



October 2009

AAERI NEWSLETTER

Association of Australian Education Representative in India (AAERI)

www.aeri.org

Message from the President's Desk

AAERI's meeting with Australian Minister for Immigration & Citizenship, Senator The Hon Chris Evans:

Dear Colleagues,

We had a very good meeting with the Australian Minister for Immigration & Citizenship, Senator The Hon Chris Evans On 21 July 2009 at 11 am at the Australian High Commission, New Delhi. He was supported by:

Mr Andrew Metcalfe, Secretary (DIAC)
Dr Michael Boyle, Chief of Staff, Office of Senator Chris Evans
Mr Paul Windsor, Minister-counsellor (Immigration) and Regional Director, DIAC, AHC New Delhi
Ms Kris Cala, Counsellor (Immigration) and Principal Migration Officer, AHC New Delhi

I was supported by

Mr Inder Panjwani, General Secretary
Mr Govind Kumar Saha, Regional Member, Kolkata
Mr Pushpinder Bhatia, Former Executive Member

I briefed the minister and his team on AAERI and its role with an emphasis on how AAERI members are different from other agents in India. Minister's attention was drawn on the following points:

- AAERI Members are bound to abide by the ESOS Act as it is incorporated in AAERI's own Codes of Ethics
- AAERI Members conduct their business with their own name and brand
- AAERI provides marketing intelligence to both AEI and DIAC
- AAERI is in the process of re-writing its MOU with a view to tighten the entry criteria for new entrants as well as introducing a third party check on the existing members to ensure the credibility of its members.

Discussion centred on the quality and integrity of education agents and providers, and some onshore Registered Migration Agents, and the regulation of the education industry. AAERI representatives asserted that, in their view, media reporting of the student safety issue had been exaggerated, and to redress the balance they are hiring a Public Relations agent in India to get a better message out. They also raised concerns about student quality, noting that Assessment Level (AL) changes in September 2008 had, in their view, made it more difficult for high quality, higher education sector students to meet visa criteria. A group of AAERI members was scheduled to depart to Australia that evening to attend meetings arranged by Australia Education International (AEI) with various Government and Non-Government agencies, universities, top level private providers, the Indian High Commissioner, Indian Consuls-General in Sydney and Melbourne and Indian communities.

Gulshan Kumar
President, AAERI

AAERI's meeting with Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs, Government of India:

Dear Colleagues,

I am pleased to advise that we met the Minister for Overseas Indian Affairs (MOIA), Hon. Mr Vyalar Ravi on Thursday, 24th Sep 09. The appointment was arranged by one of our senior members, Mr P Srieeharan, Managing Director, Mancomp Professional Services (P) Ltd., Chennai, who came from Chennai to accompany us

to the minister's office as well as to the office of the Secretary (MOIA), Mr Mohandas. The other members who attended both the meetings with me and Sriee were: Mr Arun Bhutani, Secretary, AAERI
Mr Bubbly Johar, Vice President

We were received very well by the Minister and his staff at his residence/office. We acquainted the minister with the role and the history of 14 years of AAERI existence and its work done related to regulating its members across the country. We briefed the minister on the functioning of AAERI and advised him of the role of the disciplinary committee, and how members are bound to abide by AAERI's ethic codes which are derived from some of the Indian Govt rules and regulations on advertising and the Australian Government Education Services for Overseas Students Act (ESOS Act). The minister responded to us and said he has no problems with agents like us, however, he and his department is against the agents who mislead and cheat the people interested to study overseas. The minister openly admitted that he or his ministry has no plan to stop or have any sort of control on people going overseas for education; however, they are working with the Australian Government to regulate the Agents in India. The minister also advised us of his meetings with the Australian Minister for Immigration, Mr Chris Evans, and the Victorian Premier, Mr John Brumby. The minister also shared some of his own experiences with the shoddy agents, when people complained to him directly against them. The minister then advised us to meet the Secretary for the Ministry, Mr Mohandas, as our feedback could be useful for the preparation of discussions to be held with the Australian Government under the Joint Working Group Meeting, which is schedule in the first week of October. We advised the minister that we have an appointment with Mr Mohandas, and we will be going straight to see him after our meeting with him.

