

New Zealand rolls out agent visits

New Zealand's language schools benefit from a proactive export promotion agency in the shape of Education New Zealand. The education trust has already organised a series of fam trips for agents this year, and is ensuring that they get to see a lot of New Zealand – some agents enjoyed a helicopter trip!

So far this year, groups of agents from South America, Korea, Germany and Vietnam have been given a tour of the islands and the education facilities in New Zealand. Stuart Boag at Education New Zealand – responsible for co-organising the trips – told *Language Travel Magazine*, "As well as visiting a wide range of institutions, agents have had the chance to see New Zealand by land, water and air, with helicopter flights, jet-boating and riverboat excursions being part of the mix."

He added that agents were also invited to meet a range of New Zealand's host families "and get a chance to appreciate how students will be looked after outside the classroom". Each group spent around 11 days in the country, visiting different regions and various institutions, according to their interests.

New Zealand has been aggressively marketing itself in the international education marketplace for some years now and undertook a major study to assess what students liked about the country and what hampered students from choosing New Zealand in the first place (see *Language Travel Magazine*, December 2001, page 7). Since then, serious efforts have been made to introduce New Zealand to education agents on a first-hand basis.

"Coming up we have four agents from Brazil and two each from Spain and Italy [visiting]," said Boag. "We also intend to host all the Tiega [Thai agency association] agents in New Zealand during



South American agents enjoyed a helicopter ride (top) while agents from Vietnam also had fun (right)

2005, it is a new development for us to host such a large group and also evidence of our interest in working more closely with agents' associations." Two groups of agents from the Thai association will visit, the first in May and then again in August.

"The organisation was perfect," said Marcella Serra of Passport in Argentina, who took part in one tour. "There was a good balance between business meetings and school visits and time to experience life and entertainment in New Zealand." Monica Thompson from Inter-Express in Paraguay added that she discovered "an amazing country with indescribable beauty and extremely nice people". ●

PHOTOGRAPHS: EDUCATION NEW ZEALAND

More changes for IDP in Australia

THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE of IDP in Australia, Lindy Hyam, has resigned, which follows a shake-up in student recruitment strategy and financial troubles at the university-funded organisation (see *Language Travel Magazine*, March 2005, page 10). Hyam is to be replaced by Anthony Pollock of Monash

University, who will act as Chief Executive of the international student recruiting agency for an interim period.

A new Chairperson for the association, which now only has offices in Asian countries overseas, has also been appointed, following the decision of Lance Twomey to stand down. He is superseded by Denise Bradley, Vice-Chancellor of the University of South Australia. Speaking about Hyam's resignation, Bradley said, "In her five years as Chief Executive, Ms Hyam has demonstrated the highest level of commitment to IDP and made a significant contribution to Australian international education." ●

Agency of the month

Språkreisebyrået

This month, **Liden & Denz Language Centre** in Russia nominates **Språkreisebyrået AS**, in Norway.

In a series appearing each month in *Language Travel Magazine*, we ask a different language teaching institution to nominate one of their preferred agencies or agent partners, and to explain why this person/company is worthy of their nomination.



Walter Denz, Director of the school, explains his decision:

"I would like to nominate the small but well established agency, Språkreisebyrået in Oslo, Norway. We have been working with Ingvar and Mila of Språkreisebyrået for almost 10 years now and – even though the demand for Russian in Norway is limited – we keep getting

a steady flow of students from them, mostly professionals working in the oil, transport or fishing industries, but also a growing number of full-time students. Mila's Russian background is fortunate for us – she is extremely motivated to promote Russian as a foreign language in Norway.

Språkreisebyrået participates every year at the Oslo career fair "Jobb & Utdanning" – this year we decided to follow their invitation and presented our two language schools both at the fair and in their downtown office to interested students. The office event was an informal get-together of students wishing to study either Spanish or Russian. Spending the evening with students, staff and our friends from Malaca Instituto in Spain was not only great fun – two immediate bookings easily paid for the trip."

Industry issues - agents speak out

January February March April May June July August September October November December

Q Do you think commission rates are going up?



Amina Jamal, EdCon, Pakistan

"In my view, the commission is not the point of focus, if you ask why... well, let us compare two agents. One who is getting 30 per cent from a university and another who is working for the same institute but is getting 10 per cent commission. If at the end of the day the agent who is getting 10 per cent sends 10 students and the agent working for 30 per cent sends in one student who is in the loss? Secondly, in the region where I am from, agents charge the students as well, which means they are not totally dependent on commission. Thirdly, if all the representations are with only the 'famous' institutions they will not be able to provide agents with the best services as [these institutions] know even if you are going to send in three or four students it's more than enough. In my view even if the institute is paying you 10 per cent, it's OK, but the institute should provide the agents a yearly visit to

their institute. It should include return air-ticket plus two to three nights' free accommodation."



Marco Righetti, Education Consultants, Italy

"The policy I have always had in my 35 years of activity in the study abroad market puts the commission as the second most important factor. The first important point is to check the schools, visit them, speak with the students on the spot, meet the key people and ask European agencies that are friends about the success they have had, or not had, with their students [at this school]. When all these points are positive, I can speak about commission. In the first year, I accept what is offered and, according to the results, in the second year I discuss commission. And it works for both [parties]. Based on these points, I am always happy with the schools provided that they do not change their policies or the management. After 30 years of cooperation I had to cut [ties] with

one school, because the owner's sons became arrogant."

