

# Australia increases visa charges

## Next issue

In our October issue, **Special Report** finds out what educators' associations around the world have been up to. **Market Report** provides an update on the UK's language teaching market, while **Direction** examines current accommodation trends among agency clients. **Feedback** finds out what students studying in Italy think about their study abroad experience. **Agency Survey** reports from Japan and **Destination** takes a tour of the USA's east coast.

Following last month's news story that US visa prices had increased in Korea (see *Language Travel Magazine*, August 2002, page 10), the Australian government's Department of Immigration, Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs has announced a visa price rise across the board, with student visa charges increasing from AU\$290 (US\$163) to AU\$315 (US\$177).

All student visa applications dated from July 1, when the new prices came into effect, were charged at the new higher rate, regardless of when an offer of acceptance from an institution was made to the visa candidate.

The Australian Council for Private Education and Training (Acpet) expressed disappointment that the changes were announced only two days before they were enacted. 'Good business practice should provide for at least 30 days' notice of price

changes,' commented the association. Sue Blundell at English Australia (EA), which represents English language teaching institutions in the country, said, 'EA is concerned that there is an increase at all. We are already the most expensive country for visas.'

She added, '[We] informed EA member colleges as soon as we heard. They are in [a good] position to ensure that as many agents as possible are informed through their own networks.'

Agent Arlette Rechsteiner, from Azics Intercambio Cultural in Brazil, who had been informed of the price increases by the Australian Embassy, said the cost in Brazil had increased from 351 Reals (US\$123) to 469 Reals (US\$164). 'Quite a high increase, but I don't think it will have an effect on the decision of my clients because Australia is the favourite destination [at the moment],' she said.

While other agents shared Rechsteiner's view that students would be undeterred to study in Australia, they were unappreciative of the price rise. 'We were aware of the latest news from the Australian Embassy,' said Inessa Yugay at Intellect agency in Kazakhstan. 'It isn't good news. Taking into account that we must pay to apply for the visa in Moscow, our students have to spend a significant amount of money on the express mail fee. Now, they must pay twice more for the visa.'

In Mexico, Javier Elizondo, Education Manager at Asatej, said he felt higher prices could deter Mexican students. 'Any increase in visa costs plus all the papers required to obtain a visa is an obstacle for students who decide to study in Australia,' he said. 'For the UK and Canada, Mexicans do not need a visa [for up to six months of study] and that makes a difference.'

## Agent questionnaire



Name of Agent: Rachel Wang  
 Position: Int. Marketing and Liaison Officer  
 Age: 28  
 Name of Company: Beijing Oz Enrolment Center of International Education  
 Location: Beijing, China  
 Other branches: Sydney, Australia  
 No. of staff: 76  
 Average no. of students per year: 1,500-1,800

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. Please tell us about your client profile.**  
 The average age of our students is between 18 and 23 years old [and their intentions are] foundation studies and undergraduate degree courses, while those students aged between 23 and 33 are aiming to enrol on postgraduate courses. Having studied abroad makes students more competitive in China's labour market and helps them to get better-paid jobs.

**2. Which destinations are most popular among your clientele and why?**  
 Australia, New Zealand and the UK. [This is because] we are experienced in sending students to these destinations, [and] we have a high visa success rate.

**3. How many institutions do you represent and in how many countries?**  
 We represent over 100 education institutions in Australia, the UK, New Zealand, Germany, Canada and Ireland.

**4. How do you market your services to clients?**  
 Through traditional in-house counselling which is free, online, consulting through our own website, links to popular websites and [by advertising in] the media.

**5. How do you find new partner institutions with which to work?**  
 We find new partners at international education fairs, through our connections with foreign embassies and via the Internet.

**6. What percentage of Chinese, in your opinion, are interested in language study abroad, and how will this change over time?**  
 About 85 per cent of them are. This number might decrease a little bit as increasingly, students are starting to learn English at an earlier stage and they might [wish to be] better prepared in terms of English before they study abroad.

**7. How influential a part do parents play in the decision of where their children should study?**  
 Parents have a limited role. Children are increasingly independent. The information a counsellor provides to them about a study abroad experience is most important.

**8. How will the market evolve in the future?**  
 I think with the further economic liberalisation of China and the rising of living standards for many Chinese families, overall, the number of students opting for overseas study will go up. I think China is now where [other countries in] southeast Asia were years ago and [it is progressing] in the same way. Studying abroad is a hit in modern China. According to a two-month survey on our website, the USA is the most sought after destination, followed by Japan, Australia, Canada and the UK. Distance learning hasn't gained legitimacy from China's Education Ministry and the authority refuses to accredit most of the distance learning courses. We are not sure when the situation will change. Furthermore, [it is still the case] in China that distance learning is less acceptable as it is less recognised by employers and society. So we believe the trend of studying abroad will [continue] in the context of China's economic growth.

## Alto offers marketing advice

THE Association of Language Travel Organisations (Alto) is launching a series of management seminars, with the first one taking place this month before the WYSTC conference in Rhodes, Greece. The seminar will help participants to set up and establish a professional marketing plan.