Meeting with the Secretary, MOIA, Mr Mohandas:

Our meeting with the Secretary, MOIA, was also held in a very cordial atmosphere. We apprised the Secretary about AAERI in brief, stressing the need of such an organization in India, its role and successful history of 14 years in regulating its members (161 in nos.) across the country, as well as its close relationship with the two Australian Govt Agencies i.e. AEI and DIAC. We also told the Secretary that there are some unscrupulous agents in the country, who are spoiling the name of our industry, but the AAERI members are different and they are bound to abide by our ethic codes, which are derived from some of the Indian Government rules on advertising and from the Australian ESOS Act. We handed over a folder with background of AAERI, its list of members and also various other details.

The Secretary also said that he has no problem with the agents like us but they are bringing a tough legislation to take care of the agents who mislead and cheat the people. We went a step further and offered AAERI's services to help his ministry in any way or if there was any role for AAERI to play. The secretary did not rule out the possibility of working with AAERI in the future. He also shared with us that they are more worried about the immigration agents than the education agents, and are in the process of bringing a more comprehensive and tough legislation to deal with them. The Secretary advised us to meet his Joint Secretary, Mr Gurcharan Singh, who is heading the Joint Working Group from the Indian side for its first meeting in Delhi in the first week of October, as our feedback could be quite useful for their discussions with the Australian side. We look forward to that.

After our meetings with the Indian High Commissioner in Canberra, and the Consul-Generals in Sydney and Melbourne, this is another feather in AAERI's cap. The minister as well as his Secretary seems to have acknowledged AAERI as a professional body, which can easily be distinguished from a large number of unregulated agents working across the country. There is a scope for AAERI to interact more with MOIA in future and keep it informed of the good work we do for our members and help student community in India in getting services of our members in the most professional and ethical manner.

Gulshan Kumar
President, AAERI



AAERI NEWSLETTER

Association of Australian Education Representative in India (AAERI)

www.aeri.org



Student Visa Checks Strengthened

AAERI Executive members recently met with Louise Smith, Regional Director, Kris Cala, Principal Migration Officer and Helen Wilson, Team Leader Student Integrity Project in New Delhi to discuss the strengthening of checks on student visa applications to prevent fraud and ensure students have the financial capacity to live and study in Australia. These measures were announced recently by the Minister of Immigration and Citizenship, Senator Chris Evans.

Ms Smith emphasised that Australia's student visa program supports the entry of genuine international students, for whom the department provides a convenient, efficient service. While overall student compliance rates remain high, there are elements of concern within this large caseload and targeted measures such as terminating or suspending agents because of evidence of fraud or poor approval rates are necessary.

The upgrading of the interview program to confirm the genuineness of the applicant commenced on 2 September 2009. The outcomes of these interviews are being forwarded to the decision maker in Adelaide. Applications involving fraud will necessarily result in visa refusal.

As a result of the enhanced measures the current processing time for student visas in Adelaide which is responsible for over 90% of student applications is 45 days. This has increased from 25 days several months ago, however, is well within our published service standard of 90 days. We have consistently over a long period maintained better than service standard processing times.

Ms Smith also reported that the Australian Government suspended almost 200 agents operating in a number of countries from lodging online student visa applications because of evidence of fraud or poor approval rates. While most of these agents were operating in Australia, a small number of agents were from India. To regain their access to the online system, agents will need to 'show cause' for their behaviour. Access arrangements are being reviewed to ensure that online agents meet high standards of performance.

It is important that Education Agents submitting eVisa applications fully understand their obligations under the Facility Access Agreement and meet and adhere to the agreed standards that they have signed. Providing valid, well documented applications and proper supporting documents is essential to ensure that decision makers have all the relevant information to make a decision. Agents should pay particular care to this as decisions will be made on the basis of documentation supplied at time of application.

The introduction of the new checklist for eVisa applications came into effect on 1 September 2009. Ms Smith confirmed that for cases lodged prior to the new checklist agents do not need to send any additional information unless requested to do so.

It has come to our attention that some agents are still assessing income capacity using a formula that income must be 22% of the loan amount. Please alert your members that this assessment practice ceased 2 years ago. Applicants are required to demonstrate that they have access to sufficient funds to support themselves for the duration of their studies and show that they or their sponsor have the capacity to service the loan. Applicants or their sponsor must also demonstrate a regular income sufficient to accumulate these funds. This will differ from case to case depending on income, accumulated funds including fixed deposits etc and is assessed accordingly.

Ms Smith reminded members that the Study in Australia Booklet is an important source of information for students wishing to study in Australia. The guide has been prepared to help Indian students make the transition to student life in Australia. It provides practical information about moving to and living in Australia and outlines the rights and responsibilities as an international student.

