



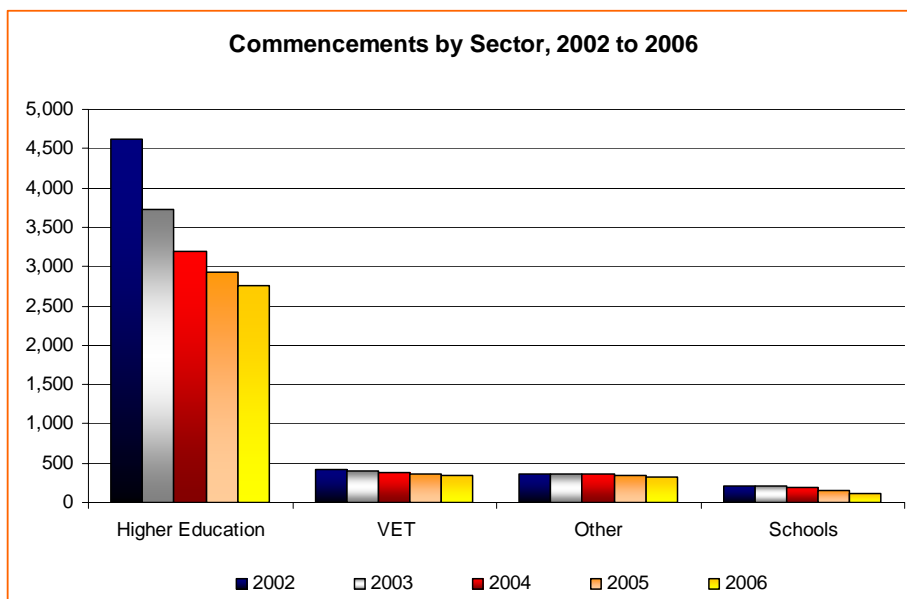
Singapore

Strong education links between Australia and Singapore have contributed to excellent bilateral ties between the two countries. Australia is still a market leader in the provision of education services, especially higher education, to Singapore.

Singapore has always enjoyed a stable political environment since its independence. Heavily affected by the turn of the century economic recession and the SARS outbreak in 2003, the country's economy has recently recorded a significant recovery. For a mature economy, Singapore experienced very strong GDP growth in 2006 of 7.9%. The strong economy has continued to generate record employment and push down the unemployment rate to 2.7% in 2006. An official government statement made in March 2007 indicated that a total of 450,000 jobs are expected to be created over the next five years if the economy grows by a projected figure of 4.5 to 6.5% each year.

Higher Education

The bulk of Singaporeans studying in Australia are enrolled in the higher education sector. Although the number of students going to Australia has been declining for the last 4 years (between 2005 and 2006 enrolments in the higher education sector dropped by 9.3%), Australia is still the top overseas study destination for Singaporeans due mainly to familiarity, proximity and competitive cost.



Singapore can still be described as an attractive source of international students for the following reasons:

- Singapore is widely regarded as a knowledge-based economy. This means that more jobs requiring specific skills will be created and the need for workers and school leavers to seek higher qualifications will become more prevalent.
- Australia will continue to remain the closest and most affordable English speaking study destination for most Singaporeans. Australian universities should consider promoting postgraduate study opportunities to Singaporeans given that Singaporeans have access to the Endeavour Awards (mainly postgraduate scholarships category) and the push by the Singapore government encouraging its people to attain higher degree qualifications.
- With the local professional bodies recognising more Australian professional qualifications, such as Medicine and Law, more Singaporeans should be encouraged to pursue such qualifications in Australia.

The gradual decline in the number of students travelling to Australia for on-campus studies is compensated by an increase in the number of enrolments in offshore programmes. In 2005, a total number of 16,736 students, both Singaporeans and foreign nationals, were enrolled to study for various Australian qualifications in Singapore - Singaporean students alone amounted to 15,745. Most offshore enrolments in Singapore are in the higher education sector.

Vocational Education and Training

The publicly funded Institute of Technical Education (ITE) is Singapore's main VET provider. ITE has developed a highly dependable vocational system that has a strong industry connection and generous government funding amounting to \$154 million dollars in 2005. ITE is interested to link up with quality VET providers overseas, including those in Australia, to embark on student/staff exchanges or summer programme/study abroad activities.