



**Australian Government**

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**Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade**

**SUBMISSION TO THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION,  
EMPLOYMENT AND WORKPLACE RELATIONS**

**INQUIRY INTO THE WELFARE OF INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS**

**SEPTEMBER 2009**

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## **ABBREVIATIONS**

|          |   |
|----------|---|
| ABS      | Australian Bureau of Statistics   |
| AEC      | Australian Education Centre   |
| AAERI    | Association of Australian Education Representatives in India            |
| AEI      | Australian Education International                                      |
| AusAID   | Australian Agency for International Development                         |
| Austrade | Australian Trade Commission   |
| CRICOS   | Commonwealth Register of Institutions and Courses for Overseas Students |
| DEEWR    | Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations             |
| DIAC     | Department of Immigration and Citizenship                               |
| DRET     | Department of Resources, Energy and Tourism                             |
| ESOS     | Education for Overseas Students   |
| MOU      | Memorandum of Understanding   |
| VET      | Vocational Education and Training                                       |

## **TERMS OF REFERENCE**

On 17 June 2009 the Senate referred the following matters to the Senate Education, Employment and Workplace Relations Committee for inquiry and report.

- (a) the roles and responsibilities of education providers, migration and education agents, state and federal governments, and relevant departments and embassies, in ensuring the quality and adequacy in information, advice, service delivery and support, with particular reference to:
  - (i) student safety,
  - (ii) adequate and affordable accommodation,
  - (iii) social inclusion,
  - (iv) student visa requirements,
  - (v) adequate international student supports and advocacy,
  - (vi) employment rights and protections from exploitation, and
  - (vii) appropriate pathways to permanency;
- (b) the identification of quality benchmarks and controls for service, advice and support for international students studying at an Australian education institution; and
- (c) any other related matters.

## **A. OVERVIEW**

The Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) is the lead agency managing Australia's international presence. The department manages a network of 89 overseas posts in five continents and has over 3800 staff – including locally engaged staff – located in Canberra, state and territory offices and overseas posts. The department works to ensure Australia's national interests are protected and advanced in our bilateral, regional and multilateral relations.

One of the three key goals outlined in DFAT's Corporate Plan is to contribute to Australia's prosperity by promoting growth in Australia's economy, employment and standard of living. To achieve this goal, DFAT seeks: firstly, to create economic opportunities for Australians, open markets to Australian goods, services and investment, and improve the business environment; and secondly, to project a realistic and positive image of Australia as a partner in trade, a destination for overseas tourists and students, a reliable partner in business and a tolerant, open and egalitarian community.

Education services is Australia's third-largest export category, and Australia is one of the world's most popular destinations for international students. Maintaining Australia's comparative strengths in the international education sector and protecting Australia's quality education "brand" are critical trade policy and public diplomacy priorities, on which DFAT cooperates closely with DEEWR and Austrade.

Beyond the revenue generated by international students, these students are also an important factor in contributing to Australia's cultural diversity and promoting a positive picture of contemporary Australia internationally, particularly in their home country. Their presence in Australia and their interaction with Australians – and particularly their fellow students – helps to make Australia more "Asia-literate" and more generally understanding of the broader world. The connections they develop while in Australia, and the awareness they develop of Australian society and capabilities, will enhance Australia's international engagement well into the future.

DFAT played a central role in the formulation of the Australian Government response to concerns about the welfare of Indian students in Australia, which came to prominence in mid-2009, primarily through the Prime Minister's Taskforce on International Students. DFAT tracks and analyses global developments in relation to international students – both economic and demographic trends in the market for foreign students, and public opinion of Australia in key education markets. The Australian High Commission in New Delhi has played a pivotal role in liaison with the Indian government and media on the student safety issue.

DFAT has coordinated the activities of overseas posts in promoting consistent, agreed whole-of-government messages highlighting the firm action by the Commonwealth and State/Territory Governments to address concerns about student safety, and bolstering international perceptions of Australia as a safe, welcoming, culturally

diverse country that is an excellent place to study, live or invest. This has included not only responding to inaccurate or unbalanced media reporting or public commentary where appropriate, but also active efforts to shape public discussion. For example, DFAT hosted a successful International Media Visit (IMV) to Australia by seven Indian journalists from respected media outlets from 23 June to 1 July 2009 aimed at promoting understanding both of Australia's cultural diversity and of measures to improve the safety of international students in light of recent attacks on Indian students. Further Indian IMVs are envisaged in 2009-10 as part of an integrated public diplomacy strategy overseen by an inter-departmental committee on Australia's image in India established by DFAT in August 2009.

DFAT's overseas network undertakes a substantial range of functions to support Australia's education exports and the welfare of international students. These functions are supported by the work of both DFAT staff and representatives of other attached agencies, in particular DEEWR (operating overseas as AEI), DIAC and Austrade. DFAT has actively cooperated with other agencies represented at overseas missions to promote Australia's educational advantages to international students. DFAT's Heads of Mission and Post carry overall responsibility for leading and coordinating whole-of-government activity in countries of accreditation, including in relation to education services.

The functions of Australia's overseas network in relation to education fall into six broad categories:

- (i) public advocacy to promote and protect the brand: quality education;
- (ii) building government-to-government links;
- (iii) supporting Australian education providers;
- (iv) advising and supporting prospective students and engaging with alumni;
- (v) advising and training local education agents; and
- (vi) managing student visas.

The extent to which DFAT's overseas posts engage in these functions, and the nature and balance of the work they undertake in any or all of the abovementioned categories, varies according to factors such as the size and potential of the local market for Australian education services, particular issues or challenges present in the market, and the size of the mission and its complement of staff from DFAT and other agencies.

