



# **Submission to the Hon Bruce Baird into the Review of the Education Services for Overseas Students Act 2000**

[www.australianetwork.com](http://www.australianetwork.com)

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## Introduction

Australia Network welcomes the opportunity to comment on issues relating to the review of the *Education Services for Overseas Students (ESOS) Act 2000* and its associated legislation and regulations (referred to collectively as ESOS), and in particular on ways to improve the quality and accessibility of reliable information, advice and support provided to each international student.

The Australian education sector faces a number of significant challenges in relation to its growing international student population both onshore and offshore (transnational) and the reputation of Australia in the wider international community. Immediate issues include strengthening Australia's public diplomacy role in communicating the social and educational benefits of studying and living in Australia and addressing issues about violence against Indian students and the activities of some disreputable educational providers, migration agents and student recruitment agencies that have exploited international students and Australia's permanent residency visa regulations.

While these issues require a range of new solutions, there is equal need to communicate these outcomes to international students and families both within Australia and offshore. This is particularly important as the international media has repeatedly covered stories of assaults and robberies of Indian students living in Australia<sup>1</sup>. These events have cast a shadow over Australia's practice and reputation as an inclusive society with a long history of successful multiculturalism and a safe environment for international students.

While the ESOS Act regulates Australia's education sector with international students and the review has narrowed its terms of reference to cover four key areas, Australia Network will confine its comments to one issue: How can the quality and accessibility of reliable information be improved.

Australia Network will not offer additional comment on matters listed in the Issues Paper – September 2009. Australia Network is not an education provider nor is it part of the ESOS regime, however Australia Network has the capacity to provide such information in a parallel and complementary way—and the submission briefly describes this potential.

Australia Network's proposition to the Baird Review is that any decisions, policy adjustments or amendments to the ESOS Act should:

1. Acknowledge that there is a need to produce quality and reliable content on education matters that is easily accessible using digital platforms and Web 2.0 technologies;
2. Adopt an approach that is more pro-active in communicating education content and information to international students, family and alumni in digestible formats;
3. Activate a more collaborative approach to sharing and disseminating education content and information to improve reach and accessibility; and
4. Acknowledge that actioning development of new content and information for distribution will require funding, whether through direct appropriation or industry partnerships.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://blogs.timesofindia.indiatimes.com/jugglebandhi/entry/sock-it-to-oz-where>

## Background

Australia Network is a 24/7 international television and online service, contracted to the Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC) by the Commonwealth and is part of the ABC International Division, which also includes Radio Australia<sup>2</sup>, ABC International Projects<sup>3</sup> and ABC International Relations<sup>4</sup>. Australia Network is funded by the Commonwealth Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT).

The Network's television service is available in key source international student markets including Asia, the Pacific and the Indian sub-continent while its online platform is accessible worldwide to any international student with access to the Internet or web-based mobile devices. Part of Australia Network's daily television feed covers education issues and English-language learning (ELL) content while its online platform provides English-language learning (ELL) video interstitials and text-based teaching tools.

Australia Network makes a significant contribution to informing international students and their families about Australian society and values including education and English-language learning content. Moreover, opportunities exist to improve and expand the quality and accessibility of this pre-arrival education information.

## Australia Network and International Education

Australia Network and its predecessors, ABC Asia Pacific and Australia Television International, have been producing news and programs on education and related issues since 1998.

Australia Network has demonstrated since its launch that it is able to play a lead role by informing and influencing international students, family and alumni about the competitive advantages of studying in Australia to help enhance Australia's role and reputation in international education.

Australia Network's television schedule covers Australian-themed education content and English-language learning programs which include *This Australian Life*,<sup>5</sup> *Inspiring Teachers*,<sup>6</sup> *Down Under Grads*,<sup>7</sup> and *Nexus*<sup>8</sup> which all provide a unique perspective on Australian campus life and society.

English-language learning (ELL) programs include IELTS (International English Language Testing System)<sup>9</sup> preparation and *Passport to English*<sup>10</sup>, *the Business of English*<sup>11</sup>, *Living English*<sup>12</sup> and *Study English*<sup>13</sup>.

