

**Senate Standing Committee on Education Employment and Workplace
Relations**

**QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
Supplementary Budget Estimates 2011-2012**

Outcome 3 - Tertiary, Skills, International and Indigenous Strategy

DEEWR Question No. EW0680_12

Senator Rhiannon provided in writing.

Question

International Education Support

Do you have any future plans to implement policy or reforms to stop the exploitation of international students in regards to housing and unemployment, to ensure that Australia remains an attractive destination for higher education on the competitive international market?

Answer

The Government has introduced a number of measures to support the quality and sustainability of Australia's international education sector, including the Government's response to the Hon Michael Knight's strategic review of the Student Visa System on 22 September 2011, the establishment of an International Education Advisory Council chaired by Michael Chaney AO, the re-registration of all providers by 31 December 2010, responding to the Baird Review of the *Education Services for Overseas Students Act 2000* and the release of the International Students Strategy for Australia on 29 October 2010.

The COAG International Student Strategy for Australia (ISSA) focuses on four action areas; student wellbeing; quality of education; consumer protection and better information. A key initiative of the Strategy is the 'Study in Australia' information portal. The portal provides a comprehensive and accurate source of information, including information about accommodation and living and working in Australia, for international students. The portal can be accessed at: www.studyinaustralia.gov.au The regulation of accommodation is a responsibility of state and territory governments. Standard 2 of the National Code of Practice for Registration Authorities and Providers of Education and Training to Overseas Students 2007 (the National Code 2007) requires that registered providers must, prior to accepting a student provide relevant information on living in Australia, including indicative costs of living and accommodation options.

The 2011 International Student Roundtable noted that affordable student accommodation is a key challenge. The Minister for Tertiary Education has written to states and territories, advising of the outcomes from the Roundtable, and the Commonwealth is consulting with states and territories through the Joint Committee on International Education on this matter.

The Australian Government provides consumer protection to international students through the *Education Services for Overseas Students Act* and its National Code. The Study in Australia Portal provides information to international students about workplace rights and responsibilities and the avenues available to students who have a complaint about their workplace. It clearly indicates that workplace exploitation is managed by the Fair Work Ombudsman and Fair Work Australia.

Recent reforms arising from the recommendations of the Hon Michael Knight's strategic review of the Student Visa Program include allowing students working hours to be measured as 40 hours per fortnight rather than 20 hours per week. Post graduate research students will be granted access to an unlimited work visa while other students will maintain the entitlement to work unlimited hours during semester breaks. This increased flexibility is aimed at reducing the scope for workplace exploitation. The Commonwealth is continuing to work with states and territories to enhance international students study and living experiences in Australia.