Austrade also places a high priority on the promotion of Australia's international education and training industry, working closely with other Australian Government agencies, state governments as well as major industry associations, professional associations and corporate partners. Austrade works particularly closely with AEI, playing the lead role in managing international education exhibitions and events as defined under an MOU with AEI, which has been in place since 2004. Austrade also has service agreements with AEI for the provision of specific services in Europe, Middle East, North Africa and Latin America. Austrade also has a multi-agency

MOU with DEEWR, DFAT, DIAC, DRET, Tourism Australia and AusAID on the promotion of Australia's education programs internationally, which has been in place since 2003. Austrade assists Australian education providers across all sectors (universities, schools, English language colleges and vocational education institutions) to connect with overseas students, agents and partner institutions. Austrade has over 70 specialists around the world to assist the education industry to promote its capability internationally.

Section B of this submission sets the consideration of student welfare issues in the context of Australia's substantial and growing trade in education services, and the vital contribution of international students to the Australian economy.

Section C expands upon DEEWR's and DIAC's submissions by describing the types of work undertaken by Australia's diplomatic missions in key overseas education markets. The examples derived from particular overseas posts are illustrative but not exhaustive.

## B. CONTEXT: AUSTRALIA'S TRADE IN EDUCATION SERVICES

Education services are Australia's largest service export and its third-largest export category overall, behind coal and iron ore and concentrates (see Table 1). Australia is one of the world's most popular destinations for international students – hosting 7.5 per cent of all international tertiary students studying worldwide in 2006.<sup>1</sup>

**Table 1: Australia's leading exports (goods and services) 2008<sup>(a)</sup>**

|   | (\$ billion) |
|---|--------------|
| Coal  | 46.4         |
| Iron ore & concentrates                           | 30.2         |
| <b>Education services<sup>(b)</sup></b>           | <b>15.5</b>  |
| Gold <sup>(c)</sup>                               | 14.7         |
| Personal travel (excl education) services         | 11.7         |
| Crude petroleum                                   | 10.4         |
| Natural gas                                       | 9.1          |
| Professional, technical & other business services | 6.5          |
| Aluminium ores & conc (incl alumina)              | 6.5          |
| Aluminium   | 5.8          |
| Beef, fresh, chilled or frozen (f.c.f)            | 5.0          |
| Other transportation services <sup>(d)</sup>      | 4.6          |
| Other ores & concentrates                         | 4.2          |
| Copper ores & concentrates                        | 4.2          |
| Passenger transportation services <sup>(e)</sup>  | 4.0          |
| Wheat   | 3.8          |
| Passenger motor vehicles                          | 3.7          |
| Medicaments (incl veterinary)                     | 3.6          |
| Copper  | 3.5          |
| Refined petroleum                                 | 3.5          |
| <b>Total exports<sup>(f)</sup></b>                | <b>227.9</b> |

<sup>(a)</sup> Goods trade are on a recorded trade basis. Services trade are on a BOP (BOP) basis.

<sup>(b)</sup> Includes Education-related travel and Other education services.

<sup>(c)</sup> BOP basis.

<sup>(d)</sup> Other transportation services exports covers a range of services provided in Australian airports and ports, including cargo and baggage handling services, agents fees associated with passenger and freight transportation and airport and port charges.

<sup>(e)</sup> Includes related agency fees and commissions.

<sup>(f)</sup> Total exports on a BOP basis.

Sources: *ABS trade data on DFAT STARS database and ABS catalogue 5368.0.*

Education has also been a fast-growing export earner for Australia in recent years. The 23.2 per cent growth in education-related travel services from 2007 to 2008 was the largest contributor to the 10.4 per cent growth in Australia's overall services exports in the same period.<sup>2</sup> The share of education-related travel services has increased from around one per cent of total services exports in the 1970s to 27 per cent in 2007-2008. And it is estimated that international student expenditure in

<sup>1</sup> *The Australian education sector and the economic contribution of international students*, Access Economics, April 2009.

<sup>2</sup> *Trade in Services, Australia, 2008*, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, July 2009.



Australia has generated over 122,000 full-time positions in the Australian economy in 2007-08, with 33,482 of these being in the education sector.<sup>3</sup>

With the economies of eight of Australia's top 10 trading partners expected to contract in 2009, and with economic growth slowing significantly in the other two, growth in exports of services is expected to be lower in 2009 than recorded in 2008.<sup>4</sup> However, international student enrolments have continued to grow strongly through the first half of 2009. As at year-to-date (YTD) July 2009, there were 547,663 enrolments by full-fee international students in Australia on a student visa – representing growth of 20.3 per cent on YTD July 2008 figures.<sup>5</sup>

