

THE AUSTRALIAN

Good colleges denied fast visas

JOHN ROSS AND JULIE HARE THE AUSTRALIAN NOVEMBER 20, 2013 12:00AM

Who are the lucky ones?

INVITED

Kent Institute of
Business and Technology

TAFE NSW

SP Jain School of Global
Management

Holmesglen Institute

International College of
Management, Sydney

TAFE South Australia

Le Cordon Bleu



NOT INVITED

Northern Melbourne
Institute of TAFE

MIT

Box Hill Institute

Holmes Institute



Source: TheAustralian

IN a process straight from the pages of Joseph Heller's *Catch-22*, colleges have been judged low-risk in their dealings with international students so long as they haven't enrolled enough international students to build up a track record of risk.

Small niche institutions appear on the confidential list of 22 private colleges and TAFEs invited to take part in the streamlined visa processing scheme.

The HES understands large and well-regarded institutions, both public and private, have been excluded. Their mistake? Recruiting too many students or too many from some of the main source countries.

"It looks like less students (equates with) less risk," said Patricia Stewart, Sydney campus director of the Melbourne Institute of Technology, which has been left off the list.

"More students, more risk. We seem to have been discriminated against because we're big."

Other notable exceptions include the Holmes Institute and Northern Melbourne Institute of TAFE.

The HES understands two other Victorian TAFEs - Box Hill and Chisholm - have also been excluded, possibly along with some divisions of Navitas.

SVP, which is currently confined to public universities, speeds up the processing of most student

visas and avoids much Immigration Department scrutiny. It is credited with arresting a decline in international university enrolments. But this has come at the expense of enrolments in vocational education and degree-teaching private colleges and TAFEs, which have campaigned for the right to join the scheme.

The Coalition has agreed to admit some of these institutions. But sources say the assessment process has favoured institutions which are small, new or niche and those that avoid recruiting from the subcontinent - or even from outside Australia. They say this means colleges that take business risks are deemed unacceptable immigration risks.

"It's not assisting people that have been out there hacking away in the international market for years," said Dr Stewart.

SP Jain School of Global Management, a private multinational education provider which established a campus in Sydney last year, is included in the scheme. The school outranked all Australian university business schools in a recent Forbes ranking.

Student services head Trent Pohlmann said SVP had been restricted to institutions with at least 100 overseas students in the previous reporting period. "It's possible high-quality providers missed out because they didn't have enough international students."

But the head of another successful applicant said the process appeared to be favouring smaller colleges. "They've benefited because their risk levels have been low, in the main because they haven't had high visa rejection rates already," said Ken Hawkins, chief executive of the Kent Institute of Business and Technology in Sydney.

Dr Hawkins said Kent had also benefited from a "fortuitous" history of recruiting from low-risk countries such as Malaysia and parts of Europe. But he said many colleges had fallen foul of a "conundrum" whereby the two biggest source markets, China and India, were also considered among the highest immigration risks.

"If you're active in the field, it's inevitable that you're going to have higher numbers from those countries," he said.

Sources say the process also discriminated against private colleges and TAFEs in using a more onerous risk framework than the one applied to universities. At least two universities would have failed the private colleges' assessment, they say.

Kate Dempsey, executive officer of Victorian TAFE International, said the process had also "penalised" TAFEs which applied to SVP in their own right.

The HES understands three of the five Victorian TAFE applicants missed out, while those in NSW and South Australia, both statewide networks, were admitted. Dr Dempsey said this meant institutes with a track record of risk may have been admitted on the coat-tails of their low-risk counterparts.

The Australian Council of Private Education and Training criticised a lack of transparency in the process. "While the 22 successful institutions have been given detailed information on their performance, those who missed out are struggling for details on why they were not successful," said chief executive Claire Field.

Dr Stewart said MIT had not been told when and whether it would be invited to apply again, or under what criteria. This left it second-guessing the vagaries of the system.

The HES sought comment from the Immigration Minister's office, which had not responded by press-time.