Students can download soft copy of the study guide at
http://www.studyinaustralia.gov.au/Sia/en/StudyGuide_.pdf

AAERI NEWSLETTER

Association of Australian Education Representative in India (AAERI)

www.aeri.org



AAERI Delegation visit to Australia - Summary Report

A DETAILED REPORT IS AVAILABLE WITH AAERI REGIONAL EXECUTIVES AND ANY MEMBER CAN REQUEST A COPY FROM THEM. THIS IS A SUMMARY REPORT.

In the last week of July 09, the AAERI delegation visited Australia where the first stop was in Sydney. They met Senior Staff members of Universities who confirmed that "Events in Australia are disturbing, attacks in Australia are "not racist in nature but an opportunistic point of view". In addition the Universities are lobbying for concessional local transportation and increasing accommodation for International students. Universities want to provide "Safe Australia" message to the Indian students and its parents.

TAFE NSW were concerned about the role of some members of the agent community and some non compliance amongst Education providers. They also confirmed that changes are coming and will be good for everyone. AAERI did mention that TAFE sector has limited seats for popular courses and needs to expand its capacity. VET needs to restrict their representation to AAERI members only.

The Indian Consul General in Sydney had a tough line for the agents in India and mentioned that soon there will be tough Indian laws to monitor the industry. He also mentioned that all Indian students in Australia have come on legitimate visas issued by the Australian Government and AAERI should attract students only if Australia delivers. The Indian Consul General also indicated that Australian Government needs to be more responsible towards Indian students.

The AAERI delegation was able to distinguish the AAERI members from the other agents community in India and did mention that we a 13 year old democratic organization which regulates its members. This was a big achievement for all the AAERI Members. The meeting with Indian community went well and they recognize the role of AAERI. The Indian community in Sydney surveyed and spoke to 150 students (approx) and found only two major issues with the Indian students and they were - part time work and permanent residence. Security for the students was not a major issue, according to them.



AAERI delegation with High Commissioner of India Hon. Sujatha Singh in Canberra

Next stop was at Canberra where the Universities in Canberra were equally concerned as the system supported low cost tuition fee providers and that some of them were not complying with the basic requirements. Key Universities had to put a proposal for fast track visas and will be maintaining and upgrading its standards. Universities in Canberra urged the need for joint statement of Australian Universities to defend Australian Education. It also reflected the truth that "This issue is very complex, Skill shortage in Australia is linked to "Education" and hence "Education" is compromised". AAERI delegates agreed unconditionally on UC views. Meeting with DIAC and DEEWR were interesting as they could only focus on numbers without reference to the quality and the breakup of the student numbers between various categories. DEEWR also mentioned that Offshore agents are not controlled and is a major issue.

The Indian High Commissioner at Canberra did give generous attention to AAERI



AAERI delegation with Consul General of India Hon. Anita Nayar in Melbourne

and the scheduled meeting of 30 minutes went well over 1.5 hours. AAERI presented the facts and figures and highlighted that the problem is in the system and that AAERI complies with ESOS act. AAERI members have a strong track record and have given their working life to Australia. Indian High commissioner's comments were, "I have 360 degree review and Students are not told the truth. USP of Australia is its will to accept the migrants. Australia is easy for relatively vocational people. Australian infrastructure has not increased with numbers. Australia receives different types of students. Agents are giving different picture. Student that come to learn English are migrants. One of the solutions could be to interview students for 572 category. We have to protect the interest of the Indian legitimate students. Task force have been appointed and are working." She also referred to AAERI as the "organised" sector amongst the agents and indicated that bulk of the "unorganised sector" was still recruiting for shonky providers and not giving the correct information to the students.

The last leg of the tour was in Melbourne and had lot of brain storming sessions. AAERI is jointly working with VIDC on some proposals including joint statements. Meeting with Victorian State Government including representation from the Premier's office was an eye opener as they were not fully aware of the visa regime and India being on the assessment level 4. AAERI mentioned that "Police's actions have been late, the Indian students voice and Indian community was not heard. Premier's office has a role to play. AAERI delegates don't only need to meet in crisis and there is a need to have a continuous dialogue.

