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## **MEDIA RELEASE**

### **The Brain Economy is the Elephant in the Room**

Australian politicians and the Australian public are yet to realize that tangible support for the “brain industries” is as critical for Australia’s future and for Australian jobs as support for the resources industries”, said Tony Adams, Immediate Past President of the International Education Association of Australia (IEAA), addressing the first ever *Services Summit* at Parliament House Canberra today.

“The Australian Government should appoint a dedicated Minister, or at a minimum a Parliamentary Secretary, with responsibility for international education”, said Adams.

“The Government should also partner with industry to develop a comprehensive national strategy on international education, with a set of well funded priority program initiatives. Funding support for the industry should be lifted to levels commensurate with the support already provided by government to Australia’s other major export industries”.

Education is Australia’s third largest export industry and the largest service export industry, out-performing tourism. The more than half a million students from overseas studying in Australian institutions - in universities, vocational education and training colleges, schools and English language centres - generate \$15.5 billion a year for the Australian economy.

“International education is a major source of jobs for Australians working in education institutions, the tourism and travel industries, accommodation and real estate, the telecommunications industries, transport, cinemas, banks and the hospitality sector”, said Adams.

Education displaced tourism as the largest service sector export industry in 2008. “The Australian people are probably not aware that international education is Victoria largest export industry and in NSW is second only to coal”, said Adams

“With the cyclic nature of the resources sector, the global financial crisis puts education in a very interesting position amongst Australia’s major exports. It is the elephant in the room”, said Adams.

Yet this has been achieved largely by education providers themselves, with only modest government support. “The industry has greatly appreciated the support provided over recent years, especially by Australian Education International (AEI) a division of the Australian Department of Education, Employment and Workplace relations. But AEI itself is a poor relative in the hurly burly of Canberra budget allocations”, said Adams.

“IEAA as an industry association believes senior level political leadership and a more effective whole of government approach is needed if the future of international education as a critical export industry supporting Australian jobs”, said Adams. “Better coordination across government agencies is also needed”.

“The Government must also engage and consult all sectors of the industry in the final design of the independent international education industry development body proposed by the recent *Bradley Review of Higher Education*. We haven’t heard what the Government’s response to this recommendation will be. There have been no industry wide consultations about it and this is worrying many in the industry”, Adams said.

“Within the next year, we would dearly like to see the Prime Minister issue a well thought through policy statement on international education, one that properly incorporates the views of industry”, said Adams.

### **Media Contact**

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