Delivered by Daniel Burckhardt, Director of the Institute of Tourism Management in Switzerland, and Gaby Billing, a strategy and marketing consultant and ex-employee of Eurocentres and STA Travel, the seminar aims to help businesses obtain better results from their marketing activities. With group work and theoretical input, the attendees are expected to leave the seminar with a 'communication plan' for their businesses and an understanding of the principles of

successful communication and corporate identity.

Michael Gerber, Chairperson of the association, explained that Alto members represent one of the fastest growing sectors of the youth and student travel industry. He said, 'Many owners of schools and language travel agencies started their business as adventurers and great entrepreneurs and were successful over many years. However, rapid changes in the marketplace, in customer needs, political and other adversities, are today leading to an increasing complexity of the business.'

A series of management seminars is planned for the future. They are limited in size and are also open to non-Alto members, who pay a higher price to attend. See our *Special Report on marketing*, pages 20-24. □



### 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?

Alexandra Borges de Sousa, Director of Studies and International Relations.

#### Where do you work?

Cial Centro de Línguas in Lisbon and Faro, Portugal.

#### Why and how did you start in the industry?

I joined the family business after graduating from university in 1992.

#### Why should agents choose to represent your school?

Cial's name represents long-standing experience, reliability, a full range of services and personalised attention in and outside of the classroom.

#### How does your school promote itself to agents?

Through personal contacts, mailings and workshops such as Ialc.

#### What percentage of your annual student intake comes through agents?

Twenty-seven per cent.

#### Please tell us about your most popular courses and about any new courses that Cial has recently introduced.

Many of our students need more than the general language course so we recently introduced a combination of group and one-to-one lessons on a variety of topics, which is proving to be successful. Another strong point of ours is the teacher training course.

#### How do you believe your institution will develop in the future?

With the steady growth of the market for Portuguese, Cial aims at continuing to be the reference point for high quality teaching and service in the private schools sector. We are also expanding into new areas like e-learning.

### Anex in Colombia to hold first fair

AGENCY association, Anex, which was formed in Colombia last year, is organising a study fair this month to promote study abroad and its agency members. Taking place from 12 to 15 September, the fair in Bogota is expected to draw in 8,000 visitors.

'Our intention is to [attract] 8,000 visitors during the three-day period,' explained Claudia Roza, a spokesperson for Anex. She said that the fair aimed to boost demand in the market for language courses and education overseas. 'As we believe advertising is an important way of [selling] the fair, we are aiming to promote it in as many ways as possible,' she added.

Radio, press and TV advertising is being used to promote the event, which will be attended by international guest speakers. □

### Fiyto and ITSC run campaign to boost sales

TWO global federations promoting youth and student travel have joined forces to boost numbers of young travellers around the world. Agencies and schools that are members of the Federation of International Youth Travel Organisations (Fiyto) or the International Student Travel Confederation (ITSC) are using a new 'Ok>Go' slogan on their literature.

The main message carried by the new literature and advertising campaign is to remind young people to take up the chance to see the world while they are young and have the opportunities to do so. Another goal of the campaign, which was launched in May, is to obtain recognition from national governments that youth travel is an under-valued sector that needs greater support.

Peter Kruyt, Director General of Fiyto, said, 'Young people spend more than anyone realises [while overseas]. We are campaigning for them to be recognised as vital for tourism, now and for the future.' □

## On the move



William Neale, of Seafield School of English in Christchurch, New Zealand, has been elected

Chairperson of the Federation of Independent English Language Schools of New Zealand (Fiels). 'Fiels schools are audited annually by the international SGS organisation to ensure quality standards are complied with, in addition to government requirements,' said Mr Neale. 'I would like to see more schools join Fiels, comply with high industry standards and enjoy the comradeship of this industry.'



Irina Serebriakova, previously employed at Efes agency in Russia, has joined the

young but experienced agency team of Intellect-tour, working at the Moscow office. In addition to her educational consultant's duties, Ms Serebriakova will be involved in organising exhibitions of international education providers in Russia.



Elizabeth Bradbury was recently named Director of Intensive Language

Studies at the Monterey Institute of International Studies in Monterey, CA, in the USA. While well known for language training, the Monterey Institute is best known for its four graduate schools that train students for international careers. 'The progress that the students make in our intensive language programmes is noticeable and dramatic,' said Ms Bradbury.



Elizabeth Lor, who has worked for Geos Melbourne in Australia since 2000, was

appointed Manager in July. She takes over from Peter Millington, who is now heading up the Geos International office in Thailand. Ms Lor commented, 'Underlying any good business is the belief in quality and superior customer service. I believe that this is what we do best at Geos.'



Eliani Boton is now working at the University of the Sunshine Coast English Language Centre

in Maroochydore, Australia, as part of the marketing team. Previously at Sunshine Coast English College, in her new role, Ms Boton hopes to establish good agent relations in Europe and South America. She is fluent in Portuguese and Spanish.