

7.84 In evidence to the Committee, DEET agreed that there has been a growing emphasis in the past twelve to eighteen months on the education in Australia of fee-paying foreign students in formal courses.⁸⁰ The non-formal education sector, which is largely devoted to the provision of English Language Intensive Courses for Overseas Students (ELICOS) has, in the words of the DEET representative, been "undergoing some consolidation"⁸¹ during the same period. Nonetheless, ELICOS is still regarded as a "significant player in the export of educational services" by providers of the service, such as the Insearch Language Centre.⁸²

7.85 It is the view of the Committee that the provision of educational services would make a valuable contribution to relations at various levels between Australia and the countries of Latin America. The Committee concurs with the view expressed by the Director of the Insearch Language Centre, Mr Michael Fay, that:

"The Japanese, Americans and Europeans long understood the pivotal role that education plays in long term economic, political and cultural enrichment. In order for Latin America to view Australia as a real partner in development we must begin with education."⁸³

7.86 Following a visit to Latin America in September and October 1990 the Director of the Insearch Language Centre concluded that:

- . there is a substantial market for educational services in South America;
- . the educational services market in Latin America is at present almost exclusively held by Britain and the United States; and
- . there is interest in educational services offered in Australia but little knowledge of such services.⁸⁴

7.87 Mr Murray Laurence, Chief Executive Officer of the Insearch Institute of Commerce at the University of Technology in Sydney stated in evidence, that it was quite feasible to expect that Australia could attract up to 1 000 students from Latin America to attend "ELICOS plus TAFE type courses".⁸⁵

⁸⁰ Committee Hansard, p. 1432.

⁸¹ *ibid.*, p. 1431.

⁸² Insearch Language Centre, submission, Committee Hansard, p. 949.

⁸³ *ibid.*, p. 951.

⁸⁴ *ibid.*, pp. 952-3. See also para. 7.136.

⁸⁵ Committee Hansard, p. 991

7.88 Mr Laurence told the Committee that one student travel bureau in Brazil, alone, sent 4 000 students abroad a year. Of these students, 70 % went to the United States and 30 % to the United Kingdom. According to Mr Laurence this bureau believes 10% of this number could be attracted to attend educational facilities in Australia on an annual basis.⁸⁶

7.89 The Australian Federation of Modern Language Teachers' Association is also optimistic that Australia could attract Latin Americans to educational facilities and services in Australia. In its submission, the Federation said that "... there is evidence that despite (or because of) the U.S. domination in this area, Australia could become a successful competitor."⁸⁷

7.90 The President of the Federation, Professor David Ingram, told the Committee that, based upon discussions he has had with a number of people who have lived in Latin America and have been involved with education, there is a market in that region that could be "quite ripe for Australia".⁸⁸

7.91 Professor Ingram shares the view of other witnesses that, because the United States dominates in the provision of educational services in the Latin American region, Latin Americans are now more "... likely to be responsive to an alternative to the United States for language programs, for educational programs."⁸⁹

7.92 The Committee was unable to gauge whether any educational institutions besides Insearch Language Centre had made any attempts in recent times to attract students from Latin America. According to one government official Australian entrepreneurs selling Australian educational services do not appear to be in Latin America any longer. The Committee was told that "... neither the private institutions nor the public institutions seem to be there".⁹⁰

7.93 This lack of initiative can probably be attributed to two main factors, the failure in recent years of several language institutions in Australia and the encouragement given in recent years by Government to providers and promoters of Australian educational services to target the Asian market.

⁸⁶ *ibid.*, p. 992 .

⁸⁷ AFMLTA, submission, Committee Hansard, p. 1158.

⁸⁸ Committee Hansard, p. 1176.

⁸⁹ *ibid.* See also paras. 5.9-5.11 of this Report.

⁹⁰ See evidence given by Mr Mark Sullivan of the Department of Immigration, Local Government and Ethnic Affairs, Committee Hansard, p. 1294

7.94 In its submission to the inquiry the Insearch Language Centre set out four client groups in Latin America that could be targeted for the marketing of Australian language courses, namely:

- . ELICOS students;
- . full fee paying university and college students;
- . holiday English language groups or "educational tourism"; and
- . businessmen and women.

7.95 Mr Murray Laurence explained that "educational tourism" referred to "... holiday programs in English, or holiday programs that combine English with sporting activities, or English with organised tourism."⁹¹

7.96 DEET expressed reservations about the potential of Latin America as a market for Australian education services. DEET has concentrated its attention on the Asian region for the marketing of such services. Mr John Muir, of the Department, told the Committee in evidence regarding the market in Latin America that:

"If we believed the source of students was genuinely there, and if we believed that the motivation was there on the part of the proprietors of the various colleges, then there would be a shift in our stance."⁹²

7.97 DEET made it clear that, unless it received a clear direction from Government that it should investigate the Latin American market or promote it, the Department would continue to concentrate its resources and energies on the current priorities.

7.98 The Committee accepts that it was appropriate for DEET to devote its energies and resources in the last five or so years to developing the infrastructure to provide Australian education services to students from Asian countries. Much has been achieved and much has been learnt about the pitfalls. It is the view of the Committee that the experience that DEET has acquired in supporting the marketing of Australian educational services in Asia should now be applied to the Latin American market, albeit on a somewhat smaller scale.

Advantages Held By Australia in the Education Marketplace

7.99 The Insearch Language Centre provided the Committee with the following list of attributes Australia has in its favour which would help to attract students to

⁹¹ Committee Hansard, p. 982.

