

Navitas submission to the International Education Advisory Council Discussion Paper for the Development of an International Education Strategy for Australia

About Navitas

Navitas is a global education provider that offers an extensive range of educational services for students and professionals including university programs, English language training and settlement services, creative media education, workforce and professional education, and student recruitment.

More than 80,000 students and clients learn with Navitas across a network of over 100 colleges and campuses in 23 countries. Navitas is an Australian publicly listed corporation which is included in the ASX 200 index.

Navitas is an industry leader in pre-university and university pathway programs, and managed campuses. It offers university programs from colleges in Australia, UK, US, Canada, Asia and Africa.

English Language training includes the provision of English as second language courses for international students and English language, settlement and work preparation programs for migrants and refugees.

Navitas Workforce provides quality higher education and vocational training, with aligned employment and placement services in areas of key demand. Focusing on meeting business and industry needs for skilled human resources, it provides the capabilities that find, train and place “work ready” skilled employees.

Via SAE and Qantm Navitas is a leader in creative media education offering audio, film and new media qualifications around the world.

Navitas also offers student recruitment services in India and China for universities and other educational institutions in Australia, Canada, US and UK.

Further details about Navitas are available at www.navitas.com.

Executive Summary

Navitas welcomes the opportunity to contribute to discussions regarding the development of an international education strategy for Australia, both through this submission and via consultation meetings. Navitas congratulates the International Education Advisory Council for their willingness to consult so widely and thoroughly on this important matter.

It is worth reflecting on the opportunity that international education presents to Australia, economically and in terms of its international relationships and global standing.

Due to its pioneering role in international education Australia currently has the third largest market share of international students¹. This has brought to Australia a substantial and sustainable services sector, which employs many Australians in skilled work, provides valuable connections with many nations and enhances the opportunity for domestic students through subsidisation of Australia’s domestic education sector.

¹ *International students and net migration in the UK*, Institute for Public Policy and Research, April 2012

Moreover, the opportunity for Australia is set to keep growing with global populations increasing rapidly (6.9b in 2012 to 8.3b in 2030) as well as household income (the size of the global middle class will increase from 1.8b now to 4.9b by 2030). With this growth will come increases in literacy from 84 percent in 2010 to past the 90 percent mark in 2030².

As much of this expansion will come from emerging nations, especially Asia, Australia is particularly well positioned to continue to meet demand for quality education from students whose home countries do not have sufficient infrastructure and resources, especially at the post secondary level.

However, as we have seen in recent years Australia has lacked a consistent approach as to how the international education sector can make a major contribution to the Australian economy and its geo political relationships. Policy changes have been disjointed, imposed substantial costs and have occurred without industry consultation. There has been a lack of robust debate leading to a clearly articulated position as to how Australia might play a part in a burgeoning services industry that requires co-ordinated activity and responsive investment. The industry is now experiencing significant issues with falling enrolments, loss of jobs as well as aligned issues of reputational damage.

The contrast to services sectors such as tourism or other major export earning industries is stark. In these industries there are both policies and communication strategies which align their importance to the nation, and which underpin success including during periods of shifts in demand and global induced change. Currently myths such as international students taking education places and jobs have gained community credence, when in fact at least 80% of students return home and Australian institutions derive much needed income from student fees.

Navitas is pleased to offer a number of suggestions to help improve this situation but principal among these is the need for greater government coordination across the federal and state level and greater consultation and engagement with the international education sector itself.

Aspects of international education are currently in the remit of DIAC, DEEWR, DIISRTE, Austrade and DFAT at the federal level, and associated Ministers, let alone the variety of state level government departments. DIAC focuses on immigration, DEEWR on education, DIISRTE on research and tertiary education, Austrade on promotion and marketing, DFAT on diplomatic relations and aid, however no one agency or Minister has sole responsibility for international education. **Navitas firmly believes that a central focus point at the federal government level, a Parliamentary Secretary for International Education, is required to improve coordination, representation and alignment across the industry.** Further, the role should be positioned in the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet to ensure that it duly represents the 'whole of government' and is seen as a national priority.

