

EDUCATION, SCIENCE AND TRAINING

SENATE LEGISLATION COMMITTEE - QUESTIONS ON NOTICE 2007-2008 BUDGET ESTIMATES HEARING

Outcome

DEST Question No. E71_08

Senator Carr provided in writing.

Question:

1. Have you held discussions with OTTE or any other part of the Victorian Government about the rapid increase in international VET enrolments in that State? What has been the nature of those discussions, and what has been the outcome?
2. Can you provide the most recent figures on international student visa cancellations and on suspension and strike-off of providers, on a state-by-state basis? Please provide this data for the last four available years.
3. Are you of the view that there is a discernible trend in the State of Victoria, with regard to problems with providers and with the bona fides of international students?
4. Have you investigated claims that international students who come here to undertake courses in skill-shortage areas – such as Hospitality, Hairdressing and transport – are essentially working in sweatshop conditions, as part of their so-called "training"?
5. Are you aware, for instance, of claims that persons from India and other countries are studying Hairdressing, and that they work sweeping the floor and doing other menial tasks in Hairdressing salons? Are you aware of claims that these persons are graduating with sub-standard skills and essentially with misleading trade certificates or other qualifications?
6. Are you aware of claims that such persons nevertheless qualify for Permanent Residency through the skill shortages provisions of the Migration Act, and that they do not in fact practice the trade for which they are certificated?
7. Do the revisions to the National Code address these concerns? Will they stamp out the kinds of practices I have referred to?

Answer:

AEI's research Snapshot no.22, March 2007

1. In relation to the Department's administration of the *Education Services for Overseas Students (ESOS) Act 2000*, increasing enrolments of international students in vocational courses has not been specifically discussed.
2. Registration Actions: Conditions, Cancellations or Suspensions

State	2003-04	2004-05	2005-06	2006-07
ACT	0	2	1	2
NSW	14(2)	21	35(5)	29(5)
QLD	17(1)	14	17	18(4)
SA	3	6	3(1)	1
TAS	1	1	3(1)	4

VIC	15	22(2)	34(1)	28
WA	11(2)	7	11	5
NT	2	0	5(4)	0
TOTAL	63(5)	73(2)	109(12)	87(9)

(number of actions taken by the Department directly, are shown italicised, in brackets)

The Department of Immigration and Citizenship has responsibility for enquiries regarding student visa cancellations.

3. The Department does not hold the view that there is discernible trend in the State of Victoria with respect to providers' compliance with the ESOS Act.
4. The Department has not received complaints from students of "essentially working in sweatshop conditions".
5. DEST is aware of general claims that, for some students studying vocational courses, their work based training has included tasks which they do not see as contributing directly to their educational outcomes. A registered training organisation issuing a qualification under the Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF) must ensure it complies with the Australian Quality Training Framework 2007 in both delivering the vocational course and in assessing competence.
6. The Department of Immigration and Citizenship (DIAC) has responsibility for the administration of the General Skilled Migration programme. Decisions on applications for permanent residency are made by DIAC on the basis of specified and public criteria. The General Skilled Migration programme does not impose a requirement on a successful applicant to work in the occupation on which they have gained permanent residency.
7. The National Code 2007 enhances Australia's consumer protection of international students. For example, it includes standards requiring providers to ensure their marketing and recruitment activities are accurate, ethical and support students to make informed educational choices. It strengthens complaints and appeals provisions, enabling students to access internal and external mechanisms that are independent, accessible and inexpensive, and places greater emphasis on student support services.