

Australia's efforts to woo agents

Next issue

In our August issue, **Special Report** finds out the latest developments in the languages for academic purposes sector. **Market Report** provides an update on the French language teaching market in France and **Direction** asks agents what they expect from a well organised workshop. **Feedback** finds out what students studying in the USA think about their study abroad experience. **City Focus** visits Vancouver and **Destination** reports from England's south coast.

Two agent workshops were held earlier this year in Australia to enable agents to meet Australian institutions first-hand and build their confidence in referring clients to Australian language teaching institutions.

Fifty-seven agents met with 51 English language schools from throughout Australia at the sector-specific Study English in Australia (SEA) workshop, while the Study in Australia (SIA) workshop was also convened to give agents a chance to meet other types of education institutions.

Sue Blundell, Executive Director of English Australia (EA), which organised the SEA workshop in collaboration with Australian Education International, reported that 94 per cent of agents said they would be interested in participating in a similar event in the future. The workshop, held for the first time in 2000, included appointments for

individual meetings, social activities and presentations from relevant industry organisations such as the Department for Immigration, Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs (Dimia).

Claudia Rozo, of Go Estudios en el Exterior in Colombia, commented that the workshop "allowed agents from around the world to gain first-hand knowledge of Australia's visa regulations." Stéphane Doussin, Education and Communication Officer at Art et Séjours en Asia-Pacifique (Asap) in France, said that the workshop presented a good opportunity to meet many educators in a short period, adding, "I didn't realise the variety and quality of programmes, nor the networks existing between some institutions based in different states." He explained that French students visiting Australia were keen to "see as much as possible" of the country.

Nguyen Thi Tuyet Hong is a new agent who found the workshop useful to find out about the industry. "Now I see that there are many options that I can offer to my students," she said, "depending on their aims, motivation and financial ability."

Following the SEA workshop, add-on trips were organised for agents to visit regions of Australia and learn more about individual institutions. Doussin commented that his trip to Tasmania to see EA member colleges in Hobart and Launceston was very useful and well organised.

"I have never been to Tasmania before and I needed to be able to explain Tasmania to students who would like to study there," he commented. "[Our] two guides from the Department of State Development treated us like VIPs [and] were always attentive. This was a unique chance to have such an experience." □

Agent questionnaire



Name of Agent: **Gérald Soubeyran**
 Position: **Founder / Manager**
 Age: **40**
 Name of Company: **Effective**
 Location: **Bordeaux, France**
 Other branches: **no**
 No. of full-time staff: **four**
 Average no. of students per year: **950**

Would you like to participate in our Agent questionnaire? If so, please send us your responses to these questions, accompanied by your photograph. Please contact us if you have any further questions.

1. When and how did you become a language travel agent?

A first experience as a group leader on a summer vacation course made me decide to give up my career plans as a teacher and to get involved in the language travel business. I worked for six years at the Paris office of one of the world's largest and most experienced organisations, and felt my next challenge would be to start my own agency. I started Effective in 1990.

2. What has been the most challenging enquiry you have received?

English courses in India for an executive. We haven't been able to provide the service, but had to work hard to convince this executive that other destinations would be as appropriate as India for his language needs. He eventually went to Oxford!

3. Please tell us about your client profile.

We have two separate operations: holiday courses for junior students aged from 10 to 18, and the 18-plus age group. In this latter category, we have noted an

increasing number of mature adults over the last few years. Whatever their ages, our clients' main requirement is a good quality programme, with serious tuition, proper accommodation and a good international mix. Preferred destinations are still the UK, Ireland and Malta for junior students, while older students seem to be more inclined to move away from "traditional" destinations. Australia is now [at the] top of the list of most sought-after destinations.

4. What are the typical problems that you encounter when dealing with language schools?

We cannot say we have ever had serious problems with any school. I must say that we always try to avoid potential problems by choosing reputable schools in the first place, and then by taking the time it needs to get to know the school and their staff well. The only issue that sometimes causes disappointment is host family accommodation, mainly in the UK, with students often feeling they're not getting their money's worth, which sometimes is actually the case.

5. What are the most popular product choices?

The most popular programmes at the moment are long-term courses, as French students become aware of the asset that an exam pass will be for their future. One-to-one courses are also very popular for our more mature clientele. On the junior side of our market, we have noted a much stronger demand for residential accommodation, and a move away from traditional group programmes.

6. How many institutions do you represent and in how many countries?

We represent 18 schools in the UK, Ireland, Malta, the USA, Canada and Australia. We also represent Australian universities and Tafes.

7. How do you market your services?

We mainly sell through direct marketing. Effective produces its own brochures, monthly electronic newsletters, regular ads and press releases. We also take part in several fairs and have a website. Word-of-mouth recommendation however is one of our most powerful selling tools, together with enquiries via L'Office.