**Table 2: Australia's Exports of Education-Related Services**

|   | 2006          | 2007          | 2008          | % share of total | % change     |              |
|---|---------------|---------------|---------------|------------------|--------------|--------------|
|   |               |               |               |                  | 2007 to 2008 | 5 year trend |
| <b>Education-related travel services</b>        | <b>10,371</b> | <b>12,177</b> | <b>15,002</b> | <b>96.7</b>      | <b>23.2</b>  | <b>15.2</b>  |
| <i>of which top ten countries (a):</i>          |               |               |               |                  |              |              |
| 1 China   | 2,358         | 2,738         | 3,421         | 22.1             | 24.9         | 20.2         |
| 2 India   | 1,086         | 1,618         | 2,389         | 15.4             | 47.7         | 42.5         |
| 3 Republic of Korea                             | 826           | 964           | 1,076         | 6.9              | 11.6         | 19.1         |
| 4 Malaysia                                      | 617           | 670           | 753           | 4.9              | 12.4         | 6.6          |
| 5 Thailand                                      | 428           | 498           | 603           | 3.9              | 21.1         | 10.2         |
| 6 Hong Kong (SAR of China)                      | 588           | 571           | 556           | 3.6              | -2.6         | -1.7         |
| 7 Indonesia                                     | 477           | 487           | 523           | 3.4              | 7.4          | 0.1          |
| 8 Vietnam                                       | 212           | 286           | 465           | 3.0              | 62.6         | 27.7         |
| 9 Nepal   | 60            | 173           | 377           | 2.4              | 117.9        | 61.3         |
| 10 Brazil                                       | 207           | 268           | 362           | 2.3              | 35.1         | 39.4         |
| <b>Other educational services</b>               | <b>351</b>    | <b>383</b>    | <b>497</b>    | <b>3.2</b>       | <b>29.7</b>  | <b>6.0</b>   |
| Education consultancy services                  | 90            | 132           | 125           | 0.8              | -5.3         | 5.9          |
| Correspondence courses                          | 22            | 22            | 22            | 0.1              | 0.0          | 5.8          |
| Services through educational institutions       | 104           | 104           | 204           | 1.3              | 96.2         | 4.0          |
| Other education services                        | 135           | 126           | 146           | 0.9              | 15.9         | 7.7          |
| <b>Royalties on education services</b>          | <b>7</b>      | <b>7</b>      | <b>8</b>      | <b>..</b>        | <b>..</b>    | <b>..</b>    |
| <b>Total education-related services exports</b> | <b>10,729</b> | <b>12,567</b> | <b>15,507</b> | <b>100.0</b>     | <b>23.4</b>  | <b>14.8</b>  |

Source: *Trade in Services, Australia 2008*, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, July 2009.  
[http://www.aei.gov.au/AEI/MIP/Statistics/StudentEnrolmentAndVisaStatistics/2009/MonthlySummary\\_Jul09\\_pdf.pdf](http://www.aei.gov.au/AEI/MIP/Statistics/StudentEnrolmentAndVisaStatistics/2009/MonthlySummary_Jul09_pdf.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> *The Australian education sector and the economic contribution of international students*, Access Economics, April 2009.

<sup>4</sup> *Trade in Services, Australia, 2008*, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, July 2009.

<sup>5</sup> *Monthly Summary of International Student Enrolment Data – Australia – YTD July 2009*, Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations.

## **C. THE ROLE OF AUSTRALIAN DIPLOMATIC MISSIONS**

### **(i) Public advocacy to promote and protect the brand: quality education**

DFAT's overseas network collaborates closely with DEEWR to promote Australia's attractiveness as a study destination for international students around the world. DFAT's overseas staff publicly advocate Australia's international education credentials in key overseas education markets, such as through public speeches by Heads of Mission and other diplomatic staff, media outreach and monitoring, and community consultations.

Monitoring media for reporting on Australia, and working proactively to shape that reporting, are functions of DFAT's overseas network. Larger posts are required to report monthly on media coverage of Australia. However, the nature and extent of the public advocacy undertaken by Australia's overseas missions – including on issues such as education services – varies considerably according to Australia's policy objectives in particular countries and regions, and whether there is a need to address inaccurate or unbalanced perceptions or public commentary about Australia.

A noteworthy example of such advocacy in the field of education has been the extensive engagement by the Australian High Commission in **India** with local media to convey messages to Indian students and to correct misconceptions about Australia. The High Commission's media team works closely with all areas of the mission to ensure accurate information about Australia is being broadcast to prospective students through India's media. The High Commission's media outreach was amplified in mid-2009 as it looked to keep parents and students informed of the response of the Commonwealth and State Governments and universities to the challenges facing Indian students in Australia. Since late May 2009, the High Commission media team has facilitated more than 30 feature interviews with Indian media for the Australian High Commissioner and visiting Ministers, and released 30 press releases to Indian media agencies. This has been supplemented by regular liaison with senior editorial contacts to explain Australia's response to the issues faced by Indian students in Australia.

In addition to direct public advocacy, DFAT's overseas network facilitates the work of other agencies to promote Australia as an international education destination. For example, the High Commission in New Delhi coordinated the visit of a high-level official Australian delegation which visited eight Indian cities from 6 to 15 July, with the objectives of strengthening the bilateral education relationship and outlining steps being taken to protect the well-being and safety of Indian students in Australia. The delegation allowed senior government officials to hear first-hand the concerns of the Indian government and families, as well as offering an opportunity to provide information in greater detail about the steps being taken in Australia to address the problem.

Promoting Australia as a study destination is also a high priority for Australian diplomatic staff in **China**. While events surrounding Indian students in Australia

have not had a significant impact on the Australian education brand in China, reports of isolated incidents of violence against Chinese students have received more extensive media coverage in recent months. In general, there has also been heightened media attention on issues relating to study in Australia and developments in the Australian education sector. The Chinese Embassy has on occasion raised its concerns about Chinese student welfare with DFAT and DEEWR officials. In early August 2009, China's Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) posted an article on its website advising students studying in Australia to be cautious about their safety. Posts in China are monitoring Chinese Government reactions closely.

DFAT has worked actively with other agencies at posts in China to promote Australia's educational advantages to potential students in the region. The Embassy in Beijing increased its education advocacy in mid-2009, including through media interviews with the Ambassador and public outreach by the Education Counsellor. These activities are part of a revised public diplomacy strategy to address any potential concerns about Chinese student safety in Australia and to protect the bilateral relationship in the short to medium term. The Australian Embassy in Beijing anticipates that much of the future public advocacy work will be undertaken at a senior level, including by the Ambassador and Minister-Counsellor (Education).

Staff at the Australian High Commission in **Singapore** also work closely to coordinate promotion of Australian education. Key promotional activities include the annual Austrade-led *Australian Education Showcase*, participation by AEI in locally-organised education fairs and involvement in a series of public seminars, workshops and lectures, organised in partnership with Australian education institutions. An important aspect of the High Commission's public advocacy is its work with local media to promote Australian education and to counter misconceptions that arise. In August 2009, the High Commission placed an item in a local Tamil language publication to correct misconceptions regarding the welfare of Indian students in Australia.

