

It was an indeed an honour to share the stage in my capacity as the AAERI President with Her Excellency, Australian High commissioner to India, Ms. Harinder Sidhu & Chancellor University of Canberra, Prof Tom Calma. Yesterday was a special evening and sharing my thoughts on the AAERI's 20th year Anniversary.

While I was a student in Australia 20 years ago, AAERI was conceived & born at the Australian High commission, New Delhi. AAERI is a brain child of Prof Tom Calma and the founder AAERI members. For any child the initial 5 years are important as these define his character. Similarly for AAERI, the initial 5 years were important. It was because of hand holding of the Australian High commission, New Delhi, AAERI was able to crawl, walk & eventually stand on its own feet. AAERI's initial office was held at the Australian High commission, New Delhi. AAERI is thankful to the Australian Govt & Australian High commission for their support & encouragement over the years. Today, the child has grown in to an adult & AAERI is a proud Indian association which operates within the framework of the ESOS act of Australia & AAERI's code of ethics. The fact that we all here in a hall, symbolises that we love Australia. For AAERI, Australia is its sole and India is its heart.

I want to thank Prof Tom Calma & the founder members, for their acumen in forming the organisation & taking the leadership.

Being an Australian Alumni & as the current AAERI President, I am proud to say that Australia not only provides Education but also a new life to the International students. For an Indian student, Education is an investment of time, efforts and resources and the Indian parents do start saving resources from the day the child is born. This is where AAERI has played a significant role. It makes sure that the AAERI members are not only certified but also abide to the code of ethics & have gone through the background checks.

20th year is time to take a pause and travel down the memory lane and at the same time visualise the future too.

The last 20 years have been eventful. It also reminds me of the student mugging issues of 2008-09. The Indian media was hostile & while we waited reactions from the Australian Govt, the senior AAERI members such as Mr. Ravi Lochan Singh, Mr. Gulshan Kumar & Mr. Naveen Chopra did several press conferences across the country & were engaging students fraternity. They were also promoting Australia as a study destination. In the past there were collaborative efforts by the Australian, NZ, Ireland & the UK for the ethical recruitment of International students. This is popularly know as the London statement and AAERI has welcomed such statements. In the past, AAERI has made number of submissions which is in the interest of the Australian Education. AAERI also had a meeting with the Honourable Michael Knight before he released his report. In August 2015, the Hon Christopher Pyne MP, then the Minister of Education, during his visit to India acknowledged the role of AAERI in the internationalisation of the Australian education sector.

Currently, there are four issues which concerns the Industry at large:

1. Issues related to service tax - Service tax may or may not be applicable on inward remittances. This is a complex problem and it will compound with the introduction of GST from April 2017. Service tax which is currently at 15% is likely to go up to 20% with the introduction of GST. AAERI is again at the forefront. AAERI has been in consultation with the senior lawyers from the Supreme court of India. I am thankful to the Committee Headed by Mr. Bubbly Johar, AAERI V.P and Mr. Puspinder Bhatia, Senior AAERI member for investing number of hours & working towards a practical solution
2. Course hopping which is also know as Waka Jumping - AAERI is of the view that ESOS act needs to review the policy on commission payments to onshore agents. In the US, commission payments to onshore agents are banned and may be Australia needs to explore in that direction. Last week the Australian, Australia's leading news paper too echoed the AAERI's concern as headlines in their Higher Education section. This ban on commission payment to onshore agents will protect & safeguard the Australian Education Export Industry – one of the largest and most prospective industries in Australia.
3. Role of Careers services - ROI does matter to the Indian students - Currently it is estimated that approx 27,000 fresh visa's have been granted in the last one year. These numbers are

similar to the numbers of 2008-09 and there is always a word of caution from AAERI's side. Each student bring approx A\$ 25,000 to 60,000 on an annual basis to the Australian Economy. Australian Education providers are excellent in imparting Education, however there is a need for the careers services to provide realistic services. These days students are interested in knowing the work opportunities back in Asia. Career services needs to market its graduates & establish links with the Asian companies.

4. Guidelines of the Association of Indian Universities - There are some courses offered by an overseas education providers which are not recognised by the Indian Govt equivalent system. Some examples are 1) Master courses which are of 1 year duration 2) pathway programmes, diploma leading degree courses. AAERI has made submissions to the Indian Ministry of HRD to reconsider these guidelines.

Moving forward, as part of our 20th year celebration, AAERI is also hosting an event in Melbourne on the 19th October, 2016. AAERI will be hosting a gathering for engaging the International Directors of the Australian Education providers and details will be shared soon in a few days time. AAERI will also be hosting various events within India, promoting the Australian Education.

I am proud to say that AAERI has signed an MOU with the Nepalese association of Australian Education representatives & AAERI welcomes the executive team of the Nepalese association. There are efforts being extended to sign similar MOU's with the other associations in SAARC countries.

By the 25th AAERI's anniversary, I will like to see AAERI as a global brand in promoting the Australian Education & regulating the agents fraternity from the Indian subcontinent. AAERI is the only successful model of self regulation and the other countries such i.e NZ, U.K, Canada & USA have taken inspiration from AAERI.

As AAERI, I guarantee that we will work in the interest of the students going to Australia & will continue to reform which is in the interest of the Australian Education brand.

Before I end, I want to thank the Guest of honour, Australian High commissioner to India, Her Excellency Ms. Harinder Sidhu & the Chief guest - Chancellor of University of Canberra, Prof Tom Calma & his family for accepting the invitation. I want to thank & acknowledge the role of Department of Education & Training, Department of Immigration & boarder protection and Austrade for the support & encouragement to AAERI over a period of years. I also want to thank the Sponsors Vodafone Australia, NIB Health funds and Pearsons Test of English - Academic for believing in the AAERI and supporting the 20th year Anniversary. I also want to thank my AAERI executives for bringing this event together.

President - AAERI