

21 August 2009

Committee Secretary

Senate Education, Employment and Workplace Relations References Committee

Department of the Senate, Parliament House

Dear Secretary,

Re: Inquiry into the Welfare of International Students

My comments relate to small - medium sized private colleges.

There seems to be a lot of variation in the level of support services, such as libraries, within the private college industry.

Students often need access to specialized information resources (books, electronic databases and the equipment to use them such as computers, internet connections etc.) in order to complete their studies. These resources must address specific course requirements. In the case of international students, extra resources may be required to support the development of English language skills. I imagine how I would feel being asked to write essays in Hindi or Mandarin with few or no resources to support my efforts.

I am aware that when obtaining accreditation for a community welfare course in Victoria, colleges must comply with a library resource formula e.g. they must spend an amount on library books and databases to support the course requirements. This amount is calculated based on full time student enrolment.

International students are always welcome to use public libraries located around the CBD and metropolitan area but public libraries don't always hold the specific texts required for higher level studies. The State Library of Victoria offers extensive services but my understanding is that international students can't access their online databases remotely, because of licensing restrictions.

This letter has only addressed a small aspect of your inquiry but it should be acknowledged that students need access to adequate library resources and computers to complete their studies successfully. If colleges are to be accredited, they should be able to support their student population with appropriate facilities.