A major focus of activity for AEI staff at the Australian Embassy in **Thailand** in 2009 has been supporting DEEWR's *Study in Australia 2010* initiative. AEI arranged a visit to Australia for a delegation of Thai journalists between from 31 May to 11 June 2009, and in the second half of 2009 AEI will undertake a 16-week print media and 10-week TV campaign advocating the advantages of studying in Australia. AEI staff in Bangkok also undertake an active schedule of presentations at education exhibitions, scholarship ceremonies, alumni events and Thai education institutions, as well as presentations to the Thai Ministry of Education on policy issues.

AEI and Austrade staff at the Australian Embassy in the **Republic of Korea** (ROK) work jointly to raise the public profile of Australian education through promotional and information activities centring on the *Study in Australia* brand. The most significant promotional activity is the Study in Australia exhibition held in Seoul each October, coordinated by Austrade. In 2008, this event saw 82 Australian providers travel to Korea to answer enquiries from approximately 5,000 prospective students. The Head of Mission and other DFAT staff also often speak at Korean universities and high schools, to the Korean media and at other public diplomacy events, in cooperation with their AEI and Austrade colleagues, to highlight the quality and competitiveness of Australian education. The ROK is Australia's third-largest source

of international students, after China and India, but from a much lower population base.

Like their counterparts in Seoul, Austrade staff at the Australian Embassies in **Vietnam** and the **Philippines** and the Australian High Commission in **Malaysia** also host annual *Study in Australia* education exhibitions. The forthcoming round of exhibitions will serve as a key platform to reinforce Australia's image as an attractive education destination and to engage with parents and prospective students on any concerns they may have. Other relevant events have included the fifth Australian Schools Open Day in Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City on 16-17 May 2009. The approximately 1,400 students and their families who attended the open day received information on education programs, curriculum and education pathways from 37 high schools and colleges from across Australia, as well as information about studying and living in Australia and visa requirements from AEI and DIAC. Austrade will host its fifth Australian Vocational and Higher Education Exhibition in Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City on 21-22 November 2009, at which a level of participation similar to the 2008 exhibition (44 institutions and 2,700 visitors) is expected.

Officers in Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City have been working hard to enhance the coverage of Australian education in the Vietnamese print, TV and internet media. By maintaining contact with groups such as the Vietnamese Graduates of Australia Club, AEI has been seeking positive stories about students who have benefited professionally and personally from an Australian education and who may now be working in high-profile public or private sector organisations.

This year in the **Philippines**, in a departure from its previous annual *Study in Australia* exhibitions conducted with other Commonwealth countries, the Embassy through Austrade will jointly host a stand-alone Australian event from 12-14 November with IDP Australia<sup>6</sup>. Other relevant activities have included: support for an education exhibition organised by IDP on 15-16 May 2009 (and hosting related receptions and events, sponsored by ANZ) which saw over 1,000 students and around 24 Australian institutions participate. In addition, Austrade officers facilitated stand-alone VET and Queensland Government education trade missions. The Embassy has also hosted a number of education receptions and roundtables designed to promote Australian exports and develop linkages between Australian and Philippine institutions.

The Australian Embassy in **Nepal** – a small post with only two Australia-based DFAT staff in what is currently Australia's fifth-largest source country for international students to Australia – coordinates closely with AEI and DIAC officers in New Delhi on education and visa issues. The Embassy has been encouraging DIAC and AEI to conduct more regular visits to Kathmandu from New Delhi. On 20 August 2009, the Embassy worked with AEI, Austrade, and DIAC in hosting an education exhibition in Kathmandu which brought together 28 representatives of Australian educational institutions, including a number of major universities. The event attracted approximately 800 Nepalis interested in learning more about Australia as a potential study destination. The exhibition was preceded by a press conference in which the

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<sup>6</sup> Known as "International Development Program (IDP) of Australian Universities and Colleges" prior to 1994.

Ambassador, together with AEI and DIAC representatives, highlighted the quality of Australian education, explained the corrective measures being taken to protect the integrity of Australia's international education industry, and emphasised that Australia welcomed genuine students from Nepal. The Embassy is exploring ways to strengthen the growing alumni groupings with AusAID and AEI.

Austrade staff at the Australian Consulate-General in **Hong Kong** promote Australian education services by working with AEI, education agents and academic institutions to attract students to study in Australia for on-shore programmes, and to study in Hong Kong at Australian off-shore programmes. Major activities include the annual "Study in Australia Fair", business matching, and partner research commissioned by Australian institutions.

The Australian Embassy in **Washington** supports Australia's presence at the annual NAFSA<sup>7</sup>: Association of International Educators trade show. This is a major AEI activity every year. NAFSA is the largest education trade show in the world and a key venue for partnership discussions not only between American and other attendees, but more generally among the 8,500-plus attendees, 40 per cent of whom are from outside the United States. The Embassy has closely monitored the US media for reporting on the welfare of Indian students in Australia since mid-2009, and has responded to inaccurate or unbalanced reporting where appropriate. For example, the Embassy submitted a letter to the editor of the *Financial Times*, published on 30 June, in response to an article entitled "Costly Lessons for Indian Students" which inaccurately suggested a general "disillusionment" among Indians studying in Australia.

AEI Latin America, based in **Chile**, with offices in Brazil and Mexico, covers the education relationship between Australia and all Latin American countries, with the following priority countries: Brazil, Colombia, Peru, Mexico and Chile. AEI's office in **Brazil**, based at the Australian Consulate-General in Sao Paulo, has hosted a series of study fairs (most recently from 21 to 27 August 2009 in Belo Horizonte, Rio de Janeiro and Sao Paulo), and recently arranged a visit to Australia by 27 school principals from Sao Paulo. Brazil is Australia's largest source of students in Latin America and Colombia the second largest. AEI's recent activities in **Chile** have included an Australian Higher Education Showcase in Concepcion, Santiago and Valparaiso from 31 August to 4 September 2009, at which around 22 Australian universities were represented.