AAERI has pushed for assessment level 3 throughout the tour across all the levels. Premier's office recognizes the role of branding and at the same time the AAERI delegation has mentioned to all the Institutes / Universities to discuss only branding with its AAERI reps for next one year. Plus the AAERI delegation communicated to all the Institutes / Universities that fresh inquiries have come down drastically and is a major concern. It will be unjustifiable to talk on targets to the AAERI Members at this stage. The Indian community leaders in Melbourne have given a strong message to Indian students to improve their behavior. The proposed G 10 of private providers had lot of interesting suggestions which hold the 38% market share and again AAERI delegates emphasized that AAERI members need the shelter of branding and its resources. AAERI had a long discussion with FISA and shared their concerns. AAERI may think on working on certain grounds with FISA after 6 months time. AAERI however disagreed with FISA's claims that Australia is a "racist" country. AAERI also wanted FISA to make its membership criteria known and declare the actual names of its members.

Throughout the tour the AAERI delegation emphasized that:

* AAERI is a major stakeholder and is a part of the solution. It is deeply concerned with the current situation in Australia and strongly feels that if its many submissions over the last few years were taken seriously, the situation would not have occurred.

In conclusion, the trip of AAERI was very timely and critical. AAERI is widely respected and is being seen as part of the solution to the current situation. Not just by the Australian Government and Education Providers but also by the Indian Government bodies.

Report filed by **Rahul Gandhi**
MD, Take Off Educational Consultant

Combined efforts on to solve student issues

THE SPATE of attacks on Indian international students and the resulting media and community furore has exposed complex problems of students studying internationally in Australia. These arise out of issues like inadequate or inappropriate counselling on the part of some education agents, uninformed and unrealistic expectations of students about studying and living in Australia, poor quality education experiences provided by some education providers, and other issues like accommodation, transport and employment opportunities. Another factor is inadequate efforts on the part of stakeholders to ensure social inclusion of international students into mainstream Australian society.



Participants at the discussion

Two stakeholders that were immediately blamed in a generalised fashion were education agents (both onshore and offshore) and vocational sector private providers. To address the above and as a part of multi-pronged measures to address these issues, a meeting was organised by Education Access Australia (Melbourne Institute of Tourism and Hospitality, Melbourne Institute of Engineering), a private provider between a visiting delegation of the Association of Australian Education Representatives in India (AAERI), and a group of top private VET providers in Victoria. Some of the providers who attended were Academia International, Cambridge International College, Education Access Australia, Meridian International Hotel School - Melbourne Campus and Sheila Baxter Training Centre.

Relevant findings of the AAERI delegation's various meetings during their

in this meeting that there is a need for better regulation of operations of a few onshore education agents, who have allegedly followed unethical practices and misled students about study options and student visa regulations. Such activities on their part aid and abet students' non-compliance with their student visa rules and lead to problems in their academic and social lives, making them easy and vulnerable targets to opportunistic crime, exploitation and an unsavoury experience of life in Australia.

AAERI has noted that recent negative media publicity about the attacks on Indian students and the operations of 'rogue' private providers and education agents, has caused a lot of damage to "Brand Australia". AAERI will be making efforts to project true and positive stories about current students and alumni of Australian institutions, and about the desirability of Australia as a study destination.

The delegation strongly urged the providers to also conduct a similar exercise of publicising their laudable efforts and highlighting the positive experiences of their students in countries where the Australian image has suffered. Such media efforts will go a long way in restoring confidence in current and prospective students and their families, about the Australian international education sector.

In conclusion, it was decided unanimously that providers and AAERI will work together towards this goal of improving the Australian image, not only in India but also globally.

third largest export industry in Australia, and move towards a deeper understanding of the main focus of this industry - the international student. It is very important to improve international students' Australian experience, if the country has to retain its place in the highly competitive international education market. AAERI sought the cooperation of top private VET providers in this endeavour of educating relevant bodies.

It is believed that about 38% of Victoria's international students (about 22,000 students) study with ten top private providers in the state. These providers will be key players, along with AAERI and similar quality agent organisations from other countries, in bringing about a positive change in the vocational education sector and in the overall international education sector in Victoria. This will be achieved through benchmarking a high standard of operation for providers and education agents.

Both AAERI and the top providers agreed

AAERI NEWSLETTER

Association of Australian Education Representative in India (AAERI)

www.aeri.org



One Last Question... Can Journalists be friends?

This was the question that was on my mind before I set off on the VIDC sponsored familiarization tour for the invited journalists. My post on FACEBOOK for that week stated my status as "TWO WEEKS DOWN UNDER WITH JOURNOS. WHAT HAVE I GOT MYSELF INTO!". This was a safe posting on the social networking site since only my FRIENDS could see it and I clearly had no intention of including these journalists in this chosen group. Well, at least this is what I thought then. Today all of them are in and they can see my posts for that tour to a little embarrassment on my part. I am however not so concerned now as they are FRIENDS.