Jorge Rojas, Edu Travel World SA de CV, Mexico

"The only way to keep agents sending students abroad is to maintain commissions or to increase them. If schools offer agents lower commissions, schools will start losing a lot of agents in a very short time. We are living a very hard situation in the countries of the third world, and the truth is that there is a lot of competition between agencies in our countries. It is not very easy to get a lot of students during the whole year, and we agents can never increase the prices that schools offer us, as the students (our clients) always ask three or more agencies for different options. If my price is higher than the price that schools offer through the Internet or direct to the students, or my price is higher than my competition, I will of course lose my client. So, the only way to keep on selling on a competitive price and to make my business more profitable

is that schools offer us a higher commission rate on the tuition and even on the accommodation. A lot of schools have started to offer agents a higher commission rate, and if it is a good school, you will always sell that school instead of another one."



Jittrawadee Neeranartvong, EDA Plan, Thailand

"The current commission level is OK now. If the school offers high commission, the cost [to the student] would be higher. Good and reputable institutions maintain their level of commission and limit it with new agents, which would probably [make them] work harder. Maybe it is time for those institutions to refresh [their agreements] if their agents are still up to standard. Agents must be knowledgeable of the education system and keep assessing their services. Agents have nothing to lose and everything to gain from [offering] reputable services."



Q&A

JULIANA STACKPOOL, National Policy Officer at the Australian Council for Private Education and Training (Acpet), tells us about their latest projects.



Fact box

Full name:
Australian Council for Private Education and Training

Year established: 1992

Number of members: 700

Type of members:
Private providers of higher education, vocational education and training, English language and post-compulsory secondary education courses.

Association's main role:
The national industry association for private providers of education and training

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What action is Acpet taking on behalf of English language teaching (ELT) providers?

Acpet represents the interests of private ELT providers to all governments in Australia. Acpet has put a strong case forward to strengthen tuition assurance arrangements for overseas students in its submission to the Australian government's review of the overseas students' legislation (Esos review).

Acpet was pushing for changes to the executive board of Neas, the accreditation body for ELT. What's the latest?

Last year, a decision was taken by the Australian Education Senior Officials Committee (Aesoc) to commission a consultancy to develop national standards for English language teaching (ELT) accreditation. Acpet understands that tenders will be called in March for a consultant to undertake the work. A steering committee constituting key regulators has been established to oversee the project.

How does Acpet work with government to ensure changes to visas or the ELT operating environment are appropriate?

Acpet periodically meets with the relevant state/territory and federal ministers responsible for education and immigration and their advisers, to ensure that the concerns of ELT provider members are considered. In addition, Acpet is in regular contact with an extensive network of senior bureaucrats at the state and federal level and is represented on numerous government advisory committees.

Do you have any dialogue with tertiary sector institutions to ensure there is cross-sector agreement on best policy?

In addition to our 120 ELT (known as Elicos in Australia) members, Acpet represents institutions delivering courses in higher education, training, and post-compulsory secondary education. By virtue of this broad membership, Acpet is constantly involved in cross-sectoral discussions on a large number of issues.

On the move

Carmen Cantariño has expanded her role at don Quijote In-Country Spanish Language Courses, based in Spain. While continuing to lead the US and Canadian marketing teams, Ms Cantariño will spearhead the Central Promotion team's efforts to expand relationships with agencies in Eastern Europe, Italy, France, Scandinavia, Brazil and Japan. "I'm eager to introduce our agency partners to innovative new products, particularly our Barcelona weekend," she said.



Study Group is delighted to announce the appointment of Johnny Peters as International Office Director UK. Mr Peters brings with him extensive experience in ELT along with a background in sales, customer service and business development. This key role will head up strategic direction and customer service for the International Admissions Centre as well as take overall responsibility for marketing and sales functions within the UK.



Matteo Savini is the new National Secretary of Asils, the Association of Italian Language. His role will see him working on the "political" side to help Asils in its relationship with relevant authorities in Italy and abroad. He will be aiming to enlarge the number of members in Asils and provide a link to allow them to share information between themselves and other private and public institutions.



Françoise Cotten has been elected, by members of L'Office in France, as the new Secretary General, replacing Jean-Marc Mignon. Formerly, Ms Cotten, as Vice Chairperson, contributed to the work of CEN (Conseil Européen de Normalisation) on quality standards for language study providers in Europe. Ms Cotten has also contributed significantly to L'Office's code of practice and complaints procedure, called Contrat Qualité.



Lawrie Coupland has joined St Clare's, Oxford, in the UK as Director of English Language Courses. After a period at the British Council in Caracas, Venezuela, Mr Coupland spent 15 years with the OISE Group in a variety of roles. The role at St Clare's is new and brings together the EFL provision across the college – closed groups, summer short courses and year-round programmes.



Grapevine

The annual Elton awards took place in London, UK, in March to honour innovation in English language teaching among UK companies and institutions.

Pictured here (centre, with hosts) are the winners of one of the three Eltons on offer, the team from Macmillan Publishing who wrote and published Campaign, the military English textbook. The two other winning candidates were from the Oxford University Press stable: Three in a Tree, a primary level book from Vanessa Reilly (pictured left) and Assessing Young Learners, another primary-level English language teaching resource from Pavlos Pavou and Sophie Ioannou-Georgiou.

The third annual red carpet event featured a roll call of industry names and innovators and was hosted by Dr Catherine Walter of the Institute of Education in London and Scott Thornbury, well-known ELT author.

The British Council staff organised a great evening and then displayed even better organisational skills by persuading their hotel bar to re-open much later that evening...



Congratulations to Umi who became the first Japanese candidate to successfully pass the University of Cambridge Work Experience Certificate at Totnes European School in the UK. She spent 12 weeks with a travel agency to earn the certificate, during which time she amassed evidence of skills acquired on her placement. Barry Morris at the school said, "This is an excellent step forward for our school and for students wishing to gain a formal qualification in work experience".

If you have any lighthearted news, photos, or stories of industry interest, please contact amy@hothousemedia.com and ask to appear in the Grapevine section!