Sector consultation and engagement has improved markedly in recent years, especially with the formation of the International Education Advisory Council (IEAC). However, as the name suggests the IEAC is an advisory council, not a strategic body, with no long term remit. **Navitas recommends that a long term International Education Council be formed which consists of leading figures in international education,**

² *Citizens in an Interconnected and Polycentric World*. European Union Institute for Security Studies, October 2011.

senior business and globally respected figures selected for their strategic capabilities, relevant experience, knowledge and community standing. Similar to the Tourism Australia model, the role of the Council would be to recommend develop and oversee a long-term strategy for international education and internationalisation. A statutory body, the IEC should report to the Parliamentary Secretary for International Education.

The IEC's work would be informed by the establishment of an International Education Stakeholder Committee (IESC), and the already operational Education Visa Consultative Committee (EVCC) with leading representatives from all sectors including higher education, ELICOS, VET and schools across both public and private providers that would report to the Council.

Generally speaking there remains a great deal of misunderstanding by the general public, and all levels of government, of the significant social, economic and educational benefits Australia gains from international education. **A coordinated government funded communications campaign to educate Australian society about the benefits and realities of international education and students would contribute significantly to remedying this situation.**

Another area where Australia can learn and improve on is the link with migration and education. It is widely recognised that higher levels of education have a positive effect at a personal and societal level. With its declining birth rate, ageing population and skills shortages **Navitas believes the Australian Government should reconsider its decision to break the nexus between education and permanent migration in areas of skills shortages in the near future.**

Navitas is supportive of moves by various education regulators across Australia to reduce regulatory burden and "red tape", a move likely to improve Australia's international competitiveness, but has yet to see any evidence of such an approach being implemented by TEQSA or ASQA. Navitas is of the belief that Australia is in real danger of losing competitive advantage due to over regulation and **recommends that all national regulators implement a 'fit for purpose' risk-based approach to regulation commensurate with assessed risk.**

Navitas also recommends that forums be created to enable the sharing of best practice and information so that all providers can work cooperatively to improve the international education experience across Australia. As an example Education Adelaide compiles a city wide list of community groups, sporting groups etc for international students so they might learn more about existing social activities.

Finally Navitas is concerned about the trend across Australia to accept the economic return from international education without investing in services for these students. **Navitas recommends that a coordinated review be conducted into the availability of key services to international students across Australia including access to affordable and safe housing, public transport concessions in NSW and Victoria, and nationally consistent access to healthcare.**

Navitas Recommendations

- 1. Navitas recommends that a central focus point at the federal government level, a Parliamentary Secretary for International Education reporting to the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, is required to improve coordination, representation and alignment across the industry.**
- 2. Navitas recommends that a long term International Education Council be formed which consists of leading figures in international education, senior business and globally respected figures selected for their strategic capabilities, relevant experience, knowledge and community standing.**
- 3. Navitas recommends a coordinated government funded communications campaign to educate Australian society about the benefits and realities of international education and students.**
- 4. Navitas recommends that the Australian Government should reconsider its decision to break the nexus between education and permanent migration in areas of skills shortages in the near future.**
- 5. Navitas believes that Australia is in real danger of losing competitive advantage due to over regulation and recommends that all national regulators implement a 'fit for purpose' risk-based approach to regulation commensurate with assessed risk.**
- 6. Navitas recommends that forums be created to enable the sharing of best practice and information so that all providers can work cooperatively to improve the international education experience across Australia.**
- 7. Navitas recommends that a coordinated review be conducted into the availability of key services to international students across Australia including access to affordable and safe housing, public transport concessions in NSW and Victoria, and nationally consistent access to healthcare.**

Navitas response to discussion points

- 1. How can we draw from past experience in preparing an international education vision and strategy that takes Australia forward in a rapidly changing global environment?*

Australia has a long and successful record in pioneering the development of international education and a strong history which we can draw upon to keep improving the industry's quality and competitiveness.

