

## **Free Trade Agreement Negotiations between Australia and India** **South Australian Education Submission**

India has nearly 31% of the population under 14 years of age and 58% under the age of 25. This equates to over 235 million people between the age of 15 and 25, however only 13 million people are able to gain entry into higher education in India.<sup>1</sup>

Due to this young and dynamic population, India is seeking to educate its people to better prepare them for the economic growth India is experiencing and likely to continue to experience. The Ministry of Human Resource Development is planning to increase its enrolments in Higher Education from 15% to 30% by 2020 and increase its enrolments in the VET sector from 5% to 50% in the same period. Currently there are 40 million secondary school students competing for 13 million higher education places.

To achieve these ambitious goals, India is in the process of passing a bill through parliament to allow foreign institutions to set up campuses in India. Part of a suite of higher education reform objectives, the bill aims to increase capacity, enhance choices, increase competition and benchmark quality.

Kapil Sibal, India's education minister, introduced measures to increase access to higher education, improve the quality of existing institutions, and eliminate regulatory sloth, incompetence, and corruption. He fast-tracked new colleges and supported the entry of foreign universities.

However, most of his ideas are still just proposals, bogged down not only by resistance from the opposition but also by divisions within his own Congress Party. The Foreign Universities Bill was introduced in parliament in May 2010. It was referred to the standing committee, which was to submit its report in two months. But opposition from various quarters has meant that the bill has been with the committee for over a year now. Deliberation over India's much-delayed Foreign Universities Bill to allow international universities to set up campuses in the country may be dragged out even further after the student body of the ruling Congress party raised a series of concerns over the proposed legislation.

The delay of the Foreign Universities Bill has prevented many institutions in exploring opportunities in India. This barrier is of a major concern for the international education industry for South Australia. As at June 2011, Indian student enrolment numbers have declined 26% in South Australia and 30% for Australia. The Foreign Universities Bill poses a significant opportunity for Australian education institutions to showcase their quality in education and increase their bi-lateral relationships with India. While the Foreign Universities bill is being debated in parliament, several foreign universities are already opening campuses in India (including those from the US and UK).

### **Recognition of overseas qualifications in India**

All higher degree qualifications in India are recognised subject to approval by the Universities Grants Commission (UGC). In addition, overseas qualifications (called Cross-Border Higher Education qualifications) have to be approved also by the Association of Indian Universities (AIU), which maintains a register of universities and the equivalence of qualifications granted by them to Indian qualifications<sup>2</sup>.

Recognition of Australian professional and other degree qualifications by the Indian government for the purposes of employment or professional registration is not transparent. There has been some progress in the recognition of law degrees, but it has been a protracted and expensive process. More information needs to be compiled on this issue.

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<sup>1</sup>Source: United Nations – Economic and Social Commission, Population, 2010, <http://esa.un.org/unpp/>

<sup>2</sup> See the highlighted portions of the attached discussion papers (India Country Reports) presented at the Asia-Pacific Academic Recognition Network meetings: ([http://www.aparnet.org/discussion\\_papers.htm](http://www.aparnet.org/discussion_papers.htm)). See especially "Section 3.4 Recognition Of Qualifications Awarded By Higher Education Institutions Within And Outside The Country: Laws And Policies Adopted Since 2000, Etc." Country Paper India Eighth Session.