## **(ii) Building government-to-government and institutional links**

As indicated in DEEWR's submission, the Australian Government's efforts to build strong inter-governmental education links – particularly by engaging education ministries on contemporary education policy – demonstrate that Australia is not just focused on the immediate commercial benefits of trade in education services, but is committed to building structures that facilitate the two-way movement of students and scholars. These efforts, often taking place under formal structures such as MOUs and Joint Working Groups, help strengthen Australia's public diplomacy and regional

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<sup>7</sup> Originally known as "National Association of Foreign Student Advisers (NAFSA)".

security, while laying the foundations for longer-term bilateral trade benefits. Diplomatic posts also work to facilitate linkages between Australian and local educational institutions to promote the two-way exchange of students, educators and researchers.

DFAT plays a significant role in supporting visits overseas by state and territory ministers, parliamentarians and officials. By promoting business, tourism, education and people-to-people ties, such visits strengthen Australia's relationships with key foreign partner governments, including at the sub-national level. A large number of state, territory and federal government ministers travelled extensively in 2008-09, including visits to China by the Victorian and West Australian Ministers for Education in September 2008 and April 2009 respectively.

The Australian High Commission in **New Delhi** is one of numerous Australian missions that engage in a regular education policy dialogue with host-government officials and ministers. This dialogue, taking place under the aegis of the Joint Working Group on Education, helps shape future policy developments that relate to Indian students in Australia. A series of Australian ministerial visits to India in the second half of 2009 have served to reinforce Australia's commitment to working closely with India to strengthen the education relationship and address issues of concern. During the visit of the Minister for Immigration and Citizenship to India in July 2009, it was agreed that the two governments would constitute a new Joint Working Group to address student welfare and the regulation of education agents. During the August-September 2009 visit to India by the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Education, it was agreed that Education Ministers would meet annually to discuss the future expansion of the bilateral education relationship. Visiting New Delhi on 2 September, the Minister for Trade underlined that strengthening the integrity of the education system for international students was a mutual responsibility:

Let's be clear we are offering a quality education in a safe environment. The quality of our education is what we are promoting, not the visa attached to it. For this to succeed we also need the cooperation of the Indian Government. We are working with the Indian Government to ensure the marketing of Australian education by Indian education agents is of the highest quality and clients get what they pay for. This will require cooperation at both ends.

Education is central to Australia's bilateral political and economic relationship with **Malaysia**: it is Australia's largest export to that country, and there are around 250,000 Malaysian alumni of Australian universities. The Australian High Commission in Kuala Lumpur works hard to ensure the sustainability of the education relationship through a number of key projects. A sister-schools program, funded by the Australia-Malaysia Institute, seeks to build links between 24 secondary schools in Malaysia and Victoria. The High Commission also coordinates an internships program, works to encourage more Australian students to study in Malaysia, and promotes research linkages, including through a variety of other projects funded by the Australia-Malaysia Institute. Malaysia's demand for skilled labour provides an opportunity to develop education ties still further, through the provision of quality vocational education and training – an expanding area of the High Commission's bilateral

education engagement.

Education is also an important aspect of the trade relationship with **Singapore**, with around 9,000 Singaporean students currently enrolled in Australian education institutions, making Singapore Australia's 14<sup>th</sup>-largest source of overseas students. There is also a growing onshore presence by Australian education institutions, with a number of Australian universities setting up branch campus in Singapore in recent years. The Australian High Commission in Singapore supports the Australian education sector through frequent interaction with the Singapore Government on education issues and through facilitating education-related visits between the two countries. The Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Education visited in 2008, while Singapore's Minister for Education intends to visit Australia in November 2009.

**Indonesia** and the **Republic of Korea** are among other countries in which Australia's diplomatic missions are pursuing emerging opportunities for strengthened government-to-government education links. The Embassy in Jakarta facilitated a visit to Australia in August 2009 by an Indonesian delegation including officials from the Ministry for National Education and the Coordinating Ministry for People's Welfare to study multicultural education and conflict resolution, among other topics. AEI officers in Seoul engage actively with the Korean Ministry of Education, Science and Training (MEST) in a joint policy dialogue, in which MEST has shown significant interest in Australian international student protection systems, quality assurance and regulatory functions.

The MOU between **Thailand**'s Ministry of Education and DEEWR provides avenues for bilateral cooperation, including through Joint Working Group meetings to discuss education policy and developments such as qualifications frameworks, quality assurance and the recognition of qualifications across all education sectors. Australia has facilitated Thailand's development of a qualifications framework, including through visits to Australia by institutional and Ministry delegations. The Australia-Thailand Institute has supported the formation of collaboration and linkages through activities such as sister-school programs and student and staff exchanges.

Australia's education and training links with **Indonesia** are formalised under the MOU on Cooperation in Education and Training between DEEWR and the Ministry of National Education (MoNE). The formal MOU relationship dates to 1992 and was renewed by the Indonesian Minister for Education and Australia's Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Education in Canberra on 10 November 2008. Recent government-to-government activities include: ongoing advice to the MoNE on the development of its scholarship program; a "work shadow" experience at the Australian Universities Quality Agency by a board member of the National Accreditation Agency for Higher Education to observe the quality audit process and institution-based accreditation, which will be implemented in the Indonesian higher education accreditation process; a visit by a delegation from the National Accreditation Agency for Schools to investigate how Indonesia can learn from Australian experience to develop a transparent and accountable school accreditation system; and staff visiting under an Endeavour Award Scholarship to examine the Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF) and Australia's education and training system.