However, as we have seen in recent years Australia has lacked a consistent approach as to how this sector can make a major contribution to the Australian economy and its geo political relationships. Policy changes have been disjointed, imposed substantial costs and have occurred without industry consultation. There has been a lack of robust debate leading to a clearly articulated position as to how Australia might play a part in a burgeoning services industry that requires co-ordinated activity and responsive investment. Accordingly, enrolments have fallen substantively with significant loss of jobs and income, as well as aligned issues of reputational damage.

The contrast to services sectors such as tourism or other major export earning industries is stark. In these industries there are both policies and communication strategies which align their importance to the nation, and which underpin success including during periods of shifts in demand and global induced change. Currently myths such as international students taking education places and jobs have gained community credence, when in fact at least 80% of students return home and Australian institutions derive much needed income from student fees.

There are a number of suggestions to help manage these issues but principal among these is the need for greater government coordination across the federal and state level and greater consultation and engagement with the international education sector itself.

The economic contribution of international education as Australia third largest export industry is undeniable and despite the sector directly providing more than 100,000³ jobs the level of Government support remains insufficient compared to smaller industries such as Tourism.

Aspects of international education are currently in the remit of DIAC, DEEWR, DIISRTE, Austrade and DFAT at the federal level, and associated Ministers, let alone the variety of state level government departments. DIAC focuses on immigration, DEEWR on education, DIISRTE on research and tertiary education, Austrade on promotion and marketing, DFAT on diplomatic relations and aid, however no one agency or Minister has sole responsibility for international education.

Navitas firmly believes that a central focus point at the federal government level, a Parliamentary Secretary for International Education, is required to improve coordination and alignment across the industry. Further the role should be positioned in the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet to ensure that it duly represents a 'whole of government' approach, demonstrating a national priority, and which is not driven by disparate agendas.

³ Education as an Export for Australia, International Education Association of Australia, May 2012

Sector consultation and engagement has improved markedly in recent years, especially with the formation of the International Education Advisory Council (IEAC). However, as the name suggests the IEAC is an advisory council, not a strategic body, with no long term remit. Navitas recommends that a long term International Education Council be formed which consists of leading figures in international education, senior business and globally respected figures selected for their strategic capabilities, relevant experience, knowledge and community standing. Similar to the Tourism Australia model, the role of the Council would be to recommend, develop and oversee a long-term strategy for international education and internationalisation. A statutory body, the IEC should report to the Parliamentary Secretary for International Education.

The IEC's work would be informed by the establishment of an International Education Stakeholder Committee (IESC), and the already operational Education Visa Consultative Committee (EVCC) with leading representatives from all sectors including higher education, ELICOS, VET and schools across both public and private providers that would report to the Council. In addition, such a committee could be an ideal coordination and engagement body for Government to liaise with the sector and to receive feedback and ongoing support. Similar bodies exist in Australia, within the Tourism industry, and in many competitor countries such as the UK and France.

The IEC and IESC could also facilitate a more structured and formalised data capture process so that the international education industry could better utilise data to manage operations and more effectively communicate the positive benefits of international education for Australia.

Navitas also believes that a Parliamentary Secretary and an International Education Council would play a vital role in communicating the importance and value of Australia's international education sector to Australia and the world.

There is a great deal of misunderstanding by the general population, all levels of government and business of the significant social, economic and educational benefits Australia gains from the international education industry and the internationalisation of our citizens. There is a perception that international students take university places from domestic students and little understanding of the level of contribution that international students make to Australia education sectors, both financially and culturally. Equally there seems to be minimal recognition that the Australian community has a part to play in helping make international students feel welcome in Australia, make new friends and find employment.