⁹² *ibid.*, pp. 1430, 1439. DEET also has concerns regarding the fact that Latin American countries are not gazetted, that is, they are considered to be higher risk countries for the issue of visas, see *ibid.*, p. 1438. See also para. 7.117 of this Report.

Australian educational facilities:

- . high quality English language programs;
- . competitively priced programs;
- . climate;
- . lifestyle;
- . personal security;
- . informal atmosphere;
- . complementary school and university holiday periods with South America.
- . sporting connections;
- . cultural connections; and
- . educational connections through existing exchange programs such as Youth for Understanding, Rotary and American Field Scholarships.⁹³

7.100 It was also argued that Australia is strategically placed to act as a bridge or a link between South America and the economies of North and South East Asia.⁹⁴ This was seen as providing an additional attraction for Latin Americans to study in Australia. It was suggested, for instance, that Latin American students may believe it would be beneficial to be in a language class in Australia along with students from Japan, Taiwan or Korea.⁹⁵

7.101 The submission from the Insearch Language Centre concluded that:

"Australia's reputation as a high quality provider of Educational Services offers us an opportunity to enter the Latin American market to the long term benefit of both Australia and the countries of Latin America."⁹⁶

⁹³ Insearch Language Centre, submission, Committee Hansard, pp. 953-4.

⁹⁴ *ibid.*, p. 950. See also Dr S. R. Anleu and others, submission, p. 1.

⁹⁵ Committee Hansard, p. 987.

⁹⁶ Insearch Language Centre, submission, Committee Hansard, p. 951.

Promotion of Educational Services - Role of Government

7.102 There is a perception, particularly among suppliers of educational services, that the Australian Government, and its agencies, do not recognise the potential significance of this industry for developing links with Latin America. The absence of any reference to students in the DILGEA submission to the inquiry would appear to lend support to this view.⁹⁷

7.103 With reference to the marketing of Australian education services in Latin America, Mr Michael Fay said that "What is required from Australia is both a recognition of the opportunities available and action to develop them."⁹⁸

7.104 Mr Fay suggested the following steps:

- . greater recognition by the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade that there is a legitimate market in Latin America for Australian Educational Services;
- . acceptance by DILGEA that the provision of educational services is a legitimate business and that immigration problems can be addressed by checking the bona fides of students in their countries in the same manner that the United States and Britain do;
- . placing of an Australian Trade Commissioner or Consul in Sao Paulo, Brazil, with visa issuing powers, to assist in developing links to the richest region of Brazil; and
- . staging of a modest advertising campaign and exhibitions promoting Australian educational services in key target countries of Latin America such as Mexico, Venezuela, Brazil, Argentina and Chile.⁹⁹

7.105 In his evidence to the Committee Professor Ingram stressed the need for Australian education facilities and services to be made better known worldwide. He believes that Austrade and Australian embassies could play a significant role in promoting Australian educational services in Latin America. Professor Ingram is also of the view that as part of this promotional exercise there is a need for Australian educational exhibitions to be staged more frequently in Latin America.¹⁰⁰

7.106 The Committee believes that several of these suggestions could make a positive contribution to the marketing of Australian educational services in Latin America.

⁹⁷ Committee Hansard, p. 1291.

⁹⁸ Insearch Language Centre, submission, Committee Hansard, p. 951.

⁹⁹ *ibid.*, p. 950.

¹⁰⁰ Committee Hansard, p. 1177.

7.107 It was asserted in evidence to the inquiry that Australia has captured only a limited share of the "study abroad" market in Latin America largely for the following reasons:

- . the absence of any focused promotion of Australia as an English study destination;
- . a lack of understanding of the range of educational services available in Australia by Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Austrade and DILGEA officers posted in Latin America; and
- . a perception among Latin American travel specialist that Australian Government representatives do not encourage applications for ELICOS study in Australia.¹⁰¹

7.108 Mr Murray Laurence was very critical of the performance of Austrade in respect to the marketing of Australian educational services in Latin America. He told the Committee:

"In terms of knowledge and support, Austrade is virtually nonexistent. From my knowledge of Latin America it is virtually not there at all. ... if they were able to deploy half the resources they put into north east and South East Asia regularly, we would at least have a presence there and the agents who want to represent Australian institutions would at least have some local body with knowledge of Australia."¹⁰²

7.109 As noted previously, notwithstanding periodic problems, Australia has generally been successful in its campaign to sell Australian educational services in Asia. It should be borne in mind that Australian Government Departments and authorities, such as DEET and Austrade, played significant roles in supporting educational institutions in marketing their services in this region.

7.110 The Committee believes that there is an untapped market in Latin America for Australian educational services. Government Departments and authorities should now play a more active role, as they did in Asia, in support of Australian educational institutions and companies interested in marketing their services in that region.

¹⁰¹ Insearch Language Centre, submission, Committee Hansard, p. 954.

¹⁰² Committee Hansard, pp. 987-8.

Visa Related Issues

7.111 During the inquiry problems with the issuing of visas were raised as serious impediments to the promotion in Latin America of Australian educational services.