One Last Question... is the reminder of the phrase mostly used by journalists (especially brilliant ones) who are always looking at drawing out the best of the

replies. Press Journalists are far richer in their awareness and enterprise and in their homework than the Television journalists. While the TV footage does get our attention but it is a fact that in their bid for supremacy and grabbing TRP points, Television channels have ceased to be objective and often goes beyond its own ethical framework. "Man bites a Dog" makes more news than "Dog bites a Man" and hence the TV channels would look for only this. I was so pleased when the Indian Prime Minister snubbed the coverage of one of the channels recently when it was trying to dramatize the Chinese infiltration of the Indian borders. Prime Minister clearly told the media to stop hyping issues. Recently the "alleged" advice of the Indian Cricket Coach to its team made headline news on television while the newspapers gave it less prominence. The news has turned out to be misplaced once again but did the channels inform us on the headline of it being untrue. We are reaching a point when we will all doubt what the visual media reports. There was a time when newspapers like STATESMAN and HINDU were often quoted widely and anything that appeared in print was almost always taken as the correct and final word. Similarly, INDIAN EXPRESS was considered as the one newspaper that everyone wanted on his or her side. Today too, HINDU and INDIAN EXPRESS are widely respected. The other newspapers that seem to be strong on ethics are TRIBUNE, TELEGRAPH and possibly HINDUSTAN TIMES to an extent. Of the television channels, only NDTV seems to be making a mark while clearly TIMES NOW is over-exposing its anchor. What has disgusted me most is the contrast the electronic arm of the Indian Today has become. Aaj Tak and Headlines Today should have continued to represent the INDIA TODAY philosophy or providing only "verified and comprehensive" stories. On the other hand OUTLOOK has improved a fair bit and its new publication CAREERS 360 is a delight in the way it has exposed institutions like ICFAI and IIPM. I would like to include in the responsible-list, the one newspaper that my wife loves to read and which claims to be the largest sold in the country, but my pen refuses to move.

I feel sad to say all this since there was a time in my life when I was the Publisher of one of the leading publication from an Eastern Indian state and had informally studied the system followed by publications to boost circulations and fudge readership surveys. This was over a decade ago but the fact is that I did work closely with various publications, advertising agencies and certainly understood to an extent the working of journalists. Not many know that I even learnt Urdu so that I could start an Urdu publication to fill the missing gap there.

Journalists have a tough life and have huge compulsions. Some are such sincere professionals that even after a tiring day, they religiously file their stories. The recent trip to Australia clearly made me appreciate this once again. Also, like good and bad agents in our business, there are good and bad journalists. Hence, while I will share my personal distrust for some of them, I have huge respect for others.

Last three months (or is it more) of media coverage of Australian attacks has had an affect not just for our business but has also impacted upon Indo-Australian relationship to an extent that no amount of the 3Cs have done in the past: Cricket, Curry and Commonwealth. It is only now that Indian Foreign minister visited Australia and prioritized a working group, (8 Indian Ministers have visited Australia in last year or so) and 9 Aussie Ministers have visited India. It is now, that ALL senior Australian leaders have India on their travel plans and hopefully health-permitting our Prime Minister will also visit Australia within a year reciprocating the forthcoming visit of Aussie PM Kevin Rudd. It is only now, that Indian diplomats feel listened to in Australia and almost all Australians who have been to college know more about the power of Indian media and give it respect. India means more than the

"singing and dancing around the trees" of our (and my favorite) Bollywood creations.

This is time for India and Australia to leverage this unique position and create a stronger Indo-Australian bond, accepting the fact that in a way India and Australia are actually neighbours; not quite different from India-Sri Lanka or OZ-NZ, considering the fact that only an ocean divides the geographic boundaries of our two great nations (Perth and Chennai are across the Indian Ocean).

Australia needs to engage more and more with the Indian media. More scholarships for Indian journalists on the lines of UK's Chevening should be initiated almost immediately. More joint work between Indian and Australian media organizations is needed. Australian needs to understand that Indian media needs both sides of the story and hence it has to be prepared to give their perspective within hours of the request. The old adage that "the story will die down" is not enough. What I learnt from my fellow travelers that this was one of the biggest reasons why the coverage on TV was so one-sided.

