MEDIA STATEMENT
Thursday, December 16th, 2010

Student Visa Review a Welcome Step Towards International Education Stability

The Australian Government's 'Strategic Review of the Student Visa System' will provide a welcome opportunity for proper industry consultation to help stabilise the international education sector, the Australian Council for Private Education and Training said today.

ACPET a/g CEO, Claire Field, said she was very pleased the Government had announced the review, and that the terms of reference responded effectively to the concerns raised by industry in recent months.

"This is a very important review for the stability, prosperity and future of Australia's third largest export industry, and I congratulate the Australian Government on responding effectively to the concerns of industry in drafting the terms of reference," Ms Field said.

"Addressing the growing disparities between student visa practices in Australia and those in our competitor countries such as the USA, UK, and Canada, is critical if this industry is to stop the worrying trend of contraction, job losses and institute closures."

Ms Field also said that short term measures to simplify student visa assessment levels would help to bring Australian international education closer into line with competitor countries, but more work needed to be done.

"We are encouraged by announcements that simplify and streamline visa assessment levels in the higher education sector, but data points to the need to extend these changes to Australia's high quality vocational education and training sector. We look forward to working with the Australian Government to do that."

"International Education is one of Australia's great export success stories, contributing tremendous social, economic and diplomatic benefit to the nation."

"But those benefits rely upon legislative and policy settings that ensure Australia remains an attractive and welcoming destination for students seeking high quality, industry responsive education and training."

"In particular, this review offers an opportunity for industry and Government to collaborate to bring greater stability and consistency to student visa processing in Australia, which should help to reassure overseas markets that international education in Australia remains a reliable and predictable destination for prospective students.

"Put simply, this review must help to develop a student visa system that puts us back in the leader's position in global international education."

"ACPET applauds the Australian Government for responding to industry concerns through this review, and we look forward to contributing to the review in 2011."

Media Contact: Ben Eade, 0406 641 881