7.112 Mr Laurence told the Committee, that based upon conversations he had during visits to Brazil, Argentina and Chile on three occasions in 1987, 1988 and 1989 he had concluded that one of the most significant problems faced by students related to difficulties involved in obtaining a visa to study in Australia.¹⁰³ According to Mr Laurence, "It is now almost impossible for a student to obtain a visa to come to Australia."¹⁰⁴

7.113 Mr Laurence believed that one of the difficulties involved in obtaining a visa to visit Australia was due to the relatively few visa issuing centres in South America. In addition it was his belief that officials involved with the issuing of visas put student visas at the bottom of their priorities. Mr Laurence was emphatic that, "The people concerned with visas have, on the whole, a very negative attitude to education as an export service."¹⁰⁵ He told the Committee in evidence:

"... from my dealings with our Foreign Affairs and Immigration people in Argentina, Brazil and Chile, none of them was aware that education was a viable commodity for Australia to be exporting. All of them had an attitude that said that everybody out there was a potential illegal immigrant and we will do everything we can to make it difficult for them to get a visa, whether as a student or as a tourist or whatever."¹⁰⁶

The Committee took this issue up with DILGEA.

7.114 DILGEA explained that the Department places students into two categories, category A and category B students. The process for issuing visa varies, depending on the student category. Category A students are either studying at secondary schools or are undertaking a course which requires a year 12 standard of education. Category B students are those undertaking short term non-formal courses, including ELICOS. According to the Department during 1990-1991 from the whole of Latin America there were only 45 category A students and 100 category B students in Australia.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰³ *ibid.*, p. 983.

¹⁰⁴ *ibid.*, p. 984.

¹⁰⁵ *ibid.*

¹⁰⁶ *ibid.*, p. 986.

¹⁰⁷ *ibid.*, p. 1291.

7.115 The Committee was told by DEET that on the 30 June 1991 there were 114 students studying in Australia from Latin America and the Caribbean. These students consisted of 28 doing higher education, eight doing post secondary courses, 70 taking secondary courses and eight doing ELICOS.¹⁰⁸

7.116 The apparent conflict with the statistics supplied by DILGEA is explained by the fact that DEET's figures result from a snap shot of the number of students studying in Australia on a particular day, 30 June 1991, while the statistics from DILGEA show the number of total student visas issued over a calendar year. It must also be borne in mind that the DILGEA figures do not show longer term visas issued to students in previous years who were still studying in Australia during the financial year 1990-1991.

7.117 DILGEA told the Committee that the arrangements in Latin America for students applying for category A courses are the same as those that apply in every market throughout the world. According to DILGEA, the arrangements that apply in Latin America for Category B courses

"... are the same as apply in non-gazetted countries -
which is a nice way, I guess, of saying high risk countries -
for short term students."¹⁰⁹

7.118 Mr Laurence suggested that Latin American students were probably placed in this category because of a lack of statistical data from which to draw firm conclusions. He made it clear that he did not necessarily accept that Latin Americans, including students, were a high risk group in respect to over staying their visas after they arrived in Australia. Mr Laurence argued that there had not been a sufficient number of visitors, particularly students from Latin America over the years to conclude that they posed a threat of illegally over staying in Australia.¹¹⁰ The numbers of students was simply too small to make any generalisations about their propensity to overstay.

7.119 The difficulties associated with obtaining a student visa in Latin America to come to Australia appear to be in part related to a general tightening up of regulations

¹⁰⁸ *ibid.*, p. 1433.

¹⁰⁹ *ibid.*, p. 1296. Gazetted countries is a list of countries whose citizens Australian authorities believe pose a minimum threat of over staying in Australia, either as visitors, or in transit through our airports. No Latin American country appears on this list of gazetted countries. There is a more liberal policy towards the issue of a visitor or student visa to a citizen of a gazetted country compared to a citizen of a non-gazetted country. See also Chapter 6 of this Report for comment on transit visas.

¹¹⁰ Committee Hansard, p. 985. A letter received by the Committee from DILGEA dated 3 March 1992 stated that "because of the small number of students coming to Australia from Latin America "... we do not have meaningful over stayers." Mr Bill Muir of DEET told the Committee in evidence, "We do not have enough students to get the statistics." *ibid.*, p. 1437.

for the issuing of such visas following Australia's experience with Chinese students overstaying their visas and applying for political asylum.¹¹¹

7.120 When pressed by the Committee, DILGEA admitted that placing Latin American students in this category was probably a "bit unfair" but it was felt "prudent" to do so until the picture concerning the over stay rates for these students was clearer.¹¹²

7.121 Nevertheless, DILGEA maintained that the system now in use for the issuing of visas is much more "... streamlined compared to what it was".¹¹³ The Department asserted that "... the conditions of student entry in category A are the most generous of probably any large studies provider in the world."¹¹⁴

7.122 The Department pointed out that during 1990-91, despite the claimed difficulties involved in Latin Americans obtaining visas to study in Australia, the Department did not reject a single student applicant from any Latin American country to come to Australia.¹¹⁵

7.123 This defence of the Department's policy and practice does not appear to the Committee to take sufficient account of the full range of factors militating against significant numbers of students coming to Australia from Latin America. The hurdles to greater interest in study in Australia appear well before a formal application for a visa is made.

7.124 The fact that students from Latin America must undergo a pre-visa assessment is likely to discourage students from studying in Australia.¹¹⁶ The difficulties associated with gaining access to Australian missions with authority to issue visas are a further deterrent.¹¹⁷

¹¹¹ For more information on difficulties experienced by Latin Americans in obtaining student visas for Australia see Committee Hansard, p. 984.

¹¹² *ibid.*, p. 1296.

¹¹³ *ibid.*, p. 1293.

¹¹⁴ *ibid.*, pp. 1293-4. Most students doing Category A courses are doing a degree. These students are given a three year multiple entry visa with work rights in Australia. Students doing Category B courses are mainly students doing ELICOS. These students must test their eligibility to come to Australia with the Australian Government before sending funds to an Australian institution. This is referred to as the pre-visa assessment.

