

19<sup>th</sup> May 2021

## **Australian Strategy for International Education 2021-2030** Consultation Paper – CITSA Submission

The CIT Student Association (CITSA) is the only TAFE, and most likely VET, independent student association and has a proud record of working with the CIT to provide the best student experience for its students.

CITSA's mission is to use the power of our partnerships (both on and off campus) to enhance the student experience.

We work to prepare students to be active, useful participants in society

We aim to be:

- The student issue experts for CIT students
- The primary touch point for CIT on student issues

CITSA is a not-for-profit entity that is recognised as the official CIT student organisation and provider of non-academic support services on campus for students. Under an MOU with CIT, CITSA operates bookshops, canteens, cafes and office shop-fronts for the benefit of students, as well as organising events to contribute to positive student experiences (this is extracted from the Annual Report).

In our submission we will provide feedback based on our experience working with and for International students at the CIT. CIT also has dedicated International Student Advisors and an extensive Pastoral Care Officer network to support students who also have been valuable in helping identify areas that could be enhanced as part of any Australian Strategy for International Education. Whilst our experience will be based on our direct experience with TAFE students and our ongoing membership of the Council of International Students Australia (CISA) I feel that much of our submission is equally relevant for all on-shore students and would also benefit off-shore students.

I will address each of the discussion questions from our student perspective and note that whilst some of the scenarios or their solutions may already exist that improved visibility of the resources/support or contact points for students at Institution and State/Federal level is vital. As members of CISA we also support and endorse their submission to the consultation paper and believe that an effective strategy can only be developed with the inclusion of the student voice.



## 1. What are the key priorities for a new Australian Strategy for international education?

- a. Clear “independent” information available for students. The [MySkills](#) website is an example of a centralized resource for Australian students to access to understand training, career and industry information prior or during training. Perhaps there can be an International Student version to avoid misinformation being provided by agents, representatives or the institution itself, particularly when it comes to post or during “study” employment.
- b. Visible student-facing networks to support students which may complement existing Institution provided/employed networks. The current regulations prohibit Institution staff from advising students on non-student visa information but that can leave a void of information/resources for students who are considering on-going access to the post study work/visa environment in Australia

## 2. Students should be at the centre of the new Strategy. How can Australian education providers deliver the best possible student experience both now and in the future?

- a. Implementation of a Best Practice Guide in the International Student Journey from enquiry to training, noting that many students have post-training engagement with Australia. A strategy to develop a Best Practice Guide (with student input) before any institution can deliver courses/training to International students can ensure that students can have confidence in the providers they choose.
- b. Student co-design in course delivery, student support and student experience with ongoing review of the needs of students at both course, industry and local level. [Student Voice Australia](#) is one organization committed to develop systems to support co-design and CISA (with an expansion of its resources to be a regular pulse check on student experience) should both be resourced to ensure appropriate measures for student experience and student success.

## 3. What changes are needed to make Australia more globally competitive over the next decade?

- i. **Policy and regulatory flexibility are important in enabling providers to innovate. How can we utilise these settings to pursue opportunities, and in what other ways can we work together to ensure Australia remains globally competitive?**

In the “skills training” needs of Australian Industry now and into the future we need to consider how to build connections or partnerships with industry to address local skill shortfalls or ensure a global workforce. As an example, access to the Australian Apprenticeship system for International Students as a “product of the International Strategy” may provide outcomes for students, industry and the Australian economy at the same time.



#### **4. How can providers, governments and stakeholders work together to achieve diversification opportunities (for example of disciplines, source countries, study destinations and delivery models)?**

In the TAFE/VET sector it is clear that we could amplify the “domestic” training/industry partnerships both to the off shore student/employment market as well as to expand access to the global workforce for on shore students and industry. Industry could expand the traditional “traineeship” model to include areas of current or future need and partner with relevant stakeholders to deliver outcomes. The VISA system may need to be re-configured to support work and study opportunities.

#### **5. What are the necessary skills for the future that students should be prepared for?**

- i. How can Australia improve employability outcomes for international students, ensuring they have the necessary skills to compete in a globally competitive labour market?**

The National Skills Commission in its recent paper on the [Australian Skills Classification](#) highlights core competencies (commonly called enterprise skills or soft skills) and this forms an excellent start point to consider the skills focus for employability in the global market on an industry basis. Further work on the link of that research and the global market place could deliver packages, embedded in existing training or available as an extra package to support improved employability outcomes. It could also support delivery of off shore packages on an industry or country/region basis.

#### **6. How do we create a uniquely Australian education experience?**

- i. What is our value proposition for both international and domestic students?**
- ii. How do we offer an Australian education experience while complementing the value of Australian offshore and online education?**

An answer to the question of what value proposition Australia can offer should be a reflection of understanding what student wants as an outcome from their study in Australia or with an Australian institution. So our value proposition can and will vary, the student who wants skills to support employment across the globe will want globally recognized training and/or experience whereas a student who looks to diversify their CV for employment will look for an education experience that delivers that deliver quality training and support as necessary to finalise their training. Australia will also need to acknowledge that students and industry commence training to secure employment in Australia and therefore clear and visible connections to industry need to be created – particularly as we identify and target skilled migration to support our Australian economy and future industry needs.



## **7. Community support for the international education sector is important for the sector's social licence. How can the benefits this sector provides to Australia be better understood by wider community?**

As a broad response greater visibility of our diverse student population as another example of the diversity of the Australian community can create further evidence of the value of Australian education. The challenge not yet approached is the clear link that education has to industry and jobs. The perceived "conflict" of a student visa being for only education and yet the clear paths developed and supported by industry and government for students in post-study in Australia does confuse the message about the value of the sector.

If we can mature the dialogue about skills, industry and developing and supporting the Australian community – via a range of "students" perhaps we can reduce the negative outcomes and enhance the perceived and real value of the international education sector. All levels of Australian governments, industry and education institutions need to role model examples of international education (on shore and off shore) that build a fairer, safer Australia and beyond.

## **8. What else should the Council for International Education and the Australian Government consider in developing the new Strategy?**

What is vital is clear and accountable metrics for "student success". The first measure of student success must reflect what a student identifies as THEIR outcome (in this case from the training they receive). Whilst the outcome may change across their student journey we should then have other points throughout their international education to pulse check this. I believe there is room for more "student" data to support student outcomes to both highlight best practice and to focus on improvement as needed.

Also, we need to ensure a well-resourced student representative body, like CISA, can like CITSA provide the dual role of independent resource for students and also a touch point for Government on student issues. A student facing organization that is resourced to support, develop and promote the international education experience to its peers will further create the space for a peer-identified uniquely Australian education experience. In a consumer driven world, a strong peer endorsement of Australia will maximise the resources of ALL stakeholders who benefit from a vibrant, resilient, student focused International Education Strategy.

In conclusion we welcome the opportunity to provide additional information if required or to support ongoing feedback from students or in the development of the Strategy or Action Plan.

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