes the absence of a lease agreement, transactions being in cash, harsh financial penalties being imposed for the breach of lease conditions, and the confiscation of bonds without justification. Further to this, the unregulated nature of rooming houses can often result in over-crowding. According to one Deakin student, she had lived in a rooming house where eight students had shared four bedrooms and where the landlord had converted all common areas into bedrooms to increase the occupancy of the house.

Practices and Procedures at Deakin

Campus residences

Deakin provides on-campus accommodation at three of its four Campuses where it aims to provide a quality living and learning environment within a community context. Students are allocated places based on the information submitted with their application and all places are allocated to students needing to relocate to attend Deakin. When allocating places Deakin also attempts to maintain a reasonable mix and balance of gender, first year and senior students, new and commencing students and international and domestic students. A nominal, flexible cap guides the allocation of places to international students; at the Melbourne Campus at Burwood, for example, this is 30% of the available places.

In recent years applications from international students have been below this 30% allocation. It is felt that this lower number of applications may be due to these students preferring to live in alternative accommodation and seeking cheaper options.

Further details on the operation of Deakin's student residences – including bed numbers, occupancy rates and costs – are provided in Attachment D to this Submission. Residential fees are approved annually by the University Council after considering a number of factors including fees charged by comparative facilities, market conditions and estimated operating costs. Deakin's residences are operated on a commercial basis and are expected to return a budget surplus each year.

Off-campus accommodation

Through its student association – the Deakin University Students Association (DUSA) – Deakin provides an Off-Campus Housing Service to assist all international students to obtain suitable permanent accommodation through its housing database and through real estate agents. This service commences with airport reception after which all international students meet a DUSA housing support officer where they have the opportunity to discuss their requirements and receive advice about accommodation options and their rights and obligations as tenants. Temporary accommodation is arranged for students who use the airport reception service. The standard of temporary accommodation used is monitored and there is a range of prices. The DUSA service takes students' preferences into account, provides transport for them to view a number of accommodation options and moves them from temporary to permanent accommodation once a choice is made. We are advised that DUSA invariably finds suitable accommodation for all the international students who seek its assistance.

DUSA does not monitor the standard of all entries on the housing database but does introduce students to a range of affordable accommodation options through the database and in the open rental market. In addition, the University has a good working relationship with relevant authorities to whose attention it can draw instances of practices that it considers to be inappropriate

Issues and Recommendations

The availability of appropriate affordable accommodation in close proximity to university campuses is one of the most pressing issues facing international students studying in Australia. In the case of Deakin students, this situation is exacerbated by the current extremely tight rental markets in both Melbourne and Geelong.

A second important issue is the lack of regulation, or the inability of the relevant authorities to enforce existing laws and regulations that govern rooming houses. Instances have been reported of international students living in these houses in substandard conditions, including the practice known as 'hot bedding', without the protection of a written lease and being unaware of their rights and possibly too frightened to challenge unscrupulous landlords because of their urgent need for accommodation.

Recommendation 1

That State Governments take appropriate steps to properly regulate and police the private accommodation sector to eliminate exploitive and unconscionable practices.

Recommendation 2

That consideration be given to establishing a quality accreditation process, open to private rental providers, that could be used by education providers to recommend rental providers to students seeking accommodation.

7. SOCIAL INCLUSION (INCLUDING TRANSPORT)

General Observations

As with the safety and security of overseas students discussed earlier in this Submission, social inclusion of international students has two dimensions: integration into the broader student and academic community on campus, and integration into the wider off-campus community and economy. Issues associated with the social inclusion of overseas students are complicated; the level of English language proficiency may be a hindrance as may a wide range of cultural peculiarities. Although Australia has a proud history of multiculturalism at the headline level, cultural competency at the practical level remains in its infancy. Some institutions, including Deakin, are developing initiatives in this area to ensure that, as far as possible, students graduating will be culturally competent and that this will be one of the graduate attributes they take with them into their domestic and professional lives.