¹¹⁵ Committee Hansard, p. 1291. In a letter to the Committee from DILGEA dated 3 March 1992, the Department advised that for the year 1990/91, 45 category visas for category A students and 100 visas for category B students were issued from offices located in Buenos Aires, Brasilia, Caracas and Santiago.

¹¹⁶ See Committee Hansard, pp. 1446-7.

¹¹⁷ For example, students from the most populous city in Brazil, Sao Paulo, have to submit visa applications in Brasilia.

7.125 The Committee believes that the difficulties encountered by students seeking visas, and the negative impression they receive as a result of the exercise, has been a deterrent to genuine students applying to study in Australia. It appears to the Committee that the possible dangers involved in liberalising the issue of student visas to Australia for Latin Americans are outweighed by the benefits to Australia of such students coming to this country. The Committee is not convinced that evidence so far available indicates that a serious overstay problem is likely to develop with students from Latin America. In the Committee's view, and on the basis of the evidence available to date, it is unreasonable to place students from Latin America in the high risk category.

7.126 Mr Laurence told the Committee that Austrade should allocate one of its offices to Sao Paulo, Brazil. Sao Paulo has the largest industrial complex in South America, making it a much more significant industrial city than Buenos Aires. Mr Laurence believes that marketing Australian educational services out of Sao Paulo would get a "... lot more mileage out of an Austrade office in Sao Paulo ..." in comparison with other Austrade offices in Latin America.¹¹⁸

7.127 The Committee has recommended elsewhere in this report the appointment of a permanent Australian government representative in Sao Paulo.

7.128 Recommendation forty one: The Committee recommends that the proposed Australian representative in Sao Paulo (see Recommendation seventeen):

- . **evaluate the opportunities for marketing of Australian educational services; and**
- . **be in a position to issue visas.**

Distance Education

7.129 In response to the Committee's inquiries about the possible provision of distance education to Latin America, DEET advised that the National Distance Education Conference (NDEC) "... has taken no initiatives into Latin America at this point in time."¹¹⁹ The costs for satellite facilities and lack of an identifiable market were cited as barriers.

7.130 The Committee considers that the potential for providing distance education should be kept in mind when market opportunities for the export of Australian education services are being assessed. The provision of Australian expertise in establishing distance education should also be considered.

¹¹⁸ Committee Hansard, p. 994.

¹¹⁹ Letter dated 10 February 1992, from Mr John Muir, First Assistant Secretary, DEET to the Committee Secretary.

AGB Report

7.131 In May 1991 DEET appointed AGB Australia Research to prepare a report dealing with the marketing of education services overseas. The market investigation set out in this report was undertaken in eleven countries.¹²⁰ Significantly no Latin American country was included in the list of countries examined. This failure to include a Latin American country in the study probably reflects the small number of students from that region studying in Australia to date.

7.132 The AGB study found that, in the view of Asians, the United States is the country which provides the highest quality of education. It is believed that qualifications from institutions in the United States offer the greatest opportunities for the career advancement of graduates in their home countries.¹²¹

7.133 According to the AGB study Australia's reputation as an educational destination is somewhat mixed with a sense of uncertainty concerning Australian educational services, in part due to a lack of experience and knowledge of our educational facilities and standards. The report makes the point that Australia's reputation in respect to the provision of educational services has been damaged in recent years due to the closure of some English language teaching institutions. According to the survey Australia also suffers from the fact that there is an impression in Asia that Australians are racially prejudiced.¹²² There is also a perception in the Asian market that Australia is beginning to treat education as a business. This perception is damaging to our reputation.¹²³

7.134 The Committee received no evidence to indicate that potential students in Latin America share these apparently negative views which have developed in Asia.

7.135 The AGB report established that Australia has a significant advantage over the United States in the marketing of educational services in Asia. This advantage relates in particular to the costs of such services. There is a perception in Asia that education in Australia is more affordable than in the United States or the United Kingdom.¹²⁴ It would appear that Australia does not enjoy such a financial advantage in marketing

¹²⁰ AGB Australia, *International Competitive Study*, Commonwealth of Australia, 1992, p. 1.

¹²¹ *ibid.* The study also found that the United Kingdom has a good reputation as an education destination.

¹²² *ibid.*, pp. 1-2.

¹²³ *ibid.*, p. 4. There is no reason to believe that Australians are in fact any more racist than other people.

¹²⁴ *ibid.*, p. 3. This perception is most unfortunate since the overall quality of Australian education is high. The AGB report makes a number of recommendations aimed at mitigating the damaging effects of incorrect perceptions about the quality of Australian educational services.

its educational services in Latin America. The Department of Employment, Education and Training told the Committee in evidence:

"It is clear that we can get an English language course in Los Angeles a bit cheaper than you get one in Sydney, and certainly it is much cheaper for Latin Americans generally to get to Los Angeles than to Sydney."¹²⁵

7.136 The AGB report puts forward a series of recommendations designed to promote the marketability of Australian educational services and facilities internationally, in competition with the United States and Europe. The Committee believes that these recommendations, particularly those numbered 3, 5, 6 and 7 could make a significant positive contribution to attempts by Australian educational bodies to market Australian facilities and services to students in Latin America.¹²⁶

7.137 Recommendation forty two: The Committee recommends that the Australian Government, and relevant authorities take note of the AGB report, *International Competitiveness Study*, particularly recommendations 3, 5, 6 and 7 and where possible implement these recommendation in respect to Latin America in order to promote Australian educational services in that region.

