
The Parliament of the Commonwealth of Australia

International education support and collaboration

**Review of the 2010-2011 annual report of the Department of
Education, Employment and Workplace Relations**

**House of Representatives
Standing Committee on Education and Employment**

May 2013
Canberra

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Foreword

The Committee's roundtable on international education was an excellent opportunity for members to engage with stakeholders, on a range of issues affecting international students in Australia.

The roundtable follows a period of reform in the sector and the Committee was provided with an update at the roundtable, and again, at a subsequent briefing. It is pleasing to see key reforms take effect.

Both the roundtable and subsequent briefing highlighted the importance of consulting regularly with international students, especially on changes to visa rules.

The Study in Australia website is an effective information portal but we have recommended some additional components to further assist students.

While the sector has experienced fluctuating enrolment numbers in recent years, the Committee learnt that there are many positive stories and messages to be shared in respect of international students' experience in Australia. Moreover, there is a burgeoning growth in two-way exchanges, twinning programs, transnational skills training, regional collaboration and cooperation, and global partnerships.

Discussions on the future sustainability and possibilities for international education should continue on a regular and ongoing basis and include student input.

Mr Mike Symon
Chair



Membership of the Committee

Chair Mr Mike Symon MP

Deputy Chair Mr Rowan Ramsey MP

Members Ms Amanda Rishworth MP (*to*
22/04/2013)

Ms Karen Andrews MP

Ms Yvette D'Ath (*to 13/02/2013*)

Ms Deborah O'Neill MP

Mr Graham Perrett MP (*from*
13/02/2013)

Mr Alan Tudge MP

The Hon Chris Bowen MP (*from*
24/04/2013)

Committee Secretariat

Secretary Dr Glenn Worthington

Inquiry Secretary Ms Sara Edson

Administrative Officers Mr Daniel Miletic
Ms Emily Costelloe



Terms of reference

On Thursday 15 March 2012, pursuant to Standing Order 215(c) the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Education and Employment commenced a review of the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations 2010-2011 Annual Report.

The Committee is interested in exploring matters arising under Outcome 3, specifically international education support and collaboration.



List of abbreviations

ACIAR	Australian Centre for International Agricultural Research
AEI	Australian Education International
AFIS	Australian Federation of International Students
APCET	Australian Council for Private Education and Training
ARC	Australian Research Council
ASQA	Australian Skills Quality Authority
CAPA	Council of Australian Postgraduate Associations
CISA	Council of International Students Australia
COAG	Council of Australian Governments
CQU	Central Queensland University
CRICOS	Commonwealth Register of Institutions and Courses for Overseas Students
DEEWR	Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations
DIAC	Department of Immigration and Citizenship
DIISRTE	Department of Industry, Innovation, Science, Research and Tertiary Education

ELICOS	English Language Intensive Courses for Overseas Students
ESOS	Education Services for Overseas Students
EVCC	Education Visa Consultation Committee
Go8	The Group of Eight
GTE	Genuine Temporary Entry
IEAA	International Education Association of Australia
ISANA	International Education Association Inc.
ISSA	International Student Strategy for Australia
OSO	Overseas Student Ombudsman
NUS	National Union of Students
OSHC	Overseas Student Health Cover
MOOCs	Massive Open Online Courses
PM and C	Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet
PR	Permanent Residency
RTO	Registered Training Organisation
TDA	TAFE Directors Australia
TPS	Tuition Protection Service
UK	United Kingdom
US	United States
UTS	University of Technology Sydney
VET	Vocational education and training



List of recommendations

2 Key themes and issues

Recommendation 1

The Committee recommends that information on the eligibility of international students for transport concessions in the respective states and territories be made available to prospective students on the Study in Australia website.

Recommendation 2

The Committee recommends that the sections on accommodation and tenancy on the Study in Australia website be enhanced with case-studies and Frequently Asked Questions about tenancy rights.

Recommendation 3

The Committee recommends that the sections on health insurance cover on the Study in Australia website be enhanced with case-study examples and Frequently Asked Questions that address common misunderstandings about health cover requirements for international students. The website should include example quotes of health insurance costs for international students. This will assist students when they compare the different deals offered by health insurance providers.

Recommendation 4

The Committee recommends that the Commonwealth Government seeks opportunities to promote discussions surrounding the future sustainability and possibilities for international education in Australia and our region, and invites a wide range of stakeholders across the sector, including international students, to participate in these, on a regular and ongoing basis.

Introduction

Background and context

- 1.1 This review follows work that the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Education and Employment (hereafter referred to as the Committee) undertook in 2011 for its inquiry into Bills referred 22 September 2011. That advisory report comprised a tranche of Education Services for Overseas Students (ESOS) and Higher Education Support Amendment Bills.¹ The bills were the second and final phase of the Commonwealth Government's response to the findings of the review of ESOS services undertaken by the Hon. Bruce Baird, AM (commonly referred to as the Baird Review),² which was to bring into effect new protections for overseas students.³
- 1.2 Also of relevance and interest to the Committee was the major review into student visa issues (known as the Knight Review) that took place at the same time as the Baird review, which focused on improving the quality and competitiveness of the student visa program.⁴

1 Advisory Report on Bills referred 22 September 2011, House of Representatives Standing Committee on Education and Employment, October 2011, http://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/House_of_Representatives_Committees?url=ee/22september2011/report.htm

2 For more information on the *Stronger, simpler, smarter ESOS: supporting international students. Review of the Education Services for Overseas Students (ESOS) Act 2000* (Baird Review) visit the DEEWR website: <https://aei.gov.au/Regulatory-Information/Education-Services-for-Overseas-Students-ESOS-Legislative-Framework/ESOS-Review/Pages/default.aspx>

3 AEI website, <https://aei.gov.au/Regulatory-Information/Education-Services-for-Overseas-Students-ESOS-Legislative-Framework/ESOS-Review/Pages/default.aspx>

4 For more information on the Knight Review see the website of the Department of Immigration and Citizenship, <http://www.immi.gov.au/students/knight/>

- 1.3 In light of the extensive Baird and Knight reforms that have taken place in the international education sector in recent years, it was considered timely and opportune to invite a diverse range of stakeholders to participate in discussions and to provide Members with a progress update.
- 1.4 The last parliamentary review into matters of international student welfare was the Senate Education Committee's 2009 report, which preceded the Baird and Knight reforms.

Definitions and parameters

- 1.5 The Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR) defines overseas students as:

Students on Visas who hold, or are dependents of persons who hold a permanent or temporary visa that is not included on the list of visa subclasses approved by the Minister's delegate. They do not include New Zealand or Norfolk Island passport holders.⁵

- 1.6 Students studying in Australia under a Student Exchange Program, in receipt of sponsorship or a scholarship, and persons dependent on diplomat on official duty in Australia are examples of foreigners not classed as overseas students.⁶

- 1.7 The term overseas student appears to be used interchangeably with 'international student'. According to Australian Education International (AEI), international students are:

...full-fee paying students studying in Australia on a student visa. This definition does not include New Zealand citizens as they do not require a student visa to study in Australia.

Australian Education International classifies international students into five **sectors**. These are:

Higher Education - undergraduate and postgraduate university students;

Vocational Education and Training (VET) - Technical and Further Education (TAFE) and related institute students;

5 Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations website, www.deewr.gov.au/ssp/help/html/coi/student_definitions.html#Not_Overseas_Students

6 Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations website, www.deewr.gov.au/ssp/help/html/coi/student_definitions.html#Not_Overseas_Students

School - kindergarten, primary, secondary (junior and senior) students;

English Language Intensive Courses for Overseas Students (ELICOS) - English language intensive students; and

Other - courses outside the above categories, e.g. foundation courses, non-award and enabling courses.⁷

- 1.8 For the purposes of this report the term international student will describe full-fee paying students from overseas studying a range of courses in Australia, at universities, TAFES and English language schools. It will not exclude overseas students studying in Australia on scholarships in the context of broader discussions on the international student experience.

Trends and themes

- 1.9 Education is Australia's largest services export behind tourism.⁸ The Committee wished to gain a broad understanding of and general insights into some of the key issues facing the international education sector, and to discuss the sustainability of the sector into the future.

Declining numbers

- 1.10 In 2011 there was a marked decline in international student enrolment numbers from the previous year. This was evident in all top ten nationalities but especially from India and China, that together comprise 40 per cent of the market share in international education. Austrade figures indicate that the numbers fell -26.8 per cent to 72,801 students from India and -5.4 per cent to 159,691 students from China in 2011. There was only one source country outside the top ten that recorded growth of more than 1000 enrolments: Pakistan (up 15.4 per cent).⁹

7 Australian Bureau of Statistics, International students, <http://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/Lookup/4102.0Main+Features20Dec+2011#D ATA>

8 Austrade, <http://www.austrade.gov.au/Export/Export-Markets/Industries/Education/default.aspx>

9 Austrade website, <http://www.austrade.gov.au/Export/Export-Markets/Industries/Education/International-Student-Data/2011-Yearly>

- 1.11 Australian Education International (AEI) research shows a commensurate decline in revenue from international education activity from \$18.6 billion in 2009-2010 to \$16.3 billion for 2010-2011.¹⁰
- 1.12 It is hard to know the extent to which the decline was attributable to the impact of the Global Financial Crisis (GFC) and the high value of the Australian dollar that made it more financially attractive to study in other countries such as the United States, Canada and Britain, or whether it might be owing to a possible decline in Australia's reputation as a quality education provider and changed visa arrangements.

Annual report review

- 1.13 The Committee wished to examine the reasons behind the drop in student enrolments and to receive updates on the plethora of education and visa reforms as well as progress made in regulations, monitoring and systems integration. Other topics of interest included international students' own experience of their education in Australia and perceived value for money; the increased role that vocational education and training (VET) might play in the sector; and the role that international education plays in regional engagement and wider diplomatic and trade relations, with the scope for forging stronger people-to-people, business and industry links.
- 1.14 The Committee resolved, pursuant to Standing Order 215 (c) to review the 2010-2011 annual report of the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations. In the annual report information was provided on the work that Australian Education International (AEI), the international arm of the Department, did in the area of international education support that year.¹¹ Whilst appearing in DEEWR's 2010-2011 annual report it should be noted that in December 2011 AEI was shifted to the Department of Industry, Innovation, Science, Research and Tertiary Education (DIISRTE).

10 AEI, Research Snapshot: Export Income to Australia from Education Services 2009-2010, November 2011, www.aei.gov.au/research/.../Export%20Income%202010-11.pdf

11 Australian Government, Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations Annual Report 2010-2011, p. 78.

Conduct of inquiry

Roundtable

- 1.15 On 3 April 2012 a roundtable on international education was held in Canberra and Commonwealth officials provided the Committee with an update at a briefing on 14 February 2013.
- 1.16 The Committee roundtable consisted of two sessions:
- Session One: Overview of the sector; and
 - Session Two: Sustainability of the sector and future opportunities.
- 1.17 The roundtable format was chosen because it is one that committees have successfully used before and it permits a range of representatives to appear together to engage in interactive discussions with Committee Members and each other.
- 1.18 A broad spectrum of stakeholders was selected and invited to appear before the Committee, including government departments and agencies; advocacy organisations; and academics. See Appendix A for the full list of participants in each session. The roundtable was a public hearing open to observers.
- 1.19 Appendix B contains a list of exhibits received.
- 1.20 In each session, the Chair opened proceedings and invited representatives to make short opening statements – to put some key issues on the table for discussion and later, questions. Following the introductory statements, Committee members asked questions.
- 1.21 The transcript of the public roundtable hearing is available on the Committee’s website.¹²

Private briefing update

- 1.22 The Committee experienced a heavy workload through 2012. Prior to tabling this report the Committee decided to invite the government departments and agencies that appeared at the roundtable to provide a progress update on the sector. The meeting took place on Thursday 14

12 House of Representatives Standing Committee on Education and Employment website, http://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/House_of_Representatives_Committees?url=ee/internationalroundtable/hearings.htm

February 2013 at Parliament House in Canberra. The witnesses are listed at Appendix A.

