

Response to NSW Tertiary Education Plan and Knowledge Statement DGS10/843

Navitas Ltd welcomes the opportunity to respond to the NSW Government's Tertiary Education Plan and Knowledge Statement.

Navitas endorses the NSW Government's priorities for the tertiary sector outlined in the Introduction to NSW Tertiary Education Plan

- 1. Developing a highly skilled workforce to support economic growth and innovation*
- 2. Increasing participation and attainment in tertiary education to boost productivity*
- 3. Attracting international students and enriching their Australian experience*
- 4. Supporting tertiary education and research infrastructure initiatives and regional development*
- 5. Facilitating research and development (R&D) and innovation*
- 6. Working with the Commonwealth to ensure NSW priorities are addressed in the tertiary education reform process*

There are a number of limitations or weaknesses with the Plan as it currently stands, which should be addressed immediately/contemporaneously to ensure the Plan's efficacy. These are indicated as followed:

International Education

The first relates to Priority 3: *Attracting international students and enriching their Australian experience.*

While the Government is to be commended for the establishment of the Premier's Council on International Education the Plan provides minimal direction beyond some high level statements of intent. ABS data indicates that the international education industry contributed \$6.76 billion in export earnings for NSW in 2009. The industry is one of the State's largest and yet, in comparison to other States and Territories, the NSW Government has yet to engage in any meaningful way with a robust and mature NSW industry.

The current section in the document on international education is weak and could be materially strengthened by explicitly recognising the broader international education benefits to NSW, including through increased outbound mobility of Australian students and increased internationalisation of innovation and research.

If the NSW Government intends to achieve these objectives it must tangibly invest in international education. For example:

- **Community Engagement:** provide real and adequate funding to support an ongoing community engagement strategy under the COAG International Student Strategy;
- **Industry Infrastructure:** invest, in partnership with private enterprise and the education sector, to overcome critical supply side deficiencies in accommodation in the Sydney metropolitan area;
- **Education Quality & Compliance:** increase the allocation of resources to enforce the regulatory requirements for the establishment and operation of education providers. Much of the problems that have occurred may be laid at the feet of inadequate enforcement rather than the regulatory regimen; and
- **Student Support:** address issues of student safety and security.

Government needs to establish an **International Education Development Authority** if it wishes to maintain its market share of international students and achieve its strategic innovation and research objectives. Other States are already better positioned than NSW or are gearing up to compete more effectively for talent and for major research and development projects, including at the international level.

The Plan needs to address the intersection between international student graduates and pathways to permanent residency given that workforce supply shortages will not be able to be fully met from the domestic market. There is a critical need for a NSW strategy to attract and retain top quality international research students and academic staff, the core human requirement to achieve the Government's objectives.

Navitas would propose an additional priority, namely ***Supporting the internationalisation of schools and tertiary institutions***. This would require a new section in the body of the plan explicating this priority.

Private Education

The second area of weakness in the Plan is the absence of recognition of the significant role that the private sector plays, and will increasingly play, in the delivery of tertiary education in NSW.

In the Plan *tertiary education* is primarily defined as universities and TAFE. The role of private higher education providers is not acknowledged in spite of the statement that "*this discussion paper takes the tertiary sector to include all of the teaching and learning, qualification levels and research activity of the higher education and vocational education and training sectors*"¹.

There is very little mention of private higher education, with the only direct reference being "the NSW higher education system also includes a small but growing private provider sector (currently numbering 54 non self-accrediting higher education institutions"² and in some sections of the document reference to "other providers".

¹ Page 3

² Page 4

It is necessary to recognise that there is significant private sector delivery of higher education, whether focused on providing pathways for lower SES student and international students, or in niche, specialised professional higher education. In 2008 Navitas accounted for 1 in 8 higher education international student commencements in Australia³.

If the Government is to deliver on the Plan's Priorities, particularly those related to increasing workforce skill levels, participation and attainment rates and attracting international students, it will need a Plan that provides integrated strategies across all education sectors and involves meaningful roles and partnerships for private providers.

There is little or no comment on the role that private vocational and higher education providers could have in meeting skill, workforce and low SES needs. The Government is seeking comment on meeting workforce needs "through quality tertiary education that is flexible and targeted to the needs of the community and the economy"⁴. Private providers in both VET and higher education have a demonstrated track record of success in this area and it is arguable that for lower socio economic groups private providers may be better equipped and experienced to take the lead in this initiative.

