Government closes Student visa loopholes

Tough new measures to crack down on the abuse of the Student visa program will ensure only genuine international students are accepted to study in Australia, the Minister for Immigration and Citizenship, Senator Chris Evans, said today.

Addressing the American Chamber of Commerce in Perth, Senator Evans said the measures would further strengthen the integrity of the Student visa program.

“This latest round of changes strikes the right balance between making the visa application process easier for genuine students while imposing additional checks on those who may seek to abuse the system,” Senator Evans said.

The latest measures include changes to the assessment of students studying more than one course, increased powers to cancel visas and streamlining the processing of postgraduate students.

“These measures build on the changes already introduced to ensure the Student visa program is not open to abuse,” Senator Evans said.

“Those students studying more than one course will now be required to meet the highest level of risk assessment within their package of courses.

“This measure will help reduce fraud by ensuring students are not able to select courses they do not intend to complete, simply to receive a more favourable risk assessment level.”

The Minister said changes had also been made to the Migration Regulations to strengthen the visa cancellation guidelines where a student is found to have deferred or suspended their studies for non-genuine reasons.

“International students who are genuinely experiencing difficult circumstances will still be able to take temporary leave from their studies,” Senator Evans said.

“However, my department now has an improved capacity to verify students’ claims where there are not compassionate or compelling reasons for deferral or suspension.”

The visa requirements for prospective postgraduate students have been streamlined for applicants from all countries.

“This will enable postgraduate research sector applicants to lodge applications using the eVisa facility and support growth in this sector,” Senator Evans said.

“This decision is based on the low level of fraud and high level of compliance with visa conditions in the sector.”

In combination, these measures will support a Student visa program that facilitates the entry of genuine international students to Australia to study full-time.

“These measures support both the integrity of the program and the quality of Australia’s education industry,” Senator Evans said.

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