

AUSTRALIAN HOMESTAY NETWORK (AHN)

Comments on Questions

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?

In legislation Australia has responded reasonably well to the downturn in the market.

This has been evident particularly in the areas of ESOS, Orientation and Student Support Services.

A new strategy/vision for international education should address the following points:

- **Orientation** – e.g. Pre and Post departure comprehensive online orientation
- **Welcoming** – Making students feel welcome when they arrive e.g. Introductory standards based homestay with trained hosts for over 18 new entries into the country
- **Inclusion** – Government led Industry and Community strategies to ensure that international students are welcomed into: The neighbourhood, The community, The education institution The workforce and The health system
- **Employment** – Government led Industry and Community strategies to ensure that international students are welcomed into: Internships, Work experience, Skill shortage fulfilment and paid employment within the student visa conditions

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

Increased organisation and recruitment from Australia's global competitors has highlighted a number of emerging issues in choosing Australia as a destination of choice for study abroad:

- Recruitment – Government led initiatives aimed at improving process, consistency and transparency of enrolment and visa application
- Pre-Arrival information – The on-line availability of such material and assessment of comprehension by the student
- At Arrival – Assurances of a welcome and safe arrival
- Orientation by provider - The on-line availability of such material and assessment of comprehension by the student
- Educational and cultural integration and care – Assistance and easy access to programs of cultural cooperation and overarching duty of care for all students
- Increased cost of living pressures - e.g. Public transport costs, phone, internet and communications access and costs
- Safe and reliable housing – Government led initiatives aimed at standards based homestay and student accommodation
- Post studies outcomes – Clear options in continued study, employment, holiday visa extension, onshore visa processing

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

The vision statement could be strengthened by including quality services and community engagement. International students will be looking for the "Whole Package" and ease of information in the digital age will make students and their families more discerning.

The vision statement should refer to:

- Orientation
- Outcomes -employment
- Welcoming
- Inclusion

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

N/A

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

Agents need to come under the same controls as Education providers and should be contracted by their EP to not participate in organising student accommodation, welfare, health insurance or ancillary services without the EP approval.

Agents can play an important role in the international student lifecycle. Institutes make best efforts to supply accurate material to agents to assist in the recruitment and counselling process. Unfortunately, at this stage, assuring the delivery and the comprehension of pre-arrival information available is not quantifiable.

A government and industry led initiative that ensures EP commitment to an online, accountable and accessible pre-arrival and onshore orientation program would assist in the ability for agents to deliver these services. This program could address standard information such as:

- Pre-departure: application and visa information, preparing for travel, Introduction to Living in Australia
- Health and Well-being: Australian health services, OSHC, Healthy living
- Personal Safety: Public, fire, beach and bush safety
- Accommodation – Where to live, what to expect, entering the private rental market
- Transport – Public transport, Australian roads and driving
- Finance – Banking, budgets and work
- etc.

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

Graduating students could provide a valuable contributor to Australian society after graduating from studies, with Australia finding labour shortages in a number of key industries, steps could be taken that the best graduates are retained by eliminating the beurecracy associated with continued study, full time/part time employment and holiday visa extension.

Links between education providers and industry could prove vital to skills retention and increased opportunities for international graduates.

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

An environment of care and investment in student welfare will provide to a successful and satisfying student experience. Seriously addressing the following points at a government and institution level will assist in providing an environment of care and investment in student welfare:

- Orientation
- Outcomes
- Welcoming
- Inclusion

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

Promote cross cultural participation through community events focused on both the domestic and international student body.

Encourage all over 18 year old students to spend their first 4 weeks in a standards based Homestay program with trained hosts assisting the student to be included in the community.

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

Fair and equitable access to services such as public transport and health services is vital to a successful international student experience. Students that are working part time under student visa work restrictions can experience increasing cost of living pressures. A government led initiative that will address the following points will assist:

- Public Transport – Legislate through federal and state governments to student discounts for international students
- Accommodation – Enforce standards based approach to homestay and student accommodation
- Health Services – Provide assurances that a ceiling limit could be enforced on OSHC providers providing commissions to education providers and agents

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

Homestay can provide a useful tool in facilitating integration and alleviating the effects of homesickness. Many international students are away from home for the first time and are in a new country. Adding a recommendation during the visa process that all student visa holders do four weeks standards based homestay as a settling in period would best equip students for life in Australia.

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?

A vibrant international education experience is inclusive of all social infrastructures that domestic students experience. A holistic approach to international student education includes:

- Orientation
- Outcomes
- Welcoming
- Inclusion
- Equitable transport and travel options
- Standards based homestay and student accommodation
- Education Standards
- Financial security
- Enforced working standard

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?

N/A

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?

Accommodation overcrowding needs to be addressed.

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

N/A

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

Cross Cultural experiences between Asian and Australian students will promote understanding in the cultural nuances of both nations. A vibrant international student experience will promote opportunities in business, science, education and many other sectors.

The disguising element in promoting this kind of cooperation is a positive student experience that incorporates a holistic approach.

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

N/A

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

N/A

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?

N/A

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

N/A

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

Australia's international reputation for the quality of education is well known. Australian international graduates are often some of the best and brightest in the world. The point of difference in deciding on an international study destination is culture and integration. A welcoming environment will facilitate studies and leave a positive impression that will last with Australia's international community and filter into other aspects of their lives. The key points are:

- Orientation
- Outcomes
- Welcoming
- Inclusion
- Equitable transport and travel options
- Standards based homestay and student accommodation
- Education Standards
- Financial security
- Enforced working standard