7.138 Recommendation forty three: The Committee recommends that action be taken by DILGEA, the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade and Austrade to ensure that their officers located in Latin America are fully aware of the educational services available in Australia to overseas students and are in a position to give appropriate information and guidance to potential students.

7.139 The Committee believes that there is a need for a coordinated effort between educational institutions in Australia interested in marketing their services to Latin American students and Australian Government officers on the ground in Latin American countries to promote this industry.

7.140 Recommendation forty four: The Committee recommends that DEET and Austrade coordinate with educational institutions and relevant bodies in Australia to produce an information kit, in both Spanish and Portuguese, listing:

. courses available in Australia and the institutions providing them;

¹²⁵ Committee Hansard, p. 1427.

¹²⁶ AGB Australia, op. cit., 1992, pp. 5-7. The Recommendations of the AGB Report appear as Appendix 14 of this Report.

- . the process for enrolling at the various institutions concerned;
- . costs involved;
- . the process involved in applying for visas to study in Australia; and
- . general information on living in Australia, particularly as a student.

These kits should be provided to Australian diplomatic posts and Austrade offices in Latin America for distribution to potential students on request.

7.141 Recommendation forty five: The Committee recommends that Austrade and the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade in association with interested educational institutions in Australia mount a concerted campaign to promote the provision of educational services in Australia to Latin Americans.

Academic Activities

7.142 Several universities in Australia offer Latin American studies. The main centres appear to be La Trobe University, Flinders University and the University of New South Wales (UNSW). Others involved in Latin American studies include Victoria University of Technology and Queensland University of Technology. Individual academics with interests in Latin America can also be found in, for example, the University of Western Sydney (Macarthur), and the Universities of Canberra and Western Australia.¹²⁷

7.143 From the contact that the Committee has had with the tertiary institutions involved in Latin American studies during the inquiry, the Committee shares the impression of one academic that there is goodwill, cooperation and relatively frequent communication among Latin Americanists in Australia.¹²⁸

7.144 Another leading academic pointed to a "take-off" in Latin American teaching and research in several Australian institutions.¹²⁹ The Committee became aware during

¹²⁷ The most comprehensive, but still incomplete list of academics and tertiary institutions involved in Latin American studies provided to the Committee was in the Newsletter No. 1 (June 1991) put out by the Consortium of Iberian and Latin American studies (CILASA), since renamed the Association for Iberian and Latin American Studies in Australasia (AILASA).

¹²⁸ Dr John Brotherton, submission, p. 4.

¹²⁹ Professor Rowan Ireland, submission, p. 1.

the inquiry that several institutions have indicated an interest in introducing Spanish and possibly Latin American studies.¹³⁰

7.145 Notwithstanding the apparent dedication of the academics working in the Latin American field, it is worth reflecting on the comment by one academic that:

"If all the expertise on Latin America in all Australia's universities were combined in one place they would not exceed those to be found in any of a number of universities in the U.S."¹³¹

7.146 Interest in inter-university and inter-institution cooperation seems to the Committee to be increasing.¹³² The Committee sees this as a very positive trend.

7.147 The Committee formed the impression that the predominant area of interest of Latin Americanists in Australia has been in historical studies, with some interest in literary, cultural and sociological fields. There appears to be relatively little research or teaching being offered in economics and the more contemporary issues. This impression was confirmed by one academic at public hearings.¹³³

7.148 Nevertheless the Committee felt that there was a growing interest amongst academics in inter-disciplinary cooperation. This was particularly evident at Flinders University, although it may be taking place elsewhere as well.

7.149 Pure research and scholarly studies are obviously an essential component of academic work. However, in the Committee's view, to be relevant, scholarly research in the more esoteric fields must be balanced by studies of issues and subjects with direct contemporary impact on the affairs and interests of the community.

7.150 In this context, the Committee was interested to learn that the Institute of Latin American Studies at La Trobe University has become:

"... the major provider of news, background information and analysis of current affairs in Latin America for the media ..."

¹³⁰ See evidence from Professor D.E. Ingram, Committee Hansard, p. 1178. See also CILASA newsletter No. 1 (June 1991) p. 3, attached to submission from Professor R. Ireland.

¹³¹ Dr Martin Scurrah, submission, Committee Hansard, p. 1661 emphasises the limited nature of Australia's knowledge resources about Latin America.

¹³² See *ibid.* In 1991 the Consortium for Iberian and Latin American studies in Australasia (CILASA) issued their first newsletter with the intention of keeping academics and others "... in touch with developments in the Iberian and Latin American studies arenas", *CILASA Newsletter* No. 1 (June 1991) p. 1, attached to submission from Professor Ireland.

¹³³ Dr Martin Scurrah, Committee Hansard, pp. 1691-2.

The Institute has contributed substantially to documentary programs, for example, for the ABC and SBS.¹³⁴ Other witnesses from academia expressed an interest in closer working relations with the public sector and the private business sector. One submission suggested that:

"... research on the communication industries of Latin America can provide knowledge of potential export markets for Australian film and televisions, or the basis for mutually advantageous co-production ventures."¹³⁵

The Committee welcomes the development in academic circles of an outward looking involvement with the wider community. At the same time the Committee notes the importance of ensuring that both research and media comment should be factually correct and accurate.

7.151 The Committee is also aware of the very positive and active role that the Latin American diplomatic representatives have played in recent times in establishing close contact with the academic community. The Committee hopes that these contacts will continue and grow. There is no question that such contact and cooperation makes a very valuable contribution to Australia's relations with Latin America.

