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SUBMISSION FROM AFG VENTURE GROUP
TO THE SENATE INQUIRY
INTO THE WELFARE
OF
INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS

1.1 AFG Venture Group

AFG Venture Group is an Asia and Australia based corporate advisory and consulting firm. Our Group was formed by merging Asean Focus Group, with its 20 year history of creating alliances, relationships and transactions in South East Asia, and Venture Group, with its 14 year history of corporate and equities advisory in Australia. See www.afgventuregroup.com

Our principal offices are in Sydney but we have representative and joint venture offices throughout Asia including Bangkok, Chennai, Hanoi, Ho Chi Minh City, Hong Kong, Hyderabad, Jakarta, Vientiane (Laos), Manila, Mumbai, New Delhi, Singapore, Yangon (Myanmar).

AFG Venture Group has a specialist education services division headed by Michael Fay who has over 20 years experience working in the international education sector. AFG Venture Group provides strategic consultancy services to individual education institutions, peak education bodies as well as Australia Network Television. The CEO of AFG Venture Group, Lindley Edwards is on the Board of Asialink.

We understand that the focus of the review is on the roles and responsibilities of education providers, migration and education agents, state and federal governments and relevant departments and embassies, in ensuring quality and adequacy in information, advice, service delivery and support.

We wish to focus our input to the committee on strategies that will help in the identification of quality benchmarks and controls for service advice and support for international students considering study, already studying and those who are returning alumni from Australian educational institutions.

1.2 Australian Education International (AEI)

Universities Australia and the Innovative Research Universities Australia group have called for a separation of the dual role of AEI as both a promoter and regulator of the Australian International Education sector. Additionally they have called for greater accountability to higher education providers.

The International Education Group within AEI has a senior internally appointed Board of Management covering what it considers to be the key focus areas:

- International Strategy and Communication
- International Engagement and Mobility
- International Engagement and Scholarships
- International Quality

The International Strategy and Communication role includes sector engagement and strategic policy, promotions and communications and research data. This we understand is the area referred to in recommendation 12 of the Bradley Report into Higher Education;



“That the industry development responsibilities of Australian Education International be revised and be undertaken by an independent agency which is accountable to Commonwealth and state and territory governments and education providers education”

We support the separation of the promotion and marketing role of the Australian International Education sector from the regulatory role. AEI is a government bureaucracy and as such has neither specific expertise nor has been required to show accountability for its current marketing, promotion and communications role.

We believe it is essential to take responsibility for industry regulation role away from the states that have proved incapable and unwilling to ensure the quality of their providers. A model for national quality assurance and control is evidenced in the role played by the National ELT Accreditation Scheme see: www.neas.org.au which provides professional regulation of the ELICOS sector at a national level.

1.3 Asialink

We believe it is relevant to research and understand the role undertaken by Asialink in promotion and cross sector marketing and its associated Asia Education Foundation in the management of international education projects. We believe Asialink is relevant because of its specific expertise, focus and success in Asia, the key region for Australian international education. It should be noted that in 2007-08 more than half of Australia's \$14.2 earnings for education services export (ABS 2008) came from China, India, South Korea, Malaysia and Hong Kong.

Asialink is separate from government but has core program partners including the Australian Council for the Arts, the Commonwealth Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations and additional government partners drawn from the various Australian Asian Councils for China, India, Indonesia, Japan, Korea, Thailand Japan and Korea.

Asialink has a model of Philanthropic Partners, Corporate Partners and Corporate Members. It has a Board made up of academic, government, business and community leaders and a larger council also drawn from these sectors. It has a strong, successful and long serving executive team administering its programs in Australia and Asia.

Asialink also delivers high level forums, international collaborations and exchange programs in education and in the arts and cultural sector that enhance Australia's place in its immediate region of relevance and influence.

AEI does not play a public diplomacy role in the same way as the British Council while Asialink and the Australia Council for the Arts play a much more visible and successful public diplomacy role. They actively work in partnership to promote cultural understanding, people to people links, information exchange and arts residencies between Australia and Asia.

The Asia Education Foundation which is part of Asialink works in partnership with the Curriculum Corporation and each State and Territory Education and Training Department. Its focus is on Asian language literacy at the school level covering both



student language and cultural knowledge and understanding and also teacher training. Its recent collaboration with AEI in the Indonesian Australian Bridge Schools Project is an initiative that is building powerful linkages between Australia and Indonesia.

