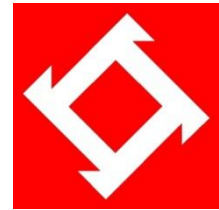


ASIAN STUDIES ASSOCIATION OF AUSTRALIA

Emeritus Professor John Ingleson
President



House of Representatives Standing Committee on Education on Employment

Inquiry into the Higher Education Support Amendment (Asian Century) Bill 2013.

On behalf of the Asian Studies Association of Australia I would like to thank you for inviting us to submit our views on this bill.

The Asian Studies Association of Australia (ASAA) is the professional association of people who have expertise on one or more Asian country. The ASAA has a long-standing commitment to increase Australians' understanding of Asian countries. The education system, from schools to Universities, has a crucial role in ensuring that the next generation of Australians is able to engage with the Asia region in ways that contribute to Australia social, economic and strategic relationships and also are personally enriching. The ASAA is supportive of the broad thrust of the Asian Century White Paper and looks forward to working with government in the years ahead to ensure its successful implementation.

The overwhelming majority of Australian university students who participate in an overseas exchange program as part of their undergraduate or postgraduate degrees attend institutions in Britain, North America and Europe. Strategically targeted interventions by government to encourage more exchange students to attend universities in Asia are essential to change this pattern. The Bill under consideration by the Committee on Education and Employment is therefore very welcome as an excellent development that will benefit many students and help deliver the promise of the Asian Century White Paper for more Australian students to be able to study in Asia.

We have two suggestions for improvements to the Bill for consideration by the Committee.

1. The Bill would be improved by extending the OS Help benefits to all graduate students, not just to those on Commonwealth Supported Places. Some 58% of graduate students are not on CGS places, which includes the vast majority of those enrolled in Masters by coursework courses. As a large proportion of these Masters course enrolments are in the management and business areas it is particularly important that students in these courses are encouraged to undertake a period of study in Asia would be of great benefit.
2. The proposal to limit eligibility to those students with one unit of study remaining should be removed. This restricts particular students following non-traditional progression, which is becoming more of the norm than the classical paradigm of a straight three or four years in a degree. This is particularly relevant as an increasing number of students are taking at least one unit of their degree on-line, which can occur anywhere in the world. There is no evidence to support the assertion that requiring further studies upon return from an overseas study has any impact on those few students who avoid OS Help type responsibilities by working overseas.

John Ingleson

13 March 2013