7.152 While coordination among tertiary institutions is obviously already taking place, several submissions referred to the difficulties that are being encountered. The School of Spanish and Latin American Studies at the University of New South Wales summarised a widely held view when it said that teaching commitments, research and community activities leave little time for the academics of the three major universities which offer Latin American studies to develop other, community orientated initiatives, including publications.

7.153 There were basically two schools of thought about how to tackle the problem of coordination. One suggested approach was to set up a fully-fledged Australia-Latin America Council, modelled on the Councils, Institutes and Foundations set up in the past for promoting relations with countries such as China, Japan and Indonesia.¹³⁶

7.154 The UNSW School of Spanish and Latin American Studies and the Victorian University of Technology have suggested that they undertake certain projects or be designated a Centre for Latin American Studies. There is already a Pan Pacific Institute at Flinders University, which deals with Latin American affairs, as well as an Institute of Latin American Studies at La Trobe University.

¹³⁴ Professor Rowan Ireland, submission, p. 3.

¹³⁵ Victorian University of Technology, submission, p. 1.

¹³⁶ See Dr Estela Valverde, submission, p. 3; Dr John Brotherton, submission, pp. 3-4; Victoria University of Technology, submission, p. 2.

7.155 The other approach was essentially more evolutionary in nature and acknowledged more fully the work that has already been put into coordinating the work of the Latin Americanists. In effect, those of this opinion urged that support be given to the recently formed Association for Iberian and Latin American Studies in Australasia (AILASA).

7.156 The Association was established in 1991 to promote research and teaching on Iberian and Latin American countries, generate awareness about the area, and encourage mutual exchange, organise conferences, seminars and workshops to stimulate mutual understanding.¹³⁷ From the evidence available to the Committee this Association appears to have wide support within the academic community.

7.157 Questioning the value of a separate new Institute, Dr Estela Valverde seems to reflect the views of those favouring support for AILASA when she says in her submission:

"We have already an Institute of Latin American Studies in La Trobe University, do we really need to create another? I also feel that perhaps rather than supporting centralised bodies we should fund at an adequate level the existing initiatives and programs where graduates are being produced. The Consortium for Iberian and Latin American Studies in Australasia (CILASA) seems to me to be a most commendable initiative ... My hope is that it would lead to better communication, cooperation and coordination ... Perhaps an important role of such consortium would be to promote the rationalisation of activities so that resources and fields of specialisation could be supported within particular institutions ..."¹³⁸

7.158 The Committee considers that Government support at this stage should be aimed at assisting the Latin American studies community:

- . to complete assessment of current academic resources and capacity;
- . to improve and consolidate co-ordination within the academic community; and
- . to expand cross-fertilisation and dialogue with other interested sectors of the community.

¹³⁷ For more information on the objectives and operation of AILASA see the Association's draft constitution set out in Committee Hansard, pp. 1668-71.

¹³⁸ Dr E. Valverde, submission, p. 4. See also footnote 127.

7.159 The Committee is of the view that even with modest levels of funding, significant advances can be made in helping realise the potential for Australia's academic expertise to contribute to a more effective and more rounded development of relations between Australia and Latin America. The Committee considers that AILASA is the most appropriate body in Australia which could, and should, be developed into an effective and dynamic vehicle for co-ordination and development of academic resources.

7.160 Recommendation forty six: The Committee recommends that Government funding be provided for:

- . **the appointment of a full time secretary to AILASA;**
- . **assistance with the publication of a regular AILASA Bulletin or Newsletter;**
- . **assistance to AILASA to complete a national inventory of specialist resources on Latin America; and**
- . **assistance to AILASA for the holding of a major annual Round Table on current issues in Latin American relations, involving AILASA and relevant business, government, migrant, cultural and community organisations.**

7.161 The Committee would like to emphasise that it does not consider that Australian Government support for these initiatives should necessarily be kept only at, or to, the level recommended in the above Recommendation. However, it feels that any new or further programs should emerge out of the dialogue between the academic community and other sectors of society, including business and Government, as the academic community itself becomes more organised and coordinated.

Academic Exchanges

7.162 A view that emerged over and over again in submissions from academics was that academic exchanges and collaborative research are essential for maintaining vitality and relevance in academic work.

7.163 The School of Spanish and Latin American Studies at the University of New South Wales put to the Committee a number of specific proposals aimed at strengthening Australian Latin American academic ties.

7.164 The School said that staff and student exchanges with tertiary institutions in Latin America had been quite irregular to date. The UNSW School indicated that it was in the process of investigating the possibilities of establishing links with El Colegio de Mexico and institutions in Colombia, Chile and Argentina.

7.165 The Committee learnt that the University of Western Sydney has established a range of contacts with various South American institutions, such as the Instituto de Lenguas Vivas, Buenos Aires, Argentina, Instituto Crandon, Montevideo, Uruguay; Instito Delmira Agustini, Montevideo, Uruguay; and Universidad Nacional de Tucuman, Tucuman, Argentina.

7.166 Dr Estela Valverde of the University of West Sydney also emphasised the need for exchanges that enable Latin American students to come to Australia. She stated:

"Unfortunately due to the lack of financial assistance for Latin American students to travel to Australia the flow has always been in one direction. I constantly receive requests from Latin American students to come to study interpreting and translation with us but unfortunately there is no organisation that provides assistance or scholarships for Latin American students."¹³⁹

7.167 It is evident that to date the contacts established between tertiary institutions in Australia and Latin America have been almost solely the achievement of energetic and enthusiastic individuals who found various avenues to bring the two academic worlds together. The Committee would not wish to see any diminution of individual efforts within Universities to enhance contacts. At the same time, the Committee believes the time is ripe for some government assistance and encouragement for such efforts.