- 1.23 The Committee subsequently authorised the briefing transcript as evidence to the inquiry. The transcript is available on the Committee's website.¹³

13 House of Representatives Standing Committee on Education and Employment website, http://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/House_of_Representatives_Committees?url=ee/internationalroundtable/hearings.htm

Key themes and issues

Government responsibilities, initiatives and reforms

Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade

2.1 At the February 14 briefing (hereafter referred to as the briefing) Mr Patrick Lawless, Assistant Secretary, Resources, Competitiveness and Trade Advocacy Branch, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) referred to the significance of the international education sector to the Australian economy. Mr Lawless indicated that it is Australia's fourth biggest export and equates to \$14 billion a year. He said that DFAT's role is to:

help that effort in a number of ways - through, for example, practical support by our network of embassies, trying to negotiate better access for our education providers and the trade negotiations we do.¹

2.2 At the 3 April 2012 roundtable (hereafter referred to as the roundtable), Mr Peter McFarlane, Director, Australian Awards Secretariat, Public Diplomacy and Information Branch, DFAT expanded on the overarching importance of international education and its public diplomacy role:

...international education is a key driver of growth and competitive education globally. So there is a market based perspective...but...we recognise the significant long-term influence that education has in shaping perceptions and

1 Mr Patrick Lawless, Assistant Secretary, Resources, Competitiveness and Trade Analysis Branch, DFAT, *Committee Hansard*, 14 February 2013, Canberra, p. 4.

understanding and therefore the keystone role it plays in facilitating and strengthening people-to-people links. For that reason it is part of the Department's broader public diplomacy strategy. Those opportunities are to help shape perceptions of Australia overseas but also to help shape Australia's perception and understanding of the larger world around it.²

2.3 At the time of the roundtable, DFAT secretariat staff were responsible for administering the Australia Awards scholarship programs which consisted of two streams:

- an **achievement stream (Endeavour Awards)** that targets the best and brightest students, researchers and professionals to come to Australia and for Australians to do the same offshore; and
- a **development stream (Ausaid Awards)** that builds capacity in developing countries.³

2.4 The statistics for the Endeavour Awards in 2012 were:

655 students from 64 countries [came] in and 122 Australians [went] out to 30 countries.⁴

2.5 DFAT later advised that, subsequent to the release of the Asian Century White Paper in October 2012, responsibility for the Australia Awards secretariat was transferred to the Australian Agency for International Development (AusAID).⁵

2.6 Current information about the Australia Awards, which brings together AusAid, Department of Innovation, Industry, Science, Research and Tertiary Education (DIISRTE) and the Australian Centre for International Agricultural Research (ACIAR) scholarships together under the Australian Awards program, can be found on the dedicated website.⁶

Austrade

2.7 The Australian Trade Commission (Austrade)'s role is:

2 Mr Peter McFarlane, Director, Australian Awards Secretariat, DFAT, *Committee Hansard*, 3 April 2012, Canberra, p. 19.

3 See the website for details, <http://www.australiaawards.gov.au/index.html>

4 Mr Colin Walters, Division Head, Department of Industry, Innovation, Science, Research and Tertiary Education, *Committee Hansard*, 3 April 2012, Canberra, p. 31.

5 Email to secretariat, Mr Andrew Ford, Director, Trade Competitiveness, DFAT, 11 February 2013.

6 Australia Awards website, <http://www.australiaawards.gov.au/>

The international marketing and promotion of Australian education and training ...the promotion of Australia as an education destination and as a provider of services in overseas markets...[through] regular activities in Australia and across [a] network of 90 posts.⁷

2.8 At the roundtable Mr John Anglely, General Manager, International Education set out Austrade's four focus areas:

- Assistance in markets to providers and the identification of opportunities for Australian providers, both onshore and offshore;
- Delivery of market intelligence through the market information package and *Global Education News*, which is a fortnightly newsletter that is circulated to several thousand subscribers and which contains discussion of markets, opportunities for Australian service providers and short discussions on policy changes in some of the markets overseas;
- Responsible for the COAG endorsed website, studyinaustralia.gov.au, designated as an authoritative source and often the first place that potential students visit; and
- Development of the new brand, Future Unlimited, and ensuing assets including a video.⁸

2.9 At the briefing Mr Anglely stated that a rebuilt version of the Study in Australia website will be launched in June 2013 and the improved version 'will be more interactive than the current model.'⁹

2.10 Work on the Future Unlimited brand has continued since the roundtable, when it was in its inception. Austrade stated that Future Unlimited is an opportunity to move away from the tourism approach of advertising and promoting to emphasising the inherent value of an Australian education:

It is to give a consistent brand, which can operate on its own or in co-branding with providers' own brands, to present a message that there are opportunities for people who have an Australian education – in this context, the Australian students studying in Australia – opportunities for the rest of their careers and lives.¹⁰

7 Mr John Anglely, General Manager, International education, Austrade, *Committee Hansard*, 14 February 2013, p. 3.

8 Mr John Anglely, General Manager, International Education, Austrade, *Committee Hansard*, 3 April 2012, Canberra, p. 4.

9 Mr John Anglely, General Manager, International Education, Austrade, *Committee Hansard*, 14 February 2013, Canberra, p. 3.

10 Mr John Anglely, General Manager, International Education, Austrade, *Committee Hansard*, 14 February 2013, Canberra, pp. 3-4.

2.11 Mr Anglely went on to say that some 160 Australian institutions have thus far been licensed to use the brand and nearly 60 international organisations – mainly major education agent companies – are using the brand. He added that it ‘was not just a label’ but ‘a brand with a lot of material to back it up.’¹¹

2.12 Austrade has also started running career development workshops for alumni international students when they return to their home country:

The big example of that is a career fair that we organised in Shanghai in the middle of last year for Chinese students who had been to universities in Australia.¹²

Working with stakeholders to promote and market Australian education

2.13 Several roundtable participants endorsed Austrade’s efforts in respect of the promotion and marketing of Australian education.

2.14 TAFE Directors Australia indicated that they had a good working relationship with Austrade and DIISRTE.¹³

2.15 Universities Australia stated:

We are working together with Austrade to reposition high-quality education and innovation as a crucial part of the ‘education Australia’ brand.¹⁴

2.16 The Group of Eight (Go8) said while there were initial reservations about Austrade’s role in this area, they were ‘really impressed with Austrade’s professionalism on the ground’ and:

They have helped us open new markets, particularly in Latin America recently and they are particularly effective when they work with the embassies.¹⁵

11 Mr John Anglely, General Manager, International Education, Austrade, *Committee Hansard*, 14 February 2013, Canberra, p. 4.

12 Mr John Anglely, General Manager, International Education, Austrade, *Committee Hansard*, 14 February 2013, Canberra, p. 8.

13 Mr Peter Holden, TAFE Directors Australia, *Committee Hansard*, 3 April 2012, Canberra, p. 16.

14 Professor Purcell, Universities Australia, *Committee Hansard*, 3 April 2012, Canberra, p. 20.

15 Mr Gallagher, Go8, *Committee Hansard*, 13 April 2012, Canberra, p. 21.

Department of Immigration and Citizenship

2.17 At the roundtable Ms Paula Williams, Assistant Secretary, Education and Tourism Branch, Department of Immigration and Citizenship (DIAC), referred to the implementation of the recommendations arising from the Knight Review. She presented the then latest Student visa program quarterly report, ending December 2011¹⁶ and an implementation timetable for the Knight review.¹⁷ Ms Williams indicated that Stage 1 changes, including the genuine temporary entrant (GTE) criteria (addressing whether the individual circumstances of a student visa applicant indicate that their intention is for a temporary stay in Australia) and reductions in financial requirements, had concluded in 2011 and that a number of Stage 2 changes were underway. On the latter:

The key change implemented in March 2012 was streamlined visa processing for prospective students enrolled at the bachelors, masters or doctoral degrees at participating universities.¹⁸

2.18 Ms Williams added that DIAC was reviewing the student visa assessment level framework which related to managing risk in the program in accordance with recommendation 32 of the Knight review, and noted that full implementation of the review findings was expected to take place throughout 2013, with recommendations four and eight, pertaining to post-study work arrangements, implemented in 2013.¹⁹

2.19 At the briefing, Dr Wendy Southern, Deputy Secretary, Policy and Management Group, DIAC outlined the progress that had been made subsequent to the preceding year's roundtable.

2.20 On the introduction of the GTE criterion, Dr Southern said that issues had arisen around the implementation of the GTE but that a lot of training and support was given, particularly to visa-processing offices onshore and offshore to ensure consistency in decision-making. In summary:

We are getting a lot of feedback informing our improvement in decision-making...statistics are now showing that the grant rates

16 Available from the Department website: <http://www.immi.gov.au/>

17 Details on the implementation timetable are provided on the Department website: <http://www.immi.gov.au/students/knight/>

18 Ms Paula Williams, Assistant Secretary, Education and Tourism Branch, Department of Immigration and Citizenship, *Committee Hansard*, 3 April 2012, Canberra, p. 4.

19 Ms Paula Williams, Assistant Secretary, Education and Tourism Branch, Department of Immigration and Citizenship, *Committee Hansard*, 3 April 2012, Canberra, p. 4.

are getting back up to where they were, and things are looking as if they are proceeding more smoothly than at the beginning.²⁰

- 2.21 On the streamlined visa processing arrangements introduced in 2012, Dr Southern alluded to increased competitiveness, indicating a similar growth in grant rate applications:

Comparing...December 2012 with December 2011 quarterly statistics, there has been an increase in both the lodgement and in grants for offshore higher education visa applications. So we are seeing that trending up.²¹

- 2.22 Dr Southern stated that the Department's review of the risk management approach taken to student visa processing, including recognising and rewarding low-risk immigration providers (pertaining to recommendation 32 of the Knight review) was currently with the Minister and the Department had consulted with peak organisations, unions and state governments about implementation: 'it is a work in progress but we are hoping to finalise it soon.'²²

- 2.23 On post-study work arrangements, Dr Southern said the Department was focused on implementation this year and early next year:

...students who have studied a degree course will be eligible to have a work visa for between two and four years following the completion of their course. The number of years on the working visa they will have access to will depend on the level of course they have completed – degree, masters or PhD. These new arrangements will be available to students who have made their first student visa application after the introduction of the GTE. It will be for students who applied for their visas and were granted them after 5 November 2011.²³

- 2.24 DIAC concluded its update with reference to the Migration Legislation Amendment (Student Visas) Act which comes into effect in mid April 2013. The Act replaces mandatory cancellation provisions with a

20 Dr Wendy Southern, Deputy Secretary, Policy and Management Group, DIAC, *Committee Hansard*, 14 February 2013, Canberra, p. 2.

21 Dr Wendy Southern, Deputy Secretary, Policy and Management Group, DIAC, *Committee Hansard*, 14 February 2013, Canberra, p. 3.

22 Dr Wendy Southern, Deputy Secretary, Policy and Management Group, DIAC, *Committee Hansard*, 14 February 2013, Canberra, p. 3.

23 Dr Wendy Southern, Deputy Secretary, Policy and Management Group, DIAC, *Committee Hansard*, 14 February 2013, Canberra, p. 3.

discretionary framework – the abolition of automatic cancellation of student visas was something also recommended in the Knight review.²⁴

Department of Industry, Innovation, Science, Research and Tertiary Education and Australian Education International

2.25 At the roundtable, Mr Colin Walters, Division Head, International Education, Department of Industry, Innovation, Science, Research and Tertiary Education (DIISRTE)²⁵ affirmed the Commonwealth Government's approach to the international education sector as one that recognises its importance to the Australian economy and future links globally, especially in the Asia region.

2.26 Mr Walters emphasised the work his department does in forging government-to-government links and pointed to the network of overseas education counsellors in Australian embassies around the world:

We see that as particularly important – the importance of international education in terms of what you might call soft diplomacy to Australia overseas...

The fact that so many people in leadership positions around Asia have actually been educated in Australia is of inestimable importance to the country...

You would not have a large flow of students from some Asian countries if those countries did not have full confidence in the Australian education system. That is something we work hard at.²⁶

2.27 Mr Walters said that the government's approach is to 'focus on the quality and sustainability of the sector and also to strengthen the student experience.'²⁷

2.28 To this end, and in addition to the Baird and Knight reviews, in 2010 the Commonwealth Government created an International Students Strategy

24 Dr Wendy Southern, Deputy Secretary, Policy and Management Group, DIAC, *Committee Hansard*, 14 February 2013, p. 3.

25 Australian Education International (AEI) is the international education, science and research arm of the Department of Industry, Innovation, Science, Research and Tertiary Education (DIISRTE). It works to foster international partnerships, provide strategic policy advice, ensure quality, and enhance international students' experiences. See the AEI website for details: <https://aei.gov.au/about-aei/pages/default.aspx>

26 Mr Walters, DIISRTE, *Committee Hansard*, 3 April 2012, Canberra, p. 20.

27 Mr Walters, DIISRTE, *Committee Hansard*, 3 April 2012, Canberra, p. 20.

for Australia.²⁸ Mr Walters also mentioned two additional developments that his Department was having input into: an International Education Advisory Council²⁹ and the Australia in the Asia Century White Paper.³⁰

- 2.29 The Australian Government released its Australia in the Asian Century White Paper in October 2012.³¹
- 2.30 At the briefing, Ms Dianne Weddell, Acting Head of International Education and Science Division, DIISRTE, said that the International Advisory Council was close to finalising its advice to government on a five year strategy for international education.³²
- 2.31 In relation to the *Australia in the Asian century* white paper, DIISRTE referred to the Higher Education Support Amendment (Asian Century) Bill 2013 (currently under consideration by this Committee). The Bill proposes greater financial assistance through the OS-HELP scheme to further encourage Australian students to undertake studies in Asia.³³

New regulatory and oversight organisations

- 2.32 The Australian Skills Quality Authority (ASQA) and Overseas Students Ombudsman (OSO) are two new organisations that were established to improve regulation and oversight in the international education sector. ASQA's equivalent in the university sector is the Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency (TEQSA), with oversight responsibilities for Australia's public and private universities.³⁴

28 The Strategy is available online: <https://www.aei.gov.au/About-AEI/Current-Initiatives/International-Students-Strategy-of-Australia/Pages/default.aspx>

29 Further information available online: <https://aei.gov.au/ieac2/about%20ieac/pages/aboutieac.aspx>

30 The White Paper is available online: <http://asiancentury.dpmc.gov.au/white-paper>

31 <http://asiancentury.dpmc.gov.au/white-paper>

32 Ms Di Weddell, Acting Head, International and Science Division, DIISRTE, *Committee Hansard*, 14 February 2013, p. 1.

33 See website of House Standing Committee on Education and Employment for details, www.aph.gov.au/ee

34 TEQSA website, www.teqsa.gov.au

Australian Skills Quality Authority

- 2.33 Dr Dianne Orr, Commissioner-Compliance, Australian Skills and Qualification Authority (ASQA) outlined her agency's purpose and functions at the roundtable:

The authority was established on 1 July as the national regulator for Australia's vocational education and training sector. It also regulates vocational and education training providers delivering to overseas students and English-language providers delivering to overseas students. The authority regulates courses and providers to ensure that nationally approved quality standards are met. ...

