

The Secretary  
Joint Standing Committee on Migration  
Parliament House  
Canberra  
ACT 2600  
Australia

9 September 2005

Dear Sir/Madam,

### INQUIRY INTO OVERSEAS SKILLS RECOGNITION, UPGRADING AND LICENSING

We should like to submit our comments to the above enquiry given the fact that several of our former students who migrated to Australia were denied jobs despite being on the Migration on Demand List (MODL).

#### **1. A Lateral View Required**

If specific jobs need to be filled, then skills and qualification recognition bodies in Australia need to take a more lateral view on applications sent in by potential migrants. It appears that such bodies have a prepared list of recognised institutions, against which applicant qualifications are compared. If the qualifications are not from an institution on that list, the applicant is turned away. The list of 'approved' institutions should never be closed to other possible entities, which should be considered on their own merits. Bearing in mind the competitive nature of education today, there is a lot of unfair 'bad-mouthing' of institutions both by governments and universities who have their own agendas.

#### **2. A Need For Transparency**

There is a need for transparency in the way these lists are compiled, and the criteria on which qualifications are judged. For example, are individual qualifications looked at in terms of course content, internship/practical experience, recognition within industry, etc. or simply by a blanket acceptance that any qualification from a certain educational institution is acceptable? (For instance, with computer programming courses, many universities have a subject called Programming I, but some continue to teach outmoded languages like Miranda, when others are now teaching C Sharp or Java). Again, institutions from overseas should be assessed fairly, without bias.

#### **3. Maintaining Standards**

It is well known in academic and other circles that standards have fallen over the past decade due mostly to the need to enrol fee paying overseas students to counter government cuts in funding. This is the case in Australia, United Kingdom, USA, Canada and New Zealand. A university degree today has less 'quality' value than it had a decade ago. There is also a burgeoning number of e-learning and distance learning programmes and institutions, corporate universities, universities of the Third Age, and an increasing number of global consortiums of universities. All of these are competing for students, and offer inducements in the form of scholarships, financial aid, commissions, and 'gifts' to agents in order to fill places.

#### **4. Education as a Commodity**

Like it or not – education is a commodity, a business, where the buyer (the student) can be wooed to accept a service from any number of providers – be they in Australia or abroad. This is not a bad thing, and perhaps a more liberal outlook is needed in Australia to re-think the whole structure of education from primary to university education. Frankly, the needs of society, commerce,

industry and the professions are not being met efficiently or effectively as they could, and we see this in the ‘dumbing-down’ of learning and the pursuit of knowledge. This is evident from television programmes, media, family and school attitudes. There needs to be a concerted effort for change where learning is valued and available to all without hurdles or barriers.

## **5. Assessing Migrant Skills**

Where there is a need to fill specific jobs in Australia, candidates must have the necessary proved qualifications and skills. An important aspect of assessment must be the level of English – to a set standard. Qualifications obtained must be carefully examined and checked, employment records confirmed, and references provided and checked. Where possible, assessment interviews could be arranged through Australia Embassies or High Commissions or through Australian Trade Centres. Overseas academic institutions should be listed taking into account their formal national registration any accreditation and memberships. But this list should not be rigid, rather, on a case-by-case basis, and applicants should be assessed on their merit

## **6. Why Warnborough should be on the ‘List’**

Warnborough College was founded in Oxford in 1973, and it has a long history of having its credits and qualifications accepted worldwide including the UK, the USA and Australia.

Warnborough College is listed by the UK Department for Education and Skills (DfES) as a genuine education and training provider ([www.dfes.gov.uk/providersregister/](http://www.dfes.gov.uk/providersregister/)). It is certified for ISO9001:2000 and Investor in People. Both are UK quality assurance benchmarks. Warnborough College was an accredited teaching and examination centre for the University of Oxford Delegacy of Local Examinations, later, the RSA Cambridge examinations.

All Warnborough graduates are required to have a high standard of English (minimum TOEFL 550 or IELTS 6.0 levels) in order to graduate. Training given by Warnborough in all disciplines would equate to UK and Australian standards, and assessment for graduate degrees is external.

Warnborough College is a member of the Warnborough University consortium of institutions around the world. Each consortium member is approved and accredited in its own country. It is an official examination centre for the American Educational Testing Service examinations such as the TOEFL, TSE, and Graduate Record Examination (GRE). Warnborough University is one of a few approved non-American universities whose students qualify for entry into US Law Schools. It is ISO9001:2000 certified.

The above are some thoughts for the Committee on Migration.

Thank you for taking time to read the above.

Yours faithfully,

**Dr. Brenden D. Tempest-Mogg**

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