7.168 In this regard, the Committee was pleased to find DEET receptive to looking at possibilities:

"We would see the way to go, if indeed there were seen to be a desire on the part of the Australian people and Australian institutions to improve, increase our interaction with Latin America, as something akin to our institutional link program where government encourage the universities to establish collaborative research or exchange arrangements with particular universities in other countries."¹⁴⁰

7.169 It was made very clear, however, that action by the Department would be instituted only "if the signals were given."¹⁴¹

¹³⁹ Dr Estela Valverde, submission, p. 2.

¹⁴⁰ Committee Hansard, p. 1432.

¹⁴¹ *ibid.*, p. 1433.

7.170 Recommendation forty seven: The Committee recommends that, as one means of achieving the objective in Recommendation one of this Report the Department of Education, Employment and Training establish an institutional links program, based on the model developed for the Asian region, to assist universities to establish collaborative research and exchange arrangements with universities in Latin America.

Libraries

7.171 The Committee is aware that the National Library's capacity to build its Latin American holdings is circumscribed, although the collections of some university libraries, particularly at La Trobe, are regarded as good.¹⁴² The National Library informed the Committee that it had concluded a long-term loan agreement with La Trobe University, transferring the bulk of the National Library's collection of Latin American material to La Trobe. This transfer will compliment the considerable collection already held by La Trobe University, which has also undertaken to give continuing financial support to the further development of their Latin American collection.¹⁴³ The Committee sees value in a pragmatic allocation and sharing of resources and would wish to see the present informal agreement concerning the division of responsibilities and areas of specialisation between the libraries of the various universities offering Spanish and Latin American studies put on a sound footing.¹⁴⁴

7.172 The University of New South Wales (UNSW) School of Spanish and Latin American Studies suggested a small technical project to provide library science on a technologically feasible level to selected Latin America countries.¹⁴⁵ The Committee is aware that this is an area where Australia has already proved its effectiveness in the work done by the Bibliography of Southeast Asia (BISA) Project currently implemented by the School of Librarianship at the UNSW.

7.173 Recommendation forty eight: The Committee recommends that:

the National Library, in consultation with other major collecting institutions, examine the value of formalising the present informal agreement between these institutions to ensure a fair and effective allocation of material on Latin America among them and the development of appropriate centres of excellence for Latin American studies; and

¹⁴² Letter dated 30 January 1992 from National Library to Committee.

¹⁴³ Letter to Committee from Mr Warren Horton, Director-General of the National Library, dated 30 January 1992.

¹⁴⁴ The School of Spanish and Latin American Studies, University of New South Wales, submission, p. 4.

¹⁴⁵ *ibid.*

a feasibility study be carried out by the National Library, La Trobe University Library and the University of New South Wales School of Librarianship, into a program of exchange with appropriate libraries and universities in Latin America, whereby materials on Latin America might be made available to Australian libraries and materials on Australia as well as technical and training assistance be made available to national library systems in Latin America.

Political and Parliamentary Contacts

7.174 In its submission to the inquiry, DFAT included a list of parliamentary and ministerial bilateral visits, which have taken place between Australia and countries of Latin America over the years. A copy of this document, updated to include visits undertaken since the beginning of this inquiry and upcoming visits, appears as Appendix 15 to this Report.¹⁴⁶

7.175 It is apparent from an examination of this list of bilateral visits that Latin America has not been a priority area for visits by Australian ministers or parliamentarians. This low priority is no doubt, in part, a reflection of the low level of economic and other ties existing between the two regions. Political circumstances in some of the Latin America countries at various times have also influenced the choices of countries to be visited.

7.176 Attention has been drawn, elsewhere in this Report, to the fact that Latin American countries have never been in the forefront of Australia's foreign policy concerns, a fact reflected in the relatively limited number of Australian embassies in Latin America. Much of the political contact between Australia and Latin American countries has revolved around issues dealt with in multilateral forums.¹⁴⁷

7.177 Despite this generally low level of involvement in the past, there is now an increasing interest in the region by Australia. Just as importantly, the countries of Latin America are signalling a greater interest in Australia and the Pacific basin generally than they have in the past.

7.178 The Committee is pleased to observe that there has been a marked increase in political contacts between Australia and significant Latin America countries during the last few years. It is interesting to note that by far the greatest number of Ministerial exchanges has taken place with Chile, Mexico and Brazil.

7.179 It is also interesting to speculate whether those relationships flourished because of the attention they received at the political level, or whether these destinations were chosen because the relationships were already perceived as being the most

¹⁴⁶ DFAT, submission, Committee Hansard, pp. 180-5.

¹⁴⁷ See Chapter 8.

substantive in the region. Whatever the conclusion, it is indisputable that high level political contact is a valuable tool in strengthening ties.

7.180 A high level visit gives a signal to the business community in both Australian and Latin America and assists in raising community awareness of the countries involved. It is particularly valuable if the business sector plays an active and direct role in such visits.

7.181 The Committee is aware, for instance, of positive follow-up to the joint Confederation of Australian Industry and Government delegation visit, led by Dr Blewett, Minister for Trade and Overseas Development and Mr Ray Patterson, Executive Director TNT Limited, to Mexico in 1991. Similarly, in the other direction, the delegation led by the Chilean deputy Finance Minister in 1991, which included a private sector component, proved to be very successful in attracting a great deal of Australian business sector interest. There is of course no question that a visit by the President of a country, like the visit of President Salinas of Mexico to Australia in June 1990, gives an extra boost to the relationship with that country.