An important element of a positive student experience for international students in Australia should be the opportunity to interact with their colleagues in the university community, both students and staff. There are numerous reasons why this objective may not be achieved as much as we would all like. As well as the language and cultural factors mentioned above, due to financial pressures international students may not be able to spend as much time on campus outside class time as is desirable.

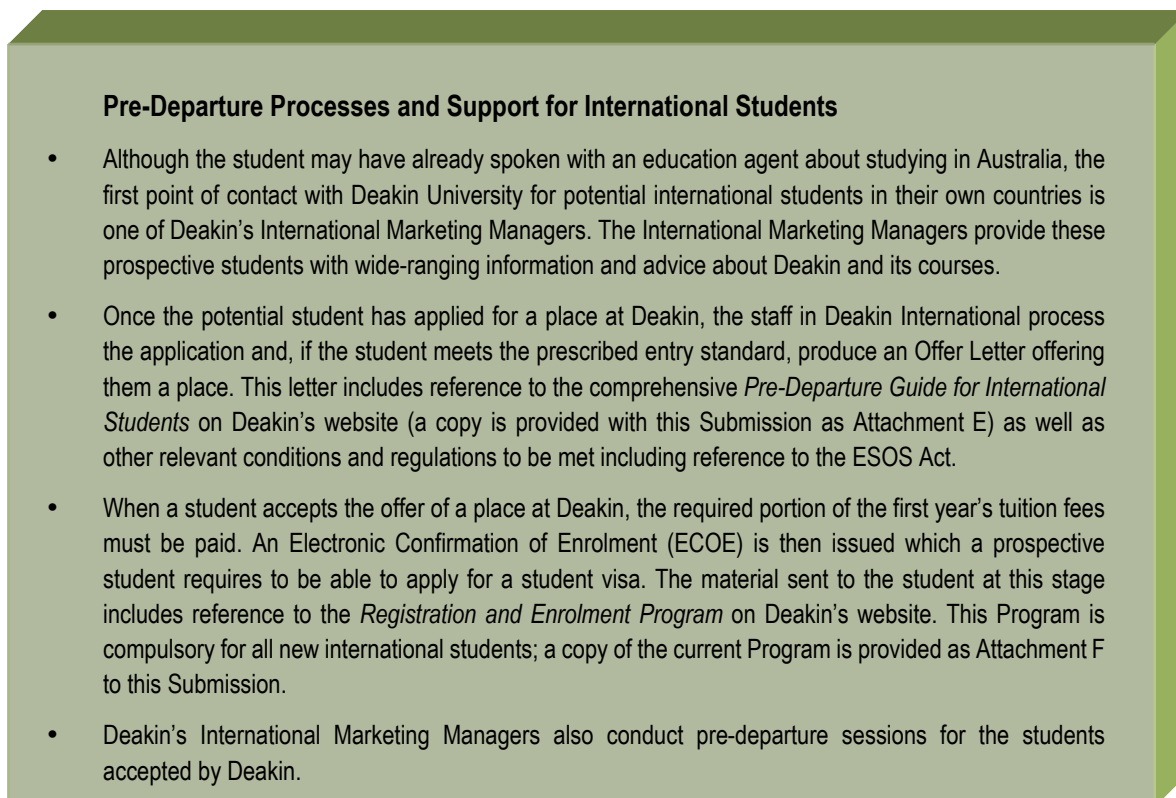
Much of the social inclusion activity at all universities is provided by the institution's student organisation; in Deakin's case, this is the Deakin University Student Association (DUSA). Clubs and societies, sporting facilities and organised activities on campuses offer situations outside the formal classes in which international students can mix with other international and domestic students with shared interests. Unfortunately, the significant loss of revenue caused by the introduction of voluntary student unionism (VSU) has made it much harder for student associations and universities such as Deakin to deliver social inclusion programs of this nature. This jeopardises their ability to ensure that overseas students are able to maximise the opportunity that study in Australia presents to engage with domestic and other international students and with the local community.

