



COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

**EDUCATION SERVICES FOR OVERSEAS
STUDENTS AMENDMENT (RE-
REGISTRATION OF PROVIDERS
AND OTHER MEASURES) BILL 2009**

Consideration of Senate Message

SPEECH

Thursday, 11 February 2010

BY AUTHORITY OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

SPEECH

Date Thursday, 11 February 2010
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Questioner
Speaker Gillard, Julia, MP

Source House
Proof No
Responder
Question No.

Ms GILLARD (Lalor—Minister for Education, Minister for Employment and Workplace Relations and Minister for Social Inclusion) (9.49 am)—I move:

That amendment (1) be agreed to.

This amendment is being agreed to as a result of debate and discussions in the Senate. The approach that the government has taken to this bill and to the area of international education generally has been a bipartisan one. We worked in a cooperative way with the member for Boothby when he was the opposition spokesperson for this area, and I think there is a shared understanding in this parliament that our international education sector is facing challenges. Those challenges include, firstly, the potential for pressure on international education because of the global financial crisis and global recession. Secondly, those challenges include the regulatory issues that have now presented, particularly in the vocational education and training sector. Obviously, we have seen an explosive growth in the number of international students. This has caused regulatory concerns, particularly concerns that we may have seen the growth of a number of shonky providers in international education. The government is therefore working strongly with state governments to address these registration issues and indeed this bill is part of that process.

Thirdly, our international education sector has obviously felt the impact of and been highly concerned about violent incidents, particularly involving Indian students in Victoria. This has led to an outpouring from this parliament of our very clear view as a nation that such violence is despicable and not to be tolerated. It has led to a policing response; it has also led to a Council of Australian Governments' response, as we work collaboratively on an international student strategy and a better way of supporting and facilitating international students. I believe this work has generally proceeded in a bipartisan way and we have tried to take the same approach to this piece of legislation.

When this bill was first before the House of Representatives, we accepted some propositions put forward by the member for Boothby. In this amendment we are now accepting a further proposition put forward by the opposition. When this amendment was first suggested in the House, the resulting debate concluded that, given the states and territories have the responsibility for the reregistration process, the risk management concept needed to be developed and delivered by them. So everybody was on the same page that a risk management approach needed to be taken. The outstanding question in the House of Representatives debate resulted in the conclusion that this did not need a legislative backing; it was occurring through the work being done by states and territories. Indeed, all Australian governments supported the concept of risk management and agreed to it at the relevant ministerial council. Through the Joint Committee for International Education, detailed work regarding the reregistration process and the risk management approach was undertaken, and as soon as this bill is passed a consistent risk management approach will swing into action. States and territories have agreed to process the highest risk providers by 1 July and all providers by December 2010.

In the government's view this amendment was not necessary, though of course we endorsed a risk management approach. But, in the interests of continuing the cooperation that there has been in this area, we have accepted the amendment which would formalise this approach. With the acceptance of this amendment, I would strenuously ask the opposition and the Senate to allow this bill to pass in a speedy fashion. We are now at the stage where further delay could jeopardise the delivery of the reregistration processes required by this bill, and jeopardising that reregistration process then jeopardises our ability to ensure that we can restore full confidence in the quality of each and every provider in international education. With those words, clearly the government is accepting the first amendment.