The authority's regulatory approach is based on risk assessment. It particularly examines those providers, courses and qualifications regarded as high risk. Non-compliance with the required standards can incur sanctions, including suspension and cancellation of registration.³⁵

- 2.34 At the briefing Dr Orr confirmed that all states and territories had now transferred their powers and transitioned to ASQA. Further, the authority was now a delegate of the minister and secretary for the registration and enforcement functions of the Education Services for Overseas Students Act 'enabling further streamlining of regulation in this sector.'³⁶

- 2.35 At the time of the roundtable ASQA was less than one year old. Dr Orr said then:

...in its first 10 months, ASQA has had a very busy time transferring providers and assuming its role in the area of designated authority for those providers delivering to overseas students.³⁷

- 2.36 A year on the authority is responsible for regulating 4,100 training providers and 561 providers on the Commonwealth register of institutions and courses for overseas students, both in vocational education and training and English language.³⁸

35 Dr Dianne Orr, Deputy Commissioner and Commissioner-Compliance, ASQA, *Committee Hansard*, 14 February 2013, Canberra, p. 4.

36 Dr Dianne Orr, Commissioner-Compliance, Australian Skills Quality Authority, *Committee Hansard*, 3 April 2012, Canberra, p. 4.

37 Dr Dianne Orr, Commissioner-Compliance, Australian Skills Quality Authority, *Committee Hansard*, 3 April 2012, Canberra, p. 2.

38 Dr Dianne Orr, Commissioner-Compliance, Australian Skills Quality Authority, *Committee Hansard*, 3 April 2012, Canberra, p. 4.

- 2.37 Dr Orr provided further detail on how ASQA had exercised its powers in the first 18 months of operation:

...the authority made five decisions to cancel provider registration and one decision to suspend all of a provider's registration. The authority issued a further 20 written notices stating its intent to cancel registration and issued 12 notices of its intent to suspend registration. In addition the authority refused 84 applications: 17 were for initial registration; 10 were for registration renewal and 57 were for applications to add qualifications to the registered scope of the provider.³⁹

- 2.38 At the February briefing, ASQA stated that the Authority works closely with and notifies federal and state agencies of breaches, including the Tuition Protection Service (TPS) and Overseas Student Ombudsman, for whom investigations into complaints about providers are undertaken.⁴⁰

Quality assurance for Australian education providers operating overseas

- 2.39 Dr Dianne Orr stated that the national regulator is mandated to assess the quality of Australian qualifications delivered in overseas locations, as well as within Australia:

...there have been some concerns expressed about the quality of that offshore provision [by Australian registered providers, particularly in the VET sector]...where an Australian provider is delivering offshore and issuing Australian qualifications they do come under the compliance requirements of that legislation.⁴¹

- 2.40 At the roundtable Dr Orr explained that offshore audits are currently not being conducted, however they will be:

We are a cost-recovery agency...We cannot charge to recover the costs of the audits at this stage. But there is a bill before the Parliament to enable us to charge the fees for those audits.⁴²

- 2.41 In the interim, qualifications were monitored through the onshore operations of the registered training organisations.⁴³

39 Dr Dianne Orr, Commissioner-Compliance, Australian Skills Quality Authority, *Committee Hansard*, 3 April 2012, Canberra, p. 5.

40 Dr Orr, Deputy Commissioner and Commissioner-Compliance, ASQA, *Committee Hansard*, 14 February 2013, Canberra, p. 5.

41 Dr Dianne Orr, Commissioner-Compliance, ASQA, *Committee Hansard*, 3 April 2012, Canberra, p. 17.

42 Dr Dianne Orr, Commissioner-Compliance, ASQA, *Committee Hansard*, 3 April 2012, Canberra, p. 17.

Overseas Students Ombudsman

2.42 At the roundtable Ms Fiona Bowring-Greer, then Director, Overseas Students Ombudsman described the establishment in 2011 of the OSO as a function of the Commonwealth Ombudsman, set up specifically to give international students at private education providers access to a statutorily independent complaints mechanism. This applies to current, former and prospective students. She distinguished the OSO's role from the state ombudsman:

Students with government education providers already had and have access to the relevant state ombudsman and in South Australia all students can complain to the training advocate.⁴⁴

2.43 Ms Bowring-Greer elaborated on the OSO's other function as a review body:

The OSO also acts as an external review body for students challenging the decisions of providers, for instance in proposing to report them to the Department of Immigration and Citizenship for failing to meet course progress or attendance requirements, releasing them so that they can change providers or in relation to paying refunds.⁴⁵

2.44 Ms Bowring-Greer said that approximately 500 complaints were received by the OSO in its first year of operation, roughly a quarter of which related to refund matters.⁴⁶

2.45 At the briefing, Ms Bowring-Greer's successor, Dr Geoff Airo-Farulla, commented that OSO had received complaints relating to 243 private education providers, which represented about 25 per cent of the providers in their jurisdiction. He described the complaints as comprising 'a steady stream after an initial surge in which the issues had some history to them'.⁴⁷ Dr Airo-Farulla stated:

43 Dr Dianne Orr, Commissioner-Compliance, ASQA, *Committee Hansard*, 13 April 2012, Canberra, p. 17.

44 Ms Fiona Bowring-Greer, Director, Overseas Students Ombudsman, *Committee Hansard*, 3 April 2012, Canberra, p. 2.

45 Ms Fiona Bowring-Greer, Director, Overseas Students Ombudsman, *Committee Hansard*, 3 April 2012, Canberra, p. 2.

46 Ms Fiona Bowring-Greer, Director, Overseas Students Ombudsman, *Committee Hansard*, 3 April 2012, Canberra, p. 3.

47 Dr Geoff Farulla, Director, OSO, *Committee Hansard*, 14 February 2013, p. 1.

We have reported eight providers to ASQA. Most of those have related to providers failing to pay funds as required. Those would have been pre-TPS cases for the most part.⁴⁸

- 2.46 Dr Airo-Farulla emphasised the important role that the Tuition Protection Service has played in the swift resolution of refund matters:

That has provided a mechanism for very quick and efficient resolution of complaints concerning non-payment of refunds where the entitlement is not in dispute...I think it is working well...That has allowed us to concentrate more on the cases where there is a dispute as to the amount of the refund or whether or not a refund is owed.⁴⁹

- 2.47 An OSO priority now is to increase the awareness of their services to education providers and students alike. This includes:

[making] sure that providers are very proactive in providing information about that to our students so that students know where they can go ...[and] developing a training module for providers about their own internal complaints handling, which we intend to deliver to them online.⁵⁰

Session One: Snapshot of international education

- 2.48 Session one of the roundtable provided a broad picture of the international student experience in Australia and highlighted some key concerns surrounding transport, security, inclusiveness and consultation and communication.
- 2.49 The fast pace of reforms and need to consolidate the suite of changes following the Baird and Knight reviews was a concern of many stakeholders and a suggested contributor, by some, to the declining numbers of international students choosing to study in Australia.⁵¹

48 Dr Geoff Farulla, Director, OSO, *Committee Hansard*, 14 February 2013, p. 7.

49 Dr Geoff Farulla, Director, OSO, *Committee Hansard*, 14 February 2013, p. 5.

50 Dr Geoff Farulla, Director, OSO, *Committee Hansard*, 14 February 2013, p. 1.

51 Ms Sue Blundell, Executive Director, English Australia, *Committee Hansard*, 13 April 2012, p. 5 and Ms Claire Field, Chief Executive Officer, Australian Council of Private Education and Training, *Committee Hansard*, 3 April 2012, pp. 22-23.

The international student experience

International student surveys

- 2.50 At the roundtable DIISRTE cited regular departmental surveys that indicate the satisfaction rating of international students' experience in Australia is in the mid 80 per cent range.⁵²
- 2.51 However, Ms Danielle Hartridge, National President, International Education Association Inc. (ISANA) cautioned against blanket acceptance of high levels of student satisfaction. Ms Hartridge said that international students who are new to the country are predisposed to try and please their host and sometimes 'the data does not match the reality.'⁵³
- 2.52 Ms Arfa Noor, President, Council of International Students (CISA) said that even if the 80 per cent satisfaction rating was an accurate reflection of the student experience, that still left a significant proportion of dissatisfied students:
- ...even if we are talking 10-15 per cent of students out of 500, 000 students in the country, that is still a huge number of students who are not having a great experience.⁵⁴
- 2.53 ISANA expressed concern that the english language sector and school students were often excluded from the data set. Ms Hartridge said:
- There is very little communication with [ELICOS] students and with those institutes. It is always difficult to get in touch with them. It can be the same with students in schools as well, which is a particular concern for CISA because they are under-age students....We have had a few instances of terrible abusethese students are so young and vulnerable they really do not know who to talk to. I know that the school sector has a peak body, but it is not usually present with the rest of the peak bodies.⁵⁵
- 2.54 Speaking to developments since the roundtable at the briefing, Ms Di Weddell, Acting Head of International Education and Science, DIISRTE, highlighted key findings of a survey conducted since the roundtable, of 50,000 international students, where satisfaction levels appear to be higher than indicated in the earlier survey. She reported:

52 Mr Colin Walters, Division Head, DIISRTE, *Committee Hansard*, 3 April 2012, Canberra, p. 20.

53 Ms Danielle Hartridge, President, ISANA, *Committee Hansard*, 3 April 2012, Canberra, p. 32.

54 Ms Arfa Noor, President, CISA, *Committee Hansard*, 3 April 2012, Canberra, p.23.

55 Ms Danielle Hartridge, ISANA, *Committee Hansard*, 3 April 2012, Canberra, p. 33.

We find there is a high level of satisfaction – 88 per cent....Students are also very satisfied with studying and living in Australia....⁵⁶

- 2.55 Ms Weddell mentioned additional work the Department had done looking at demonstration projects that enhance international students' experience.⁵⁷

Public transport concessions

- 2.56 Representatives from the National Union of Students (NUS) and the Council of Australian Postgraduate Associations (CAPA) referred to the long-standing issue of transport concessions not being made available to international students in the states of Victoria and New South Wales.
- 2.57 Mr Ashraf Alias, International Students Officer, NUS acknowledged that this was an issue for the respective states, rather than the federal government, but nonetheless one that greatly impacted students.
- 2.58 It appears to be something that students assume they will have access to on arrival in Australia but are surprised to discover they are not entitled to in every state. Mr Alias elaborated:
- If students knew ... that before they came to Australia then, if they were thinking of studying in universities in Victoria and New South Wales, they might think twice.⁵⁸
- 2.59 CAPA concurred that 'much desired and needed [are] travel concessions for New South Wales and Victoria.'⁵⁹
- 2.60 Ms Hartman-Warren, International Students Officer, CAPA clarified that the transport concessions that students missed out on relate to local public transport as well as inter-state transportation, such as Murrays coaches.⁶⁰

56 Ms Di Weddell, Acting Head, International Education and Science Division, DIISRTE, *Committee Hansard*, 14 February 2013, p. 1.

57 Ms Di Weddell, Acting Head, International Education and Science Division, DIISRTE, *Committee Hansard*, 14 February 2013, p. 2. The *Enhancing the international students experience* report is available from the Universities Australia website, <http://www.universitiesaustralia.edu.au/page/policy---advocacy/international/enhancing-the-student-experience-awardees/>

58 Mr Ashraf Alias, International Students Officer, National Union of Students, *Committee Hansard*, 3 April 2012, Canberra, p. 3.

59 Ms Hartman Warren, International Officer, *Committee Hansard*, 3 April 2012, Canberra, p. 4.

60 Ms Hartman Warren, International Officer, *Committee Hansard*, 3 April 2012, Canberra, p. 10.

- 2.61 Mr Michael Gallagher, Executive Director, Go8 endorsed the student representatives' comments 'reinforc[ing] the advocacy that others put for transport concessions to be made available.'⁶¹

Safety

- 2.62 Mr Alias said that the higher transport costs were prohibitive for him and other international students and the lack of a concession card was potentially a safety issue too:

I used to live in a suburb called Maroubra where you have to take a bus. Just to save money I used to walk 45 minutes back at night through Maroubra, which is not really a safe suburb.⁶²

...Just last week a student came up to me and said, "You know, I'm so unhappy I don't get transport concessions. She said that it is unsafe for her."⁶³

- 2.63 Dr Ly Thi Tran, a researcher at RMIT, added:

If [students] finish their library at 9 [pm], it costs them \$5 for the ticket home, so they think it's better to walk for half an hour in the dark.⁶⁴

Limiting academic and social participation

- 2.64 Dr Tran reported that international students feel that they are treated differently to domestic students because they are not entitled to the same travel discounts as local students, and this can impact participation in campus activities:

I interviewed 150 student participants from 25 VET providers in NSW and Victoria. Firstly,...they mention that they have the feeling that they are treated like second-class citizens.... It creates a negative image about Australia in the eyes of international students. Secondly, it may have a significant impact on their academic performance. In many cases, students mentioned: I don't like group work...over the weekend...Over the weekend I have to pay \$8-10 in train tickets - that is two meals for me to go to the campus to do group work...So I would prefer individual

61 Mr Michael Gallagher, Executive Director, *Committee Hansard*, 3 April 2012, Canberra, p. 21.

62 Mr Ashraf Alias, International Students Officer, National Union of Students, *Committee Hansard*, 3 April 2012, Canberra, p. 3.

