

## **INQUIRY INTO TOURISM IN LOCAL COMMUNITIES**

**Organisation:** William Blue College of Hospitality Management  
**Date received:** 21/11/2013

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13 November 2013

Hon Natasha Maclaren - Jones  
Chair  
Legislative Council General Purpose Standing Committee No 3  
Parliament House ·  
Macquarie Street  
SYDNEY NSW 2000

Dear Ms Maclaren - Jones

William Blue College of Hospitality Management welcomes the opportunity to provide a submission to the Inquiry into Tourism in Local Communities. William Blue College is part of the Think Education Group. Think Education Group is a group of 8 colleges that provide industry-driven education and training to thousands of students all over Australia in over 60 specialist courses – from vocational certificates and diplomas to bachelor and master's degrees. With campuses in New South Wales, Queensland and Victoria, a growing number of students study their course on-line, at a time and place that suits them. The purpose of this report is to highlight to the Standing Committee the importance of international students to the New South Wales visitor economy.

Tourism is one of the many disciplines available to our students at William Blue College. The Bachelor of Business (Tourism Management) offered by William Blue is a university equivalent Higher Education course fully accredited by the regulatory bodies. The emphasis is on a knowledge and skills-based approach to learning. All course lecturers are industry experts and experienced educators. We aim to provide the tourism sector with employees that are not only knowledgeable and skilled in the tourism industry but are passionate about it.

We envisage that our skilled and passionate tourism graduates will assist in addressing the projected long term skills gap in the tourism industry. This skills gap was highlighted in the 2011 Australian Tourism Labour Force Report. In this report Deloitte Access Economics estimated that by 2015 there will be a short fall of 45,782 workers within the tourism industry. If tourism training and education is not actively encouraged by both state and federal governments then the results will be a further reduction in the pool of qualified talent available to employers. This would ultimately lead to a lower quality experience for visitors to our state and nation and may negatively impact on future tourist visitation to New South Wales.

**THINK: EDUCATION GROUP**  
HEAD OFFICE  
LEVEL 2, 80 TRAFALGAR HIGHWAY  
NORTH SYDNEY NSW 2060  
AUSTRALIA  
PHONE: +61 2 9555 1122  
FAX: +61 2 9557 1811  
[www.think.edu.au](http://www.think.edu.au)

**THINK: EDUCATION SERVICES PTY LTD**  
APN 470716151642

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ABN 63 620 029 299  
STUDIOS 10/40  
16 PINE MOUNTAIN ROAD, 10/40  
CHERRY PARK INDUSTRIAL ESTATE  
NEWCASTLE NSW 2300  
Sydney

**WILLIAM BLUE COLLEGE OF  
HOSPITALITY MANAGEMENT**  
PHONE: AUSTRALIA 1800 851 233  
PHONE: NSW +61 2 9492 3222  
[www.williamblue.edu.au](http://www.williamblue.edu.au)

**BILLY BLUE COLLEGE OF DESIGN**  
PHONE: AUSTRALIA 1800 851 245  
PHONE: NSW +61 2 9492 3222  
[www.billyblue.edu.au](http://www.billyblue.edu.au)

**APM COLLEGE OF  
BUSINESS AND COMMUNICATION**  
PHONE: AUSTRALIA 1800 851 233  
PHONE: NSW +61 2 9492 3222  
[www.apm.edu.au](http://www.apm.edu.au)

**AUSTRALIAN COLLEGE OF  
NATURAL THERAPIES**  
PHONE: AUSTRALIA 1800 851 245  
PHONE: NSW +61 2 9492 3222  
[www.acnt.edu.au](http://www.acnt.edu.au)

**CATC DESIGN SCHOOL - SYDNEY**  
PHONE: +61 2 9271 1079

**CATC DESIGN SCHOOL  
BRISBANE, MELBOURNE, GOLD COAST**  
PHONE: AUSTRALIA 1800 851 233  
PHONE: NSW +61 2 9271 1079  
[www.catc.edu.au](http://www.catc.edu.au)

**AUSTRALIAN NATIONAL COLLEGE  
OF BEAUTY**  
PHONE: AUSTRALIA 1800 851 245  
PHONE: NSW +61 2 9492 3222  
[www.ancb.edu.au](http://www.ancb.edu.au)

**JANSEN NEWMAN INSTITUTE**  
PHONE: AUSTRALIA 1800 851 233  
PHONE: NSW +61 2 9492 3222  
[www.jni.edu.au](http://www.jni.edu.au)

**SOUTHERN SCHOOL OF  
NATURAL THERAPIES**  
PHONE: +61 2 9492 3222  
[www.southernschool.com](http://www.southernschool.com)



## Item 6: any other related matter

In relation to the topic of this inquiry there can be no doubt that tourism is an important industry for Australia. In the previous 12 months the Tourism sector generated \$98 billion dollars in expenditure.<sup>1</sup> NSW has the largest tourism industry of any state or territory in Australia and this is demonstrated by the fact that NSW has over 30% of national tourism consumption. This is by far the largest slice of the national tourism pie. Data from Tourism Research Australia shows that in 2011-12 almost 81 million visitors visited NSW and spent over \$25 billion<sup>2</sup>

However what is often forgotten is that International Education is Australia's fourth largest export industry. Australia's international education activities generate over \$15 billion of export income annually and this revenue supports more than 100,000 jobs. This figure is largely driven by the higher education sector, representing 65.6 per cent of total revenue during this period.<sup>4</sup> According to the June 2013 International visitor Survey (IVS) 359,481 international tourists stated that their major reason for coming to Australia was for the purposes of education. This accounts for 6% of all inbound tourists. While this figure may at first glance not seem substantial on closer inspection of the IVS the following details about international students are revealed:

- International students spent a total of 51 million nights in Australia. This represents 24% of all international visitor nights, by far the largest of any sector.
- Their average expenditure per night was \$115. This is a higher spend than leisure tourists and is only exceeded by business visitors
- The average duration of stay in Australia for education visitors was 142 nights – the longest length of stay by any group.