A coordinated government funded communications campaign to educate Australian society about the benefits and realities of international education and students, and the value of internationalisation would contribute significantly to improving this situation. Additionally if business were to better understand the opportunity and scale of the international education industry it is more likely they work in public private partnerships with government to provide solutions to recognised issues such as accommodation, transport, healthcare and work placements.

Another area where Australia can learn and improve on its past is the link with migration and education. It is widely recognised that higher levels of education have a positive effect at a personal and societal level. With its declining birth rate, ageing population and skills shortages Navitas believes the Australian Government should reconsider its decision to break the nexus between education and permanent migration in areas of skills shortages in the near future. Permanent migration should be linked to education in recognised areas of skills shortages and monitored closely, but as Australia considers

expanding its migration program 'locally' educated and skilled people who are familiar and comfortable with Australian society should be given priority. We operate in a globally mobile world and many international and Australian students now look for temporary, and in some cases, permanent migration opportunities that allow them to live and work outside their home countries.

Finally, Navitas believes that a greater focus should be maintained on a genuine interest in and commitment to benefiting the countries from which international students are drawn and with which educational cooperation and collaboration occurs. It goes without saying that there is considerable benefit in terms of political and soft power for Australia as an outcome of the international education sector as well as in terms of research and culture. In addition a commitment to help improve regional human capital and capacity building as a whole through the benefits of education, training and improved relationships will only have positive outcomes for Australia.

2. Which emerging issues do you believe will impact on international education in Australia?

By its very nature international education operates in a volatile and globally interconnected environment subject to a wide variety of macro and micro effects including government controls and global economic, social, technological and political factors. Its international importance is also increasing as the shift to a knowledge based economy becomes a global characteristic amongst nations requiring educated and motivated individuals to participate at all levels of the civil service, business and not-for-profits.

Navitas believes the following emerging issues will have the most significant impacts on international education in Australia, now and in the coming years:

Reputation

- Perception that Australia does not genuinely welcome international students and value the internationalisation of its people;
- Lack of understanding across Australia of the economic and social benefits of international education;
- The need to portray the fact that Australia is a high quality education provider;
- Willingness to generate income from international students but not to invest in services for those students, particularly at a state level (transport concessions, healthcare);
- Lack of consistency in student support services from state to state (transport concessions, healthcare);
- Increased competition from UK, US, Canada and Asian countries particularly China and Singapore;

Regulation

- Risk of over regulation making Australia uncompetitive compared with other markets;
- Lack of transparency in DIAC processes (how subjective is the determination of a genuine student leading to visa rejection?);
- Providers being held wholly responsible for visa breaches, over which they have no control (overstay and protection applications);
- Lack of international student diversity influenced by Streamlined Visa Processing, where providers are becoming more risk averse;

Infrastructure

- Sufficient, safe and affordable accommodation;
- High price of Australian education and living costs;

Student experience

- The impact of technology and online education. Australia needs to prepare for the e-learning revolutions that will impact significantly on 'bricks and mortar', markets, staffing and current paradigms;
- Limited employment options for international student graduates;
- Varied international student integration with domestic students;
- Demographics of current academic workforce (age and race);

Other factors

- Over reliance on key markets;
- Increasing decline of the Australian international High School sector as a pathway to university;
- Increasing mobility of students and the importance of articulation arrangements and transnational programs that reflect standardised curriculum;

3. Does the vision reflect Australia's aspirations for international education? If not, how can it be strengthened?

Vision: Australia is recognised, both regionally and around the globe, as a world class provider of education and training, a partner of choice for educational collaboration, and a country that openly welcomes international students and helps them achieve their goals.

The vision statement is fairly generic but this is to be expected with so many stakeholders. While there is more work to be done in developing a vision, Navitas is concerned that it is more reflective of a mission statement than a vision statement.