63 Mr Ashraf Alias, International Students Officer, National Union of Students, *Committee Hansard*, 3 April 2012, Canberra, p. 3.

64 Dr Ly Thi Tran, RMIT, *Committee Hansard*, 3 April 2012, Canberra, p. 11.

assignment rather than group work. Also, sometimes I wanted but I couldn't participate in the social activity organised by my TAFE or other activities in town because I have to pay extra for my transport.⁶⁵

NSW grant transport concession

- 2.65 Six months after the roundtable, on 29 October 2012, NSW Premier Barry O'Farrell announced that public transport fare discounts would be made available for international students, to increase the attractiveness of NSW as a study destination. International students will now have access to travel discounts of up to 35 per cent.⁶⁶
- 2.66 A joint media release issued from the Council of International Students of Australia (CISA), NUS and CAPA welcomed the move but expressed reservations 'the NSW government will only grant up to 35% off the current adult fare and that this will only be a 12 month pilot program.'⁶⁷
- 2.67 Student representative bodies urged Victoria, the only remaining state without transport concessions for international students, to revisit their transport concession policy for international students.⁶⁸
- 2.68 Information on international students' eligibility for transport concessions is not accessible on the transport section of the official Australian Government website, Study in Australia. In light of general comments made by roundtable participants on the need for better communication between government bodies and international students, it is the Committee's view that, as a minimum, this information be conveyed clearly on the official government website, so that prospective international students can be informed about transport concessions they are entitled to, in advance of their applications to study here.

65 Dr Ly-Thi Tran, RMIT, Committee Hansard, 3 April 2012, Canberra, p. 11.

66 Media release, Transport NSW, "NSW Government announced travel discounts for international students", 29 October 2012, <http://www.transport.nsw.gov.au/media-releases/nsw-government-announces-travel-discounts-international-students>

67 Joint media release, CISA, NUS and CAPA, "'CISA, NUS and CAPA welcome international student transport concession in NSW", 30 October 2012, <http://cisa.edu.au/transportconcession>

68 Joint media release, CISA, NUS and CAPA, "'CISA, NUS and CAPA welcome international student transport concession in NSW", 30 October 2012, <http://cisa.edu.au/transportconcession>

Recommendation 1

The Committee recommends that information on the eligibility of international students for transport concessions in the respective states and territories be made available to prospective students on the Study in Australia website.

Tenancy and accommodation

2.69 Procuring secure and affordable accommodation is another concern for students. Participants at the roundtable stated that international students for whom English is a second language can be subject to discriminatory and exploitative practices by landlords.

2.70 Ms Hartman-Warren of CAPA elaborated:

I have seen tenancy set-ups where landlords are only having international student women who barely speak English and they have all acted afraid of him or cramming eight students into a room for a very high weekly cost.⁶⁹

2.71 Ms Sue Blundell, Executive Director, English Australia (the association for English language program providers) pointed to the need for more affordable housing to be provided, ideally by universities, and for students to be informed of their housing rights when they enter Australia:

The rising cost of accommodation across the country is hitting international students particularly hard. They are also extremely vulnerable to exploitation because a lot of them are not aware of their rights...We see a lot of students being exploited. Landlords, for example, are requiring that students give them their passports as insurance...These kinds of things are actually illegal.⁷⁰

2.72 The National Union of Students reiterated the need for more affordable accommodation and alluded to security concerns. According to Mr Alias:

There is a concentration of international students within private rental housing, coupled with a lack of affordable student housing, and that makes safety an issue,...in Kensington, which is a suburb just beside UNSW, I have heard about quite a few cases of theft.⁷¹

69 Ms Hartman-Warren, International Officer, CAPA, *Committee Hansard*, 3 April 2012, p. 10.

70 Ms Sue Blundell, Executive Director, English Australia, *Committee Hansard*, 3 April 2012, p. 6.

71 Mr Ashraf Alias, International Students Officer, NUS, *Committee Hansard*, 3 April 2012, p. 11.

- 2.73 The Study in Australia website does contain some information on renting private accommodation and tenancy rights, including information on residential tenancy authorities in each state and territory.⁷² However, it may also be useful to include some case study scenarios and Frequently Asked Questions and answers to assist international students.

Recommendation 2

The Committee recommends that the sections on accommodation and tenancy on the Study in Australia website be enhanced with case-studies and Frequently Asked Questions about tenancy rights.

Health insurance

New legislation

- 2.74 Roundtable participants discussed international students' requirements to have adequate health insurance cover. Ms Blundell from English Australia advised that, 'It was legislated last year to make it link to visa-length cover rather than semester-length cover.'⁷³
- 2.75 Prior to this, students were apparently only taking out cover for their first year in Australia and not necessarily renewing it. Legislation was subsequently introduced to ensure that students have insurance for the duration of their course here.⁷⁴
- 2.76 Ms Williams from DIAC added that there is information about this on the Department's website.⁷⁵ Health insurance requirements are also set out on the Study in Australia website.⁷⁶

Rising premiums

- 2.77 Reference was made by several roundtable participants to the high costs associated with health insurance for international students and the fact

72 Study in Australia website, <http://www.studyinaustralia.gov.au/en/Living-in-Australia/Student-Safety-Portal/Renting-Accommodation>

73 Ms Sue Blundell, Executive Director, English Australia, *Committee Hansard*, 3 April 2012, Canberra, p. 15.

74 Dr Helen Forbes-Mewett, Researcher and Lecturer, Monash University, *Committee Hansard*, 3 April 2012, Canberra, p. 15.

75 Ms Paula Williams, Assistant Secretary, Education and Tourism Branch, DIAC, *Committee Hansard*, 3 April 2012, Canberra, p. 15.

76 Study in Australia website, Overseas Student Cover, <http://www.studyinaustralia.gov.au/en/Study-Costs/OSHC>

that they do not always have adequate cover for them and accompanying family members.

- 2.78 Ms Arfa Noor, President, CISA, referred to the cost of premiums, together with other living costs, rising in line with the high Australian dollar.⁷⁷ Mr Walters from DIISRTE concurred but asserted that, 'one just has to accept that' to be the case. Further:

One cannot expect the government to pay the cost of treatments for overseas visitors any more than we can expect to be treated for free wherever we go.⁷⁸

- 2.79 Ms Noor said international students accept that hospitals are not under any obligation to treat international students. She explained that once international students understand the importance of having insurance, they are generally happy to pay the cost, so long as they feel they are getting value for money:

Students are paying \$10,000 or \$16,000 (for family cover from a particular health insurance provider), but...they do not understand what they are covered for. There is no clear information. We are just given a big booklet, along with heaps of other information. If you are from a country where you do not have health insurance you do not really understand it.

...

A lot of students do not understand how the system works. Instead of going to a GP they are going to the emergency room for things like flu and fever....Going to a GP would be \$60; going to a hospital emergency service would be \$150 [upfront].⁷⁹

- 2.80 Ms Noor cited instances of female students or spouses that had fallen pregnant whilst in Australia and been under the impression that their health insurance would cover all expenses but this was not necessarily the case, in Queensland and Victoria.⁸⁰
- 2.81 DIISRTE confirmed that standard cover provides the following:

Full cover for the Medicare Benefits Schedule fee for medical services, both in hospitals and outside hospitals, and for public

77 Ms Arfa Noor, President, CISA, *Committee Hansard*, 3 April 2012, Canberra, p. 27.

78 Mr Colin Walters, Division Head, DIISRTE, *Committee Hansard*, 13 April 2012, Canberra, p. 27.

79 Ms Arfa Noor, President, CISA, *Committee Hansard*, 3 April 2012, Canberra, pp. 28 and 30.

80 Ms Arfa Noor, President, CISA, *Committee Hansard*, 3 April 2012, Canberra, p. 28.

hospital accommodation at the rate determined by states and territories.⁸¹

- 2.82 Mr Walters added there are, however, a range of overseas health cover products which offer higher levels of cover.⁸² And:

Public hospitals have no obligation to provide non-emergency treatment to international students, regardless of whether the student has overseas health cover.⁸³

- 2.83 Subsequent to the roundtable, CISA welcomed news that international students who have been in the country for at least 12 months can now receive obstetric care at the Royal Brisbane and Women's Hospital and called on public hospitals in Melbourne to follow suit.⁸⁴

Educating students about insurance requirements, products and providers

- 2.84 Roundtable participants advised that there are varying costs of cover, for singles, couples and families, offered by different providers. And that some educational institutions have 'preferred health cover providers'.⁸⁵

- 2.85 Ms Noor indicated that while information may be available on the various health cover options available to international students, it is not necessarily clear to them how it all works and why it is essential:

We are just given a big booklet along with heaps of other information. If you come from a country where you do not have health insurance, you do not really understand the importance of it. I speak English fairly well and I had to look at the brochure I was given by my health insurance, and I still fail to understand what they were talking about.⁸⁶

- 2.86 Mr Angley from Austrade referred to the Study in Australia website as a source of information on the requirements of living and studying in Australia, and said:

81 Mr Walters, Division Head, DIISRTE, *Committee Hansard*, 3 April 2012, Canberra, p. 27.

82 Mr Walters, Division Head, DIISRTE, *Committee Hansard*, 3 April 2012, Canberra, p. 28.

83 Mr Walters, Division Head, DIISRTE, *Committee Hansard*, 3 April 2012, Canberra, p. 28.

84 Media release, CISA, *CISA welcomes decision of Royal Brisbane and Women's Hospital to treat pregnant international students*, 14 August 2012.

85 *Committee Hansard*, 3 April 2012, Canberra, p. 29.

86 Ms Arfa Noor, President, CISA, *Committee Hansard*, 3 April 2012, Canberra, p. 29.

...hopefully the student or their parents or whoever is helping the potential student to get the most current and accurate information.⁸⁷

- 2.87 The Committee acknowledges that the Study in Australia website contains information about the health insurance requirement, including what health insurance does and does not cover; informing students that institutions may have a preferred health insurance provider but that they can choose their own provider; and links to an Overseas Student Health Cover (OSHC) fact sheet. There are also links to the five authorised health insurance providers that sell health insurance products to international students. Several of the provider links, Bupa, Medibank Private and Nib, provide insurance calculators that enable students to quickly ascertain an estimate of health insurance costs particular to their individual circumstances. Health insurance cover costs vary according to whether the student is travelling as an individual, part of a couple or bringing their family with them to Australia.⁸⁸
- 2.88 However, the Study in Australia website does not appear to reflect the range of scenarios that were cited at the roundtable and may be enhanced by a section with case-study examples and Frequently Asked Questions that address some common misunderstandings. . The website should include example quotes of health insurance costs for international students. This will assist students when they compare the different deals offered by health insurance providers.
- 2.89 CISA stated its intention to have information on health insurance matters made available on their website for students.⁸⁹
- 2.90 However, Ms Noor mentioned that CISA has limited resources and said that information on health cover matters should be disseminated on a sector-wide basis, rather than left solely to student representative organisations.⁹⁰
- 2.91 Key stakeholders, including the Commonwealth Government and international students' organisations, should be working together to effectively communicate and streamline key messages on important issues such as having adequate health cover whilst living and studying in Australia.

87 Mr John Anglely, Director, International Education, Austrade, *Committee Hansard*, 3 April 2012, Canberra, p. 13.

88 Study in Australia website, <http://www.studyinaustralia.gov.au/en/Study-Costs/OSHC>

89 Ms Arfa Noor, President, CISA, *Committee Hansard*, 3 April 2012, Canberra, p. 29.

90 Ms Arfa Noor, President, CISA, *Committee Hansard*, 3 April 2012, Canberra, p. 28.

- 2.92 At the briefing DIISRTE indicated that it was working with CISA, and 'ensuring that they have good support in the issues that affect their studying and living experiences.'⁹¹

Recommendation 3

The Committee recommends that the sections on health insurance cover on the Study in Australia website be enhanced with case-study examples and Frequently Asked Questions that address common misunderstandings about health cover requirements for international students. The website should include example quotes of health insurance costs for international students. This will assist students when they compare the different deals offered by health insurance providers.

Security – media coverage and perceptions versus reality

- 2.93 The Baird Review was undertaken in part as a response to a series of violent attacks on Indian students.⁹²
- 2.94 At the roundtable the Committee heard from Dr Helen Forbes-Mewett, Australian Postdoctoral Fellow and Lecturer in Sociology, Monash University, who had been working on an Australian Research Council (ARC) project on crime and international students. She described the negative impact of media in both Australia and India in 'blowing the attacks out of proportion' and providing 'factually incorrect' information. Further:
- [that perception] has travelled pretty widely. The people I spoke with in the UK were pretty aware of it, and in the US, even more recently. In fact almost all my interviewees, no matter where they come from, had heard about the Indian student issue in Australia. So the media was incredibly damaging about that.⁹³
- 2.95 According to Dr Forbes-Mewett, while there was a perception that Indian students were victims of racist attacks, the fuller story was that:

91 Ms Di Weddell, Acting Head, International Education and Science Division, DIISRTE, Committee Hansard, 14 February 2013, p. 2.

