

## MEDIA RELEASE

### **Australia remains a key player in international higher education student market, but competition is building**

**9 February 2012:** Australia is a key player in international higher education student provision and is now ranked third in the world, according to the latest *Joining the Dots* research briefing released by the Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER).

Dr Daniel Edwards, ACER Senior Research Fellow, said Australia's net flow of international students is one of the highest in the world, even when calculated in the context of the total size of the higher education sector. Net flow is the ratio of incoming international students that the country hosts compared to outgoing domestic students studying abroad, expressed as a percentage of all tertiary education students in the country.

"Out of 109 countries, Australia is one of only seven nations in the world that has more than 100 000 international students. UNESCO figures indicate Australia is ranked third with more than 250 000 students, behind the UK with 370 000 and the US with 660 000," Dr Edwards said.

"Importantly, the figures show that apart from Macao, Australia has the largest net flow ratio of the large international host countries. This highlights the importance of international students to Australian higher education in terms of relative size of the sector. It also provides some perspective on the relatively small proportion of students in Australia who undertake study abroad."

Dr Edwards said Australia's international student market is heavily reliant on Asia and the Pacific – accounting for nearly 80 per cent of the cohort.

"Students from Asia travel in substantial numbers to a large variety of countries for higher education, meaning that the scope of competition for students in this region now and in the future is significant," Dr Edwards said.

The largest number of higher education students abroad from Asia originate from China (510 314), India (195 107), South Korea (125 165), Malaysia (53 121), Japan (44 768), Vietnam (55 038), Hong Kong (32 944) and Indonesia (32 246).

Australia is currently the most popular destination for Malaysian, Hong Kong, Indonesian, Singaporean, Sri Lankan and New Zealand tertiary education students. It is also the second most popular destination for students from Viet Nam, Nepal, Philippines, Solomon Islands and Brunei.

Dr Edwards said that while Australia remains one of the 'big fish' in the international student scene, growth in the size, quality and infrastructure for hosting international students in the future is likely to be substantial. This is signalling a warning to Australian providers that the number of host nations is growing, as is their capacity to compete for students.

*Joining the Dots* is a subscription-based resource provided by ACER to those with an interest in Australian higher education. The 2012 series is about to be launched and details for subscriptions are available at [www.acer.edu.au/jtd](http://www.acer.edu.au/jtd) or by emailing [jtd@acer.edu.au](mailto:jtd@acer.edu.au).

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