Navitas is broadly supportive of the vision statement developed by the IEAA, referenced in the Discussion Paper, as capturing more of a vision although the statement or some underlying principles need to reflect the wider concept of internationalisation.

The vision proposed in the Paper would be compatible as a mission under a broader vision statement.

(IEAA) Vision: International education is valued for the benefits it provides to communities and individuals in Australia and overseas. It underpins Australia's national prosperity and social advancement and helps build Australia's international standing and our place in the world.

Mission: Australia is recognised, both regionally and around the globe, as a world class provider of education and training, a partner of choice for educational collaboration, and a country that openly welcomes international students, and the internationalisation of Australian students⁴, and helps them achieve their goals.

4. How can the quality of education provided by Australian institutions to international students be effectively monitored?

Australia already has one of the most rigorous regulatory and quality control regimes in the world; in fact it is so rigorous that it risks making Australia uncompetitive.

Navitas is supportive of moves by various organisations across Australia to reduce regulatory burden and “red tape” and supports the Business Council of Australia’s proposition that adopting a risk-based approach to regulatory design, implementation and review is critical to lifting regulatory performance and to realising and sustaining the benefits of current and future competition and regulatory reforms⁵.

Both TEQSA and ESOS legislation advocate greater use of a provider risk based regulatory approach taking into account the scale, financial stability, history and academic standards of a provider. In particular the principle of regulatory necessity - exercising powers to not burden the higher education provider any more than is reasonably necessary - is critical in reducing onerous regulation and allowing innovation to improve education.

Unfortunately Navitas has yet to see any evidence of such an approach being implemented by TEQSA or ASQA which is of serious concern and a matter of some urgency. A recent example is a discussion paper released by TEQSA regarding provider data to be used for accreditation and regulation. It seems that TEQSA will require significantly more data than is needed to achieve its objectives so rather than reducing regulatory burden they are actually increasing it.

Navitas is of the belief that Australia is in real danger of losing competitive advantage due to such over regulation and recommends that all national regulators implement a ‘fit for purpose’ risk-based approach to regulation commensurate with assessed risk.

The other important element of regulation is enforcement. If enforcement of education and training regulation, where data was demonstrating high risk behavior by a segment of the industry, had been more rigorous several years ago it is unlikely that Australia would have experienced such a dramatic increase in non-genuine students pursuing a legal migration pathway as their primary objective. Regulation enforcement needs to be timely, transparent and appropriate to the risk.

5. How well do offshore agents perform in recruiting and preparing students to study in Australia? Are the current arrangements with agents appropriate?

Agents play a vital role in helping international students manage the application process, find suitable education opportunities and prepare for living overseas. Agents have been used effectively for many years by Australian education providers and agent relationships have developed into partnerships with mutual benefits for both parties, including a commitment to quality and standards. Without this commitment these long and successful relationships would not have been sustainable.

Navitas firmly believes that, in general, Australia has one of the best managed agent networks in the world. In addition, providers can work to ensure they maintain quality outcomes by using a number of tools including constant communication, a code of

⁵ Discussion Paper for the COAG Business Advisory Forum, April 2012.

conduct, conferences, training and the use of regional offices to help manage agent networks and relationships.

One ongoing issue in relation to agents is the lack of understanding by Western countries of the valued role education agents play for parents and communities in many Asian cultures. The already recommended coordinated communication campaign could also aim to address this in its objectives.

6. What more can Australian institutions do to better prepare graduates for success in their early careers?

One of the most valuable experiences a student can gain during or after education is relevant work or career experience. Education providers have programs and strategies to facilitate work experience during the education process but many students still are not able to gain relevant experience during study.

One program that has proven highly successful in gaining international graduates Australian work experience, and often employment, is the Professional Year Program. A Federal Government initiative, Navitas runs Professional Year programs in conjunction with IT, Engineering and Accountancy peak bodies (e.g. Engineers Australia, Australian Computer Society and CPA). This program has a very good success rate with 72% of participants securing employment in their profession within six months of program completion and 98% having secured employment in an Australian workplace after six months.