92 Australian Government, *Baird Review*, February 2010, p. 1.

93 Ms Helen Forbes-Mewett, Monash University, *Committee Hansard*, 3 April 2012, Canberra, pp. 9-10.

...large numbers of students have populated areas that are already resource scarce and home to groups of disengaged youth from various ethnic backgrounds.

...The necessary structures to cope with the incoming groups, including housing, work and community services and attitudes were not in place.⁹⁴

- 2.96 Interviews that Dr Forbes-Mewitt conducted demonstrated that there has been a shift in the last two years and those interviewed for her study were beginning to feel safer.⁹⁵ Specifically, on the subject of the Indian attacks and the response to them, Dr Forbes-Mewett said that there is now a more positive view of international student safety compared with when she commenced her research, which 'I believe, reflects on the concerted efforts of [governments, education providers, parents and students].'⁹⁶
- 2.97 Dr Tran added that safety is one of the main reasons international students she interviewed have chosen to study in Australia, over the United States.⁹⁷
- 2.98 DIISRTE's latest international student survey appears to confirm this '92 per cent identified personal safety in their top five reasons for choosing to study in Australia.'⁹⁸

Stereotyping of international students

- 2.99 Dr Tran commented on the stereotyping of international students as 'Permanent Residency (PR) chasers' and the psychological impact this had on international students.
- 2.100 Dr Tran's research examined VET students' various motivations for coming to Australia to study, and the role that permanent residency plays. According to her research, permanent residency is not necessarily the goal, for all.⁹⁹
- 2.101 Dr Tran conveyed international students' disappointment and upset at being typecast in this negative light, and compared it with the way

94 Ms Helen Forbes-Mewett, Monash University, *Committee Hansard*, 3 April 2012, Canberra, p. 2.

95 Ms Helen Forbes-Mewett, Monash University, *Committee Hansard*, 3 April 2012, Canberra, p.10.

96 Ms Helen Forbes-Mewett, Monash University, *Committee Hansard*, 3 April 2012, Canberra, p.2.

97 Dr Tran, RMIT, *Committee Hansard*, 3 April 2012, Canberra, p.14.

98 Ms Di Weddell, Acting Head, International Education and Science, DIISRTE, *Committee Hansard*, 14 February 2013, p. 1.

99 Dr Tran, RMIT, *Committee Hansard*, 3 April 2012, Canberra, p. 5.

students wishing to stay in other countries upon completion of their studies might be perceived more favourably by the wider community:

A large proportion of international students mention...the way they are stereotyped as chasing permanent residence. They compare with their friends and relatives in the US. If you want to study in the US, the Americans would be very surprised if you did not want to stay there...But in Australia they look at you and ask you why? When you show up at your workplace, they ask you why you are also interested in learning. They think you came here just for permanent residency and they may have negative attitudes about you. But in the US you hear encouraging remarks about applying for PR. There they may say: 'You are like me: you are like other people who have come here and would like to stay.'¹⁰⁰

Emotional security

2.102 Dr Tran's comment about students feeling like second class citizens because they do not have access to the same transport concessions as local students, or because the community may believe that that they are here solely in order to gain permanent residency, points to a deeper need that international students have to feel welcome and accepted members of Australian society during their time here.

2.103 According to Dr Tran's research, overall, students appeared happier in Brisbane and the Gold Coast than their contemporaries in Melbourne or Sydney. She postulated this may be because it was easier to get part-time work in Queensland and the students are not made to feel so different because local residents are more accustomed to visitors and tourists.¹⁰¹

2.104 Dr Erlenawati Sawir, Research Fellow, Central Queensland University (CQU) similarly noted the importance of emotional security for settling into life in Australia:

Providing emotional support is as important as academic support. Universities need to do more...for international students.¹⁰²

2.105 Ms Hartman-Warren agreed:

it is important to make sure that once [students] get here, they feel included and their experience is not marginalised.'¹⁰³

100 Dr Tran, RMIT, *Committee Hansard*, 3 April 2012, Canberra, p. 14.

101 Dr Tran, RMIT, *Committee Hansard*, 3 April 2012, Canberra, p. 14.

102 Dr Erlenawati Sawir, CQU, *Committee Hansard*, 3 April 2012, Canberra, p. 14.

103 Ms Hartman-Warren, CAPA, *Committee Hansard*, 3 April 2012, Canberra, p. 14.

Student support services

- 2.106 Mr Alias observed that international students require access to services like counselling and psychological care and these could be improved:

For example, you cannot just have social workers as counsellors.¹⁰⁴

- 2.107 CISA agreed that international students require support systems and advocated that independent support systems be put in place:

Sometimes some institutes do not do a good job of providing that support. At other times the institutes are so small, particularly colleges, small TAFES and ELICOS sectors, they do not have funding to provide that support... There needs to be an independent support system for students in every state.¹⁰⁵

- 2.108 ISANA spoke about the concept of student services hubs –as identified in the Baird review:

Perhaps there is a certain range of information and services that could be provided out of hubs which are not within institutions but located so that students can go to them for a range of assistance and support. They could run community engagement programs and so forth...sitting within institutions is not always necessarily the right answer.¹⁰⁶

- 2.109 CISA praised the kind of support system set-up that exists in Victoria, comprising the International Student Care Service and the International Student Legal Advice Clinic, described as ‘independent bodies that look after students.’¹⁰⁷

Social divide between international and domestic students

- 2.110 Dr Sawir, Research Fellow at the Central Queensland University highlighted the social divisions that can exist between international and local students. She intimated this remains the case despite many institutions’ efforts to integrate the two groups.¹⁰⁸

104 Mr Ashraf Alias, International Students Officer, NUS, *Committee Hansard*, Canberra, 3 April 2012, p. 3.

105 Ms Arfa Noor, President, CISA, *Committee Hansard*, Canberra, 3 April 2012, p. 23.

106 Ms Danielle Hartridge, National President, ISANA, *Committee Hansard*, 3 April 2012, p. 23.

107 Ms Arfa Noor, President, CISA, *Committee Hansard*, Canberra, 3 April 2012, p. 23.

108 Ms Erlenawati Sawir, Research Fellow, Central Queensland University, *Committee Hansard*, 3 April 2012, Canberra, p. 2.

- 2.111 Dr Sawir stated that institutions have tended to focus on assisting international students to adjust to the new learning environment in Australia, with less focus on the other side of the equation:

We would like to see further development of domestic student cultural understanding and international competence, for example, through initiatives or by conducting research which examines attitudes towards the presence of international students, their overall attitude toward cultural differences, their interest in studying abroad or learning another language, and the institutional supports they think are needed to develop their cultural competence.¹⁰⁹

- 2.112 Dr Tran endorsed Dr Sawir's comments about the cultural divides that exist between international and domestic students, and pointed to factors specific to the VET sector:

We have a lot of stand-alone classes of international students and that hinders the engagement between international and local students.

Further a lot of those local students studying part-time are on a work-release block so this may be another barrier to promoting the engagement of international and local students in VET [and some TAFES still have a lot of difficulty finding work placements for international students].¹¹⁰

- 2.113 Improving local students' intercultural capabilities was something covered in the second session of the roundtable, and will be explored further in Section Two in the contexts of two-way exchanges and internationalising Australia's outlook.

Visa issues

- 2.114 The purpose of the Knight review was to 'enhance the quality, integrity and competitiveness of the student visa program.'¹¹¹
- 2.115 Whilst roundtable participants were broadly supportive of the review and its recommendations, views were expressed that Australia's visa regime

109 Ms Erlenawati Sawir, Research Fellow, Central Queensland University, *Committee Hansard*, 3 April 2012, Canberra, p. 2.

110 Dr Ly Thi Tran, RMIT, *Committee Hansard*, 3 April 2012, Canberra, p. 5.

111 Department of Immigration and Citizenship website, <http://www.immi.gov.au/students/knight/>

had become complicated, confusing and inconsistent.¹¹² There was praise for the new post-work study arrangements but concerns by some that existing postgraduate students were not entitled to access them.¹¹³ Also highlighted was the importance of effective stakeholder communication, with migration agents and international students alike.

Regulatory reform, compliance costs and uniform standards

2.116 Ms Sue Blundell from English Australia stated that the pace of regulatory reforms was placing a considerable strain on the sector, particularly English second language providers:

Our zeal for regulatory reform is putting up compliance costs for our providers so they see revenue going down and costs going up...¹¹⁴

2.117 Ms Blundell reported feedback she had received at a migration agent event (migration agents play a key role in advising students on what to expect when they get to Australia and the visa process), that 'the pace of reforms in Australia has led to considerable confusion.'¹¹⁵

2.118 The fact that the Baird and Knight reforms were taking place simultaneously complicated matters, said Ms Blundell. She indicated that providers were finding it difficult to keep on top of all the changes and, particularly in the English language sector and had to divert resources away from teaching and learning to employ extra personnel to deal with compliance matters.¹¹⁶

2.119 Mr Gallagher, Executive Director, Go8 also referred to the post-secondary regulatory framework as 'unnecessarily complex' and 'needing to be more coherent.'¹¹⁷

112 See evidence from Mr Peter Holden, Director, International Engagement, TAFE Directors Australia, *Committee Hansard*, 13 April 2012, p. 3; Ms Kylee Hartman-Warren, International Students Officer, CAPA, *Committee Hansard*, 3 April 2012, p. 4; and Ms Sue Blundell, Executive Director, English Australia, *Committee Hansard*, 3 April 2012, p. 5.

113 Ms Kylee Hartman-Warren, International Officer, CAPA, *Committee Hansard*, 3 April 2012, p. 11.

114 Ms Sue Blundell, Executive Director, English Australia, *Committee Hansard*, 3 April 2012, Canberra, p. 5.

115 Ms Sue Blundell, Executive Director, English Australia, *Committee Hansard*, 3 April 2012, Canberra, p. 6.

116 Ms Sue Blundell, Executive Director, English Australia, *Committee Hansard*, 3 April 2012, Canberra, p. 7.

117 Mr Michael Gallagher, Executive Director, Go8, *Committee Hansard*, 3 April 2012, Canberra, p. 21.

- 2.120 Whilst supportive of improvements to the regulatory system such as the creation of a single Tuition Protection Service and the review by DIAC into the student visa assessment level framework, Mr Holden, Director, International Engagement, TAFE Directors Australia expressed concerns about multiple risk management frameworks and compliance regimes:

There will be different levels of regulatory control and oversight for the approximate 1,200 providers of international education and...registered training organisations. This will be even more complex for many of our TAFE organisations, which are also higher education providers.¹¹⁸

We are less than impressed with some of the blunt instruments introduced ...¹¹⁹

- 2.121 TDA called for the development of coordinated standards for all tertiary education providers:

What we need is a set of provider standards which enable the profiling of all registered providers of international education. Such standards should clearly articulate the quality of delivery, the level of student support and provider compliance with regulations.¹²⁰

- 2.122 English Australia stated that private education providers are not experiencing the same kinds of benefits conferred by the Knight reforms on universities and their recognised pathway providers either.¹²¹

- 2.123 Mr Gallagher, Executive Director, Go8 acknowledged that the university sector 'is pretty well privileged in the current framework.'¹²²

Consolidation of reforms

- 2.124 At the roundtable Ms Blundell from English Australia emphasised the need to consolidate the reforms made to date so that students and agents can understand why, for instance, their visas are rejected:

I think part of the complication is the constant reform. You think you are on top of the latest rules and then there are new rules and

118 Mr Peter Holden, Director, International Engagement, TAFE Directors Australia, *Committee Hansard*, 3 April 2012, Canberra, p. 3.

119 Mr Peter Holden, Director, International Engagement, TAFE Directors Australia, *Committee Hansard*, 3 April 2012, Canberra, p. 3.

120 Mr Peter Holden, Director, International Engagement, TAFE Directors Australia, *Committee Hansard*, 3 April 2012, Canberra, p. 3.

121 Ms Sue Blundell, Executive Director, English Australia, *Committee Hansard*, 3 April 2012, p. 17.

122 Mr Michael Gallagher, Executive Director, Group 8, *Committee Hansard*, 3 April 2012, p. 21

new rules. As long as the rules are transparent and objective you can work within the rules...¹²³

...our sector is suffering from regulatory indigestion...we need a period of stability for the sector to try and get ourselves back on track.¹²⁴

2.125 Several others at the roundtable agreed. Mr Walters from DIISRTE said:

Hopefully there will be a period of consolidation of the reforms which have been carried through.¹²⁵

2.126 Mr Michael Gallagher, Executive Director, Go8 concurred:

It does, as Sue Blundell quite eloquently put it, need a period of stabilisation.¹²⁶

2.127 Mr Phillip Honeywood, Executive Director, International Education Association of Australia added:

...we also look forward to a period of bedding [the new obligatory framework] down.¹²⁷

2.128 Ms Claire Field, CEO, Australian Council for Private Education and Training also underscored the importance of consolidation to the sector's future:

...unless we successfully implement the changes made through the Baird and Knight and that are coming with the Tuition Protection Scheme, we will not have a starting point for sustainability.¹²⁸

2.129 The Committee appreciates there have been many reforms in this sector. The briefing indicated consolidation is occurring across agencies and reforms. On the TPS for example, the OSO said 'That is a really important development in the overall framework. I think it is working well.'¹²⁹

Post-study work arrangements

123 Ms Sue Blundell, Executive Director, English Australia, *Committee Hansard*, 3 April 2012, p. 5.

124 Ms Sue Blundell, Executive Director, English Australia, *Committee Hansard*, 3 April 2012, p. 5.

125 Mr Colin Walters, Division Head, DIISRTE, *Committee Hansard*, 3 April 2012, Canberra, p. 20.

126 Mr Michael Gallagher, Executive Director, Go8, *Committee Hansard*, 3 April 2012, Canberra, p. 21.

127 Mr Phillip Honeywood, Executive Director, International Education Association of Australia, *Committee Hansard*, 3 April 2012, Canberra, p. 21.

