

# EA risk management

English Australia has put a lot of effort over the past year into promoting strategic management and growth among its members to ensure they offer high quality courses and are well placed to weather any storm. SUE BLUNDELL, Executive Director of EA, tells us about the association's achievements.

## Fact box



**Full name:** English Australia (EA). Formerly known as the Elicos Association.

**Year established:** Early 1980s

**Number of members:** 75

**Type of members:** Public and private colleges teaching intensive English to overseas students

**Government recognition:** yes

**Membership criteria:** Full Neas accreditation, adequate public liability insurance, three referees, site visits and reports

**Association's main role:** To assist members in providing high quality educational programmes, high ethical standards, and generally to promote, strengthen and represent the interests of members

**Code of practice:** yes

**Complaints procedure:** yes

**Agent workshops/fam trips:** Agent workshop

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### Q What has EA been up to this year?

**A** One of the major [targets has been] quality assurance, so we can assure agents and students that EA colleges provide the best possible experience. We have continued to revise and produce new Best Practice Documents and work closely with government regulatory and accreditation bodies to ensure that standards are monitored. EA has also continued to provide some of the best statistics available on the industry worldwide, helping our colleges and their agents evaluate trends and develop effective marketing strategies. The EA website has been redeveloped to provide a more accessible source of information and we have developed and distributed translated fliers to explain to students and agents the value of choosing an EA member college.

### Q What industry developments have there been in the last year, and how have these impacted on EA members?

**A** 2003 has been a challenging year in many ways, with international events reminding us that we live and work in an uncertain and unpredictable environment. Nevertheless, the Australian English language teaching industry remains strong. Experiences in the past have enabled us to establish a strong legislative framework for the industry that ensures steady, sustainable growth rather than dramatic market-driven fluctuations that can leave individual institutions vulnerable. As a result, although external events have impacted on EA colleges, the impact has not perhaps been as severe as in other countries.

### Q How will EA members be affected by the new registration charges for language schools?

**A** The new charges will come into effect from 1 January 2004. A number of colleges have chosen to absorb the charges into their current fees, other colleges have decided to increase their fees for 2004 in order to cover the increased costs they are experiencing.

### Q The revenue raised is being used to fund a raft of measures aimed at improving Australia's education export industry. Which new initiatives is EA most excited about?

**A** The focus on expanding the Working Holiday Visa programme has the potential to provide new opportunities for agents in a range of countries to recruit students for Australian institutions. In another area, complaints are always being received about slow visa processing times, so EA is pleased to see additional resources being put into visa posts in growing markets. Additional funds allocated to monitoring and enforcing the legislation that protects students' fees and ensures quality standards will ensure that Australia continues to lead the global industry.

### Q What plans does EA have for 2004 to help members market themselves?

**A** The major promotional focus in 2004 will be the EA Agents Workshop, which will be held in Sydney from 15 to 17 April. This is part of a comprehensive strategy to raise the profile of Australia, EA and EA member col-

leges with agents and agent associations. The workshop is supported by the Australian government, provides a number of information seminars and allows colleges to support their partners in other education sectors by nominating them to attend as well.

### Q Are there any more immigration legislation changes imminent?

**A** The focus at the moment for EA and the government is on fine-tuning the legislation that was introduced in July 2001. The statistical basis for determining a country's risk level is currently under review to make sure that the risk levels are allocated appropriately. The reviewed Assessment Levels should be announced soon and should result in increasing enrolments from countries where the Assessment Level (AL) is reduced (as happened with Korea following their change from AL3 to AL2 in November 2002). Changes to the English language requirements for the high school sector have been scheduled for November, however these are still to be finalised. It is also anticipated that the financial requirements will be made more consistent across sectors in November, resulting in an easing of the criteria for some sectors.

### Q What are the challenges facing EA members at the moment?

**A** Australian colleges are currently reviewing their risk management policies and practices. 2003 showed the industry how difficult it is to predict events that may impact on the industry. Strategically, colleges are focusing on diversification of markets and products in order to minimise their vulnerability.