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<sup>2</sup> <http://www.radioaustralia.net.au/aboutus/>

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.abc.net.au/international/projects/about/>

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.abc.net.au/international/>

<sup>5</sup> <http://australiannetwork.com/life/>

<sup>6</sup> [http://video.google.com.au/videosearch?sourceid=navclient&hl=en-GB&rlz=1T4GZAZ\\_en-GBAU316AU320&q=inspiring+teachers+program+sbs&um=1&ie=UTF-8&ei=Oo3aSr69N4f-tQPj8uyxCQ&sa=X&oi=video\\_result\\_group&ct=title&resnum=4&ved=0CBoQqwQwAw#](http://video.google.com.au/videosearch?sourceid=navclient&hl=en-GB&rlz=1T4GZAZ_en-GBAU316AU320&q=inspiring+teachers+program+sbs&um=1&ie=UTF-8&ei=Oo3aSr69N4f-tQPj8uyxCQ&sa=X&oi=video_result_group&ct=title&resnum=4&ved=0CBoQqwQwAw#)

<sup>7</sup> <http://www.filmaust.com.au/downundergrads/>

<sup>8</sup> <http://australiannetwork.com/nexus/>

<sup>9</sup> <http://www.ielts.org/>

The online service <sup>14</sup> is available to any international student with access to Internet and web-based mobile devices, including those students among China's 338 million web users.<sup>15</sup> English-language learning programs account for an estimated 38% of all Australia Network website traffic.<sup>16</sup>

Australia Network's public diplomacy role extends to Australia via the online ABC *iView*<sup>17</sup>, Australia Network Learning platform. The channel represents the most extensive and complete free English-language resource available via any broadcasting medium in Australia.

Australia Network's English-learning videos have also proven popular on public streaming sites such as YouTube and iTunes. For example, *Passport to English*,<sup>18</sup> rates fourth and *English Bites*<sup>19</sup> ninth, in the world on iTunes listing of language learning video podcasts.<sup>20</sup>

An estimated 87% of content in the Australia Network television schedule is now locally produced or licensed from independent distributors, ABC<sup>21</sup>, SBS<sup>22</sup> and Australia's three commercial networks Seven<sup>23</sup>, Nine<sup>24</sup> and Ten<sup>25</sup>.

This strategy helps project Australia's image and perspective 24/7 across 44 countries in the Asia Pacific region and adds further value by showcasing trusted and impartial news and multi-genre programs, including Australian film, documentaries, magazine, drama, sport and children's content.

A critical part of the service is Australia Networks 24 hour newsroom which provides dedicated coverage of news, current affairs and business programs for regional audiences. A professional team of experienced journalist produce 35 hours of news programming each week, making Australia Network one of the most productive news rooms in Australia.<sup>26</sup>

## Supporting the Interests of Students

Australia Network is pleased to provide the following comments and recommendations on the issue of how can the quality and accessibility of reliable information be improved. Australia Network believes its public diplomacy role in relation to education falls into four-areas, as follows:

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<sup>10</sup> <http://australiannetwork.com/passport/>

<sup>11</sup> <http://australiannetwork.com/businessenglish/>

<sup>12</sup> <http://australiannetwork.com/livingenglish/>

<sup>13</sup> <http://australiannetwork.com/studyenglish/>

<sup>14</sup> [www.australiannetwork.com/learningenglish](http://www.australiannetwork.com/learningenglish)

<sup>15</sup> <http://www.internetworldstats.com/asia/cn.htm>

<sup>16</sup> Australia Network Annual Report 2009

<sup>17</sup> <http://www.abc.net.au/tv/iview/>

<sup>18</sup> <http://australiannetwork.com/passport/>

<sup>19</sup> <http://australiannetwork.com/englishbites/>

<sup>20</sup> Australia Network Annual Report 2009

<sup>21</sup> <http://www.abcccontentsales.com.au/default.htm>

<sup>22</sup> <http://www.sbs.com.au/contentsales/>

<sup>23</sup> <http://www.sevencorporate.com.au/>

<sup>24</sup> <http://channelnine.ninemsn.com.au/>

<sup>25</sup> <http://ten.com.au/>

<sup>26</sup> Australia Network Annual Report 2009

**i. To develop new pre-arrival content and education programming financed by government and education sectors to improve the quality and accuracy of information on key issues.**

This includes the development and production of short interstitial video content for online and mobile devices on issues such as student safety and welfare, public health, student visa requirements<sup>27</sup> and pathways to permanency, employment rights and protection from exploitation, accommodation, and other related government and agency services.

The production and availability of 15, 30 or 60 second low resolution video vignettes themed on key issues will improve the international education sectors ability to communicate reliable information in a timely and effective manner.

