

This submission is primarily aimed at (a) (i) **'student safety'** and in some part (ii) **'adequate accommodation'**. The work I have done over many years could also inform (b) **the identification of quality benchmarks and controls for service, advice and support for international students studying at an Australian education institution.**

In essence, without having had time to prepare a full report for you, my main observations/suggestions would be:

- That the Australian Government take an active role with the welfare of international students and work with agencies/organisations to help create a transparent, safe and efficient system within the 'youth travel sector' for those visiting their country. There are significant cases of abuse (neglect, emotional, physical and sexual) of foreign students whilst on such trips, many through unsuitable accommodation placements.
- As above, many Australian citizens have been and continue to be at risk of abuse (and abused) when travelling abroad on such programmes. There is some potential collaborative work and pressure that the Australian Government may be able to place on outgoing organisations and others, to improve standards ranging from 'orientation to foreign placement'.
- Training is needed for host family recruitment to counter the lack of awareness of what to look for or ask on site visits for potential hosts.
- Support is needed for students who require assistance and advice (24/7 help lines, named contacts, welfare officers/counsellors etc)
- Mandatory reporting of child abuse (even if suspected), should be considered for anyone working (paid or unpaid) in this sector, as well as professional support and guidance made available for those wishing to share concerns or intelligence/information from within the sector.
- A monitoring and registration scheme should be considered, linked to a National (or State) criminal records system whereby those hosting, caring for, training or supervising children and young people (to include foreign students) on such programmes are continually assessed to ensure that they are suitable to carry out that work.

Note: I have previously advised the UK Government on the introduction of the 'Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006' (which has led to the ISA registration scheme), specifically in relation to the youth travel sector. In addition, I have advised the UK Government and the NSW Government in relation to the introduction of checks on those working with children and young people.

- Any new system should take account of all the work documented in the Travel Safe series of booklets produced by the Child-Safe charity. This work, together with all the subsequent consultancy, focuses on prevention of abuse and the welfare, safety and pastoral care of international students.
- Internal legislation may need to be examined in relation to statute of limitations placed on certain crimes (given the extent of historical abuse cases I am uncovering, some up to 30 or even 40 years after the event)
- The above Travel Safe series of booklets together with the consultancy work I am undertaking outlines significant suggestions of good practice based on my experience and research - too many in number to outline here given the lateness of my submission.
- Australia is a signatory to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and as such, any work done in this area would be supportive evidence towards its continued commitment to the Convention.

I have attached a copy of a report I presented at the 7th Australasian Conference on Child Abuse and Neglect - Perth, WA 17-20 October 1999, together with a copy of Commonwealth of Australia, Senate, Hansard - Monday 16 October 2006 (comments by Senator Murray re the research work of Child-Safe).

I hope that the report which I gave at the 7th Australasian Conference will give an overview, albeit somewhat dated, of the original work and that my comments above have alluded to the current developments with the charity and the work that is now undertaken.

Yours sincerely

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