128 Ms Claire Field, CEO, APCET, *Committee Hansard*, 3 April 2012, Canberra, p. 22.

129 Mr Geoff-Farulla, Director, Overseas Students Ombudsman, *Committee Hansard*, 14 February 2013, p. 5.

2.130 Dr Tran said that students choose Australia over other study destinations because of the opportunity to work while studying and after studying. In her view, the new post-study work arrangements will be particularly attractive to international students.¹³⁰

2.131 Ms Hartman-Warren International Officer, CAPA said that many existing international students believe that they are able to access the new post-study work visa that came into effect on 5 November 2011, when they are not in fact eligible for it. The new post-study work arrangements will not include students who commenced their studies prior to this date.¹³¹

...students who have been here the longest can only access the 485 [visa] which is tethered to the skilled occupations list.¹³²

2.132 Ms Hartman-Warren elaborated:

Many of these students have decided to stay in Australia because of some of the benefits they had back in 2009-2010. Some of those benefits are being removed by the end of the year and those students are caught in the middle.¹³³

2.133 The DIAC website makes it clear that the new post-study arrangements only apply to students who have applied for their first student visa after 5 November 2011:

The new post-study work arrangements will only be available to students who have applied for their first student visa ... after the introduction of the Genuine Temporary Entrant Requirement (GTE) on 5 November 2011.¹³⁴

2.134 Mr Gallagher, Executive Director, Go8 supported Ms Hartman-Warren's comments about extending the post-study work arrangements to university students already studying here:

...the point about the need to value the students already here is an important one.

130 Dr Tran, RMIT, *Committee Hansard*, 3 April 2012, Canberra, p. 14.

131 Ms Kylee Hartman-Warren, International Officer, Council of Australian Postgraduate Associations, *Committee Hansard*, 3 April 2012, p. 4.

132 Ms Kylee Hartman-Warren, International Officer, Council of Australian Postgraduate Associations, *Committee Hansard*, 3 April 2012, p. 4.

133 Ms Kylee Hartman-Warren, International Officer, Council of Australian Postgraduate Associations, *Committee Hansard*, 3 April 2012, p. 11.

134 Department of Immigration and Citizenship website, Post-Study Work Arrangements – Recommendation 4, December 2012, www.immi.gov.au/students/_pdf/2011-post-study-work.pdf

The bureaucratic purity of grandfathering is a bit of an impediment...¹³⁵

- 2.135 Mr Peter Holden, Director, International Engagement, TAFE Directors Australia expressed disappointment that streamlined visa arrangements and extended work rights do not include VET students.¹³⁶

Consultation

Migration agents

- 2.136 Austrade acknowledged the importance of disseminating the latest visa information to migration agents. Mr Angley said that Austrade achieves this via the Study in Australia website as well as by making direct regular contact with agents and running agent seminars around the world, three or four times a week with different groups.¹³⁷

- 2.137 DIAC added that it has information on its agents' gateway which is an internet resource available to migration agents.¹³⁸

- 2.138 Mr Angley stated that it is important to sell the benefits of the changes to agents. Following the introduction of reforms, Austrade is finding some messages easier to sell:

...we are finding quickly after the Knight review that the message is a bit more straightforward....Certainly for the university level we can sell the new arrangements that are in straightaway and the potential ones coming in next year.

...the message for [the VET] sector...with the Knight changes is [also] now a simpler message to do.¹³⁹

- 2.139 According to DIAC one of their key interlocutors is the migration industry association with whom the Department has ongoing dialogue about the implementation of various visa reforms. Dr Southern said:

We have had quite a good turn-up of agents at a range of public seminars and presentations that we have run over the past 12

135 Mr Michael Gallagher, Executive Director, Go8, *Committee Hansard*, 3 April 2012, Canberra, p. 21.

136 Mr Peter Holden, Director, International Engagement, TAFE Directors Australia, *Committee Hansard*, 3 April 2012, Canberra, p. 3.

137 Mr John Angley, Director, International Education, Austrade, *Committee Hansard*, 3 April 2012, Canberra, p. 8.

138 Dr Southern, DIAC, *Committee Hansard*, 14 February 2013, p. 6.

139 Mr John Angley, Director, International Education, Austrade, *Committee Hansard*, 3 April 2012, Canberra, p. 8.

months and we are certainly getting feedback from agents on a range of issues.

..I get the sense that the level of understanding is increasing.¹⁴⁰

- 2.140 At the briefing Dr Southern mentioned that DIAC had been working collegially with a number of other countries, including the United States and United Kingdom, on the ethical recruitment of migration agents:

We have also led a statement of principles in the ethical recruitment by agents, known as the London statement.¹⁴¹

- 2.141 Austrade emphasised that it works with DIAC at posts to give seminars, particularly in the big markets like China and India. Mr Angley said there is:

intensive consultation with agents to keep them [informed]...on things like the changing rules and policy on student visas and implementation of the program....[including] regular newsletters in local languages to keep it up to date.¹⁴²

International students

- 2.142 At the roundtable CAPA indicated it had questions regarding the Knight review and its implications and that it had experienced difficulty getting written responses:

We students are concerned with the poor information and response we get when we address such important issues to government bodies.

Weak transparency in information leads many students to think that they can access this new visa, and they may feel marginalised when they learn otherwise and export negative sentiment about their experience to their home countries.¹⁴³

- 2.143 At the briefing DIAC referred to its stakeholder engagement process throughout the implementation of the Knight review:

140 Dr Southern, DIAC, Deputy Secretary, Policy and Management Group *Committee Hansard*, 14 February 2013, p. 6.

¹⁴¹ Dr Southern, Deputy Secretary, Policy and Management Group, DIAC, *Committee Hansard*, 14 February 2013, Canberra, p. 2.

¹⁴² Mr John Angley, General Manager, International Education, Austrade, *Committee Hansard*, 14 February 2013, Canberra, p. 6.

¹⁴³ Ms Kylee Hartman-Warren, International Officer, Council of Australian Postgraduate Associations, *Committee Hansard*, 3 April 2012, Canberra, p. 4.

We have had a strong emphasis during this period on ongoing consultation and communication with stakeholders. The Education Visa Consultative Committee, which meets quarterly, is one that we have particularly worked through. That is chaired by us, but other government agencies also join us on that group.¹⁴⁴

We have web pages devoted to the Knight review recommendations, providing updates to people so that they are aware of what is going on.¹⁴⁵

2.144 The Education Visa Consultation Committee (EVCC) comprises the following members:

- Department of Immigration and Citizenship (Chair);
- Department of Industry, Innovation, Science, Research and Tertiary Education (DIISRTE);
- Australian Trade Commission (Austrade);
- All state and territory governments;
- Australian Council for Private Education and Training (ACPET);
- Australian Council of Trade Unions (ACTU);
- Australian Government Schools International (AGSI);
- Business Council of Australia (BCA);
- Council of International Students Australia (CISA);
- Council of Private Higher Education (COPHE);
- English Australia (EA);
- International Education Association Australia (IEAA);
- Independent Schools Council of Australia (ISCA);
- TAFE Directors Australia (TDA); and
- Universities Australia (UA).¹⁴⁶

144 Dr Wendy Southern, Deputy Secretary, Policy and Management Group, DIAC, *Committee Hansard*, 3 April 2012, Canberra, p. 2.

145 Dr Wendy Southern, Deputy Secretary, Policy and Management Group, DIAC, *Committee Hansard*, 3 April 2012, Canberra, p. 3.

146 Email to secretariat from Dr Wendy Southern, Deputy Secretary, Policy and Management Group, DIAC, 4 March 2013.

International student representation

- 2.145 The importance of consultation with student bodies was one of the recurrent themes to emerge from the roundtable. Mr Alias from the NUS said that international student representation was lacking in the VET and TAFE sector colleges, and universities and TAFES alike need to encourage representation.¹⁴⁷
- 2.146 Ms Walmsley, National President of the NUS suggested reasons why international students might find it harder to be a student representative office holder than local students:

...the ability of international students to engage in representative bodies across the country is limited by their full-time study requirement. Many students who choose to engage in their student organisations across the country drop down to two subjects or even, at times, one or none in order to fulfil their representative roles. International students are unfortunately not well represented in their student organisations because they cannot take on roles because they cannot fail their subjects or drop down to a lower study load.¹⁴⁸

Establishment of the Council of International Students Australia

- 2.147 The Council of International Students Australia (CISA) was established in July 2010 and is the national peak body student representative body for international students studying at all levels: postgraduate; undergraduate; private college; TAFE; ELICOS; and foundation level.¹⁴⁹
- 2.148 Ms Noor, President of CISA noted that resources in her organisation were limited:

being a student association run by 10 full-time international students, we are already stretched with our resources.¹⁵⁰

Streamlining communication

- 2.149 At the roundtable CISA expressed concerns that it was not always clear whom to talk to at the national level about international student issues

147 Mr Alias, NUS, *Committee Hansard*, 3 April 2012, Canberra, p. 3.

148 Ms Donherra Walmsley, National President, NUS, *Committee Hansard*, 3 April 2012, Canberra, p. 5.

149 For more information on the organisation see the website: <http://cisa.edu.au/>

150 Ms Arfa Noor, President, CISA, *Committee Hansard*, 3 April 2012, Canberra, p. 28.

and information needs to be disseminated to all educational institutions that have international students:

...there needs to be a centralised response and there needs to be a way so that, when we come together and we come up with a list of solutions...they should immediately be able to send them out to all the people who are dealing with students.¹⁵¹

- 2.150 IEAA acknowledged the various roles and responsibilities that different Commonwealth government departments have in respect of international education, but said that they need to be better aligned:

...ensuring that we do not have a silo effect for this industry, we have to do something about getting the structures of government right...

Ideally it might occur with an interdepartmental committee specifically on international education, run out of...PM & C.¹⁵²

- 2.151 DIISRTE responded that an inter-departmental committee such as that proposed by Mr Honeywood had existed for a number of years. The Joint Committee on International Education:

... reports...to COAG...One of the functions that committee has is to review and report on the progress of the international student strategy for Australia... That strategy was the product of a negotiation between the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet and the premier's department of each state, so it does represent what the states were prepared to put on the table in terms of support for students. It certainly covers issues like information –how it should be provided and how comprehensive it is. All that feeds through to the website Study in Australia...[which] has input from all the states and territories.¹⁵³

- 2.152 Given the limited resources available to international student representative bodies like CISA it makes sense to pool resources and work together in the way that DIISRTE indicated it is now doing:

We have been working with CISA in ensuring they have good support for the issues that affect their studying and living experiences.¹⁵⁴

151 Ms Arfa Noor, CISA, *Committee Hansard*, 3 April 2012, Canberra, p. 26.

152 Mr Honeywood, IEAA, *Committee Hansard*, 3 April 2012, Canberra, p. 22.

153 Mr Colin Walters, DIISRTE, *Committee Hansard*, 3 April 2012, Canberra, p. 25.

154 Mrs Di Weddell, DIISRTE, *Committee Hansard*, 14 February 2013, p. 2

Committee comment

- 2.153 The Committee supports effective two-way communication between the Government and student organisations that spans all the issues affecting international students that were raised at the roundtable, including transport, health cover and personal safety to visa issues, and more.

Session Two: Sustainability of the sector and future opportunities

- 2.154 The second session of the roundtable focused on some of the key challenges and opportunities for the future of international education in Australia. Key challenges include internationalising our outlook and retaining and growing the numbers of incoming international students. A range of new opportunities exist for a range of offshore education, including greater two-way exchanges of students and regional cooperation and collaboration.

Internationalising our outlook

- 2.155 As previously mentioned, Drs Sawir and Tran commented at the roundtable on the cultural divide that exists between international and domestic students and a perceived need for Australian students to gain greater exposure to other cultures by studying and living abroad.

- 2.156 Mr Gallagher, Executive Director, Go8 stated:

If we want to see internationalisation of Australian education we really have to attend a bit more to own culture and be more international in our outlook....

People know about Beijing and Shanghai, but they are ignorant of other parts of China. We are even more ignorant of India.

