



Submission to the
Australian Senate Inquiry into the Welfare of International Students

Prepared and presented by

Margaret Harrison
Managing Director
Our HR Company Pty Ltd
48a Toorak Road
South Yarra Vic 3141

Tel: (03) 9866 3866



Introduction

Our HR Company welcomes the opportunity to make a submission to the Australian Senate's Inquiry into the welfare of International Students.

We recognise that international education is Australia's third largest export industry after coal and iron ore, and we also recognise the cultural value international students bring to Australia.

Our interest is in the cultural integration of students. We believe cultural orientation is an integral factor in providing students with a positive and memorable experience, and together with the English language would help students feel comfortable and welcome in our society. Social inclusion will occur if people know the parameters and expectations of the society in which they live, and respect the customs, behaviours and norms of the host country.

Cultural orientation can be seen as a mutual obligation which would differentiate Australia and enhance its reputation as a country of choice for international students when seeking high quality education.

Senate Inquiry's Terms of reference

- Student safety;
- Adequate and affordable accommodation;
- **Social inclusion;**
- Student Visa Requirements;
- **Adequate international students supports** and advocacy;
- Employment rights and protections from exploitation;
- Appropriate pathways to permanency

This submission responds to two terms of reference:

- Social inclusion
- International student support



Our Concept

At Our HR Company we believe we can contribute to the International Student industry by providing a program based on the observed needs by its Managing Director, Margaret Harrison. Working across Asia for several years, the cultural differences between countries are abundantly clear and most particularly the differences in behaviours, customs and norms. The working title of a cultural orientation program we are developing is '**Settling In@**: a cultural orientation program for International Students'.

International students provide diversity and support to the education sector in Australia which in turn benefits our students and the whole community. This provides us with the opportunity to give back and assist their immediate integration and well-being while in Australia.

Pre- and post-arrival, students are presented with a great deal of information about life in Australia such as housing, banking, work, public transport and safety but nothing about behaviours that are acceptable in a western country. Unfortunately we still live in a world where some people do not readily accept differences and this often results in students feeling uncomfortable and alienated in their host country.

This program would address all aspects of different personal behaviours, customs and norms, together with practical realities, safety issues, and the opportunities that are readily available in the community for social integration. The optimum time for involving students in this orientation is within the first weeks of their arrival. In some instances it may also be beneficial pre-arrival.

Term of reference: Social inclusion

Cultural orientation is integral to the welfare and social inclusion of International Students. It will differentiate Australia as a host country, and provide an opportunity to significantly contribute to their comfort and well-being.



Support

We have been working on a cultural orientation program with

- Victorian Multicultural Commission
- A.F.I.S.
- Consul General of India
- Federation of Indian Associations Victoria
- Victoria Police

The value of impartiality

- We believe a cultural orientation program presents a mutual obligation opportunity for Australia to demonstrate the value it places on International Students, and also to be a mechanism to integrate new and emerging communities.
- We believe a cultural orientation program needs to be provided by people with no vested interests in the industry. Universities, private providers and agents have vested interests and shy away from the 'difficult' issues of behaviours, customs and expectations.
- The provision of cultural orientation will require investment, and the provider will need the experience, expertise and resources to conduct such a program nationally and perhaps internationally.

Cultural orientation must be impartial, and include areas which are often deemed "difficult".



Who we are

Our HR Company

Our HR Company is a specialised training company based in Melbourne with clients both nationally and internationally. All training programs are customised for client needs and the company works across a wide variety of industries and local governments. Clients include ANZ, Fosters, Telstra, BT Global Services in Asia, Wynn Macau, MGM Grand Macau, Crown, IOOF, Lanier, CPA, MAV, and many others. Facilitators are all post-graduate qualified and highly experienced.

Margaret Harrison BMus (Hons), MEd, MBA, Managing Director

After a career in academic and corporate life, Margaret Harrison established Our HR Company to provide customised solutions to business and government in the areas of strategic implementation, management/people development, and change management.

Before establishing Our HR Company in 2003, Margaret spent four years at adidas as Director of Human Resources for Australia and Asia Pacific, led the Change Management project at RACV overseeing the merger of RACV and NRMA Insurances, and several years at PwC as Senior Management Consultant in the Change Management Group working with a variety of industries both in Australia and Asia. Prior to corporate life, Margaret was Lecturer and Principal Lecturer at the Australian Catholic University.

Margaret has extensive knowledge of the South-east Asian region having conducted programs in China, Hong Kong, Macau and Malaysia. She is sensitive to people's needs and demonstrates great interest and respect for individuals.

Our HR Company is supported by the services of 8 sessional consultants, all of whom are post-graduate qualified with many years of corporate and academic experience.

Delegation

Further to this submission, and after recognising this issue while working in Asia for the past 2 years, we would welcome a delegation to present to the Committee and explain in person the factors we believe are integral to cultural integration and social inclusion.