As well as a possible expansion of the Professional Year program other options to better prepare graduates include a greater focus on internships and work experience in course structures and improved relationships with industry to facilitate workplace integrated learning.

It is also feasible that improved communication of the social and political value of the international education sector to Australia will foster greater understanding and encourage organisations to recruit more international graduates.

7. What aspects of teaching and learning in Australia's education settings contribute to a successful and satisfying study experience in Australia?

A number of factors contribute to a satisfying Australian study experience including:

- Quality of teaching;
- A comprehensive and positive induction process;
- Academic outcomes consistent with expectations;
- Engagement with local communities;
- Engagement with domestic students;
- Work experience, particularly relevant to area of study;
- The availability and quality of facilities; and
- A positive student experience at the education institution including social occasions, fun, sport and interesting activities for out of class interaction.

In addition Australia needs to prepare for the e-learning revolution that will impact significantly on traditional 'bricks and mortar' institutions, markets, staffing and current paradigms. The impact of technology and online education to international and domestic

education will continue to grow and strategies need to be developed and implemented to manage and leverage these changes.

8. *What means might be employed to improve international students' experiences with respect to local social activity and engagement with local students and communities?*

Most education providers have successful integration and mentoring programs which have helped to improve the social interaction and engagement of international students in their communities. Building on this Navitas recommends that forums be created to enable the sharing of best practice and information so that all providers work cooperatively to improve the international education experience across Australia. As an example Education Adelaide compiles a city wide list of community groups, sporting groups etc for international students so they might learn more about existing social activities.

Navitas also believes one of the most effective ways to improve international students' engagement and social interaction in Australia would be to improve understanding in the community of the social and economic benefits of international education. The previously recommended coordinated communications campaign to educate Australian society about the importance of the sector and to dispel common myths would contribute to a greater appreciation and acceptance of international students.

An extension of this is a number of fully funded international student activities across Australia focusing on international student's e.g. international student food festival, international student cultural events. Such events will help communities to celebrate international students and treat them as special guests. A complementary strategy would be for governments to more actively promote and support young Australians undertaking some of their education offshore.

9. *How can services to support international students, such as transport concessions and health services, be provided in a more consistent manner across Australia?*

One consistent issue within international education is the willingness to accept the economic return from international education without investing in services for these students. Prime examples include the states of NSW and Victoria where international students are not able to access public transport concessions. Incongruously, international education is NSW's second largest source of export revenue and Victoria's largest source of export revenue.

The lack of such concessions represent a competitive disadvantage for these states, and indeed for Australia, especially when international students contribute so significantly to the state economy through their fees and associated living spend, as well as undertaking part-time work and paying taxes. International students also contribute significantly to the tourism industry with most students exploring some of Australia themselves and being visited by friends and family resulting in education related tourism value adding \$12b to the economy⁶.

⁶ The Australian education sector and the economic contribution of international students, Access Economics, April 2009.

Another looming issue is the growing number of instances where international students have been refused health care despite having purchased private health insurance. The Commonwealth Health Department needs to investigate these incidents and ensure that this practice does not continue.

Such issues are not only unfair on students but send a message that Australia does not value international students and does not welcome them.

As highlighted earlier, Navitas suggests that a Parliamentary Secretary for International Education would be a key stakeholder in ensuring greater consistency in the provision of support services across Australia.

10. What, if any, further improvements need to be made to student visa and post-qualification work rules?

There are further improvement opportunities with regard to the student visa regime, specifically with secondary schools recruiting international students. These secondary schools have not yet benefitted from significant reform, and like other sectors, they have experienced a decline in international enrolments. There is also a need to increase sharing of best practice so the leading high quality schools can help to improve outcomes for the whole sector.

