

IMMIGRATION NEWS

(Volume 126)

TODAY'S NEWS STORY

Pressure to rein in 'corrupt' colleges



Today's Newspaper Story's Concerning International Students

14th April 2009

Dear Students

Welcome to the latest edition of IMMIGRATION NEWS. These articles come from *The Age* who clearly have corrupt colleges and migration agents in their sights. It's about time!

There is also one story from the Australian I missed previously but is still relevant today regarding the use of IELTS for migration purposes.

Feel free to e-mail this newsletter to any of your friends.

Pressure to rein in 'corrupt' colleges

- Sushi Das *The Age* April 14, 2009

THE Federal Government is facing mounting internal pressure to launch a co-ordinated nationwide crackdown on corrupt training colleges that are making millions of dollars a year exploiting foreign students by breaching immigration and education laws.

Senior officials from government departments have told *The Age* that widespread rackets among private trades colleges are "out of control" and undermining Australia's education, immigration and employment systems.

Complex networks linking unscrupulous private colleges, migration agents, education agents and businesses offering work experience indicated the involvement of organised crime, one official said.

The officials, who spoke on the condition of anonymity, said serious problems existed at several levels: colleges and agents were fleecing students using forged certificates and immigration fraud; government agencies charged with checking

the credentials of students entering the country were "lackadaisical"; and some students were complicit in scams aimed at securing permanent residency in Australia.

They said that while individual government departments and agencies were belatedly stepping up efforts to deal with the problem, a unified response from the Commonwealth was being hampered by a lack of co-ordination, confusion over jurisdictions, and a reluctance to upset a lucrative industry.

"It's out of control," one of the officials said. "In the current economic climate ... I think people are fairly reticent to try to fiddle with this huge earner in Australia."

International education is a \$13.7 billion industry, making it the nation's third largest export after coal and iron. Australia has the highest proportion (19 per cent) of international students of any OECD country.

"The whole thing is a sustained attack on our education system, it's an attack on our immigration system, it's an attack on our workplace relations system," another official said.

"The Government is allowing it to happen and it could be stopped with the stroke of a pen," he said.

Kimberley Gardiner, a spokeswoman for federal Education Minister Julia Gillard, yesterday did not respond to specific allegations but defended the integrity of the system and urged people with information to come forward.

The Australian Council for Private Education and Training, an industry body, yesterday denied rogue colleges were widespread, saying the "vast majority" of Australia's private education and training providers operated ethically.

The state's regulator of education providers, the Victorian Registration and Qualifications Authority (VRQA) acknowledges the existence of what it calls "dodgy providers" but has repeatedly denied the problem is widespread.

Departments and agencies involved in investigating complaints about the international education industry include the Department of Immigration, the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations, the Australian Federal Police and in Victoria, the VRQA.

Government departments have been inundated with letters of complaint from students alleging illegal activity and threatening or unethical behaviour by college operators.

They allege colleges are offering qualifications for under-the-counter payments; that students are being bullied into making advance payments for semesters or face

finer; and that students are being fined up to \$250 for being late for classes or for submitting assignments late.

Students also allege colleges are charging them for subject results and threatening to have them deported if they ask to switch colleges. Some colleges are allegedly charging students thousands of dollars to be formally allowed to leave.

Last week *The Age* reported that the Immigration Department was investigating 20 colleges in Melbourne for possible breaches of immigration laws. Raids on migration agents allegedly supplying fake documents to international students took place last month.

In December, federal immigration officers and police raided nine Melbourne businesses over claims that some charged up to \$20,000 for fake education certificates and work references.

Ms Gillard's spokeswoman said in a statement yesterday: "The minister urges anyone with information of this nature to contact the relevant authority, where all information is treated confidentially.

"Australia's reputation for quality education and training services for overseas students has been enhanced by compulsory, nationally consistent registration of education providers and their courses and appropriate enforcement powers and sanctions for non-compliance."

Link: <http://www.theage.com.au/national/pressure-to-rein-in-corrupt-colleges-20090413-a4tq.html>

Have you witnessed the exploitation of foreign students? Send your story to scoop@theage.com.au

End Story 1

Probe has watch on 20 colleges

- Sushi Das The Age April 7, 2009

TWENTY Melbourne colleges teaching international students are under investigation for possible breaches of immigration laws.

The Department of Immigration and Citizenship yesterday revealed some of the investigations had been under way since early last year and involved the help of other government agencies.

It is the first indication of the scale of problems affecting the state's \$3.9 billion

international education industry — and comes within weeks of a raid on migration agents allegedly supplying fake documents to international students.

In December, federal immigration officers and police raided nine Melbourne businesses, including a private training college, over claims that some charged up to \$20,000 for fake education certificates and work references.

International students applying for permanent residency in Australia must provide proof of their education and vocational work experience. Using fake documents to support residency applications is migration fraud.