In coming years, emphasis will be placed on VET priorities to address Australia's skills shortages and Indonesia's industry and training needs, as well as continuing to pursue recognition of Australian three-year bachelor degrees and Australia's quality assurance system. A VET Symposium is to be held in October 2009 to discuss governmental strategies for human resource development in producing skilled Indonesian workers.

The Australian Embassy in Hanoi and Consulate General in Ho Chi Minh City are working closely with **Vietnamese** agencies in the higher education and vocational education and training sectors, including on curriculum development, quality assurance and accreditation. Support is also provided for policy dialogue at technical levels, with regular visits to Vietnam from Australia-based experts. The Embassy continues to engage with agencies on the development of laws and regulations, including on foreign participation in Vietnam's education sector and on commitments on education services in the ASEAN-Australia-New Zealand Free Trade Agreement.

Education was a focus of the 8th Joint Trade and Economic Cooperation Committee on 24 July in Hanoi, which was co-chaired by Minister for Trade, Simon Crean, and Vietnam's Minister of Planning and Investment on 24 July. In those discussions, Mr Crean emphasised the potential for cooperation on vocational education. Education providers also participated in the business delegation accompanying Mr Crean during his visit. The Comprehensive Partnership with Vietnam, which was signed on 7 September 2009 during the visit to Australia of the General Secretary of the Communist Party of Vietnam, HE Nong Duc Manh, incorporates vocational education with a reference to examining options for a policy dialogue aimed at addressing educational management and vocational and technical training needs and capacity.

DFAT also attaches high priority to building intergovernmental education links in **Latin America** – one of the fastest-growing sources of foreign students for Australia. Annual enrolments in Australian educational institutions from Latin American countries totalled more than 28,000 at the end of 2008, reflecting a more than 20 per cent growth over the previous year. A high-level Council on Australian-Latin American Relations (COALAR) Education Action Group delegation is scheduled to visit Latin America in March 2010, with the objective of building government-to-government, education and research relationships.

There is considerable scope for increased government-to-government interaction with **Brazil** under the 2005 Memorandum of Understanding on cooperation in education and training. Brazil is Australia's largest source of enrolments from Latin America, and our ninth-largest source of enrolments globally – with significant potential for further growth. The Australian Government, through AEI, has developed and funded a framework for active, long-term collaboration between Australian and Brazilian universities.

The opening of an AEI office within the Australian Embassy in **Chile**, and the signing of a MOU on cooperation in education and training between DEEWR and the Chilean Ministry of Education in 2004, have led to a significant increase in education-related activity between the two countries, particularly at the government-to-government



level. This has been matched by a growing interest from the private sector. Chile is Australia's fourth-largest source of students from Latin America, with 1,086 enrolments in the year to June 2009. In July 2008, the Chilean Minister for Foreign Affairs signed MOUs with Universities Australia, the Group of 8 and TAFE Directors Australia aimed at facilitating the operation of the Chilean Government's Bicentennial Scholarship Program in Australian institutions. In November 2008, the Australian Embassy in Santiago hosted a successful visit to Chile by a Universities Australia delegation, which had detailed discussions on the application of the program. The 63 per cent growth in Chilean student enrolments in Australia in 2009 reflects increased bilateral activity under the Bicentennial Scholarship Program.

### **(iii) Supporting Australian education providers**

One of the core functions of AEI staff based at Australian diplomatic missions is to support the Australian education sector to develop knowledge of international education systems, to identify educational opportunities, and to understand foreign government regulatory systems and the reputation and capacity of local providers. These efforts help build bilateral relations by promoting institutional links and research clusters, and encouraging staff and student mobility.

AEI Embassy staff also brief visiting Australian education providers on student welfare issues and the need for Australian providers to take responsibility for the recruitment practices of the local agents with whom they choose to work. They also discuss "best practice" in relation to support for international student welfare and the reputational risk if this area is not addressed adequately by institutions.

Overseas posts also support the Australian education sector by providing market intelligence on local opportunities and issues as well as the needs and expectations of local students. By assessing and reporting on international education developments and capabilities in other countries – both well established providers and new entrants – they contribute to DEEWR's work in benchmarking Australia's provision of international education against global standards and developments in a highly competitive market.

Posts in key education markets facilitate visits by Australian educational institutions, providing students with an opportunity to ask questions directly to the education providers. For example, student safety in Australia was discussed at an education roundtable held in Ho Chi Minh City on 24 July 2009 attended by the delegation of Australian businesses that accompanied the Minister for Trade to Vietnam for the Australia-Vietnam Joint Trade and Economic Cooperation Committee meeting.

In China, the Embassy actively supports Australian education providers to develop knowledge of China's education systems, to identify educational opportunities, and to understand Chinese government education regulation and the reputation and capacity of Chinese providers (such as through assisting Australian institutions to develop institutional links, research clusters and encourage staff and student mobility.) AEI staff also showcase Australian education excellence through specifically targeted events, including supporting the visit of pre-eminent Australian educators, researchers

and scientists.

**(iv) Advising and supporting prospective students, and engaging with alumni**

Australian diplomatic missions in key education markets, led by DFAT Heads of Mission, make it a priority to listen to and convey feedback from students, parents, agents and governments at all levels on expectations and experiences, and work closely with in-country education agents in meeting the needs and expectations of students. They also showcase Australian education excellence through specifically targeted events, including supporting visits by pre-eminent Australian educators, researchers and scientists, and encouraging Australian alumni activities.