I think we are too complacent about how inwardly oriented we are...¹⁵⁵

- 2.157 Mr Gallagher acknowledged that language may present an issue for students studying abroad but noted that 'a number of these other countries are now teaching in English.'¹⁵⁶

155 Mr Gallagher, Executive Director, Go8, *Committee Hansard*, 3 April 2012, Canberra, p. 30.

156 Mr Gallagher, Executive Director, Go8, *Committee Hansard*, 3 April 2012, Canberra, p. 30.

Education providers exhibiting leadership in student mobility

- 2.158 The International Education Association of Australia (IEAA) identified the University of Technology Sydney (UTS) as a leader in encouraging its student cohort to study overseas:

UTS has one of the highest student mobility rates of students studying overseas...about 18 per cent...They are providing leadership there.¹⁵⁷

- 2.159 Professor Purcell advocated for a national scheme to promote the kind of mobility arrangements that his university has been organising for students.¹⁵⁸

- 2.160 IEAA went further and recommended that Australia establish an equivalent of the British Council or Alliance Francaise in order to promote Australian culture, including our education system. Mr Honeywood said:

We do not have any one-stop shop approach to really being able to harness all this incredible work by individual institutions such as [Professor Purcell's] by different government departments with our scholarship program. We are not getting our act together compared to other nations.¹⁵⁹

Non-credit studies

- 2.161 Professor Purcell from Universities Australia talked about developing a wider range of shorter-term opportunities for university students to build their global skills and to increase intercultural capabilities:

Last year at my own university we ran micro-financing programs in India. We ran a Bollywood director shadowing program for our film and media students. But you also want to get your students volunteering in orphanages in India or have them in internships in Infosys in India. All of these things will build a big web....¹⁶⁰

Reversing student enrolment declines

- 2.162 Roundtable participants explored a range of possible reasons for declines in international student numbers in recent years, including:

157 Mr Phil Honeywood, IEAA, *Committee Hansard*, 3 April 2012, Canberra, p. 31.

158 Professor Purcell, Universities Australia, *Committee Hansard*, 3 April 2012, Canberra, p. 31.

159 Mr Phil Honeywood, IEAA, *Committee Hansard*, 3 April 2012, Canberra, p. 31.

160 Professor Purcell, Universities Australia, *Committee Hansard*, 3 April 2012, Canberra, p. 31.

- students and agents not understanding why their visas are being rejected...Because of that lack of understanding they are turning away;¹⁶¹
- Australia not holding quite the same status it held previously in providing a quality education¹⁶²and being only concerned about commercialising education, making profits out of Asian neighbours' children in particular;¹⁶³
- the high Australian dollar (increasing competition in Australia's main markets: India and particularly China and competitor countries becoming more aggressive with their marketing); and¹⁶⁴
- moving from being best value to highest cost.¹⁶⁵

2.163 Ms Claire Field, Chief Executive Officer, Australian Council for Private Education and Training (APCET) suggested that the numbers of declining students may in fact exceed DIAC figures, which indicated a 10 per cent decline in overall student numbers:

...the VET sector in the last two years...is about a 16% decline...In actual fact, if you look in the publication you will see that there has been a more than three-quarter, or 75%, decrease in two years in students applying for VET courses from overseas. That has been propped up by about a 55% increase in students who are already studying here looking to continue to stay...There is a similar drop in offshore applications in the higher education sector of about 37 per cent, propped up by about a 30 per cent increase in applications from students who are here.

2.164 Mr Peter Holden, TAFE Directors Australia acknowledged that there have been declines in international student numbers at TAFE Institutes, but noted that at 4 per cent they 'still represent a small proportion of our students.'¹⁶⁶

2.165 At the briefing, DIISRTE alluded to the 'perfect storm' occurring about 2009-2010 where student numbers declined and concurred there was still a

161 Ms Sue Blundell, Executive Director, English Australia, *Committee Hansard*, 3 April 2012, Canberra, p. 7.

162 Dr Helen Forbes-Mewett, Monash University, *Committee Hansard*, 3 April 2012, Canberra, p. 8.

163 Mr Phillip Honeywood, Executive Director, International Education Association of Australia, *Committee Hansard*, 3 April 2012, Canberra, p. 22.

164 Mr John Angley, General Manager, International Education, Austrade, *Committee Hansard*, 3 April 2012, Canberra, p. 8.

165 Professor William Purcell, Chair/Deputy Pro-Vice Chancellor (International) Committee, Universities Australia, *Committee Hansard*, 3 April 2012, Canberra, p. 20.

166 Mr Peter Holden, TAFE Directors Australia, *Committee Hansard*, 3 April 2012, Canberra, p. 8.

decline in student body numbers, but there were promising signs of a recovery:

While the student body has declined some 6.9 per cent compared with the previous year, we do see as a lead indicator from the work that DIAC do in compiling the numbers of offshore visa grants in higher education that there is renewed interest, coming particularly from China.¹⁶⁷

- 2.166 Ms Weddell stated that the numbers are likely to improve in coming years, based on the revival of the English Language Intensive Courses for Students (ELICOS) sector:

Enrolments are a good gauge of the numbers of students studying in Australia. We also look at commencements, which are new students coming in. But the very early indicator is certainly offshore visa grants....another of the lead indicators that we see interest in is ELICOS....Well over 70 per cent of students coming to study in Australia are from Asia and English language is a really important part of what they do...We are heartened that the English language sector did record some growth in enrolments and commencements in 2012, enrolments grew by 0.2 per cent and commencements by 4.2 per cent....We know from our statistical collection and working closely with the sector that the pathways from ELICOS into higher education and VET are crucial pathways. A lead indicator would be what is going on in the ELICOS sector.¹⁶⁸

- 2.167 DIISRTE advised that the Knight reviews were making Australia more competitive with its competitors, the US, UK and Canada, and emphasised that 'we are seeing a turnaround.'¹⁶⁹

Attracting students, becoming more competitive and broadening approach to international education, with a focus on quality of the experience

- 2.168 The Group of Eight spoke about the challenges of attracting and retaining the best students from overseas, especially with respect to increasing Australia's market share at the postgraduate level.¹⁷⁰

167 Ms Di Weddell, Acting Head of International Education and Science Division, DIISRTE, *Committee Hansard*, 14 February 2013, p. 2.

168 Ms Di Weddell, Acting Head, International Education and Science Division, DIISRTE, *Committee Hansard*, 14 February 2013, p. 6.

169 Ms Di Weddell, Acting Head, International Education and Science Division, DIISRTE, *Committee Hansard*, 14 February 2013, p. 6.

- 2.169 Ms Noor from CISA alluded to the importance of a high quality education.¹⁷¹ Ms Hartridge from CAPA agreed:

...very little attention is paid to the quality of the student experience and the cultural and social benefits international students bring to this country. The experience can vary considerably depending on the institution's capacity and commitment to deliver.¹⁷²

- 2.170 Ms William referred to a recent study that when choosing where to study, international students:

really were looking at the quality of the education and cultural experience.¹⁷³

- 2.171 The Go8 mentioned the Group Eight-China Nine agreement, which is intended to encourage the best students in Chinese universities to spend time studying in Australia. Mr Gallagher elaborated:

The students that go to the China Nine undergraduate programs are the cream of the Chinese school leavers – the ones who prefer to go to their top national institutions before the US. So, for our students to be interacting with them, for those students to be coming to Australia and for our students to be going to those institutions, think of that in 20 years in terms of the nature of the relationships that we will have in the intellectual leaders of China.¹⁷⁴

- 2.172 Mr Phillip Honeywood, Executive Director, International Education Association of Australia (IEAA) expanded on the benefits of striving for and sharing excellent education practice in the region:

We need to better utilise soft diplomacy initiatives such as an Australia-Asia international education research network...and a biennial conference...we can learn from one another, and...actually provide leadership based on the incredible intellectual property we have built here in Australia.¹⁷⁵

170 Mr Michael Gallagher, Executive Director, Go8, *Committee Hansard*, 3 April 2012, Canberra, p. 21.

171 Ms Noor, CISA, *Committee Hansard*, 3 April 2012, p. 23.

172 Ms Danielle Hartridge, National President, ISANTI, *Committee Hansard*, 3 April 2012, p. 24.

173 Ms Paula Williams, Assistant Secretary, Education and Tourism Branch, *Committee Hansard*, 3 April 2012, Canberra, p. 14.

174 Mr Gallagher, Go8, *Committee Hansard*, 3 April 2012, p.30.

175 Mr Phil Honeywood, Executive Director, International Education Association, *Committee Hansard*, 3 April 2012, p. 22.

- 2.173 At the same time as there has been a contraction in the supply of international students in Australia, the bigger picture, according to the Go8, is a massive demand globally for higher education.¹⁷⁶
- 2.174 Opportunities to capitalise on this situation do not rest solely with universities and public providers in the same way that they may have in the past either. There are ample opportunities for a diversity of higher education and skills providers and the private sector:
- I think the time has come for us to expand a high-quality, robust private sector in Australia, in partnership, across the different provider types –with international collaboration as well, and that is a really exciting opportunity to grow a major employment sector in the country – with high quality jobs that will be a major facilitator of productivity and international engagement for Australia.¹⁷⁷
- 2.175 The Australian Council for Private Education and Training (ACPET) agreed on the scope for offshore activities:
- Offshore is really exciting – we talked about the work that the universities and TAFEs do.....that is a real role that the private vocational education and training sector is already well advanced in.¹⁷⁸

Growth of VET student numbers at offshore institutions

- 2.176 A marked growth is already being witnessed in offshore delivery of vocational education and training (VET) through Australian institutions partnering with institutions in other countries, especially in China. TAFE Directors Australia (TDA) advised:
- ...the growth is offshore – that is the delivery of vocational education and training in partnership with institutions in other countries, predominantly China. We have significantly more students studying offshore with our TAFE institutes than we do in Australia.¹⁷⁹
- 2.177 Mr Holden indicated that a variety of opportunities exist for Australian education providers to fill skills gaps in the region:

176 Mr Gallagher, G8, *Committee Hansard*, 3 April 2012, p. 21.

177 Mr Gallagher, G8, *Committee Hansard*, 3 April 2012, p. 21.

178 Ms Claire Field, CEO, ACPET, *Committee Hansard*, 3 April 2012, p. 23.

179 Mr Peter Holden, TAFE Directors Australia, *Committee Hansard*, 3 April 2012, Canberra, p. 8.

I think it is actually the dawn of vocational education and training, particularly in the East Asia region.¹⁸⁰

...what they are severely lacking is skills development and workforce development, particularly for globalised industry, and they are looking to us because, as much as we complain about overregulation and the complexity of our systems, ours is still regarded as one of the world's best vocational training systems.¹⁸¹

- 2.178 There are a wide range of capacity building activities that TDA TAFE members have been involved in:

Many of our TAFE institutes are now heavily involved in what we call 'capacity building'...going in as consultants and support institutes in improving their teacher training, their qualifications trainings and so on. We have had institutes literally develop from the ground up, such as training institutes in Abu Dhabi. We have had our institutes establish colleges in partnership with...33 different countries.¹⁸²

Two way exchanges

- 2.179 Roundtable participants discussed the need for international education to be more of a genuine two-way trade. TAFE Directors Australia explained:

...where we should be moving with international education is towards this two-way exchange...it is always put in terms of being an \$18 billion industry. Nothing gets up the noses of international students or the many countries which we closely work with than the fact that we regard international education as simply a line in our export income.¹⁸³

TAFEs twinning programs

- 2.180 Mr Peter Holden indicated that twinning was already occurring within the TAFE system. He provided examples in China and Mongolia:

We have selected 10 of our TAFE institutes and they will be matched with 20 institutes in China for ... a real exchange of students. Chinese students will come and spend up to six or 12 months studying a vocational course that they are studying in

180 Mr Peter Holden, TAFE Directors Australia, *Committee Hansard*, 3 April 2012, Canberra, p. 15.

181 Mr Peter Holden, TAFE Directors Australia, *Committee Hansard*, 3 April 2012, Canberra, p. 16.

182 Mr Peter Holden, TAFE Directors Australia, *Committee Hansard*, 3 April 2012, Canberra, p. 15.

183 Mr Peter Holden, TAFE Directors Australia, *Committee Hansard*, 3 April 2012, Canberra, p. 15.

China, but equally our students will go and spend some time in China to add value to the vocational qualification they are studying here.¹⁸⁴

...we have college directors come here for four-week leadership programs through organisations, and we are hoping by the end of this year to have the first leadership program for Australian college directors going to China.¹⁸⁵

We have got three twinning programs in Mongolia that have just commenced which were a result of, in a sense, Australian government support for bringing their senior vocational leaders out to Australia to look at our system, As a result of that it led to the signing of agreements there.¹⁸⁶

Universities

2.181 Mr Gallagher, Executive Director, Go8 spoke about the various bilateral agreements instigated at the university level including group-to-group, scholarships and exchanges:

...so we have a Group of Eight-China nine agreement in relation to post-doc exchange and...for undergraduate student exchange.

...we have programs where we provide scholarships into Europe and we have an arrangement with the Group of Eight and the German academic exchange service, the DAAD [a lab/industry exchange].

We have equivalent arrangements now in France.

We are the recipient of scholarship programs from Chile and now Brazil where they fund masters and doctoral students to study in Australia.¹⁸⁷

Dual-degrees

2.182 Professor William Purcell, Chair, Deputy Pro-Vice Chancellor (International) Committee, Universities Australia, outlined myriad benefits, including cost-effectiveness, of dual-degree PhD programs for building key research relationships and networks:

184 Mr Peter Holden, TAFE Directors Australia, *Committee Hansard*, 3 April 2012, Canberra, p. 16.

185 Mr Peter Holden, TAFE Directors Australia, *Committee Hansard*, 3 April 2012, Canberra, p. 16.

186 Mr Peter Holden, TAFE Directors Australia, *Committee Hansard*, 3 April 2012, Canberra, p. 17.

187 Mr Michael Gallagher, Executive Director, Go8, *Committee Hansard*, 3 April 2012, Canberra, p. 30.

...each country simply charges its own students. A dual degree, generally a PhD requires a student to spend at least one year in the other country studying in the laboratory of the other university.