In a way, we should not regret what has happened over the last few months as I think it will lead to something much bigger. I can almost foresee Australia welcoming only quality Indian students, working with only quality Indian agents and alert at all times to Indian issues. If safety in the city of Melbourne can improve, then almost all the residents of Melbourne are going to be thanking the Indian Media. There is going to be a lull for some time but then that is acceptable to me.

I am an optimist. However, I have stopped watching the news on TV. My wife's happy.

Ravi Lochan Singh
MD, Global Reach

(Immediate Past President and current Executive of AAERI, Ravi, recently escorted a group of Indian journalists to Australia on a familiarization visit sponsored by VIDC. The visit generated a number of positive articles. MD of Global Reach, Ravi writes this article in his personal capacity only and comments from him about the media are his own.)



Page 4 GOING GLOBAL

Fear's the last word

By Neha Tara Mehta

EVEN as the booming Australian education industry has come under fire for the allegedly racist attacks on Indian students, there's no sense of fear among them.

The police has warned students not to carry laptops, mobile phones and iPods on trains to avoid being robbed or assaulted. But it's business as usual for RMIT University student Vineet Panwalkar. "I can't do without my iPod. One hour on the train is very boring, after all," he says.

Has he ever been attacked? "I have been asked for cigarettes at odd hours, but I have never been attacked," says Panwalkar, who is from Mumbai and has just completed his Master's in Biotechnology. Rajesh Ramanathan, who's pursuing his PhD in Applied Science, also at RMIT, watches movies on his iPod during his long rides back home. "Many strangers riding next to me have an eye on it. I don't feel threatened. I also work on my laptop on these long rides," he says.

YOUR LAPTOP'S SAFE

And no, people aren't out to grab his gadgets. "Some time back, I took the last train at midnight," Ramanathan remembers. "I was working on my presentation. A drunk man came and sat next to me. He was looking at my presentation on nano materials rather than running away with my laptop."

Like Ramanathan, many Indian students have friendly encounters on trains in the dead of night. Mohit Patiyal, University of Melbourne student, had one such experience when he was going from the Western suburbs, which have gained notoriety for the high incidence of robbery and assaults on students there, to meet some friends at Crown Casino. "One night on the train, some drunk guys and girls came up to me and asked me where I was going. We ended up becoming friends, and took photos of each other. They even came with me to Crown Casino and we partied till 4 am," he says. Many students believe that a lot depends on the vibes they give out to others. Divya Sharma, an RMIT PhD student, always has her iPod with her when travelling late. "I often keep it off, but I want to give the appearance that I am not available for others to come and talk to me," she says. She once had a drunk man stagger up to her on a deserted train and ask her if she was Indian or Greek. "I didn't say anything to him. Then he himself said - 'I think you are Indian. Namaste,'" Sharma, who is from Chandigarh, and is an Art of Living Teacher, is planning a Diwali festival called Sab Kuch Theek Thak Hai - a multicultural event open to students of all nationalities.

AT HOME IN AUSTRALIA

Multiculturalism is also the buzzword on the Swinburne University campus, which has students coming and shaking a leg at bhanga performances organised by the local Punjabi club. Says Luciniana's Bajjit Singh Sekhon, who is pursuing a Master's in IT at the university.

"We have over 260 members of the Punjabi association. Of these, 30-40 are non-Indians, including nearly 15 Aussies. They love dancing and curry." Sekhon avoided going out for about two weeks after reports of attacks on Indian students. "I go out now and don't feel unsafe," he says.

Siddharth Rajanna, a Bachelor's of IT student at Deakin University, also insists



The Punjabi Club of Swinburne University has several Aussies as its members



RMIT University students Vineet Panwalkar, Sarvesh Soni and Rajesh Ramanathan on the campus

that he doesn't feel unsafe — even when he's walking back home all alone at 3 am. "There have been a few incidents like someone pushing me and walking past. But I won't say it was racial. I haven't cut down on my partying because of these attacks," he says.

Several students, in fact, decided to come to Australia, despite the negative publicity in the last two months. Delhi's

Radhika Vohra also came to the University of Melbourne just last month for her Master's in Business and IT. She was chaperoned by her father, because she was travelling alone for the first time. "My father actually went out till 3 am and came back laughing. 'What racism are they talking about?' he asked." Vohra has even got a part-time job at a grocery store at night.

"I walk back alone at 11 pm. It's absolutely safe."

Sarvesh Soni arrived in Melbourne earlier this year on the Endeavour Fellowship. "I had a visa for the US, but I decided to come here because I have better opportunities here. When I was boarding the plane, my mother told me not to go. But I did. And I don't regret it," says the post-doctoral fellow at RMIT.

