

School's out for good

A Gold Coast international college has shut down and is blaming the Federal Government's new skilled migration laws for its demise.

ROBINA'S Mackintosh College has gone into liquidation with owner Shane Mackintosh saying it's all over for the company that he took over in 2007.

The government's much publicised 'crackdown' on skilled migration was announced in February, with the number of eligible occupations slashed from more than 400 to 181 - and Mackintosh lays the blame squarely at the new laws.

"The school only began losing money this year, since uncertainty with international students surrounding job prosperity began," he says.

"New enrolments stopped and the students currently enrolled either stopped paying their fees or didn't turn up for classes. The more colleges I talk to the more concerns there are about the new migration laws. Some institutions are trying to trade their way through the difficulties but can't do this forever."

Australian Migration Lawyers' Peter Lee says Australia's workforce may benefit from the 'sharper' skills intake as a result of the new laws, but many students 'were sold' on studying an eligible degree in Australia and applying for skilled migration upon completion.

Education is listed as Australia's third largest export market at an industry value of \$17 billion.

"The real selling point for Australia was our education system, and we've brought all these people across only for them now to



Shane Mackintosh

be locked out of the system," says Lee.

"Many people have travelled specifically to Australia to complete qualifications that will soon become no longer eligible as skilled migration."

Mackintosh is frustrated by what he claims to be misrepresented media focus of the plight of the students, whom he says will be relocated to other schools.

"The staff of the school and their families are the real victims here, who now don't have jobs. We've also been actively involved with the community and all that support from Gold Coast locals is wasted - it's an unfortunate situation for everyone," he says.

"There are systems in place with the Australian Council for Private Education and Training that will ensure the students are looked after. And the students weren't paying for their fees upfront - they were paying for a term or a semester. In many cases they will receive certificates for study completed but not paid for."

Liquidator W Roland Robson of Aggs Robson was still processing the college's

figures when *Gold Coast Business News* went to print, but confirmed Mackintosh's debt levels were not 'exceptionally high'.

"Based on what I've seen at the moment, debt levels aren't in the millions. Super is well up to date and debts to trade creditors such as Energex, Telstra and product wholesalers are minimal," says Robson.

Mackintosh conceded that time was up.

"All of our books were quite up to date, we had no 90 day invoices outstanding and didn't let it get that bad. Had we tried to trade through it for another two or three months it would have been a different story," he says.

"The lack of income was the issue, not debt. Once the international students stopped paying and we had all those overheads we were forced to cease trading."

Mackintosh, a 2008 *Gold Coast Business News* Young Entrepreneur of the Year finalist, says he has had 'no time' to comprehend his personal future.

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