Most States offer overseas students the same concessional fares on public transport as are available to domestic students. The continued absence of these transport concessions in Victoria and New South Wales is a source of great dissatisfaction for international students. Both of these States argue that the provision of such concessions would be too costly and that the lack of transport concessions is consistent with a variety of other government services (for example, Medicare) that are not available to international students. On the other hand, it is noted that international students contribute a great deal to the local economy through paying tuition fees, living expenses and taxation, and confer considerable non-economic benefits as well by enriching and diversifying our communities. The absence of transport concessions not only imposes a financial cost on overseas students – many of whom are already struggling to make ends meet – but also creates a perception amongst these students that, despite the government rhetoric, they are not really welcome.

Addressing this situation by granting international students transport concessions in Victoria and New South Wales would do much to counter the adverse media attention Australian international education has received in recent months, here and overseas, by sending a powerful message to current and prospective overseas students that they are valued and not seen simply as revenue providers.

Practices and Procedures at Deakin

Deakin University believes that social inclusion for its international students commences as soon as prospective students make their first contact with Deakin's representatives in their home countries and continues through the pre-departure phase before the student arrives in Australia. Deakin, therefore, ensures that this phase of the partnership between itself and its new international students enhances the student experience by providing him or her with as much information as is reasonably possible about what to expect when they come to live and work in Australia. The pre-departure process, including an outline of Deakin's support for international students at this stage, is illustrated in Figure 3.



Pre-Departure Processes and Support for International Students

- Although the student may have already spoken with an education agent about studying in Australia, the first point of contact with Deakin University for potential international students in their own countries is one of Deakin's International Marketing Managers. The International Marketing Managers provide these prospective students with wide-ranging information and advice about Deakin and its courses.
- Once the potential student has applied for a place at Deakin, the staff in Deakin International process the application and, if the student meets the prescribed entry standard, produce an Offer Letter offering them a place. This letter includes reference to the comprehensive *Pre-Departure Guide for International Students* on Deakin's website (a copy is provided with this Submission as Attachment E) as well as other relevant conditions and regulations to be met including reference to the ESOS Act.
- When a student accepts the offer of a place at Deakin, the required portion of the first year's tuition fees must be paid. An Electronic Confirmation of Enrolment (ECOE) is then issued which a prospective student requires to be able to apply for a student visa. The material sent to the student at this stage includes reference to the *Registration and Enrolment Program* on Deakin's website. This Program is compulsory for all new international students; a copy of the current Program is provided as Attachment F to this Submission.
- Deakin's International Marketing Managers also conduct pre-departure sessions for the students accepted by Deakin.

Figure 3 *Pre-departure Processes and Support for International Students*

Social Inclusion in the University Community

International students routinely identify the difficulty they have in making Australian friends as among the few disappointments of their Australian education experience. To address this situation, Deakin conducts a range of activities on its Campuses to profile the cultures from which international students come and to support their social well-being. These programs are designed to help new students to adjust to life on campus and build connections with Australian and other international students.

Deakin's Transition Group has found that students form enduring bonds with the peers they associate with during their first experience at university. The University has therefore introduced a senior student led peer networking session on the first day of orientation ('Week Zero'). Every effort is made to ensure that this session (and subsequent ones) is cross-cultural so that these networks are forged across cultural and national groups and that all students identify and appreciate Deakin as a multinational environment from their very first experience – being part of 'the world at Deakin'. International students are invited to join a group of approximately ten students from the same discipline but comprising a mixture of domestic and international students. The group is hosted by a

trained senior student who facilitates introductions and networking and remains available to the group for the first six weeks of the trimester.

The compulsory *Registration and Enrolment Program* that all new international students must participate in at the commencement of their first trimester at Deakin is one of its most important activities for social inclusion. This comprehensive Program is carefully designed with contemporary input from current international students. A copy of the Program for Trimester 2, 2009 is attached to this Submission as Attachment F; some key features of the Program are shown in Figure 4.