For example, the Australian High Commission in **India** provides advice to students on a range of welfare issues through its AEI office as well as resources on the High Commission's website. AEI operates an information service for students considering studying in Australia, which includes both a library of resources on a range of Australian education institutions and the provision of specific advice to students who choose to make an appointment to speak to an AEI officer. As part of this service, the publication "Guide to Living and Studying and Living in Australia" is available on the High Commission's website ([www.india.embassy.gov.au](http://www.india.embassy.gov.au)). This booklet contains introductory information on a broad range of subjects relevant to international students, with information on where to obtain more detailed advice. The range of subjects includes: student safety, particularly on public transport; accommodation; social inclusion; student visa requirements, particularly around work rights; information on student support services at universities and employment rights.

Australia is a leading destination for Vietnamese students, with 20,000 enrolments since the beginning of 2009. The Australian Embassy in **Vietnam** is redesigning the education page on its website to include comprehensive information on studying in Australia, including coverage of safety, housing, consumer protection for international students and scholarships. AEI has also been collaborating with the Australia Network to translate into Vietnamese language additional links that would be beneficial to prospective students. AEI runs pre-departure briefings for students prior to their travel to Australia at which safety, housing and other welfare issues are addressed. AusAID also provides pre-departure briefings to scholarship recipients on cultural awareness and general welfare issues.

The Australian Embassy in **Thailand**'s direct contact with local students most commonly occurs through AEI presentations at secondary and tertiary institutions, at education exhibitions and at targeted meetings. Presentations to secondary school audiences provide introductory information on living and studying in Australia, including key aspects of the ESOS Act. Issues such as accommodation options and entry requirements are also discussed, but AEI avoids discussion of pathways to permanency with secondary school audiences. Presentations to tertiary student audiences have a greater focus on higher education opportunities and commonly involve more detailed discussion of entry requirements and reference to opportunities for permanency, as supported through visa processes. However, a substantial

majority of Thai students return to Thailand at the completion of their studies. AEI Thailand's activities with alumni are extensive, including maintaining the Ozthaialumni webpage and supporting Australian Chamber of Commerce activities through regular communication with Australian alumni to participate in such events and meet prospective employers and to network. AEI Thailand supports individual university alumni activities, as well as the alumni associations. AEI Thailand has also hosted meetings of alumni associations and groups.

While the Australian Embassy in the **Republic of Korea** has limited face-to-face contact with students, interaction is possible via a Korean language *Study in Australia* website which largely provides pre-departure information. There is an on-line message board where students can post their questions and receive a response from the AEI section. Students are also able to link to the DEEWR *Study in Australia* website which has extensive information in both Korean and English on issues of interest to students, including safety and accommodation. At a variety of education exhibitions and on-campus information sessions, AEI provides prospective students with an Australian Government perspective on education institutions and international student education regulations in Australia.

In **China**, the Embassy works hand-in-hand with education agents in meeting the needs and expectations of Chinese students. AEI staff engage closely with students, parents, agents and governments at all levels. AEI and the Ministry of Education are working to jointly publish a "safety-guide" for Chinese students in Australia. The proposed guide will be in Chinese and will be provided to every Chinese student who receives a visa to study in Australia. The guide will also be published on the AEI, Australian Embassy and Ministry of Education websites and provided to all registered education agents. AEI also actively supports and encourages Australian alumni activities.

In **Hong Kong**, the Australian Consulate-General website and the Study in Australia Hong Kong webpage provide comprehensive information on studying in Australia, including coverage of personal safety, consumer protection for international students and scholarships. AEI Hong Kong produces printed copies of the Pre-departure Guide in traditional Chinese. More in-depth information on student safety will be incorporated into the new edition of the guide and posted on the website soon. Student advisory services also include:

- *Study in Australia* seminars aimed at providing students and parents with general information on the Australian education system, study pathways and application procedures for studying in Australia
- pre-departure seminars, for students who have already obtained a student visa, on how to make a smooth transition to student life in Australia
- an open resource centre houses materials on Australian education such as prospectuses, handbooks and CD ROMs on Australian education and training institutes and *Study in Australia* brochures and leaflets. The resource centre also offers free internet access to AEI's official *Study in Australia* website
- AEI contributes to the Austrade-organised annual "Study in Australia Fair"

through promotion and providing students and parents with expert advice on study and career prospects in Australia.

Australian missions in countries such as **India, Singapore, Malaysia and Vietnam** invest heavily in maintaining close links with alumni, both through engagement with individuals and through networks such as the Endeavour Awards Alumni Network. Australian alumni bring substantial economic, social, cultural and diplomatic benefits to both Australia and their home countries, and often act as lifelong advocates for Australia. As indicated in DEEWR's submission, there are estimated to be more than 1 million Australian alumni worldwide, many occupying senior positions in government, business, research and education. DFAT and DEEWR work together at overseas posts to encourage alumni to maintain links with Australia, including through support to alumni associations. AEI Vietnam also supports the Vietnamese Graduate Alumni Club through regular consultation on options to broaden its membership, become more financially sustainable and increase its interaction with potential students.

#### **(v) Advising and training local education agents**

Australian diplomatic missions in key education markets, in particular AEI staff at post, work closely with education agents to ensure that they are equipped with the latest information about the Australian education system and regulatory environment. AEI also monitors the activities and behaviours of education agents to ensure that the best possible standards of client service and advice, pastoral care, and professional practices are being provided.

Australian missions in many countries conduct regular workshops for new and inexperienced education agents. The workshops include an overview of the Australian education system, the Australian Qualifications Framework and the regulatory environment (ESOS Act, National Code/CRICOS, State Government Regulations, Student Visa Regulations and processes). The workshops also cover ways to work effectively as an agent including: student-client management, pastoral care, correct immigration documentation, and professional ethics and practice. For example, AEI and DIAC held workshops in **Indonesia** from 17 to 19 June 2009, with 100 participants in Jakarta and 51 in Surabaya.

In order to enhance the quality and accuracy of pre-departure information students receive from agents, Australian missions encourage participation in the Education Agent Training Course (EATC), which results in a formal Australian qualification.