Yes, there have been incidents like someone just pushing me and walking past. But I won't say these were racial.

— SIDDHARTH RAJANNA, Bachelor's of IT student at Deakin University

Victoria University's Footscray campus has also seen a large number of applications from Indian students in the last two months, despite being situated in an area considered unsafe for Indian students.

Says Trupti Chaudhary, who is doing her Master's of Clinical Practice, and is a safety ambassador on the campus. "We thought a lesser number of Indians would join this semester. But we have got more Indian students applying than in the February semester." That should sound bring some solace to the badly beaten Australian education sector.

AAERI NEWSLETTER

Association of Australian Education Representative in India (AAERI)

www.aeri.org



Investigation Stage: Income tax Search

In my previous article I had outlined the Search / Survey procedure by the Income tax department. In this article I will be writing further on the Investigation stage.

You start understanding / digesting what has happened in the past couple of days from "search" and now have entered into a legal and highly complicated stage.

The first question that comes in your mind is that your accounts are audited and written regularly but still what has gone wrong !!!!

At this stage the investigation officer issues summons for further investigation and statements are recorded.

The objective of the investigation officer is to further increase your UNDISCLOSED Income / Assets which do not have supporting evidences.

Before you appear for further investigation, it is important that you study your books of accounts of last 6 assessment years (7 years) + current year plus all documents / loose papers seized (approx 2,000 on an average) with supporting evidences to confirm that they are accounted and recorded.

In addition, if family members are also included in the Income tax search then in that case assuming 4 adults in the family, you will have to study data of atleast (7 * 4 adults) 28 accounting years in all.

Failure to comply will further enhance the UNDISCLOSED Income / Assets.

It is quite natural that you don't know from where to start. On one hand you are thinking about future business and in fraction of a second you have to think of the past 7 years.

Investigation stage is like an "Open book exam" which needs to be completed in 60 days time from the date of completion of "search". Considering on an average 2-3 days for each accounting year this time period is very less and the process is tiring.

The following probable and interesting questions can be asked and one needs to be mentally prepared to answer with supporting evidence of the last 6 assessment years during the investigation stage:

1. List of companies with contact details, concerns, enterprises in you had been or are director, proprietor along with I.T jurisdiction with service agreements.
2. Details of all bank accounts with contact details including FDs with banks held with a reconciliation statement of last 6 assessment years.
3. Detailed information in respect of the addition, if any to the depreciable asset - i.e depreciation of the asset, date of purchase, date of installation and date of commissioning the last 6 assessment years with the copy of bills and payment details.
4. With reference to loans and advances above Rs 1 lakh, give details regarding the name and address of the parties to which the same has been advanced. Give details regarding interest received and interest paid including the rate of interest as per the market rate. If the interest rate is higher or lower than the market rate then kindly explain in detail with the supporting evidence and lower / higher rate of interest on borrowed / lend funds will be disallowed.
5. Give details in respect of unsecured loans and deposits or additional to old deposit accounts during the years, including new and squared up accounts.
6. Give detailed note on the nature of business activities carried out by your firm.
7. Give a detailed note on the documentation process followed by you on the details and description of the primary records maintained in respect of services provided by you.
8. Give a flow chart of the documentation process and also furnish the copy

of the various documents prepared by you in respect of any one student from the point of his / her approaching you to the point of commission being received on account of that student.

9. Kindly submit the copy of agreements with various Universities with reference to the commission income earned by you.
10. Furnish terms and conditions of commission payment received from the Universities. Also give details of the records maintained in this regards and the accounting treatment give by you in the books of accounts.
11. Submit copy of agreement, terms and conditions with regards to sharing commission with various firms.
12. Give a detailed note on commission share / received from various firms.
13. Furnish copy of all TDS returns
14. Give details of immovable properties sold / disposed off in the last 6 assessment years in the following format:

