

EDUCATION INNOVATION UNDER THREAT



Dear Prime Minister

It is with regret that I write this open letter urging you to act on the numerous reports and reviews your Government has commissioned to support international education. Your delay threatens organisations like mine, our students and our staff.

As a former Minister for Tertiary Education you know and understand the importance of quality in tertiary education. Many reforms that you introduced are now in place and working well. But now you are putting jobs and the sector at risk by failing to:

1. Act on Michael Knight's recommendations from the 2011 review of international student visas;
2. Release the outcomes of the Assessment Level Framework Review of student visa settings; and,
3. Respond to the report of the International Education Advisory Council (the Chaney Council).

Your own Asian Century White Paper makes it clear that international education is critical to our nation and is one of the key links between Australia and the rest of the world. Research for the Australian Council for Private Education and Training (ACPET) by Deloitte Access Economics shows that Australia today earns \$14.7 billion per annum through international education down \$2 billion each year for the two previous years. Even with that downturn the industry provides 130,000 full-time equivalent jobs.

After the turmoil that hit the sector in 2008-2009 your government acted to make it simpler for international students to come to Australia and study at universities, but not at institutions like mine. Your government's reluctance to support small, niche, education providers and their students is alarming.

When I started what is now JMC Academy in 1982, educational programs in audio production didn't exist. In the early 1980s I ran a commercial recording studio, where onlookers would frequently enquire about private lessons. Demand grew so quickly that delivering classes became my full time job. In the early 1990s I began delivering multimedia programs when very few people understood what multimedia was.

Today audio production and digital media programs can be found in nearly every university around the globe and many TAFEs in Australia. JMC Academy now delivers degrees and vocational programs in three states to more than 2000 students from Australia and almost 100 students from 27 other countries. We have links with many of the world's leading universities and colleges. In 2012 we moved to a purpose built \$30 million campus.

There are many success stories in the Australian education sector similar to mine. It saddens me that JMC Academy's success would be unlikely with the policy settings we have today.

Filling an educational niche that a university or TAFE can't fill is part of Australia's innovative edge. Not all students (whether they are Australian or international) want or need to study with a large institution. I urge you to recognise and celebrate small businesses in the education sector when you respond to the National Skills Standards Council proposed changes to the regulatory standards for small providers.

More urgently, I ask you to act on the advice you have received and to extend improved visa processing arrangements to international students in non-university providers, rather than seeking to only reward large, homogenous public institutions.

Yours sincerely

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