AEI staff at Australian missions abroad also work closely with qualified education agents and the principals of larger agencies to obtain feedback on specific aspects of the Australian industry, and to provide market intelligence for both industry and government. For example, on 17 June 2009, AEI Indonesia organised an Agent Forum, structured as a focus group. The Forum, attended by 46 participants from across Indonesia, covered topics such as: perceptions of Australia; the visa regime (English language requirements, assessment levels); student accommodation and cost of living issues; how to showcase excellence in Australian education; student safety

concerns and their impact on recruitment; and students' overall experience in Australia (including access to work rights and subsequent migration opportunities).

The presence of standing associations of Australian education agents in some key education markets facilitates engagement with Australian diplomatic missions. For example, the Australian High Commission in **India** has close links with the Association of Australian Education Representatives in India (AAERI), a select group of education agents through which DEEWR and DIAC provide training to education agents. AAERI's website ([www.aaeri.org](http://www.aaeri.org)) includes links to student visa requirements on the DIAC website, a link to the Australian High Commission in India's website and online training for education agents, provided by DEEWR. Individual agents are able to undertake formal assessment at the end of the training and be accredited as a Qualified Education Agent Counsellor. A list of people who have received this recognition, along with their email address, is also available on AAERI's website. A copy of the updated guide is given to all student visa recipients from the High Commission in New Delhi.

AEI staff in **Vietnam** are increasing efforts to train Vietnamese education agents, including on the importance of providing accurate and realistic information to prospective students, awareness of Australia's regulatory framework and consumer protection legislation. This is particularly important in the Vietnamese context, where parents are the main decision-makers about destination of study and where safety and welfare are major parental concerns. AEI officers also exchange information with education representatives from other countries (US, UK, Canada and the Netherlands) to assist in its development of a list of preferred education agents. The DIAC officers at our missions in Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City also maintain regular contact with student agents, including formal and informal outreach and liaison activities.

AEI staff at the Australian Embassy in **Thailand** maintain an extensive program of outreach and advocacy with agents. They conduct a professional development program comprising an annual workshop and regular outreach events. These events typically focus on the ESOS Act (as the focus of discussions on student safety and support for overseas students), issues of relevance to students such as accommodation, lifestyle and the education system and information on particular institutions and education sectors in Australia. On 24-25 June 2009, the Australian Embassy in Bangkok sponsored a major gathering of Thai education agents attended by 200 agency principals and owners, as well as junior staff. The event offered principals and owners the opportunity to engage in open discussion of issues they saw as relevant for Thai students studying overseas. AEI staff at the Embassy in Bangkok also distribute a regular newsletter to agents containing the latest information on ESOS, explanations of National Code regulations, changes to visa rules and other topical issues. In addition, the AEI staff organise roundtables for agents to provide information on major issues affecting Australian education providers as they arise.

Agents play an important role in **North America**. Roughly 35 per cent of North American study abroad students – the largest cohort of North American students in Australia – enrol via an agent. A portion of the full degree students also use agents. Agents in the US are reputable and provide a high level of support to American students before, during and after their studies. AEI North America engages American agents at various workshops and conferences throughout the year, and

works collaboratively with agents to position Australia as a quality academic destination. US agents have reported that interest in Australia as an education destination remains strong.

Recent agent outreach activities conducted by AEI staff at the Australian mission in **Hong Kong** have included an Education Agent Training Workshop on 26-27 May 2009 under the Study in Australia (SIA) 2010 initiative. The workshop was aimed at improving agents' understanding of their role as an Australian Government stakeholder and partner, the SIA 2010 initiative, recent trends in student flows, student visa settings and recent changes to visa policies. Staff also produced a bilingual leaflet containing advice for students and parents on choosing an education agent for study in Australia. DFAT, AEI and Austrade staff at the Australian Consulate-General in Hong Kong actively support over 30 Australian alumni associations operating in Hong Kong and attend and speak at the graduation ceremonies of many Australian institutions throughout the year.

#### **(vi) Managing student visas**

The key functions of Australia's diplomatic missions in relation to student visas include processing applications, carrying out integrity checks, providing information on visa processes to prospective students, and training migration and education agents on visa procedures and requirements.

DIAC's submission explains in detail the requirements and processing arrangements for student visas. Australia's diplomatic missions vary in the extent of their involvement in managing visa applications, including for student visas. For example, the Australian High Commission in New Delhi receives and processes visa applications from prospective Indian students and also conducts integrity checks for applications lodged through the eVisa service which are processed in Adelaide. DIAC has entered into a service delivery agreement with VFS Global, which allows students to lodge applications at nine locations in India and one location in Kathmandu (Nepal). Visa applications lodged through the Australian Visa Application Centre are then forwarded to the High Commission in New Delhi for processing. By contrast, all visa applications from Chinese citizens who normally reside in China are lodged and processed in Adelaide. The direct involvement of the three DIAC China posts in this process is therefore limited to targeted integrity checking of certain individual applications prior to a decision being made to grant or refuse a visa. Visa applications from Mongolian citizens who normally reside in Mongolia are lodged and processed at the Embassy in Beijing.

DIAC's submission also details the sources of information for prospective students about visa processes and conditions. Australian diplomatic missions serve as a major source of information on student and other visas – by phone and email, through their websites, and via DIAC's over-the-counter client service operations. Embassy websites provide links to the DIAC website for more detailed information.

Australian missions in many countries serve as staging points for DIAC's activities to train migration and education agents on lodgement procedures and regulatory and

policy requirements for student visas. DFAT works to ensure such training is carried out on a cooperative whole-of-mission basis where possible – for example, DIAC staff at several posts integrate their training on student visa policy and processing requirements into AEI’s outreach sessions for education agents.