

NSW DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AND TRAINING

SUBMISSION



SENATE INQUIRY INTO THE WELFARE OF INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS



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Submission on behalf of the NSW Department of Education and Training

The NSW Department of Education and Training welcomes the opportunity to respond to the Senate Inquiry into the welfare of international students.

Our commitment to international students

TAFE NSW Institutes and NSW government schools are committed to the provision of a quality education for international students in a safe, secure and socially inclusive environment. We offer a holistic approach to the education of all our students and offer the same level of quality and support to both domestic and international students. A summary of the range of our services and support mechanisms is included in TAB A of this submission. The scope and scale of our services to international education is at TAB B.

We encourage members of the Committee to visit any one of our schools or TAFE NSW campuses where international students are attending. They will see the full range of facilities available to all students including well equipped libraries, internet connected classrooms, recreation areas and purpose built facilities for specific key learning areas and vocational training courses.

The committee members will also have the opportunity to meet our fully qualified teachers and trainers, professional learning support teachers, counsellors, welfare officers, international student coordinators, administration and security staff and managers.

TAFE NSW and NSW government schools value the contribution of international students to our local school and college communities. This contribution is far more than a monetary value and we support the Committee's initiative in exploring ways in which we can protect and enhance the reputation of Australian education in all its forms.

Our support for improving the experience of international students

In November 2008, the NSW Minister for Education and Training, The Hon Verity Firth MP initiated the formation of a Ministerial Taskforce on International Education. This taskforce was asked to examine ways to enhance the experience of international students studying and living in NSW. With a broad representation from the public and private education sectors, police, community welfare and student organisations, the taskforce is due to deliver its recommendations in October 2009.

The NSW Department of Education and Training strongly supports a range of recent Commonwealth initiatives to improve the quality of provision for international students including:

- Review of Education Services for Overseas Students (ESOS) Act 2000 led by the Hon Bruce Baird
- Review of the Migration Occupations in Demand List (MODL) to be jointly carried out by the Department of Immigration and Citizenship and the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations
- Development of a National International Student Strategy including an international student roundtable on 14 and 15 September 2009

- The COAG Agreement on 12 June 2009 to:
 - provide comprehensive information about studying and living and working in Australia
 - target audits of education providers
 - design and implement the Tertiary Education Standards and Quality Agency (TESQA)
 - bring forward the review of the ESOS Act.

We fully support the development of a national campaign which informs the Australian public of the contribution of international students to broadening our understanding of other cultures and enabling the development of long term friendships, business relationships and partnerships throughout the world.

Areas of concern

The NSW Department of Education and Training shares a number of concerns expressed by a range of stakeholders including international students, embassy and consular officials from other countries, and Australian providers of quality education and training for international students.

These concerns focus on:

- the compliance of some private providers with their registration under the ESOS Act 2000
- the activities of some agents in providing misleading and inaccurate information about studying and living in Australia
- the negative media coverage which has failed to differentiate between providers such as TAFE NSW institutes which offer the same high standard of education and support to both domestic and international students and those providers who have failed to meet their obligations under the ESOS Act.

We believe that with the Commonwealth initiatives currently underway and the continuing delivery of high quality education by the majority of providers across Australia, the experiences of international students studying and living in Australia will be greatly enhanced.



TAFE NSW INSTITUTE AND NSW GOVERNMENT SCHOOL SUPPORT SERVICES FOR INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS

Websites

The NSW Department of Education and Training (DET) website (www.detinternational.nsw.edu.au) provides relevant information for international students (e.g. accommodation and welfare, visas, complaints and appeals procedures, student course guides). Individual TAFE Institute websites also have downloadable material.

Information on studying at our government schools is also included in the website and includes visa regulations, ESOS requirements and student rights. Currently this information is available in three languages.

Safety/welfare

Critical incident policy guidelines have been developed for international students including contacting parents/families overseas and consulates in serious situations.

All government schools comply with the Department of Education and Training's policies on emergency management, student welfare, child protection and drugs in schools.

Accommodation

An Accommodation Placement Service is offered and can be accessed by indicating on the application form. Homestay accommodation for students under 18 years of age includes guardianship arrangements.

Airport pick-up

This service is arranged in advance of the students arrival in Australia.

Orientation program

An orientation session is held at each TAFE NSW campus and school before the start of the course. The orientation provides information about the campus, living in Australia, the range of services available to international students and information about who to contact if help is needed.

Orientation sessions include a campus tour, information on counselling and career services, student support services, accommodation, as well as health and safety matters.

Employment services

This service assists students with resume preparation, interview techniques and information about job vacancies. Support is provided for work placement if required as part of the course.

International student coordinator

Staff are available at each school and TAFE college to offer a range of services and advice for international students.

Tutorial support

Tutorial support, including English language support, is available on request and at no extra charge.

Counselling

Counselling and career advice is available on request and at no extra charge.

Student associations

On and off-campus social events, recreational and sporting activities are organised by Student Associations.

Child care

Many TAFE campuses have child care centres for use by students.

Awards

NSW government schools have specific award categories for international students to recognise outstanding achievement at the Higher School Certificate and School Service which recognises international student involvement in school life, school leadership programs, fundraising and peer support.

TAFE Institutes have a specific award category for international students to recognise outstanding achievement.

Government schools also offer the following student support services:

- Student support staff including school counsellors, careers advisers and peer support coordinators (many are bilingual)
- An International Student Coordinator at each school to welcome, advise and support overseas students into their new school
- Specialist English as a Second Language teachers who provide language support
- Information evenings for international students and their guardian/carers
- Access to excellent resources such as libraries, computers and internet access
- Intervention strategies to identify students at risk.

Scope and scale of operations

The following overview of international activity in 2008 provides an indication of the scope and scale of our operation:

International students

Enrolments by Sector	2008
NSW Government Schools and Intensive English Centres	3,701
TAFE NSW	4,957
TAFE ELICOS	1,885
Temporary Visa Holders (Schools)	10,148
Total	20,691

2008 FAST FACTS

- China, India and Korea remain the top source countries for TAFE NSW with significant growth from Vietnam, Nepal, Philippines and Thailand.
- China, Korea and Vietnam remain the top 3 source countries for NSW government schools with Germany now the 4th largest source market ahead of Hong Kong and Japan.
- As well as enrolments in the metropolitan area, 111 international students enrolled in 51 regional schools in NSW.
- 27% of the 611 Year 12 international students appeared on the NSW HSC honour roll.
- 515 students enrolled in Intensive English Centres in NSW government schools.