

# Overseas students



Australia plays an increasingly significant role in the international education industry and is the third most popular English-speaking country in which to study, behind the United States of America and the United Kingdom.

Schools play a role in the industry – estimated to be the nation's third largest export industry, worth \$4 billion.

The decade 1994-2004 witnessed an overall growth of 119 per cent in the number of overseas students studying in Australian schools. But in 2005 pressures on this growth became evident, with fewer overseas students studying in our schools.

While the vast majority of overseas students come to Australia for their tertiary education, a significant number have been enrolling at Australian secondary schools as preparation for higher studies in Australia. In particular, independent schools have been attracting many of these students.

In 2005 the schools sector accounted for 7.4 per cent of the 344,815 overseas students studying in Australia. Independent schools had more than 9,600 overseas students, a 3.2 per cent decrease over the previous year. There were nearly 9,500 overseas students enrolled in government and Catholic schools in 2005.

Most overseas students in independent schools are in the secondary years, with senior secondary accounting for the majority of these enrolments. Overall, 90 per cent of overseas students in independent schools are in secondary schooling, and 10 per cent in primary.

The independent schools sector, together with the Australian schools sector as a whole, is concerned about the recent drop in recruitment of international students to Australian schools.

It is believed that the drop in overseas students is due to a number of factors. Firstly, Australia has become more expensive as a place to study, relative to other countries. This is due to increasing school costs, and increases in the value of the Australian dollar.

There has also been an increase in the quantity and quality of local education provision in traditional source countries, including the provision of Australian curriculum. Some Australian institutions are now exporting education off-shore, as are several traditional source countries themselves in Australia's region. There is also increased pressure from competitor countries such as New Zealand, Canada, the United Kingdom and the United States of America.

Nonetheless, Australia's education system is well regarded, and the assurance of its quality, underpinned by the Qualifications Framework, ensures that Australia remains an attractive study destination. Students choose Australia not only for its quality of education but also for its diversity of educational and cultural experiences, the integrity of its qualifications, and its reputation for a safe and friendly environment.

The Independent Schools Council of Australia (ISCA) represents independent schools on national policy matters including the Student Visa Programme and the *ESOS Act (Educational Services for Overseas Students)*. As such, it actively seeks to address concerns about enrolment of overseas students in independent schools.



On international education matters, ISCA works with the Department of Education, Science and Training (DEST) – particularly the department’s international division, Australian Education International (AEI), and the Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs (DIMA). This includes regular whole of industry meetings with DEST and DIMA.

ISCA has also made several submissions regarding the evaluation of the *ESOS Act* and other overseas student issues. (These are available on the ISCA website). AEI is developing a Schools Sector Strategy to set directions for the schools sector as a whole. The independent schools sector is actively engaged in this work.

#### Overseas students in Australian schools: Top 10 countries of origin, 2005

Nationality	Number of enrolments	Percentage of total enrolments
China	10,748	42.1
Korea (Republic of)	4,553	17.8
Hong Kong	1,780	7.0
Japan	1,611	6.3
Thailand	808	3.2
Viet Nam	807	3.2
Malaysia	799	3.1
Indonesia	795	3.1
Taiwan	613	2.4
Germany	605	2.4

Source: AEI Enrolment Data

Chinese students form by far the largest national group of overseas students studying in Australian schools, accounting for more than 42 per cent of all school enrolments. Most overseas students are enrolled in New South Wales schools, with 32.7 per cent of total school sector enrolments, followed by Victorian schools (29.4 per cent) and Queensland schools (17 per cent). Enrolment shares in other states and territories are as follows: South Australia 7.7 per cent; Western Australia 8.7 per cent; ACT, 2.3 per cent; Tasmania 1.7 per cent; Northern Territory 0.5 per cent.

**For further information:**

Study in Australia (AEI): [www.studyinaustralia.gov.au](http://www.studyinaustralia.gov.au)

AEI: [www.aei.dest.gov.au](http://www.aei.dest.gov.au)

DIMA: [www.immi.gov.au](http://www.immi.gov.au)

IDP Education Australia: [www.idp.com](http://www.idp.com)

Austrade: [www.austrade.gov.au](http://www.austrade.gov.au)