International education makes urgent plea at Adelaide conference

Australia’s international education sector will make an urgent plea to State and Federal politicians to help rebuild the struggling sector when delegates meet at the Australian Council for Private Education and Training (ACPET) National Conference in Adelaide this week.

The conference, one week out from the Federal Election, will see Federal and State political leaders outline their visions for the future of Australia’s tertiary education sector, but ACPET CEO, Claire Field said the time for rhetoric is past and the sector desperately needs a government champion.

“This Federal election is a critical one for the international education sector and its future,” Ms Field said.

“Despite some rebounding in the university sector, the majority of the vocational education and training, English language and schools sectors remain in deep decline.”

“With the most expensive and inflexible student visas in the world, a complex and stifling regulatory system and a reluctance to aggressively promote Australian education abroad, Australian governments are turning potential students away from Australia and into the welcoming arms of our competitors in Canada, New Zealand, the UK and the USA,” Ms Field said.

The ACPET conference will be addressed by leading politicians in the portfolio including Minister for Employment, Skills and Training, Brendan O’Connor MP, Shadow Minister for Employment Participation, Sussan Ley MP, Independent Senator Nick Xenophon, South Australian Minister for Employment, Higher Education and Skills, Grace Portolesi MP and South Australian Shadow Minister for Education, Families and Training, David Pisoni MP.

Ms Field said the conference was the one of the last opportunities for political candidates to address a sector that was concerned about political indifference to its protracted decline, and she encouraged speakers to come armed with clear and practical plans for the sector’s future.

“Australia’s education sector has been clear about what needs to be done to rebuild our industry, with a coalition of peak bodies earlier this month releasing a joint action plan for international education. We were heartened to see an immediate response from the Coalition, but we still await a response from the current government. That’s simply not good enough.”

“International education remains Australia’s fourth-largest export industry, and the largest services export in South Australia. There is simply too much at stake for this sector to continue suffering under political indifference.”

Media Invitation:
What: ACPET National Conference
When: Thursday 29th August to Friday 30th August
Where: Adelaide Convention Centre
Conference program: www.acpet2013.com.au
Contact: To arrange interviews or media access call Ben Eade on 0406 641 881