Video vignettes will also improve the accessibility of information and allow the education sector and government agencies the opportunity to communicate inside the same digital and Web 2.0<sup>28</sup> pipeline as students communicate with each other, namely *iPhone* applications<sup>29</sup>, SMS<sup>30</sup>, IM<sup>31</sup>, UGC<sup>32</sup>, video sharing channels<sup>33</sup>, wikis<sup>34</sup>, blogs<sup>35</sup> podcasts<sup>36</sup>, mash-ups<sup>37</sup>, folksonomy<sup>38</sup>, search portals<sup>39</sup>, social media<sup>40</sup>, Twitter<sup>41</sup> and Skype<sup>42</sup>.

Short video-clips can be either animated or use real characters. Clips should include a storyline. They need to be creative and where appropriate entertaining. They should not be infomercials. Clips should include a watermarked web link to allow identification and easy access to the primary source. Local language voice-overs should be added to all animated clips where possible or local language subtitles to improve communication.

The education sector and appropriate government agencies need to also fund the development of 'soft' diplomacy messaging using magazine style education programming highlighting the positive experiences of international students studying and living in Australia.

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<sup>27</sup> <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=keBOZ9rFuuk>

<sup>28</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Web\\_2.0](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Web_2.0)

<sup>29</sup> <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/IPhone>

<sup>30</sup> <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/SMS>

<sup>31</sup> [http://netforbeginners.about.com/od/instantmessaging/a/im\\_explained.htm](http://netforbeginners.about.com/od/instantmessaging/a/im_explained.htm)

<sup>32</sup> [http://www.imakenews.com/imediainc/e\\_article000870123.cfm?x=b11,0,w](http://www.imakenews.com/imediainc/e_article000870123.cfm?x=b11,0,w)

<sup>33</sup> [www.YouTube.com](http://www.YouTube.com), [www.dailymotion.com](http://www.dailymotion.com), <http://www.vimeo.com/>

<sup>34</sup> <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wiki>

<sup>35</sup> <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Blog>

<sup>36</sup> <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Podcast>

<sup>37</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mashup\\_\(web\\_application\\_hybrid\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mashup_(web_application_hybrid))

<sup>38</sup> <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Folksonomy>

<sup>39</sup> <http://www.google.com>, <http://www.bing.com/>, [www.naver.com](http://www.naver.com)

<sup>40</sup> [www.facebook.com](http://www.facebook.com), [www.myspace.com](http://www.myspace.com)

<sup>41</sup> <http://twitter.com/>

<sup>42</sup> <http://www.skype.com/intl/en/>

**ii. To support the international education sector in the promotion and communication of a brand education strategy that showcases Australia’s knowledge economy.**

The Hon Simon Crean MP, Australia’s Minister for Trade is committed to developing a brand for Australia <sup>43</sup>which includes recognising the international education sector.

He said at a joint press conference in October 2009 with Simon Ahholt, <sup>44</sup>an independent policy advisor and researcher who specialises in national identity, public diplomacy and the ‘brand images’ of nations that the government is looking for a more effective mechanism by which [to] join the dots around building of a new brand position<sup>45</sup>.

*“This requires importantly some business savvy ... because it's got to be a brand that business is confident about, but also that the community accepts as a credible expression about what Australia is and what it's seeking to offer the rest of the world both in goods and services”<sup>46</sup>.*

*“And in the case of education, he said if nations are going to move forward they have to build the skills of their people. Australia is uniquely placed. It's a trusted provider, an image that's been tarnished somewhat with the Indian student's issue. And that has been an attack on the brand if you like because what we offer is quality education, not just any education but quality education, and we have to reinforce that brand.”<sup>47</sup>*

Australia Network can support a brand campaign that turns *soft diplomacy* initiatives into *smart* diplomacy. This development makes for a great story as the balance between knowledge (education) and resources is shifting towards knowledge<sup>48</sup> and how Australia is transitioning from the *lucky* country to the *clever* country.

**iii. To help design a social compact<sup>49</sup> between international students and the Australian public by highlighting the benefits of social integration using newly developed program strands funded by third parties.**

Australia Network regularly holds discussions with students, representatives of the higher education<sup>50</sup>, VET<sup>51</sup> and ELICOS<sup>52</sup> sectors, as well as, federal government departments and Australian Educational International<sup>53</sup> counsellors in select embassies on this matter.