Deakin's Registration and Enrolment Program for New international Students

The function of the *Registration and Enrolment Program* (refer to Attachment F) is to provide cultural community information and basic advice about University support services, addressing adjustment issues. Key academic and enrolment briefings in the afternoon are designed for Faculty staff to meet students and impart essential information about their course, School and Faculty expectations. This Program is run on all Deakin Campuses at the start of Trimesters 1 and 2 and each Trimester at the Melbourne Campus at Burwood. It is designed and delivered by the Division of Student Life in conjunction with other key administrative Divisions, such as the Library, and the Faculties. By completing the Program students are able to obtain their student card and gain access to University Library and information technology facilities.

Key Features of the Registration and Enrolment Program

- The provision of Campus familiarization tours
- International Reception Officers (ROs) meet students staying at nominated hostels/hotels and drive them to the Campus for the *Welcome to Melbourne* (First Links) program.
- As part of the *Welcome to Melbourne* program, First Links Peer Support Leaders (FLPs) assist all new students with their initial needs such as banking and familiarity with their Campus and the local area including public transport. The ROs and FLPs work closely together to ensure that the newly arrived students are supported to become familiar with their temporary accommodation, Campus and the local area.
- Approximately forty volunteer Orientation Peer Support (OPS) Leaders, most of whom are themselves international students, participate in the planning of the Orientation and Enrolment Program and are integral to its success.
- The orientation information briefings offered on Tuesday are designed to address new students' adjustment issues, provide Australian cultural information (including information about Australian Police) and advise students where they can get basic help and advice from the University.
- The Peer Support cultural play, a short drama production written and performed by the Orientation Peer Support Leaders on Tuesday, focuses on adjustment issues and is always very well received by new students.
- The Orientation Peer Support Leaders close the *Registration and Enrolment Program* by offering a Melbourne city tour to newly commencing students with the aim that new students can benefit from their own OPS experiences in living in Melbourne.

Information Sessions focus on:

- Academic support
- Safety in the community
- Social integration
- University Resources: IT, Library, Pastoral care/ counselling

Figure 4 Deakin's Registration and Enrolment Program for New international Students

The Deakin University Student Association (DUSA) is one of the principal providers of on-campus social inclusion initiatives for all students. DUSA facilitates and supports a wide range of University sporting and cultural clubs and conducts a variety of competitions and non-competitive recreational activities. Some of these activities are ethnic based (for example, the Deakin Sri Lankan, East Asian and Indian Clubs) and through these DUSA has an important role to play in fostering engagement through culturally-sensitive and multicultural events.

Deakin Faculties and other areas also provide opportunities for social inclusion. The Faculty of Business and Law, for example, fosters student societies such as the Deakin Business Students' Society and the Deakin Commerce Society that are open to students without joining fees. The Faculty also works closely with student societies to encourage and support social events and events designed to enrich students' educational experience, or enhance their career opportunities. When group work is required as part of teaching, efforts are made to ensure that there is a good cultural mix of students in each group. Some Faculties also offer 'drop-in stations' and peer mentoring programs to encourage contact between students, whilst others have established Support Groups that convene periodically to discuss international student needs.

Members of the University's Senior Executive also meet regularly with international students to discuss issues that affect them and to reinforce the contribution they make to the University and the communities it serves. The Vice-Chancellor, for example, conducts open gatherings with international students several times each year to enable them to raise matters of concern in a relaxed and informal environment, whilst the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic) holds regular meetings with the University's international clubs and societies to help gauge the University's performance and inform them of initiatives being taken for their benefit. These meetings sometimes involve the diplomatic or consular representatives of the country involved when they are visiting Deakin as part of its international engagement program.

