



Senate Inquiry into the Welfare of International Students

UniSA Submission

The **University of South Australia (UniSA)** welcomes the opportunity to provide comment on the welfare of international students. UniSA's fulsome response to this important inquiry is captured in the submissions from the Australian Technology Network and Education Adelaide, but in addition we would like to raise other related matters.

UniSA is represented on Minister O'Brien's 'Enhancing the international student experience' task force, which has a focus on student welfare and is working with stakeholders in Adelaide to address the issues that the inquiry raises and their manifestation in South Australia.

UniSA has developed a comprehensive provision of student services, compliant with the ESOS Act and the National Code. The University offers a range of services to ensure student safety on campus, and encourage inclusion and participation in University life. As part of standard practice, the University will continue to address and strengthen its student services, especially in relation to community engagement, social inclusion and student security.

The recent attacks on Indian students have brought to light broader issues facing the Australian higher education sector. For educated opinion leaders, the student safety issues have directed attention to the underlying structural issues which are of priority concern and have the potential to affect the overall brand. The major issues of concern are:

1. lack of quality management of the private Registered Training Organisations (RTOs)
2. unsustainable growth in that subsector
3. distortions driven by the MODL and PR for both the community and for bona fide VET education provision

State regulation of private RTOs

It is clear that in India, there is no understanding of Australia's Federalism hence the constant reference to the Australian Government as a single powerful entity. In light of this there is a need for the States to have a unified approach to regulation of private RTOs across the country. The key issue is the quality of the State and Territory authorities in approving and regulating the RTOs. It may be necessary to suspend approvals on new RTOs until regulation and compliance issues have been properly addressed.

The key issue is *compliance* with the current codes and legislation – greater legislation with the current weak compliance activity will only penalise those providers that already comply, rather than screening out non compliant education providers.

- *UniSA recommends that a unified approach to regulation and compliance of private RTOs be incorporated into TEQSA's remit*
- *UniSA recommends that approvals of new RTOs be suspended until regulation and compliance issues have been properly addressed*

Unsustainable growth

There has been exponential growth in the number and scale of RTOs, as evidenced by the number of institutions listed on the Study in Adelaide website. This list indicates a 70% growth in the number of VET providers since March 2008 (see Appendix A). This growth is unsustainable in both the short and long term. A significant issue is that of student placements. When developing programs, universities are mindful of industry placements, and quotas are set accordingly to ensure that all students can participate in placements. Potentially some of the smaller states such as South Australia will not have the capacity to support the number of placements required by all of the training providers.

- *UniSA recommends that the States set student quotas for RTOs appropriate to the discipline, to ensure capacity to deliver on student placements*

Implications of RTO closures

We have already seen the closure of some RTOs across the country. There are significant implications for both the students and other training providers arising from these closures. Each state needs to carefully plan to manage the fallout from college closures. Media strategies need to be developed, as do plans to ensure the volume of students are appropriately placed.

- *UniSA recommends that each state develops a plan for dealing with RTO closures*

Rebuilding the brand

The Australian Government has a significant opportunity to start rebuilding the brand with the visit of the Deputy Prime Minister to India in September. However, the DPM will need to have concrete plans and actions in order to rebuild the trust in the Australian Government. In a recent UniSA visit to India, it was clear that there are high expectations on the Australian Government to act to ensure the quality of education in Australia is maintained and issues of compliance are addressed.

Australian Education International and Universities Australia need to be investing in substantial long term engagement in our key source markets, such as India and China. The focus should not be on selling and recruitment, but rather on joint research, staff and student exchange and joint conferences.

- *UniSA recommends that AEI and UA pursue opportunities for collaboration and exchange in key source markets such as India and China*

Conclusion

UniSA believes that the Australian higher education sector is at a crossroads in terms of structural imbalances and unintended consequences of the nexus between skilled migration and education provision. The federal government needs to act in relation to state management of the RTO sector. A

whole of government strategy is needed to deal with the issue of education provision as it relates to skilled migration based on the critical shortage list. The government needs to address the issue of appropriate pathways to permanent residency and consider how this nexus can be sustained while the unintended distortions are removed.

Summary of recommendations

It is recommended that:

- a unified approach to regulation and compliance of private RTOs be incorporated into TEQSA's remit
- approvals of new RTOs be suspended until regulation and compliance issues have been properly addressed
- the states set student quotas for RTOs appropriate to the discipline, to ensure capacity to deliver on student placements
- each state develops a plan for dealing with RTO closures
- AEI and UA pursue opportunities for collaboration and exchange in key source markets such as India and China

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APPENDIX A

List of all institutions offering vocational courses in South Australia as at 10 August 2009.

Colleges marked with X have been registered since 7 March 2008. List downloaded from the Study in Australia website (<http://studyinaustralia.gov.au/Sia/en/Tools/InteractiveMap.asp>).

Access College Australia
Adelaide Central School of Art
Adelaide College of Divinity
Adelaide College of Ministries Inc
Adelaide College of Technology X
Adelaide Hospitality and Tourism School
Adelaide Institute of Management and Technology Pty Ltd X
Adelaide Pacific International College Pty Ltd X
Annesley College
Australian Institute for Higher Studies Pty Ltd X
Australian Institute of Business and Trade Studies Pty Ltd X
Australian Institute of Further Academics X
Australian Institute South Australia X
Australian Lutheran College
Bible College of South Australia Inc
Bruce Hartwig Flying School
Cambridge International College
Careers Australia College of Healthcare X
Carrick Institute of Education/Carrick English Language X
Clip Joint Education
Colour Cosmetics Academy
Durban International College Pty Ltd X
Elite Learning Solutions
EQUALS International
Eynesbury College/Eynesbury Institute of Business and Technology/Centre for English Language in the University of South Australia/Eynesbury College Academy of English
Flight Training Adelaide
Flinders University
Gibran Graduate School of Business Pty Ltd
Hosanna International College
Imperial College of Trades X
Institute for the Nations - Australia
International College of Cosmetic Technology X
International College of Hotel Management X
International Wing Chun Academy
Le Cordon Bleu Australia Pty Ltd
National College for Athletic Performance X
Nursing Industry Skills Centre X
Paradise College of Ministries
Quality Training and Hospitality College X
Salford College X

Sheffield College X
South Australian Government Schools
South Australian Health Education Centre
South Australian Institute of Business and Technology (SAIBT)/CELUSA
Southern Cross College of Vocational Education X
Southern Cross Education Institute X
Tabor Adelaide
TAFE South Australia
The University of Adelaide (Adelaide)
Trison Business College
Unitech Institute of Technical and Further Education Pty Ltd X
Universal Network of Infotech Pty Ltd X
University of South Australia (UniSA)