



IMMEDIATE RELEASE **Friday 6 November 2009**

COLLEGE CLOSURES

The closure of another four colleges catering to international students shows how much both Federal and State Governments allowed the education industry to slip out of their hands.

Newspapers are reporting that the Meridian International group has gone into voluntary administration, with its hasty closure affecting 3400 students in Sydney and Melbourne.

The MIA has put in a submission to the Baird Review of the Education Services for Overseas Students (ESOS) Act advocating a stronger regulatory framework and enhanced compliance monitoring.

The belated scrutiny of Australian education providers, particularly in the VET sector, makes it obvious that the monitoring and enforcement of standards has been inadequate. Strengthening regulations for an education provider is meaningless unless the Government enforces compliance by conducting regular audits and monitoring.

CEO of the Migration Institute of Australia, Maurene Horder, said, "We need to set high standards then ensure compliance with them to restore Australia's reputation as an education provider."

Students who have been affected by the college closures need to be found places in alternate courses or be refunded their fees. The MIA is proposing that a government-controlled and guaranteed assurance fund, using money from levies on education providers, be used to ensure the viability of these measures and to recompense students who have been badly treated.

"If Australia puts itself forward as an education destination, then we have an obligation to ensure the treatment and experience of international students is commensurate with the high value they bring to the economy." Said Ms Horder.

"No students should have visas cancelled because of these college closures. Students should be given ample time and assistance to arrange new courses with other education providers, with students whose visas are about to expire being given special consideration."

The Institute suggests reforms need to go further still and that those who establish and manage education institutions must demonstrate good character and competence for the task at hand. The MIA also continues to call for the regulation of education agents who are currently not subject to the same training, Code of Conduct and checks which Registered Migration Agents must satisfy.

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