Australia also needs to adapt its thinking to meet the needs of a 'global citizen' workforce where students and workers move freely around the world for work and do not migrate permanently. In a global knowledge economy workers are increasingly moving to other countries for work, settling for a number of years and then moving on to the next opportunity. Given this trend, Australia needs to review its migration rules for graduates in areas of skill shortages as international students who graduate from Australian universities are well educated and likely to integrate successfully in Australia.

Further, improvements with regards to engagement and communication between the sector and DIAC also represent a significant opportunity. As an example, greater communication and coordination with DIAC on visa breach issues would allow providers to better manage risks and evolving problems rather than being informed after the fact when it is often too late to rectify the issues.

In regards to the changes made to the student visa rules under the Knight review, it is too early to comment on any substantial impacts. Notwithstanding this Navitas is seriously concerned about feedback it is receiving from colleagues and agents regarding implementation of Genuine Temporary Entrant (GTE) requirements in Spain and other markets. Clearer guidance regarding definitions and application of GTE requirements would be welcome, as well as more timely and coordinated government action to rectify inappropriate use of the GTE requirement.

11. What are the critical social infrastructure features that contribute to a vibrant international education experience for students learning, living and working in Australia? Where are the shortcomings in these?

There is a strong need for more good quality on, or near, campus student accommodation and improved post graduate employment support.

The successful provision of affordable, high quality student accommodation will require a multifaceted approach by education providers and federal, state and local governments. Specific areas that require addressing include:

- Supporting low income housing initiatives specifically in locations proximate to campus locations;
- Reviewing and implementing planning regulations that support the specific requirements of student accommodation property developments;
- Reviewing the Residential Tenancies Acts to optimise the private supply of student accommodation rentals to an agreed standard for students;
- Ensuring State Government policies are supportive of and do not differentiate against the interest of international students;
- Ensuring the identification and enforcement of student accommodation regulation has as its underlying objective the support of students and the international student market; and
- Developing an industry based system of accreditation for student accommodation supported by forums such as a website providing relevant information for international students and encompassing an associated complaint and follow-up mechanism.

Like many domestic students, international students also need help to access post study employment. Initiatives such as the Professional Year program should be considered for expansion as to date participants have enjoyed a 72% rate of employment in a relevant occupation within six months of program completion and a 98% rate of employment in an Australian workplace after six months of program completion.

Other critical social needs include improved consistency across Australia in regards to public transport concessions and healthcare provisions as mentioned earlier. The lack of nationwide consistency in the provision of such services presents a confusing and unwelcoming landscape to international students. Navitas recommends that a coordinated review be conducted into the availability of key services for international students as soon as possible.

In 2009 the Council of Australian Governments developed and adopted an International Students Strategy for Australia to “support a high-quality experience for international students, in order to ensure a sustainable future for quality international education in Australia.” While a number of actions have been implemented the strategy itself needs refinement and to be given greater emphasis by governments. Many of the actions are one-off and short-term rather than part of a holistic strategy framework that would achieve the strategy’s stated aim.

12. Is it desirable, or possible, to consider national, state and territory and/or institutional targets for a sustainable number of international students across the various education sectors?

The international education sector is a globally competitive market that is volatile and heavily influenced by social, political and economic factors across the world. Navitas supports a market driven approach underpinned by quality education and a quality student experience. It is considered that setting recruitment targets would send a very negative message to the market generally, and more specifically to both agents and future students.

Because international education operates in a competitive global context it is not practical to set targets as ultimately these will be seen to be barriers to Australia and

both students and agents will pursue more positive opportunities elsewhere in the world. International education cannot be viewed as a tap that can be turned on and off. Implementing targets or other restrictions will mean that students keen to pursue an international education will be attracted to more welcoming countries. A reputation for restricting access to students, such as setting targets, will quickly lead to a change in the pattern of demand. As Australia has found to its own chagrin, reversing a negative reputation and resuming a positive demand pattern for international students is neither instantaneous nor assured.