7.182 The Committee is pleased that President Aylwin of Chile has agreed to visit Australia later this year. The visit will consolidate the already strong links between the two countries and open opportunities for further contacts.

7.183 Recent visits by Australian Ministers to countries of Latin America were warmly welcomed by their hosts. For example, the Chilean Ambassador to Australia, H.E. Mr Juan Salazar said of Dr Blewett's visit in July 1990 and Mr Woolcott's visit in September of that year that, "These were the first Australian visits to Chile at a senior level in at least seventeen years and heralded the beginning of a new and constructive political relationship between both countries."¹⁴⁸ In his submission to the inquiry, the Chilean Ambassador called for Australia and Chile to "... intensify their political contacts" with regular official and parliamentary visits between the two countries.¹⁴⁹

7.184 Visits by Latin American Ministers and Government leaders to Australia have benefited Australia by making it possible for the visitors to see for themselves the opportunities for trade and other exchanges with this country. The Committee firmly believes that future visits will produce further positive results.

7.185 Recommendation forty nine: The Committee recommends that Government Ministers with responsibilities in areas of mutual interest to Australia and to the countries of Latin America, such as mining, telecommunications, agriculture and agricultural technology, as well as Ministers with responsibility for Trade and Foreign Affairs seek out opportunities to visit Latin American countries to further the interests of Australia in the region. The Committee also encourages the Australian Government

¹⁴⁸ H.E. Mr J. Salazar, submission, Committee Hansard, p. 1336.

¹⁴⁹ ibid., pp. 1343-4.

to continue to invite Latin American political leaders and Government Ministers to visit Australia.

7.186 There is a need for Australian parliamentarians as well as business people to expand their knowledge of Latin America if we are to succeed in placing our relations with countries of that region on the firmest footing possible. The Committee regards contact between Australian parliamentarians and those of Latin America as a valuable means of increasing understanding and of instigating and supporting initiatives to promote relations between Australia and Latin America.

7.187 One of the earliest parliamentary exchanges took place in 1965 when Senator John Gorton, then Minister of Public Works and in charge of education and research activities led a Parliamentary Delegation to Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Mexico, Peru and Uruguay.¹⁵⁰

7.188 Recent visits by Australian Parliamentarians to Latin America, including a Parliamentary Delegation, led by the Speaker of the House of Representatives, to Chile and Venezuela and a three member opposition delegation to Argentina, Uruguay, Chile, Peru, Venezuela, Colombia and Mexico in 1991,¹⁵¹ have contributed towards increasing our understanding of that region.

7.189 An Australian Parliamentary Delegation is due to visit Argentina, Brazil and Mexico as this Report goes to press. A Colombian Parliamentary Delegation visited Australia in 1989, and Parliamentary Delegations from Mexico visited Australia in 1991 and 1992. A Parliamentary Delegation from Brazil will visit Australia in late August and one from Venezuela in June. During the second half of the year a Parliamentary Delegation from Argentina is expected to visit Australia.

7.190 It is the view of the Committee that there should be a strengthening of exchanges such as these in the next few years.

7.191 Meetings of the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) provide excellent opportunities for Australian Parliamentarians to relate to parliamentarians from Latin American countries. The IPU brings together representatives of National Parliaments for the objective study of political, economic, social and cultural problems of international

¹⁵⁰ Prior to this visit there were two Australian trade delegations. In 1960 a six-member Australian team visited Latin America. This was followed in 1962 by a 40-member trade delegation led by Mr Donald Mackinnon.

¹⁵¹ The Delegation consisted of Senator Robert Hill, the Hon. John Moore MP and Senator Baden Teague. Senator Teague's report on this visit may be found on pp. 734-46 of Senate Hansard of 20 August 1991.

significance.¹⁵² Since 1975 eight IPU conferences, or meetings, have been held in Latin American countries and attended by Australian Parliamentarians.¹⁵³

7.192 In addition to the opportunities offered for political contacts through the medium of the IPU, Australian Parliamentarians maintain contact with their colleagues in Latin America through six individual inter-parliamentary groups involving Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Cuba, Uruguay and Venezuela. These groups provide opportunities for the members to develop a personal relationship with colleagues leading to an increased understanding and appreciation of the other country involved.

7.193 The Committee sees great value in these parliamentary groups and the IPU in furthering Australian-Latin American relations.

7.194 Recommendation fifty: The Committee recommends that the momentum of political and parliamentary exchanges built up in the last two years be consolidated. The Committee also recommends that the Australian Council for Political Exchange look to expanding its program to include Latin America on a bilateral basis. The Committee suggests that the first country to be considered should be Mexico.

7.195 The Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade conducts a Special Visits Program, the aim of which is to "... expose key opinion makers in other countries to Australia and Australian concerns and views on a range of issues."¹⁵⁴ During the period July 1989 to the end of May 1992 only one visitor came to Australia from Latin America under the Special Visits program, the Mayor of Santiago, Chile, Mr Jaime Ravinet.

7.196 Recommendation fifty one: The Committee recommends that the Special Visits Program conducted by the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade should include at least two visitors from the Latin American region each year.

¹⁵² As of 1 January 1992, 116 of the 149 Legislative Assemblies established in the world's sovereign states were represented in the IPU. For more information on the IPU see the booklet *Inter-Parliamentary Union 1992* published by the IPU in Geneva, Switzerland.

¹⁵³ Details of IPU Delegation visits to Latin America are included in Appendix 15.

¹⁵⁴ *Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade Annual Report 1989-90*, p. 132.