Social inclusion in the broader Community

It is also important for students to create networks and become involved in the broader community in which they live. This will enable them to engage with Australians at a personal interest level and to achieve a healthier work/study balance. Doing both will enhance their experience of living and studying in Australia and importantly, in many cases, will also help them to develop their English language skills. This may also increase their capacity to access the 'hidden' job market ('who you know'). To help in this regard, the University plays a significant role in 'introducing' the community to international students and to facilitating initial contact. International students' casual and part-time employment also assists their social inclusion in the broader community.

Deakin provides students with links to the community in a variety of ways. These include sponsoring sporting clubs that encourage international student participation (for example, the Waurn Ponds Cricket Club); developing connections with service bodies (for example, Rotary and Rotaract); working with community agencies (for example, Diversitat); creating volunteering opportunities, and providing information about religious groups and English language classes for spouses (GATE). These opportunities are promoted to international students on arrival and through Campus posters. Deakin's International Student Support group (ISS) is represented on the Whitehorse City Youth Group and items of interest from that Group are disseminated to international students. Excursions are arranged which are designed to bring students out into the community in order to familiarise them with local environs and regional attractions, including areas that they might wish to revisit. Recent excursions include visits to the Bellarine Peninsula, Port Fairy Folk Festival, Healesville Sanctuary, and Narana Creations (an Aboriginal Craft and Cultural Interpretation Centre). Links with the Geelong and Collingwood Football Clubs also exist or are being developed. Activities such as these all encourage students to get to know and participate in the wider community and support social inclusion.

Issues and Recommendations

The most pressing issue facing those trying to provide activities and initiatives that can facilitate the social inclusion of international students is the lack of funding. This situation was exacerbated by the introduction of Voluntary Student Unionism (VSU) in 2005. As a result of VSU, DUSA now has only limited funds to support its affiliated clubs and societies and this has a negative effect on its ability to conduct the kinds of sporting, cultural and enrichment activities that would foster the social inclusion of international students. The University has sought to assist DUSA in this respect; however doing so involves reallocating resources that would otherwise be directed towards teaching and research. For this reason, the University favoured the passage of the *Higher Education Legislation Amendment (Student Services and Amenities, and Other Measures) Bill 2009* and regrets that this has not occurred. Had this Bill passed it would have enabled the University to charge students a services and amenities fee, the revenue from which would have been used to support these activities.

As noted above, transport concessions for international students is a major issue. The absence of such concessions in Victoria and New South Wales not only imposes extra financial pressures on international students but can have implications for their safety and security and a negative effect on their social inclusion.

Recommendation 3

That the Victorian and New South Wales Governments provide transport concessions to all international students that are identical with those provided to domestic students.

Recommendation 4

That the Victorian Government extend for students its Zone 1 ticket limit, which is currently set at a 12 kilometre radius from the central business district, so that it encompasses all major Higher Education and VET providers and their campuses within the Greater Metropolitan Melbourne Region.

Recommendation 5

That universities be permitted to charge students a services and amenities fee, the revenue from which would be used to support the provision of services and amenities for all students.

8. STUDENT VISA REQUIREMENTS

This is not an area on which the Deakin wishes to comment other than to note that it provides its international students with considerable information about student visas and their requirements. This is made available in Pre-departure Guides, on the University's Current Students website, and in flyers included in enrolment packs and distributed during orientation programs. Key support staff, such as International Student Advisers (ISAs), are also available to provide information about student visa requirements and regulations. In addition, Deakin's ISAs also facilitate on-campus sessions for students covering matters such as visa renewal, rights to work and skilled migration.

9. ADEQUATE INTERNATIONAL STUDENT SUPPORT AND ADVOCACY

General Observations

It is clear that from time to time, international students studying in Australia will require support and advocacy assistance from their education providers and from the various levels of government. This support must extend across a wide range of areas including academic matters, accommodation, financial concerns, personal issues, social inclusion, visas, permanent residency, employment, future careers, safety, transport, rights and responsibilities, and so on. Many of these areas are discussed elsewhere in this Submission. Universities, including Deakin, have traditionally offered all students a variety of support and advocacy services to assist them in areas such as these. However, their ability to do so optimally is being compromised by competing financial pressures.

