

To

Committee Secretary,
Senate Education, Employment and Workplace Relations Committee,
PO Box 6100
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600 Australia

Re: Inquiry into the Welfare of International Students

In regards to the recent exposé of dodgy private vocational education providers, it would be a good idea to set up a separate regulatory body to supervise and monitor those providers.

In my opinion, the existence of some of these types of providers does not necessitate the change of skilled permanent migrant pathways for all international students. There are many genuine students who pursue single and multiple postgraduate coursework and research degrees in universities to improve their skills. They may decide later to work and contribute to the economy of Australia. Australia might be losing many bright, intelligent students to their home countries or elsewhere if skilled permanent residency pathways are tightened or restricted for all international students as a result of the disproportionately large number of students enrolling in private vocational colleges as a means to permanent residency.

However, I feel if there needs to be tightening of pathways to skilled permanent residency for international students, students at vocational colleges should only be allowed to apply for skilled permanent residency through the Skilled - Graduate (Temporary) Visa (Subclass 485). In the current system, it is easy for vocational students to obtain the 900 hours work required through fraudulent papers and bribes. In the new system that I am proposing, the 900 hours work should be done away with and the pathway to permanent residency should be through the Temporary Visa (485). In this case, they will need to take employment for a year, which can be monitored by the concerned authority as it now for the Temporary Visa (485).

The government is also going to remove the cap on the number of students in universities from 2012, but has consistently failed to put a cap on the number of students enrolling in private vocational colleges. This has led to the mushrooming of students in private colleges, which gladly take in as many students as they can because they are not government-funded. As a result, the academic standards of students enrolling in private colleges have fallen. Since many students enrolling there are doing it as a means to permanent residency, they don't care about how well their lecturers teach them, which has led to the standards of academic staff fall as well.

The government has to propose a limit to the number of international students enrolling in private vocational colleges or limit the number of visas issued to students coming to study vocational courses. The international

students studying in universities are at a disadvantage, as they have to compete with disproportionately higher number of students from vocational colleges for the limited skilled permanent resident places available each year. The limit mentioned above should be in place until the number of students in universities and vocational colleges are about the same. This would provide the crème de la crème of students studying coursework, research and doctorate degrees that want to work and secure permanent residency in Australia to have a better chance of getting it and not lose out to students from vocational colleges in the quota for permanent residency places.

Universities should try to provide for on-campus accommodation for most if not all of international students. International students can also be given preference to fill places in on-campus accommodation. Some cities like Darwin have a very tight rental market and it is extremely difficult for students studying there to find rental accommodation. Uncapping the number of places in the universities won't help unless there is infrastructure to support the increase in the number of students expected. The government should allocate funding for universities to build on-campus accommodation. This will greatly reduce travelling time for students living far and away as well as provide safety for students after late-night classes, as they need not travel long distances to their home. This can also prevent some of the recent attacks on Indian students travelling alone late at nights.

Regards,
Krishnan Raman.