MEDIA STATEMENT
Friday, February 20, 2009
Monash Call for Migration Cuts Out Of Touch, Puts Australian Industry at Risk

The Australian Council for Private Education and Training (ACPET) today rejected calls from a Monash University report to cut Australia’s migration intake by two-thirds, saying the knee-jerk reaction would actually put jobs at risk, not protect them.

“This report is out-of-touch and offensive for the many thousands of skilled migrants who, for generations, have brought tremendous benefits to the Australian community,” said ACPET National Executive Officer, Andrew Smith.

“Even more alarming, though, is that the authors of the report clearly underestimate the devastating impact that such a reduction in migration would have on the Australian economy.”

“By taking a short-term, protectionist view of the global financial crisis, this report fails to see that protecting Australian industry also means protecting the many billions of dollars that migration brings to Australia and adopting a long-term, well-balanced migration policy.”

“International education is Australia’s largest services export and contributes more than $15 billion to the economy each year. If Australia were to cut our migrant intake by the levels proposed by Doctors Birrell and Healey, we would see Australian businesses going broke almost overnight.” Mr Smith said.

“And there would be similar impacts on our incredibly valuable tourism and hospitality industries as well.”

“What this report overlooks is that the very fabric of Australia’s economy is built around a culture of migration. Simply put, to walk away from that culture during a time of financial instability would be economically reckless and dangerous.”

“The Australian Government has been actively seeking to strike the right balance in making measured, long term reforms to skilled migration, and ACPET is very supportive of that approach,” Mr Smith said.

“But it is disappointing that this process is seemingly being undermined by an out-of-touch report that purports to have the best interests of Australian businesses at heart, but in reality would do more harm to Australian jobs than good.”

Andrew Smith is available for comment
Media Contact: Ben Eade, Wilkinson Media, 0434 708 095