It is also noticeable that there is no 'one stop' shop at either Commonwealth or State level where international students can obtain the advice or support. At the Commonwealth level, for example, the Department of Education, Employment and Workplaces Relations (DEEWR) is responsible for matters associated with education whilst the Department of Immigration and Citizenship (DIAC) handles student visas and immigration issues. Given the current importance of overseas students to Australian social life and to our economy, and its potential to contribute even more in these areas in the future, a strong case can be made for international education being formally represented within the Federal Government by, for example, its own Parliamentary Secretary. This would help to ensure that it receives the 'whole of government' attention its importance warrants.

Practices and Procedures at Deakin

Deakin University provides a wide range of support services to all students, domestic and international. These services are provided by several areas of the University, principally Deakin International, the Division of Student Life (DSL), the Division of Student Administration and the Deakin University Student Association (DUSA) – which is independent but which is contracted by the University to provide certain services for students – and the Faculties responsible for teaching. Some examples of support services provided specifically for international students at Deakin are shown in figure 5.

Deakin's Specific Ongoing Support Services for international Students

International Student Advisers (ISAs) - daily support service – consultation and case management

- ISAs remain the first point of contact for international students throughout their time at Deakin for:
- advice and referral;
- problem resolution;
- advocacy/diplomatic representation;
- knowledge/expertise in relation to ESOS Act 2000/National Code(2007) compliance requirements for students and University.

Programs designed and implemented specifically to meet the needs of international students

- Academic Support Programs
 - FAPDC Workshops in conjunction with DSL Language and Learning/DUSA/Faculties – assist students to understand FAPDC requirements and help to prepare for show cause hearings
- Conversation classes – together DSL Academic Skills Unit
- Life Skills Programs
 - Eat Well - Study Well for International Students (in conjunction with DSL Health Service)
- Community Links Programs
 - Rotary/Rotaract
 - Volunteer Groups
 - Local Government Youth Groups
 - Sport and Recreation Clubs
- Final Semester Program – online program plus DIAC Skilled Migration seminars on campus
- Exchange/Study Abroad Returning Home Programs

Support designed for particular international student cohorts

- U/18 students (in compliance with ESOS 2000/National Code(2007) Standard requirements)
- HDR students (arrival, post arrival, link with Faculty and supervisor, referrals, for example Liaison Librarian, DUSA, DSL HDR Language and Learning Adviser)
- Students with families (schools and child care advice/referral, language classes for spouses referral)
- Students with disability (arrival, post arrival, link with DRC)
- Scholarship/sponsored students
 - AusAID Govt Sponsored students in compliance with agreement (arrival, post arrival including bank account, stipend, liaison with faculties for academic monitoring, liaison with DI for allowance payments, reporting of variations to AusAID)
 - Botswana Government Sponsored students
 - Government of Oman Sponsored students
- Financial Aid students – includes Extended Entrance and Extended Exit Counseling
- DUELI students – attend preparation session for transition to Deakin
- MIBT students – representation in DU/MIBT support group to assist transition to Deakin Resource to Faculty programs for specific cohorts

Figure 5 Deakin's Specific Ongoing Support Services for international Students

International Student Advisors (ISAs)

Deakin employs *International Student Advisors (ISAs)* to provide international students with advice and assistance in relation to all aspects of their study and life in Australia. Through one to one consultations, these advisors directly assist students to deal with their problems, or help them to obtain the assistance they need from other parts of the University, or from external service providers and agencies. They are experienced and well versed in the needs of international students and the challenges they face in adjusting to a new living and learning culture. ISAs are also responsible for managing personal crises (such as illness, accident or death) and for providing intensive support and advice to the student and student's family as necessary.