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<sup>43</sup> [http://www.trademinister.gov.au/transcripts/2009/091022\\_jpc.html](http://www.trademinister.gov.au/transcripts/2009/091022_jpc.html)

<sup>44</sup> <http://www.simonanholt.com/>

<sup>45</sup> [http://www.trademinister.gov.au/transcripts/2009/091022\\_jpc.html](http://www.trademinister.gov.au/transcripts/2009/091022_jpc.html)

<sup>46</sup> *ibid*

<sup>47</sup> [http://www.trademinister.gov.au/transcripts/2009/091022\\_jpc.html](http://www.trademinister.gov.au/transcripts/2009/091022_jpc.html)

<sup>48</sup> <http://www.deewr.gov.au/highereducation/review/pages/reviewofaustralianhighereducationreport.aspx>

<sup>49</sup> Social compact definition: to encourage social integration between international students and the public

<sup>50</sup> Talks are held with students and with peak bodies and conferences including English Australia, TAFE Directors, Australian International Education, The Australian Council for Private Education and Training.

<sup>51</sup> <http://www.vcaa.vic.edu.au/VET/Index.html>

The production and distribution of education and related programming on Australia Network works towards strengthening co-operation between students and the Australian public by showcasing Australian themes and images. International students are better prepared on arrival if they've been exposed to images and themes about Australia.

Australia Network is well positioned to produce new strands of programming funded by the education sector to help strengthen social integration<sup>54</sup>.

**iv. To improve overall communication of information about Australia between international alumni, APAC governments, media and other key “gatekeepers” including international students, counsellors, advisors and placement agents in host countries.**

Australia Network believes there are opportunities to play a positive role in facilitating information and producing programs about educational issues and experiences of students studying and living in Australia.

However, to do so will require funding. Further, it will require input from institutions, Australian transnational education providers, education peak bodies and student recruitment agencies, including IDP Education,<sup>55</sup> Universities Australia,<sup>56</sup> ACPET,<sup>57</sup> English Australia<sup>58</sup> and TAFE Directors Australia,<sup>59</sup> to ensure best practice.

Australia Network is open to talks about producing vignettes and episodic programming for wider on-air and online distribution. This content would be able to be re-distributed and used by education, government and non-government agencies to maximise audience reach.

International students are increasingly discovering, consuming and interacting with media content and information through online and mobile platforms and these usage patterns are likely to influence their information and communications expectations both in their home countries and in Australia.

For example, recent research shows there is an estimated 460 million internet users in Australia's top five student source markets—China, India, Korea, Malaysia and Thailand.<sup>60</sup> Similarly, there are an estimated 800 million mobile-phone users in the top three student

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<sup>52</sup> <http://www.elicos.com/>

<sup>53</sup> <http://www.aei.gov.au/>

<sup>54</sup> *MY AUSTRALIA* is a new 15 episode series being developed by Australia Network that looks at Australia through the eyes of young people from the Asia-Pacific region.

<sup>55</sup> <http://www.idp.com/>

<sup>56</sup> <http://www.universitiesaustralia.edu.au/>

<sup>57</sup> <http://www.acpet.edu.au/>

<sup>58</sup> <http://www.englishaustralia.com.au/>

<sup>59</sup> <http://www.tda.edu.au/>

<sup>60</sup> <http://www.internetworldstats.com/stats3.htm#asia>

source markets of Korea,<sup>61</sup> China<sup>62</sup> and India.<sup>63,64</sup> As Chinese students represent 23.9% of international student enrolments in Australian educational institutions,<sup>65</sup> it is worth noting that an estimated 155 million people in China can access the internet via mobile phones.<sup>66</sup>

An appropriate response would be to increase the volume of education-based content delivered over digital distribution channels to better meet the expectations of international students using the internet and mobile information devices.

Moreover, there are opportunities for Australia Network and Radio Australia to use these platforms to deliver information about various issues affecting international students in their home countries, so that they are better informed when they arrive in Australia to study.

Australia Network Television is in a strong position as it reaches 44 nations in the Asia-Pacific to accurately reflect the depth and strength of Australia's education sector.

**Contact for further information:**

Bruce Dover  
Chief Executive  
Australia Network

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<sup>61</sup> <http://www.futurizekorea.com/255>

<sup>62</sup> <http://www.chinatoday.com/data/data.htm>

<sup>63</sup> [http://www.neoncarrot.co.uk/h\\_aboutindia/india\\_telecom\\_stats.html#mobiles](http://www.neoncarrot.co.uk/h_aboutindia/india_telecom_stats.html#mobiles)

<sup>64</sup> See also [http://www.nationmaster.com/graph/med\\_mob\\_pho\\_sub-media-mobile-phone-subscribers](http://www.nationmaster.com/graph/med_mob_pho_sub-media-mobile-phone-subscribers)

<sup>65</sup> <http://aei.gov.au/AEI/MIP/Statistics/default.htm>

<sup>66</sup> <http://www.them.pro/China-internet-statistics-2009>