Association of Australian Education Representatives in India

Objective 1

1. Are there further reforms governments should consider that will improve the quality and integrity of the sector?

• The Evidence Levels classification (EL) or risk rating of universities is very confusing and potentially unfair. Australian universities are indeed known for their high quality and world-class programs, regardless of their evidence level classification. Students may unknowingly choose an EL 2 or 3 university without fully understanding the implications it could have on their visa application processing time. This could lead to significant delays and frustrations, which may ultimately impact their academic and personal plans. And on the other hand, students will be forced to choose EL 1 university which don't match their profile or other aspirations.

• Have a straightforward student visa grant mechanism and shorter processing time frame

• The current streamlined visa processing approach is outdated and did not serve its purpose.

• Linking student visas directly to institutes (as in NZ, UK or Canada) and so genuine students needing to change providers can lodge student visas onshore again and prove that they meet the other requirements. In this way it would make it more difficult for individuals to engage in unethical practices like course hopping. By tying visas to specific institutions, the authorities can better regulate student movements and ensure compliance with visa conditions.

• Introducing the requirement for a fresh student visa upon changing courses or institutes onshore, regardless of the level of study, would further strengthen the integrity of the system. This would necessitate all students to reapply for their visas when making such changes, providing an opportunity for authorities to reassess their eligibility, funds and other compliance. Also it gives genuine students an opportunity to change providers and prove the Genuine Student requirement

• Have clarity on the Standard 4 of the ESOS act on use of sub agents or aggregators. Currently untrained agents are posing themselves as university / institute representatives. Students don't benefit and they get inaccurate information on all aspects of studying in Australia. Further its also encouraging unethical, dishonest marketing practices with no accountability to anyone. Institutes don't have any control over such agents' behaviors. The entire essence of appointing "agents" is lost with such concept

TAFE in Australia offers a valuable educational pathway that equips students with practical skills, flexibility, and strong employment prospects. International students wanting to study TAFE programs at public institutes and universities need to be encouraged and VET programs which are high in demand all over the world should be marketed

2. What more can providers do to improve the integrity of the international education sector?

• Treat prospective students as customers

• Providers must check the experience and expertise of education agents and appoint them only after conducting transparent due diligence

• Ensure that there is no conflict of interest

• Ensure that agents are fully trained with all aspects of studying in Australia

•   Providers must promote self-regulation of agents and support organisations such as AAERI (www.aaeri.org.in)

•   Ensure that all agents are trained and have through knowledge of Australian education   related topics (courses, admission requirements, ESOS framework, visa procedures, code of ethics etc)

•   Institutes must publish the list of all agents in every country (so prospective students are also aware of such university appointed agents)

•   Online aggregators and use of sub-agents recruiting on behalf of university / institute has many potential risks – providers need to be aware of such risks and must not engage with such aggregators

•   Providers must develop partnerships with local businesses and industries to create internship and work experience opportunities for international students

•   The Confirmation of Enrolment (CoE) in PRISMS must have the name of the agent

Objective 2

1. What factors should inform government's approach to allocating international student enrolments across sectors, providers, and locations in Australia?

•   Assess the capacity of institutions/universities to handle additional students without compromising educational quality.

•   Ensure that providers meet high standards of education and support services, maintaining Australia's reputation for quality education.

•   Align enrolments with sectors experiencing skill shortages to support workforce development and economic growth of Australia and other nations.

•   Ensure alignment with visa regulations and immigration policies to facilitate smooth enrolment processes.

•   Consider having new international partnerships and agreements that can influence student flows.

•   Respond to the demand from key source countries positively

•   Providers must promote initiatives that foster social interaction between international and domestic students

•   Benchmark and position Australia as a competitive destination for international students in terms of tuition fee, living expenses, student support and also focus on the academic strength, world-class universities, safe campuses and post study work options

•   Students must be encouraged to study at world-class Australian TAFE towards technical level vocational, trade or professional qualifications. TAFE needs to be promoted in various countries including the sub-continent

•   Have a clear agent code and better monitoring and mechanism of agent's behavior and compliance (Promote self regulation of agents offshore and must agent organizations such as AAERI)

2. What considerations for government should inform the overall level of international students in Australia?

•   •   Government must assess the economic contributions of international students through tuition fees, living expenses and their impact on local economies.

•   Consider the fact that international student policies can affect diplomatic and trade relations with key source countries.

•   Certain countries (China, India and other such) are key source of international students and they cannot be ignored

•   Evaluate the potential for international students to fill skill shortages in critical industries and contribute to the labor market, both during and after their studies.

•   Have more scholarships for high achieving international students from certain key countries

•   Australia must remain competitive with countries like the UK , the USA and Ireland and aim to become the world's best international student destination

3. How will this approach to managing the system affect individual providers?

•   Institutes can develop programs / courses which are highly in demand by employers. The univertsities and colleges can invest in career guidance programs that inform students and job seekers about in-demand skills and career paths. Establish advisory panels comprising representatives from key industries to provide direct insights into skills needs, training and emerging trends. Make internships a mandatory component of the program for certain courses in skill shortage, ensuring international students gain practical experience.

•   Work with screened and ethical agencies and look for quality before quantity

4. Should sectors other than higher education and vocational education and training, such as schools, ELICOS and non-award be included in approaches to manage the system for sustainable growth?

Yes, each sector contributes to the economy. A diverse and interconnected education ecosystem is a benefit

5. How should government determine which courses are best aligned to Australia's skills needs?

•   Develop partnerships with employers to gain firsthand information about the skills they seek and the gaps they encounter in the workforce. Engage in consultations with all stakeholders, including industry bodies, trade unions, educational institutions, and community organizations, to gather diverse perspectives on skills needs.

•   Promote awareness among international students on high demand industries and occupations to attract interest and enrolments in those programs. Allocate grants, incentives and scholarships to programs identified under the skill shortages. Extend post study opportunities for all courses which can fill the skill need irrespective of their course level

6. How should government implement a link between the number of international students and an increased supply of student housing?

Work closely with educational institutions, private developers, and local communities. Adjust zoning regulations to facilitate the construction of student housing near campuses. Provide incentives for private developers to build student housing, such as tax breaks, grants, or low-interest loans. Implement affordable housing schemes for international students ensuring affordability.

7. What transition arrangements would support the implementation of a new approach?

Allow existing student visa holders to continue under the previous system until their visas expire, providing certainty and minimizing disruption for those already studying in Australia.

Linking student visas to specific institutes will also benefit in many ways

Remove the current classification of public universities (under the Evidence Levels)

Objective 3

1. What are the barriers to growth in offshore and transnational delivery of Australian education and training?

Ensuring that the quality of education delivered offshore matches Australian standards can be challenging, particularly in maintaining consistent teaching practices, staff and assessment standards. Competing with well-established local education institutes / universities who have a better understanding of the local market and lower operating costs can be difficult. Students may seek to study abroad for better exposure and living standards which may not be available in studying back in the country of their origin

2. Where can government direct effort to support transnational education?

Provide financial support through grants, loans, and scholarships for such transnational programs. Introduce a bonus points system in skill migration where students who have completed certain qualifications via transnational education programs, receive additional points for migration and other visas. Provision of post study work to graduates who qualify from such transnational education