Personal Support

International students have ready access to free University services including Counselling, the Medical Clinic (medical insurance is required), Interest Free Loans and Food Vouchers. International Customer Service staff and International Student Advisors, as dedicated support for international students, provide a first point of contact. International Customer Service Officers (ICSOs) are able to provide information on matters such as visas, health insurance, admission, enrolment, fees and so on.

Support Services Available to All Deakin Students

Through its Division of Student Life and the Deakin University Student Association, Deakin provides a comprehensive range of services to all students, including international students. Full details of all available services can be found on the University website, while some more detail is provided in Attachment G to this Submission. The services provided include:

- On-campus accommodation
- Health and medical services
- Counselling and personal development
- Financial assistance
- Disability Resource Centre
- Food services
- Childcare
- Careers and employment
- Chaplaincy
- Jobshop
- Transition
- Study skills
- Sports and recreation
- Clubs and societies

Figure 6 Support Services available to All Deakin Students

Academic Support

International students often need to adjust to studying in a second language and to learning within a different educational environment. To assist them in this regard, Deakin provides a transition program and study skills and language support through generic and targeted interventions. Deakin's approach is to create quality generic and course specific support for all students, augmented by individual support. The University provides a wide range of programs to assist students develop necessary study skills. These programs include reading, writing, referencing, researching, assignment writing and study habits. Deakin has also designed a free access English Language diagnostic tool, named *iDeal*, which enables students to assess their English language proficiency and, if necessary, obtain assistance to improve their language skills. Having established a base analysis of English language entering skill, *iDeal* can then be used for the reassessment of these regularly throughout the student's course.

Each Faculty at Deakin monitors the academic progress of its students and those 'at risk' are sent an appropriate warning and information about obtaining assistance from a student advisor. This advice will usually involve developing an intervention strategy to support the student. Typically, the components of such a strategy will include referral to language and learning skills advisers in DSL and the review of major areas of study. Faculties also offer support tutorials for students in core units and units in the most popular majors; these are free and offered in addition to standard tutorials. Other programs to support students include the *iDeal* language diagnostic tool, mentioned above, and the peer assisted study success program (PASS).

Careers and Employment

Deakin's Careers and Employment Service is available to assist international students to acquire part-time jobs, internships, identify their career plans and develop expert job-seeking skills. Assistance is also provided with resume development, interview skills, work integrated learning and employer liaison. Assistance of this nature is provided in private consultation and through career fairs and seminars supported by web-based and hard copy resources. The Employment Service is popular with international students as it can also assist them with longer term career planning and preparation, and gaining employment while studying. Importantly, the Service is available to students for twelve months after graduation, thereby providing valuable assistance to all graduates at this crucial time in their career development.

Recommendation 6

That noting the importance to Australia of the provision of international education and the current fragmented approach to its regulation, support, promotion and oversight, a new Parliamentary Secretary for International Education be appointed to help coordinate these activities.

10. EMPLOYMENT RIGHTS AND PROTECTION FROM EXPLOITATION

General Observations

Many international students need to do some paid work to assist with their living expenses whilst studying in Australia. This work can also be a valuable component of their student experience, and can directly assist their social inclusion by providing opportunities to improve their English language proficiency and interact with the wider community. Longer term, this work experience can assist overseas students to obtain references for subsequent employment and prepare those who wish for permanent residency.

Current student visas allow overseas students to work no more than twenty hours per week during the teaching trimester. Whilst there are sound reasons for this limit – principally to ensure students have adequate study time – it is known that, in practice, many overseas students work well in excess of twenty hours to meet their living expenses. Being unable to do so legally, many students take on extra work on a cash basis, often doing menial tasks and being susceptible to workplace exploitation. International students endure such situations either through a lack of knowledge of their rights or through fear of adverse consequences – such as losing their student visa – should they lodge a complaint with the relevant authority.