Description of property

- b. Date and cost of acquisition
 - c. Name, address, PAN from whom you acquired
 - d. Cost of renovation
 - e. Date of sale and reason for sale consideration
 - f. Name and address of PAN whom sold
 - g. Capital gain or loss and respective treatment in the books of accounts
 - h. Need to substantiate the source of investment in the above properties and substantiate that the above transactions stand reflected in the books of accounts and bank statement
15. With reference to salary expenses in Profit and loss account you are required to give details of all employees i.e Name, address, PAN number, Educational background, nature of services rendered by such person, form No.16 with service register for verification
 16. Give working of long term / short term gain or loss with dividend history. Please specify the source of investment with reflection in books of accounts which needs to be verified with DMAT A/cs statements. Also number of shares in the 6th Assessment year (closing) should match with the opening balance of the first assessment year keeping in mind the bonus and right shares issued by respective companies (if any).
 17. Give details of transactions with related concerns and family members with justification of reasonableness in view of the provisions of section 40A(2)(b) of the act.
 18. Kindly furnish break up of monthly expenses which are reflected in your books of accounts such as Rent, Education, Food, Traveling and Conveyance, Entertainment, Servants / Drivers, Electricity / Telephone, Membership of club etc
 19. State whether any foreign traveling has been done by you or any of your family members during the last 6 years, whether in personal or professional capacity. Kindly explain the source of expenditure incurred.
 20. Give details regarding major expenditure in last 6 years i.e. renovation of house, family functions etc with substantiate the sources of expenditure.

The above question at the time of investigation puts tremendous pressure on the Profit and loss account and the Balance sheet. Any ambiguity will lead to addition of disallowable expenses or undisclosed income.

During the assessment stage which is after the investigation stage the accessing officer can reduce the unaccounted funds if the assessing officer is convinced with the supporting evidences.

Disclaimer - The above write up is my personal opinion and should not be taken as legal opinion / write up.

Rahul Gandhi

MD, Take Off Educational Consultant

Action plan mooted to protect Indians studying in Australia



BS REPORTER
Ahmedabad, 30 September

The recent attacks on Indian students in Australia has spurred the Association of Australian Education Representatives in India (AAERI) to devise stringent measures to protect those opting to study down under. The steps will ensure that only genuine students go to Australia. They will also help the authorities identify those education agents who misguide students.

AAERI is an initiative of

the Australian Education International (AEI), the international arm of Australia's ed-

Australia is the second largest market for Indian students who pursue overseas education

ucation department. It is a self-regulatory body of education agents across the world, which has over 160 members in India.

AAERI has developed an '8-point Action Plan' to ensure a conducive environment for Indian students, which includes conducting visa training workshops, working closely with various departments handling education and immigration in Australia, having stringent checks for e-visa applications and working closely with the Indian community in Australia.

AAERI president Gulshan Kumar Pathania said, "A very high number of students go to Australia every year from Gujarat. During the last five years, the number of students going to Australia from Gujarat for higher education has grown four times.

In 2008, an estimated 8,000 students went to Australia from Gujarat. AAERI is expecting a 15 per cent growth in this figure. Therefore, Gujarat will be a key focus area for AAERI over the next five years."

"We urge all prospective students of Gujarat who are planning to study in Australia to meet AAERI members since they abide by a code of ethics that ensures students are treated honestly and fairly.

AAERI members also ensure that students get accurate and unbiased information about studying options in Australia, and are not charged more than the fee prescribed by AAERI, which is currently Rs 10,000."

Australia is the second largest market for Indian students who pursue overseas education.

AAERI is an independent organisation registered under the Societies Registration Act of India. It was formed in October 1996 to assure the integrity and credibility of agents recruiting students on behalf of Australian institutions.

AAERI RESPONSIBILITIES (09-10)

President

Mr Gulshan Kumar
g.kumar@kangarooostudies.com

Vice President

(Exec Member for Delhi Region)
Mr Bubbly Johar
johar@airtelmail.in

General Secretary

Mr Inder Panjwani
leps@airtelmail.in

Treasurer

(Exec Member for North India except NCR)
Mr Rupesh Duggal
cambridge_jal@vsnl.net

Secretary

Mr Arun Bhutani
abhutani17@gmail.com

Regional Representative (West India)

Mr Rahul Gandhi
rahul@takeoffeducation.com

Regional Representative (East India)

Mr Gobind Kr Saha
seven_seas1@rediffmail.com

Regional Representative (AP Region)

Ms Sangeeta Deshmukh
vgcinternational@gmail.com

Regional Representative (South India)

Mr Sabesan Manickavasagam
studyinaustralia@gmail.com

Mr Nishidhar Reddy Borra (member)

info@atlasindia.net

Mr Ravi Lochan Singh (Member)

ravi@globalreachonline.com

AEI Representation at AAERI meetings

Counsellor (Education), AEI

Ms Kelly Raj

Education Promotions Officer

Ms Priya Raja

Several Newspapers have reported this media release from AAERI. AAERI website (www.aeri.org) carries release. (Part of the public relations activities being undertaken)