MEDIA RELEASE
Friday, November 26th, 2010

Student Visa Changes Ignore Industry Consultation
Government Must Work With Industry to Avert Impending Crisis

Only days after sitting down with the industry to urgently address the need for student visa changes to support Australia's International Education sector, the Australian Government has announced changes which put students, colleges and Australian jobs in jeopardy and misrepresent consultation with industry, according to the Australian Council for Private Education and Training (ACPET).

ACPET A/g CEO, Claire Field, said today that she was shocked and dismayed that the Australian Government had ignored warnings from education and business leaders, and grossly misled the Australian public by suggesting the major education peak bodies supported the changes.

“Student visa changes announced yesterday by the Australian Government will be devastating a large section of Australia’s international education sector,” Ms Field said.

“Australians will lose their jobs and businesses will close as a direct result of these changes.”

Ms Field said the Government was misleading the Australian public by suggesting the changes were uniformly supported by industry and that the Government had consulted extensively to inform their decisions.

“I am furious that the Australian Government would so recklessly and contemptuously misrepresent consultations with the international education sector to justify these changes.”

“If this is the Australian Government’s idea of industry consultation, then clearly consultative mechanisms have failed.”

“If the government is serious about seeking input from the sector, I implore the Immigration Minister to establish a new, effective mechanism for consultation with industry leaders, as proposed at this week’s International Education Taskforce meeting.”

“A Tourist Visa Advisory Group has already been established and is working effectively. Our sector urgently needs to establish a similar Student Visa Advisory Group so that policy changes like this take into account industry feedback about damaging unintended consequences.”

Ms Field said that, in releasing the change, the Minister's supporting documentation states that the change will have "mutual benefits for the Department and the industry" and that a regulatory impact statement is not required as the change will have no impact on the industry or the economy.

“In no other industry of this size, this importance and this potential would Government justify such a substantial change as being for its own benefit. Nor would it misrepresent the nature of its dealings with the industry.”

“We would not accept it for our resources, our tourism or our agricultural sectors, and we should not be made to accept it for our international education sector.”

Claire Field is Available for Interview
Media Contact: Ben Eade 0406 641 881 or Jenny Muir 0415 401 200