The other aspect of employment that needs to be considered is the difficulties often faced by international students in gaining meaningful employment in their area of expertise after completing their studies. There are several reasons for this situation, most of which have little to do with their professional knowledge and expertise. The barriers faced by these graduates are more likely to be language or culturally based, factors that are inconsistent with Australia's positioning as an open multicultural society.

Practices and Procedures at Deakin

Deakin works closely with employers in relevant industries and the professions to identify opportunities for work placements, internships, and so on for its students. However, more could be done to build community and employer awareness of the value of employing international students and graduates to meet identified skills shortages.

International students also need information about their rights as employees in Victoria. The *Jobshop* at Deakin vets all vacancies that it lists and specifically excludes jobs that are exploitative in nature. This includes commission-based jobs, contractor roles and positions in the sex industry. The *Jobshop* also refuses to advertise for employers with a known reputation for exploitative practices. On the *Jobshop* website and offices there is information for students about their rights at work and the website has a prominent link to the Government's Workplace Ombudsman. International students are also advised personally during interviews and presentations of their workplace rights and acceptable behaviour in the workplace.

As well as the services provided by the Careers and Employment Service described earlier, Deakin's Faculties recognise the importance of preparing international students for the Australian workforce. Graduate Recruitment Workshops are held each year and cover such topics as: what to do to increase your chances of securing a graduate position in Australia; business writing standards and styles expected by Australian employers; General Skilled Migration visa options; and developing a 'base' resume and tips for job interviews.

One Faculty's Experience

Deakin's Faculty of Business and Law, which has by far the largest concentration of overseas students of the four Faculties, commented as follows on the employment prospects of its international graduates in Australia. "In 2008 the Faculty implemented a career-focused event called *Professionals' Week* to assist students to understand how the graduate recruitment process works; to meet with some of the larger employment firms, particularly Accounting firms; and to provide assistance in preparation of resumes. International students find it very difficult to gain employment in their discipline field as many of the larger firms are unwilling to take on 'internationals'. This may be a visa related issue, but it is very keenly felt by international students. Career prospects for international students in Australia are far more limited than for domestic students."

Issues and Recommendations

The presence of international students and graduates in Australia has the potential to significantly add to the depth and quality of the Australian labour market. However, as noted above, there is reason to believe that many employers are not taking full advantage of this situation. For this reason Deakin suggests that the Federal Government undertakes a program to promote to employer groups and professional associations, including public sector employers, the advantages of employing international students and graduates. This would be beneficial to both.

Recommendation 7

That the Federal Government undertake a program to increase the awareness of employer groups and professional associations of the advantages of employing international students and graduates.

11. APPROPRIATE PATHWAYS TO PERMANENT RESIDENCY

General Observations

The prospect of gaining Permanent Residency (PR) in Australia is a powerful motivator for many overseas students coming here to undertake university or vocational studies. In many cases, the initial contact these students have with the Australian education system is through an education agent in their home country, rather than through the institution at which they eventually enrol. There is anecdotal evidence that in their desire to place as many students as possible, some agents 'bend' the truth about such important matters as the pathway to PR in Australia; finding employment and the amount of money they can earn; the availability and cost of accommodation; and the standards of English language proficiency needed. The temptation for agents is to portray PR as being much easier to obtain than it really is.

Deakin suggest that there is a need for more transparency, clarity and accountability about permanent residency and that an appropriate mechanism to regulate the activities of offshore agents should be devised.

Practices and Procedures at Deakin

Deakin University does not answer any queries from its international students relating to the eligibility or process of applying for Australian permanent residency. On its website it advises "International students who wish to find out more about applying for [Australian permanent residency](#) should contact DIAC (03) 9657 4117 or view the information online". The University does provide the following piece of general advice: "International students may wish to know, however, that prospective skilled migrants who have lived in or are willing to relocate to certain regional or low population growth metropolitan areas within Australia could stand a greater chance of applying for permanent residency".

Professor Philip H Clarke
Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic)

24 August 2009