

**Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs
&
Ministerial Council for Vocational & Technical Education**

JOINT COMMUNIQUE

International students are welcome in Australia. They provide a diversity and richness to our education and training institutions and enrich the communities in which they live. Now and in the future, Australia grows as a nation as a result of students coming here and Australians studying abroad.

Ministers today welcomed a number of international students to listen directly to their views. Ministers also heard today from representatives of Universities Australia and the Australian Council of Private Education and Training and acknowledge their important role in providing a rewarding study experience.

Ministers condemn recent incidents involving international students which have compromised their belief in Australia as a safe and welcoming country. Ministers are united in their commitment to ensure all international students and their families remain confident that Australia will not tolerate discrimination or victimisation of students who are guests in our country.

Ministers acknowledged the need for a coordinated approach between all jurisdictions to provide the best possible experiences and outcomes for international students.

Ministers agreed that comprehensive information about studying and living and working in Australia is essential to improve international student experiences, including their safety and life in their community. Addressing these information needs will be a priority. Better information will minimise risks to students' safety and ensure if their safety is threatened or infringed, students get the help they need. It will also ensure that overseas students are fully aware of their employment rights and Australia's workplace laws and where to go for assistance with employment matters. Ministers will also consider how to ensure overseas education agents are reputable and responsible in the advice they provide.

All Ministers are committed to enhancing the quality of our education and training system to deliver high quality, internationally recognised courses that maximise international students' experiences and outcomes. This will be achieved through renewed emphasis by registration authorities and the Australian Government to address quickly any issues of the quality of education and training providers in their jurisdiction. Ministers have agreed that to achieve this, targeted audits of providers will be undertaken as a matter of priority. In addition, there will be joint action by all governments to design and implement the announced Tertiary Education Standards and Quality Agency. All Ministers support the bringing forward of the review of the *Education Services for Overseas Students Act 2000* to commence in 2009-2010.

Today's agreement ensures all Australian governments are actively working together, in partnership with education providers and the community, to meet the challenges of an increasingly dynamic international education environment. Ministers have tasked the Joint Committee on International Education to urgently progress the actions agreed today so that the November 2009 Ministerial Council on Tertiary Education and Employment can agree any further actions to promote and protect Australia's reputation as a safe destination for top-quality study and research.