13. What steps could Australia take to ensure that any further increase in international student numbers does not place unacceptable pressure on our social infrastructure?

The provision of adequate social infrastructure is an issue for the whole of Australia, across all demographics and is not specific to the inflows of international students. As part of the normal process of planning, governments should be anticipating medium and long term infrastructure requirements arising from net population growth that reflects net migration as well as additional demands arising from tourism and international student numbers. A Parliamentary Secretary for International Education, the International Education Council and an International Education Stakeholder Committee would be able to provide advice and recommendations into governments' planning processes.

14. How can an international education strategy help institutions to capitalise on transnational education opportunities?

An international education strategy can assist by raising the profile of Australia as a prospective partner with offshore institutions and governments. A strategy could also help to frame and inform the political and regulatory environment in which the transnational programs operate.

15. How can Australia capture the opportunities emerging from the rise of the Asian Century while seeking geographical diversity in its international education engagement?

As a nation, we need to send more domestic students for a study experience in Asian countries. This will only happen if students study the culture and language of that country and study abroad programs for Australian students are supported by the Federal Government to encourage more domestic students to study overseas with a particular emphasis on Asia.

16. How can we encourage more students to learn an Asian language and to develop their Asia literacy?

The fact that fewer Australian students are learning second languages, especially Asian languages, is not surprising given current funding and resource levels at our schools. The most effective way to improve language rates is to increase government investment in such programs. This needs to be supported by both state and federal governments actively pursuing policy measures in favour of second language literacy and in turn reflected in the priorities of school curriculums. Whilst most students have exposure to a

second language the priority is low and as a consequence the teaching intensity is not sufficient to achieve meaningful acquisition of second language literacy skills.

Another opportunity to improve rates of study in second languages is to make it easier for students to study another language at university. Currently a student who wishes to study a second language will experience the problem of having their academic performance for that study affect their overall academic standing, even if the unit is only an elective and not relevant to their core degrees. Making it easier to study a language as a non-assessed elective should facilitate language study at our universities. Increased use of blended and online learning should also be utilised to improve language study rates.

Australia also has the opportunity to observe and adopt best practice from countries which have high second language rates.

17. How can the sector and governments work together to encourage, support and increase the outbound mobility of Australian students and academics?

Please refer to points 15 and 16.

18. How do we use the high quality and international nature of Australia's science and research to strategically position Australia as a destination of choice for the world's best and brightest?

There are a number of opportunities to leverage Australia's science and research quality to attract tomorrow's leading thinkers including improving investment in research and development and raising awareness of opportunities in Australia by celebrating Australian research successes.

However there should be a balanced message to future students that education in Australia is accessible to anyone who has the commitment, ability and resources to study here. International students of all paths can make significant contributions to society, here in Australia, and in their home country when they return – Australia should ensure its approach recognises the smart and motivated who will play valuable roles at multiple levels in organisations having had the benefit of a robust and applicable education.

19. What additional incentives might be provided to increase international research collaborations?

Australia already has well established international research collaborations which are largely driven at the institutional level. An important way to increase the level of these research collaborations is via scholarships to both international students and international academics.

20. What priorities should Australia be addressing in its marketing and promotion to best support the international education sector?

The highest priority must be an international Australian branding and marketing campaign to raise the profile of Australia as a high quality and welcoming study destination. Specifically international students need to know that Australia, from the

Prime Minister down, wants to welcome them to our country and will value them. The campaign should also raise awareness that Australia is a leading supporter and contributor to the internationalisation of education.

A Parliamentary Secretary for International Education would indicate to the world that Australia is taking its commitment to international education seriously and that it is prepared to invest in the sector. A Prime Ministerial statement highlighting recent changes to improve international education and announcing that Australia welcomes international students would also support such a campaign.

- Ends -

Submitted by Navitas Limited and authorised by Navitas CEO, Rod Jones.
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