Asian associations build interest in study abroad

A SERIES of Asian education fairs organised by members of the Federation of Education and Language Consultant Associations (Felca) continued to build interest for study abroad in the region, according to the national agency organisations that staged the three events. The Taiwan Overseas Study Association (Tosa) reported an estimate attendance figure of 5,000 students at its fairs in March, although it pointed out that no precise figures were available.

Vivien Liu at Tosa reported, "According to the feedback we have received from participants, most students that came to [the

fair] were serious students and the quality was better. However, some [participants] thought the fair was a little bit slow, due to insufficient student numbers."



In Thailand, the eighth International Education Fair was "the most successful event so far", according to Geoffrey Blyth, Vice President of the Thai International Education Consultants Association (Tieca). "More than 70 institutions from around the world

participated and almost 4,000 students visited the fair," he said. "Many institutions commented on the quality and seriousness of applicants [at the fair]."

The third education Fair in the region was hosted by the Vietnam Education Consultants Association (Vieca). Events, in Hanoi and Hi Chi Minh City, attracted 20 institutions from as far afield as the UK, the USA, Russia, Malaysia, New Zealand and Hungary, and at least 1,500 visitors. Fourteen Vieca members also exhibited.

"[Participants] were very happy with the fair," said Vu Hanh Thong, Secretary of Vieca. □

On the move



Melbourne University Private in Australia has appointed John Green as General Manager of its

Hawthorn English Language Centres division. There are now Hawthorn centres in Melbourne, Auckland, Vancouver and Edinburgh as well as franchises or branch centres established or planned in Ho Chi Minh City, Glasgow, Tokyo and Muscat, and plans to open 30 centres by the end of 2004. "I am delighted to be given the opportunity to lead the division in this important and exciting phase," said Mr Green.



David Morgan joined Swandean School of English in Worthing, UK, as a teacher and became Head of

the London centre when it opened in 1997. The London school has now reached the stage where it merits an independent principal and Mr Morgan is taking on this position.



In March, Jackie Simpson joined the Aspect ILA Edinburgh school as Principal. Ms

Simpson has previously worked in Scotland, Spain and Finland. "I'm very happy to be working in such an attractive and friendly school and I look forward to building on the excellent reputation that Aspect ILA has internationally," she said.



Face to face

Each month, we profile the people from language schools who deal directly with agents, in order to give you the chance to get to know some of the people you work with.

Who are you?

Renate Schmid, Language School Director.

Where do you work?

Cultura Wien in Vienna, Austria.

Why and how did you start in the industry?

Having worked as a teacher before, I wanted to realise my ideas of what a good school should offer to its students, namely value for money and a personal and warm welcome, which is essential in a foreign country.

Why should agents choose to represent your school?

Firstly, because Vienna is an ideal place to combine vacations and learning, and also because Cultura Wien has gained a reputation for high-quality teaching and for being a reliable partner for agents.

How does your school promote itself to agents?

Through detailed agents' manuals and videos.

What other marketing strategies does your school embark upon?

The Internet has become the most important means of marketing for us in the past two years, but our best marketing instrument has proved to be a top quality language course, which brings students back the following year.

What percentage of your annual student intake comes through agents?

Fifteen per cent, but we would like to increase the number, especially in Asia.

What advantages does Vienna offer for international students?

Students can take advantage of the broad cultural options and of the many sporting facilities in summer as well as in winter.

UCIEP launches agent initiative

THE consortium of University and College Intensive English Programs (UCIEP) in the USA is proactively marketing to agents for the first time in its 35-year history. An electronic newsletter has been mailed to around 200 agents and advisers, and UCIEP is keen to assist any other agents who are interested in finding out more about the consortium.

"At this point in our history, we decided that getting the UCIEP name out there was a good thing," Mary Brooks at UCIEP told *Language Travel Magazine*. "There are so many programmes in this country that don't measure up. We wanted to give advisers a way to look at good [courses]."

UCIEP members conform to a series of quality requirements, including rules concerning teaching hours per week. "[Agents] can be assured that quality standards are in place," asserted Brooks. "UCIEP programmes are long-standing, follow high standards, hire quality instructors and continually upgrade programmes." □



Hayley Stewart (top) is the new Communications Executive at Regent in the UK and will be responsible for generating publicity as part of the company's



aim to develop a first-class marketing strategy. She joins other new members of the marketing team: Marisa Parsons, who has been appointed as Marketing Media Manager, and Peter Wilkinson (below), who brings a wide spectrum of skills from his years working in the consultancy sector to the position of Marketing Director.



David Jay, formerly a Principal in the UK, has found the challenge of running a large school in Ireland irresistible. ISI Ireland opened this summer with 18 specially designed classrooms and a state-of-the-art computer centre in a refurbished 18th-century warehouse near the River Liffey in Dublin.