

Nov 04, 2016 by **Nicholas J. Cull**

Australia's Public Diplomacy Crisis ^[1]

In recent years Australia has made great strides in its public diplomacy and has demonstrated a remarkable ability to 'punch above its weight,' especially in the realm of international education. As the US international student recruitment became bogged down in visa bureaucracy and post-9/11 paranoia, Australia surged ahead to take up the slack and recruited large numbers of students from Asia especially. Now this recruitment and Australia's wider reputation are in jeopardy as a result of a series of brutal racist attacks on Indian students by youths.

The attacks have not only opened questions over the safety of the nearly 100,000 Indian students studying in Australia, but they have also raised wider concerns about the quality of the education provided to Indian students. Indian blogs and newspapers are speaking about 'exploitation' of their students. The Australian government – doubtless concerned to protect their third largest export industry – has responded by pledging an annual conference on the welfare of Indian students in Australia.

Prime Minister Kevin Rudd sought to mend wounds. He recently assured India of his country's love of the sub-continent, joking that if it wasn't for India, Australians would be stuck eating English food. The crisis has implications for practitioners and scholars of public diplomacy. For scholars, it promises to be a fascinating example of public diplomacy crisis management. For practitioners outside Australia, it is an opportunity to remind Indian students of alternative choices for their education.
