

Submission to the
Senate Education and Employment Legislation Committee Inquiry into
the *Education Services for Overseas Students Amendment*
(Streamlining Regulation) Bill 2015
and the
Education Services for Overseas Students (Registration Charges)
Amendment (Streamlining Regulation) Bill 2015.

Both Bills follow extensive and constructive Government-industry consultation. The Council of Private Higher Education (COPHE) supports all the provisions of the Bills, which will reduce red tape and the unproductive compliance burden on providers, while strengthening the powers of ESOS Agencies, including regulators, to execute their functions for the better protection of students and the reputation of the international education industry.

We have also signed a joint statement from the International Education Association of Australia whose submission to the Committee is supported by seven peak bodies involved in consultations.

Students will continue to be protected by the Tuition Protection Service and the National Code.

We support the provisions in the *Education Services for Overseas Students Amendment (Streamlining Regulation) Bill 2015*.

At present students and sponsors cannot pay more than 50% of the tuition fee upfront, even if they want to do so. This restriction has created difficulty where some sponsors, including other governments, need to pay on an annual basis and been a source of annoyance to some students and sponsors. The Bill proposes to allow students or sponsors to elect to pay upfront more than 50% of the fees, but to continue to prohibit providers from requiring more payment upfront.

The present requirement for a designated account provides little real protection and is unnecessarily restrictive; the Australian Government Actuary estimates its proposed removal will present minimal risk.

Removal of the concept of a *Study Period* in the ESOS Act reduces administrative complexity and better aligns with the National Code, which still requires detailed written agreements for the protection of students.

We support the provisions in the *Education Services for Overseas Students (Registration Charges) Amendment (Streamlining Regulation) Bill 2015*, specifically to remove the 2 year minimum registration period for providers, and to waive double charging on a provider who seeks renewal after an initial registration of less than 2 years.

In summary, we urge the Senate Committee to recommend that Parliament pass both Bills in their present form.

About the Council of Private Higher Education

COPHE is a peak body representing higher education institutions that are independent of Australian public universities. The membership is diverse and includes private universities and institutions operating from more than 80 campus locations across Australia. Members vary in student enrolments from under a hundred to a few thousand and include not-for profit and for-profit operations. Courses offered range from pathway diplomas through to bachelor and master's degrees, often linked to professions and employment. Some members also offer research degrees, including PhDs.

The private sector in higher education is recognized for the quality of student outcomes from a diverse range of smaller institutions that focus on the quality of teaching.

The diversity is also evident in the provision of international education. For COPHE, seeking policy that encourages all students to be global citizens is a priority.

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