See: www.bridge.edu.au

There may be some helpful insights in the Asialink model for better promotion of Australian education globally and also for Australia's English language teacher training expertise in the delivery of teacher training both in Australia and Globally. It is also relevant if a British Council model were to be adapted for the Australian context. See: www.asialink.unimelb.edu.au

1.4 Austrade

We believe it will also be helpful to address the current role of Austrade in the promotion of Australian education and training services which in some cases overlaps the role of AEI and causes confusion in the marketplace and internal competition between government departments.

Austrade coordinates events, exhibitions and education promotions in Asia, Europe and Latin America. It articulates its role as supporting the student recruitment and international business objectives of Australian education providers. It has dedicated Education sector advisors at its head office and a network of education specialists in its overseas offices.

1.5 Education UK Partnership

The Education UK model is a partnership between the British Council and the relevant international education providers in the UK. Funding comes from a grant from the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and from education providers who pay a subscription fee as well as a fee for products and services used.

Education UK is able to benefit from the one stop shop approach of the British Council which provides education, language, arts and culture, alumni relations, scholarship management, teacher training, as well as public diplomacy events and exchanges. The British Council is this year celebrating providing 75 years of Cultural Relations. We believe that Education UK needs to be assessed in relation to its role as an integral part of the UK approach to public diplomacy. Education is a cornerstone of the UK public diplomacy agenda and is integrated into a strategic whole of government approach. Australia pays lip service to this.

“We connect people with learning opportunities and creative ideas for the UK to build lasting relationships around the world” (British Council website)

Education UK has a network of international offices, a dynamic website and an active engagement with BBC Television and a network of local FM re-broadcasters. Australian International Education has yet to adopt an active whole of government approach and has not yet fully utilised the benefit of Australia Network Television, its companion website and the Asia Pacific footprint of Radio Australia. See: www.australianetwork.com



We believe that in any Education Australia body separate from AEI which is focused on the Marketing and Promotion of Australian Education and Training there needs to be a mix of backgrounds and skill sets covering Education, the Creative Industries, Business and Industry, Philanthropy and the Aid sector.

We believe that the whole of government approach will need to ensure that education language and the creative arts and cultural sectors begin to speak to each other as partners in international marketing and promotion of Australia.

The British Council Malaysia website illustrates the partnership between the British Council and Education UK in a regional location.

See: www.britishcouncil.org/malaysia

While we believe there are lessons to be learned by Australia from the activities of the British Council there are issues of the British Council competing with its institutional partners. This is particularly relevant in the area of English language training and these matters need to be addressed in any review as the ELICOS sector is a dynamic part of the Education Australia package.

The British Council offers commercially available English language courses offshore and often these are in competition with member institutions of Education UK who are paying subscription fees as part of the marketing and promotion of UK education services. The British Council also oversees the regulation and accreditation of the English language sector.

1.6 Education New Zealand

The other focus of this submission is Education New Zealand which is an education export industry peak body established in 2003 with a Board of Directors whose members are elected by the sector as a whole. Education New Zealand is trying to achieve an outcome in which Board members are elected for their business as well as their educational knowledge and skills rather than their ability to represent a particular sector.

Education New Zealand is responsible for branding, agent training, coordination of exhibitions and fairs, industry training and best practice capacity building as well as the New Zealand Educated website,

Education New Zealand has strategic partnerships with the New Zealand Ministry of Education, New Zealand Trade and Enterprise, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Department of Labour and Tourism New Zealand.

1.7 Conclusion

We believe that in an Education Australia body separate from AEI should be established to focus on the Marketing and Promotion of Australian Education and Training. Such a body needs to have on it a mix of backgrounds and skill sets covering Education, the



Creative Industries, Business and Industry, Philanthropy and the Aid sector. It would also benefit by having some international alumni input.

We believe that the whole of government approach will need to ensure that education (including promotion for private and scholarship students); language, the creative arts and cultural sectors as well as Tourism Australia, Australia Network Television begin to speak to each other as partners in the international marketing and promotion of Australia.

Michael Fay
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August 14th 2009