Yesterday, an Immigration Department spokesperson said: "The department is assessing allegations concerning 20 education providers that are operating out of Melbourne. Some of those investigations have been ongoing since early 2008... The department is not in a position to provide further information at this time as it might jeopardise the progress of those investigations."

There are 342 education providers authorised to teach international students in Victoria. More than half (195) are training colleges. Most of them (181) are privately operated.

There is unprecedented growth in the vocational education and training sector, with increasing numbers of private colleges moving into the area to meet demand from international students.

State Government figures show 77 per cent of international students enrolled at training colleges in Victoria in September were catered for by the private sector.

Overall, as of September last year, 39 per cent of international students were enrolled at higher education institutions, and 35 per cent were enrolled at training colleges. The growth in the training sector compared with the previous year was a staggering 48 per cent.

Victoria's regulator of education and training providers, the Victorian Registration and Qualification Authority, acknowledges there are unscrupulous operators, particularly among private training colleges, but denies they are widespread.

Last Wednesday, *The Age* submitted questions to the director, Lynn Glover, including whether the authority was investigating any colleges for taking cash for certificates. Yesterday Ms Glover said she was still considering the questions.

Andrew Smith, the national executive officer of the industry body, Australian Council for Private Education and Training, said he was unaware of any investigations by the Immigration Department.

Acting outside its brief, a State Government inquiry into the experiences of

international students last year called for a rapid audit of high-risk providers to guarantee the quality of courses.

Link: <http://www.theage.com.au/national/probe-has-watch-on-20-colleges-20090406-9uus.html?page=1>

End Story 2

English tested

January 28, 2009 Article from: [The Australian](#)

DR BOB Birrell's latest study (Degrees still lure low skills migrants, HES, January 14) continues to raise important issues about English language standards and ESL international students. However, his research in this area needs to be carefully scrutinised.

Birrell has been right to criticise the lack of common English entry standards across higher education institutions. An important weakness he has highlighted is the lack of established equivalence between the scores from proficiency tests such as IELTS and the various other forms of evidence recognised by Australian institutions, such as the results from intensive English and Foundation Studies English programs.

However, his simplistic conclusion that all prospective ESL international students should therefore have to demonstrate Band 6 on the IELTS underestimates the educational value of these pathway programs in preparing students for tertiary study in Australia and exaggerates the worth of the IELTS test.

However, the most serious objection to his discussion of English standards relates to his reliance on IELTS data for examining the English standards of graduating students.

While the IELTS test is an internationally recognised measure of determining whether a student's English proficiency is adequate for entry to higher education in contexts where English is the medium of instruction, it was not designed to be used as an exit test of attainment for graduates or for their workforce suitability.

Nor was it ever intended to serve as a tool for determining suitability for permanent residency. The increasing use of the IELTS test for these purposes by the Australian government and professional accreditation bodies over the past decade as well as by higher education institutions more recently is highly questionable.

Birrell's conclusion (based on the IELTS test data) that many graduating students

English skills are inadequate for the workforce is thus flawed.

There is an urgent need for the development of more English tests which provide valid assessments of graduate attainment and workplace readiness in specific professions and trades (such as the Occupational English Test for overseas-trained health professionals). The notion of a one-size-fits-all English test is untenable.

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<http://www.theaustralian.news.com.au/story/0,25197,24971786-21682,00.html>

End Story 3

Readers Comments to previous editions

Mona writes;

Hi All,

I am writing you in regards to your last month news letter VOLUME 118 which says that Cooks and Pastry cook not wanted in QLD.

I am still confused with this newsletter. According to news letter it says that its out of Skilled list but not MODL. So is that means that students can still apply for cookery and Patisserie courses. And moreover, just need to know if the 7 bands each criteria also applies for Cookery and Patisserie.

From news letter, it says that QLD has stopped taking students in 886 sponsorship criteria. Is that means that students will still enroll in such courses in QLD universities?

Can someone please advise me as i am bit confused in this? I want to know if Cookery and Patisserie are still valid for PR? And if yes whats the criteria for someone for getting PR in these courses .(Any 7 bands each criteria goes to these courses or not).

Thanks heaps,

Our response:

The State of Queensland has now removed Cook's, Pastry Cook's and Hairdresser's from their lists of both permanent (886-State Sponsored) and temporary residence (487-State Sponsored) sponsorship. This is talking about visa's where the states sponsor you for residency and there are different

occupations on lists that the states wish to support. All states have their own lists.

There are the usual visas such as the Relative Sponsored (886) and Independent classes (885) where there is just the usual Skilled Occupation List (SOL). Cooks and Hairdressers are still on this list and you just need to reach the pass marks.

In one example if you are under 30, have a 60 point skill like cooking and have 7.0 on each section of an IELTS test then you can apply for PR for you can reach 120 points. In this way there is no need to use the states for sponsorship.

Hope this helps.

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Kind regards

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