These are very significant because they then build student- to-student and laboratory-to-laboratory relationships. They have to have dual supervisors, so they build supervisor-to-supervisor relationships, and that expands through research networks... to build quite significant and enduring international collaborations with all the advantages of the soft diplomacy that has already been described.¹⁸⁸

Expanding global partnerships

2.183 Professor Purcell indicated that Universities Australia is working on diverse ways to 'build a new set of sustainable networks'. This includes increased engagement with emerging global players, such as Brazil and India, and, in addition to dual-degree programs, developing joint research training programs and joint research centres.¹⁸⁹

2.184 Like TAFEs, universities are focusing attention on growing relationships and increasing student mobility in the region. Professor Purcell referred to:

...concentrating a lot more on building deep and enduring partnerships with institutions and organisations offshore.

We believe that, in terms of Australia and the Asian century, enhancing Australia-Asia transnational education and promoting student mobility in Asia will be a very important focus of what our sector will be doing.¹⁹⁰

2.185 TAFE Directors Australia spoke of the opportunities that exist to expand partnerships to other regions, such as Africa:

Every country that we talk to and we visit, not just in the East Asia region but more broadly, are interested in opportunities for partnerships. Africa is going to be the next region where there is

188 Professor William Purcell, Universities Australia, *Committee Hansard*, 3 April 2012, Canberra, p. 31.

189 Professor William Purcell, Universities Australia, *Committee Hansard*, 3 April 2012, Canberra, p. 20.

190 Professor William Purcell, Universities Australia, *Committee Hansard*, 3 April 2012, Canberra, p. 20.

strong interest in vocational training and we are looking for those kinds of partnerships.¹⁹¹

2.186 Group of Eight described opportunities spanning continents:

...the big picture is one of rapid expansion, on a massive scale, of world demand for higher education. We are seeing that not only in Asia but in Latin America, the Middle East and Africa.¹⁹²

2.187 Austrade noted its efforts to have Australia recognised as a preferred destination provider in two-way scholarship schemes in Brazil and Russia.¹⁹³

Transnational education and skills matching

2.188 Austrade pointed to the scope for different kinds of two-way exchanges, including matching Australian education providers with overseas companies:

The big companies are short of skilled workers and they are interested in Australian service providers training their workers....particularly the Asian economies, have got very ambitious skills training goals over the next 20 years, where there is a shortage in building up their own skills base.¹⁹⁴

2.189 Mr Angley emphasised that it was not just VET that had growth opportunities, rather, 'the newer angle is to offer skills':

Their worker may not need a full Australian qualification but may need some skills and competencies which could be delivered by an Australian provider.¹⁹⁵

2.190 At the roundtable Mr Angley mentioned a program that Austrade was promoting in India which is seeking Australian service providers to provide training within companies rather than directly with another education institution.¹⁹⁶

191 Mr Peter Holden, TDA, *Committee Hansard*, 3 April 2012, Canberra, p. 17.

192 Mr Gallagher, Executive Director, Go8, *Committee Hansard*, 3 April 2012, Canberra, p. 21.

193 Mr John Angley, Austrade, *Committee Hansard*, 13 April 2012, Canberra, p. 16.

194 Mr John Angley, General Manager, International Education, Austrade, *Committee Hansard*, 3 April 2012, Canberra, p. 16.

195 Mr John Angley, General Manager, International Education, Austrade, *Committee Hansard*, 14 February 2013, Canberra, p. 4.

196 Mr John Angley, General Manager, International Education, Austrade, *Committee Hansard*, 3 April 2012, Canberra, p. 16.

- 2.191 Austrade's work in transnational education¹⁹⁷ has continued to grow. For instance, the South-East Asian Skills Initiative:

...over the next 3-5 years...which involves working in five countries (Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand, Vietnam and Singapore) in South-East Asia. We work with the sector in Australia, governments and employers in those countries to identify their skill gaps. ...the potential areas include, for example, the automotive sector in Thailand [driving trucks]. None of this has been finalised yet...There is a lot of work going on already...We are going to build that up over the next few years. A delegation from the automotive industry, for example, visited Thailand last week to talk about these opportunities.¹⁹⁸

Regional collaboration and cooperation

- 2.192 TAFE Directors Australia enthused about the opportunities that exist for region-wide collaboration and cooperation on education issues.
- 2.193 Mr Holden cited a well-attended workshop with attendees from East Asian summit countries coming together to develop a quality assurance framework in VET:

It was a fantastic response from those countries to send senior officials from their government and to be absolutely committed to working together, not just on a one-on-one basis but on a regional basis.¹⁹⁹

Good news stories

- 2.194 An overriding message to emerge from the roundtable is that while international education has received negative press and there have been fluctuating enrolment numbers and a host of overlapping reforms to contend with, there are actually a great many positive stories and messages to share about international students' experiences in Australia, and Australian students' experience at overseas institutions too. For instance, Mr Holden from TDA pointed to how the rest of the world looks to Australia as a leader in VET and yet:

197 Mr Angley defines transnational education as Australian providers delivering education and training in overseas countries, as distinct from the continuing effort to recruit students to come to Australia, *Committee Hansard*, 14 February 2013, p. 4.

198 Mr John Angley, General Manager, International Education, Austrade, *Committee Hansard*, 14 February 2013, p. 4 and p. 6.

199 Mr Peter Holden, TAFE Directors Australia, *Committee Hansard*, 13 April 2012, Canberra, p. 15.

...it is probably a story that the general public and perhaps the broader political environment need to understand a little bit better.²⁰⁰

Committee comment

- 2.195 The Committee agrees that positive stories and messages about the sector, from ELICOS through to VET, universities and transnational education and training opportunities need to be promoted and disseminated widely by all sector stakeholders, including the Commonwealth government.

Innovations in the sector

- 2.196 There was discussion at the roundtable about what more Australia needs to do to remain competitive in the international student arena, beyond visa reform; beyond facilitating greater offshore opportunities and two-way exchanges; and beyond furthering regional cooperation and collaboration.
- 2.197 Mr Gallagher, Executive Director, Go8 commented that Australia has been operating out of and dependent on a 'certain paradigm of international education' for many years:

...from a university perspective...we have become dependent on international fee income and used that to cross-subsidise shortfalls in government funding for teaching, which is price-controlled, so there is a problem there, and underfunding of research. ..I don't think that is sustainable for the next 25 years. We cannot just bleed international income rather than face the problems we have. That requires us to think radically about the structure of the supply of post-secondary education and to see the international side and the domestic side as if they are all part of the one rather than this false bifurcation.²⁰¹

- 2.198 Mr Gallagher suggested that the current system underutilises TAFEs and a nascent private sector,

Which could more cost-effectively supply a diversity of learning options to suit the more diverse demand that is emerging domestically and internationally. ...from the G8 perspective that would allow the concentration in research function for those institutions [i.e. universities] that have that particular mission,

200 Mr Peter Holden, TAFE Directors Australia, *Committee Hansard*, 3 April 2012, Canberra, p. 16.

201 Mr Gallagher, Executive Director, G8, *Committee Hansard*, 3 April 2012, Canberra, p. 33.

rather than them having to kind of enlarge themselves to get the money they need to do their research by taking a greater volume of domestic and international students.²⁰²

2.199 Mr Gallagher went further, suggesting that there be a wider sector-wide debate on the whole post-secondary system, both public and private:

‘What could that look like?’ It could be virtual as well as on-campus delivery, international partnerships, multi-mode provision with industry – some really exciting innovations.²⁰³

2.200 At the briefing Austrade referred to a paper prepared recently by its Washington Post about the emergence of Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs)²⁰⁴ and other digital education issues, and ascertaining where Australian educational institutions might fit into this landscape.²⁰⁵ Mr Angley said:

MOOCs are less than one year old...and there are a lot of issues about whether they will survive...A lot of Australian universities have already joined the major MOOCs partnerships overseas...One of the issues with the business model is how the suppliers will eventually ...‘monetise’ their product. The paper is available...and there will be a follow up paper...where we have gone out to our posts...in our major education markers [and sought their views]...so we can put another paper out to the sector...about what the market thinks is going to happen with MOOCs in their country in the next short while.²⁰⁶

2.201 Such matters possibly go well beyond the scope of the intention of the original roundtable and only started to be explored towards the end of the inquiry. However, the Committee hopes that this report is part of that conversation of possibility, and that interactive discussions amongst

202 Mr Gallagher, G8, *Committee Hansard*, 3 April 2012, Canberra, p. 34.

203 Mr Gallagher, G8, *Committee Hansard*, 3 April 2012, Canberra, p. 34.

204 A MOOC is an online course aiming at large-scale interactive participation and open access via the web. In addition to traditional course materials such as videos, readings, and problem sets, MOOCs provide interactive user forums that help build a community for the students, professors and teaching assistants. MOOCs are a recent development in distance education and often use open educational resources. Typically they do not offer academic credit or charge tuition fees. Only about 10 per cent of the tens of thousands of students who may sign up complete the course. Source Wikipedia, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Massive_open_online_course

205 Mr Angley, Austrade, report supplied via email, 26 March 2013, *More than MOOCs: Opportunities arising from disruptive technologies in education*.

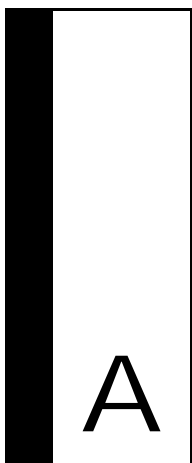
206 Mr Angley, Austrade, *Committee Hansard*, 14 February 2013, Canberra, p. 9.

stakeholders can be facilitated on a regular basis across a broad range of international education related topics.

Recommendation 4

The Committee recommends that the Commonwealth Government seek opportunities to promote discussions surrounding the future sustainability and possibilities for international education in Australia and our region, and invites a wide range of stakeholders across the sector, including international students, to participate in these, on a regular and ongoing basis.

Mr Mike Symon MP
Chair



Appendix A – Hearing participants

Public hearing roundtable: Tuesday 3 April 2012, Canberra

Session One: Overview of international education sector

Australian Skills Quality Authority

- Dr Dianne Orr, Commissioner-Compliance

Australian Trade Commission

- Mr John Angley, General Manager, International Education

Central Queensland University

- Dr Erlenawati Sawir, Research Fellow

Council of Australian Postgraduate Associations

- Ms Kylee Micajah Hartmann-Warren, International Officer, Council of Australian Postgraduate Association

Department of Immigration and Citizenship

- Ms Paula Williams, Assistant Secretary, Education and Tourism Branch

Monash University

- Dr Helen Margaret Forbes Mewett, Australian Postdoctoral Fellow and Lecturer in Sociology

National Union of Students

- Mr Ashraf Alfian Alias, International Students Officer; and
- Ms Donherra Walmsley, National President

Office of the Commonwealth Ombudsman

- Ms Fiona Bowring-Greer, Director, Overseas Students Ombudsman

RMIT

- Dr Ly Thi Tran

TAFE Directors Australia

- Mr Peter Holden, Director, International Engagement

Session Two: Sustainability of sector and future opportunities

Australian Council for Private Education and Training

- Ms Claire Field, Chief Executive Officer

Council of International Students Australia

- Miss Arfa Noor, President

Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade

- Mr Peter Maxwell Macfarlane, Director, Australia Awards Secretariat, Public Diplomacy and Information Branch

Department of Industry, Innovation, Science, Research and Tertiary Education

- Mr Colin Walters, Division Head

The Group of Eight

- Mr Michael Gallagher, Executive Director

International Education Association of Australia

- The Hon. Phillip Neville Honeywood, Executive Director

ISANTI: International Education Association

- Ms Danielle Hartridge, National President

Universities Australia

- Professor William Purcell, Chair, Deputy/Pro-Vice Chancellor (International) Committee

Private hearing: Thursday 14 February 2013, Canberra

Australian Skills Quality Authority

- Dr Dianne Orr, Deputy Chief Commissioner and Commissioner Compliance

Austrade

- Mr John Angley, General Manager, International Education

Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade

- Mr Patrick Lawless, Assistant Secretary, Resources, Competitiveness and Trade Analysis Branch

Department of Immigration and Citizenship

- Dr Wendy Southern, Deputy Secretary, Policy and Management Group; and
- Ms Paula Williams, Assistant Secretary, Education, Tourism and International Arrangements Branch

Department of Innovation, Industry, Science, Research and Tertiary Education

- Ms Di Weddell, Acting Head of International Education and Science Division

Overseas Students Ombudsman

- Dr Geoff Airo-Farulla, Director



Appendix B – List of exhibits

1. Ly Thi Tran, journal article by Ly Thi Tran and Chris Nyland titled, 'International vocational education and training – The migration and learning mix' in Australian Journal of Adult Learning, Vol. 51, Number 1, April 2011.
2. Helen Forbes-Mewett, journal article by Helen Forbes-Mewett and Anne-Maree Sawyer, 'Mental Health Issues amongst International Students in Australia: Perspectives from Professionals at the Coal-face', The Australian Sociological Association Conference Local Lives/Global Networks, University of Newcastle, New South Wales, 29 November 29 - 2 December 2011.
3. Department of Immigration and Citizenship, Student visa program quarterly report, Quarter ending at 31 December 2011.