International students studying in Australia are good for the economy as they stay longer and spend more than any other inbound tourist group. Yet the importance of this sector is often either ignored or overlooked by both industry and government authorities. For example on the Destination New South Wales website on their state tourism statistics page they highlight Visiting Friends & Relatives (VFR), Holiday and Business as being reasons for visiting Australia but fail to mention the substantial international student market. I see this as an oversight considering that international students spend more per day in Australia and stay for longer than any other type of tourist

Deloitte Access Economics has identified international education as one of five future super-growth sectors for NSW .These 5 sectors are International Education, Tourism, Wealth Management, Gas and Agribusiness and are forecast to grow more quickly than the global economy over the next 20 years.<sup>3</sup> Additionally Deloitte's Building the Lucky Country Report states that "the future potential for International education is enormous as the emerging economies of

THINK: EDUCATION GROUP  
HEAD OFFICE  
LEVEL 2, 80 PARADISE HIGHWAY  
NORTH SYDNEY NSW 2060  
AUSTRALIA  
PHONE: +61 2 9550 1122  
FAX: +61 2 9550 1811  
[www.think.edu.au](http://www.think.edu.au)

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HOSPITALITY MANAGEMENT  
PHONE: (AUSTRALIA) 02 9550 1122  
PHONE: (NZ) +61 2 9550 1122  
[www.williamblue.edu.au](http://www.williamblue.edu.au)

BILLY BLUE COLLEGE OF DESIGN  
PHONE: (AUSTRALIA) 02 9550 1122  
PHONE: (NZ) +61 2 9550 1122  
[www.billyblue.edu.au](http://www.billyblue.edu.au)

APM COLLEGE OF  
BUSINESS AND COMMUNICATION  
PHONE: (AUSTRALIA) 02 9550 1122  
[www.apm.edu.au](http://www.apm.edu.au)

AUSTRALASIAN COLLEGE OF  
NATURAL THERAPIES  
PHONE: (AUSTRALIA) 02 9550 1122  
PHONE: (NZ) +61 2 9550 1122  
[www.acnt.edu.au](http://www.acnt.edu.au)

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PHONE: +61 2 9550 1122

CATC DESIGN SCHOOL  
BRISBANE, MELBOURNE, GOLD COAST  
PHONE: (AUSTRALIA) 02 9550 1122  
PHONE: (NZ) +61 2 9550 1122  
[www.catc.edu.au](http://www.catc.edu.au)

AUSTRALIAN NATIONAL COLLEGE  
OF BEAUTY  
PHONE: (AUSTRALIA) 02 9550 1122  
PHONE: (NZ) +61 2 9550 1122  
[www.ancb.edu.au](http://www.ancb.edu.au)

JANSEN NEWMAN INSTITUTE  
PHONE: (AUSTRALIA) 02 9550 1122  
PHONE: (NZ) +61 2 9550 1122  
[www.jni.edu.au](http://www.jni.edu.au)

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PHONE: +61 2 9550 1122  
[www.southernschool.com](http://www.southernschool.com)





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today will become the knowledge economies of tomorrow". The future of International Education looks very promising with global demand for educational services expected to increase by about 7% a year between now and 2020.

Yet International Education receives little recognition in either the press or government tourism bodies. I hope that by putting forward this submission the profile of International Education is raised and placed on the radar of the NSW Government and this Standing Committee in particular.

Based on the above statistics that highlight the importance of the tourism revenue generated by international students I believe that both the State and Federal governments should consider supporting the following recommendations from the 2013 Chaney report :

- Expedite streamlined visa processing for low immigration risk providers.
- Implement a whole-of-government approach to educating employers on the value of recruiting graduates, both domestic and international.
- Consider increasing the points available for an Australian education qualification in the skilled migration points test from five to 10.
- Market Australia as a supplier of high quality education and continue to build its core markets while pursuing diversification through engagement with emerging markets and increased offshore delivery.
- Annually review Austrade's contribution to promotion and marketing of international education, including performance and activities.
- Develop and implement a communications campaign to articulate the many economic and cultural benefits that international education and students bring to Australia.

While I appreciate that the NSW State government has established, in principle, the government body Study NSW, it is now critical that the government provide sufficient resources to this organisation to ensure that this government authority flourishes and achieves its maximum potential. As Australia's 4<sup>th</sup> largest export industry International Education should have a higher standing in government and the wider community than what it currently does. International Education is now Australia's largest service export so anything that this Standing Committee could do to assist the sector and facilitate raising its profile would be greatly appreciated.

I thank you for the opportunity to participate in this consultation. If you have any further questions in relation to this submission please don't hesitate to contact me.

Linda Brown  
CEO



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