Without substantial provision by private providers, governments will not achieve participation targets for 25-34 year olds to have a bachelor's degree by 2025; to halve the number of Australians between 20 and 64 without a Cert III by 2020, or to double the number of diplomas and advanced diplomas by 2020.

A number of the initiatives proposed within the Plan focus on increased TAFE and university partnerships with business and across the education sectors⁵. While this is laudable the emphasis on the public sector ignores the substantial partnerships private education providers have with industry and the benefits of public/private education partnerships.

As it currently stands the Plan will be perceived as a NSW Tertiary Public Education Plan, not a plan for tertiary education for NSW.

E-Learning

Thirdly, there is no mention of e-learning which is the fastest growth segment of the education market. "Growth of around 12-14% pa on average in enrolments for fully online learning for 2004-09 in the US post-secondary system, compared with an average of approximately 2% increase per year in enrolments overall."⁶ Much of this activity is being pioneered in the private sector and is directed at making educational and training offerings more flexible as people who would otherwise be unable to undertake such study due to working hours, family commitments, access etc are able to be included.

Government recognition and support of the furtherance of eLearning will add much to securing a well equipped and flexible workforce with concomitant job opportunities.

³ AEI data

⁴ Page 10

⁵ Pages 6, and 14-14 (sections 2.11 and 2.12)

⁶ Allen, I.E and Seaman, J (2008) Staying the Course: Online Education in the United States

Statistical data

The document would benefit from a more rigorous use of evidence-based data and research, with particular reference to international education and the role of the private sector. For example, due to DIAC system errors, VET international student enrolment figures used to demonstrate a 20% growth in VET international students in NSW⁷ include international students studying higher education diplomas. Additionally, the statistics on the international education students in NSW do not include ELICOS (English language) student visa data or students on Working Holiday or Tourist visas⁸. The latter's omission serves to under-represent the value of this activity to the state of NSW and as a consequence lead to poor policy outcomes.

I thank you for the opportunity to provide comment on the draft NSW Tertiary Education Plan, and look to our organisation being consulted and playing a valued role in securing the aims of the government.

Yours sincerely,



Rod Jones
Chief Executive Officer

8 July 2010

⁷ Page 6

⁸ In 2009 there were 155, 613 ELICOS students in Australia, across all visa types, of which 66.7% were on student visas. NSW's share of total ELICOS students in 2009 was 41%. 53% of ELICOS students on student visas pathway into tertiary education.

About Navitas

Navitas commenced operations in 1994 as a provider of university pathway programs. It has grown to be a highly successful Australian-based global provider of education and related services. In 2004 Navitas listed on the Australian Stock Exchange.

Through its partnerships with over 30 universities, industry and government Navitas' objective is to maintain a 'trusted, whole of learning life' relationship with students, clients and partners that provide meaningful outcomes for all. A number of Navitas entities have been in operation for over a quarter of a century.

Navitas delivers education across the traditional sectoral boundaries that define higher, vocational, English and secondary education offering AQF qualifications from Certificates through to Masters Degrees.

Navitas offers:

- University pathway and managed university campus programs for students studying in Australia, Sri Lanka, Singapore, Kenya, Canada, Indonesia, the United States of America and the United Kingdom;
- English as second language courses for international students and English language settlement and work preparation programs for migrants and refugees;
- Education, training and business solutions to employers to meet their requirements for 'work-ready', skilled employees, and to provide learners and clients with relevant, practical tertiary and vocational skills, work experiences and support in their career development and working lives;
- Recruitment of students for educational institutions in Australia, Canada, the US and the UK through major networks and operations in China and India.

Annually Navitas provides educational opportunities for over 42,000 students each year from more than 120 countries; and settles over 3,650 new Australians.

In 2008 Navitas accounted for 1 in 8 higher education international student commencements in Australia. And since 1994 Navitas has contributed \$1 billion in royalties and flow-on student revenues to its Australian university partners and is now listed on the ASX 300 companies' index, employing over 4,000 staff.

Over more than a quarter of a century Navitas has built its reputation as being a credible quality education provider and partner. Navitas has played an active role in enhancing support systems and programs for learners and setting students up for success either at university or in the Australian community. Many Navitas staff are respected, active members of the education community and have worked to ensure high standards of delivery and support for international students and the rigorous enforcement of those standards.

Navitas is proud of the substantial achievements of Australia's education industry, providing many hundreds of thousands of students with a quality education, skills for their future careers, and in many cases for international students, life-long engagement with Australia.