

# International Education and Training Advisory Council - Queensland

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## Submission

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There are approximately 1,200 CRICOS (Commonwealth Register of Institutions and Courses for Overseas Students) registered education and training institutions in Australia, ranging from niche providers of specialised courses and English language colleges to universities. Of these institutions, privately owned providers in the post-school sector deliver education and training to 86% of international vocational education and training students and 13% of international higher education students. In addition, three quarters (75%) of all ELICOS students choose to study with a private provider. In Queensland the private sector's share of international students are 87% of those studying VET, 12% of those undertaking higher education, and 71% undertaking ELICOS.

Australia has been a global leader in international education for decades. However, we are at risk of losing that position in an increasingly competitive industry because government policies undervalue the international education sector's contribution (and that of privately owned institutions in particular) to our future relevance, prosperity and security.

The future of international education in Australia will rely on a multi-sector, multi-agency and multi-disciplinary approach.

The recent report of the International Education Advisory Council identified a number of changes required to re-build Australia's international education sector.

Since the report was published the introduction of Streamlined Visa Processing in the university sector, combined with post-study work rights for students completing degree level courses have seen parts of the higher education sector bounce back – with international student numbers again on the rise. English language centres attached to, or working in partnership with the public university sector, have similarly seen enrolments increase.

For the private tertiary sector (and both public and private VET providers) the sector remains in deep decline and requires government intervention to help it rebuild.

Many of the mechanisms required to rebuild the international VET sector and to introduce parity for students wishing to study at private providers rest with the Federal government.

The Queensland government can and should play a leadership role with respect to encouraging the Commonwealth government to:

1. rethink its current student visa arrangements and to consider the proposal for a fairer and more equitable student visa framework put together by all of the International Education Peak bodies. The proposed visa framework brings immigration risk, educational quality risk, and business viability risk into a coherent risk framework and would provide all low risk providers the chance to offer simpler and easier student visa arrangements to their students. Details of the risk framework are provided at Appendix A.
2. undertake a public review of the Genuine Temporary Entrant criterion for student visas and to publish visa refusal rates by educational sector.
3. undertake a comprehensive review of the ESOS Act with a view to reducing excessive (and previously ineffectual) regulations and instead ensuring that only those aspects of the Act and its supporting regulations that genuinely add value to the experience of international students remain in place
4. extend post-study work rights to VET students - following the Knight Review, post-study work rights have been available to all higher education providers, not only the university sector. VET providers should be able to offer their Diploma students the same rights. Australia's

history of international education includes a proud record of offering high quality VET courses. Affording post-study work rights to VET providers will deliver the dual benefit of helping the international education sector to grow and diversify, while also helping to address the nation and Queensland's skills shortages in a targeted way

5. encourage the Chinese government to recognise qualifications issued under the Australian Qualifications Framework by private tertiary institutions (currently of the 10,000 non-Chinese educational institutions recognised by the Chinese government all of Australia's public universities and TAFEs are included on the list but only three private institutions are listed – one Sydney-based private provider, plus NIDA and the College of Law). This current lack of recognition is a major inhibitor to partnerships between Chinese and Australian private providers, as well as to encouraging more Chinese students to Australia.

Specifically to assist Queensland providers the government should:

**1. *Promote international student engagement and support including exploring options for scholarships to Queensland for international students.***

- The Queensland government and local governments need to place greater recognition on the social, economic and strategic contributions international students make to the Queensland economy and communities.
- An awareness raising campaign across the community should develop a stronger understanding of these significant contributions and place greater importance on the role the entire community must perform to ensure international students are afforded a friendly and safe stay in our state.
- Providers should establish innovative internship models in collaboration with specific industry sectors to enhance the overall cultural and educational experience for students by value adding the experience with exposure to Australian workplace environments as inturns.

**2. *Develop a program of offshore visits focusing on potential areas of growth for Queensland's international education and training industry.***

- The coordination of outbound delegations is valuable to the market awareness, growth and diversification of the training sector. A program of offshore visits should be focused on achieving the following outcomes by identifying countries into tier levels of priorities based on their economic, political and social importance to Queensland.
  - attracting students to Queensland by identifying the skills and qualifications they require in their own domestic settings, that match with Queensland provider capabilities
  - growing educational export opportunities for Queensland providers should be mapped against priority industry sectors and markets in countries that are rated on a tier level of priorities.
- Establish a mechanism where providers can follow and support Queensland businesses as they establish international operations, form government relationships and industry partnerships.

**3. *Advocate Queensland's position of Australian international education and training policy particularly with respect to those policy issues that are having an adverse impact on the sector.***

- ACPET performs an ongoing role advocating on behalf of the private training sector to the Commonwealth government on a wide range of international education concerns (see previous list on page 2).
- ACPET and its members welcome the opportunity to engage with the Queensland government to discuss and work in collaboration to influence the Commonwealth policy framework around international students with consistent and prioritised messages.

**4. *Examine education export opportunities for Queensland in growth areas, particularly as Asia's middle class consumers emerge as the world's largest market.***

- ACPET members have been delivering training in offshore arrangements for many years, despite the challenges of establishing offshore delivery models and partnerships, which are often risky, culturally challenging and expensive.
- ACPET encourages the Queensland government to commit funding that supports providers to establish unique partnership arrangements that represent and are built upon quality educational standards and sustainable commercial business practices.
- This can be achieved in many ways:
  - Trade and Investment Queensland needs to organise more targeted delegations focused on industry sectors, including supply chains to those sectors, to Australia's key Asian markets to realise the potential opportunity.
  - a concerted effort needs to be aligned to these delegations to prepare providers for the discussions that lay ahead. Professional development activities can be delivered before, during and after trade missions to support and nurture the growth and awareness of providers entering into new offshore markets.
  - a business to business approach, where Queensland operations move into offshore environments require identification and connection to training providers that have the capacity and capability to develop foreign workforces, working in semi or simulated Australian workplace conditions and to Australian educational standards.

**5. *Facilitate collaboration between training providers, universities, schools, peak bodies, and industry to maximise opportunities for Queensland's participation in international education and training.***

- Australia's Qualifications Framework and course consistency leads the world but most importantly it streamlines occupational pathways and opens up the opportunity for collaborative articulation arrangements to occur between the different sectors of the education and training industry.
- In this regard the Queensland government needs to become more visible and highly supportive of public private partnership models in the training and tertiary sectors and where appropriate facilitate discussions that reach mutually beneficial outcomes.
- Collaboration requires leadership to establish an easier way for providers to do business with each other; to become more innovative and competitive in a global market; and to ultimately raise the global profile and positioning of Queensland's educational capability.