

UK joint ventures may lead to mergers

Aban Contractor, London | July 29, 2009

Font Size:   Print Page: 

Article from:  THE AUSTRALIAN

MERGERS between Australian and British universities could prove to be a winning formula as they struggle to survive in an increasingly competitive global market, a top British lawyer has told the HES.

Glynne Stanfield, a partner and head of international education at Eversheds, a leading international law firm and legal adviser to University College London when it established a campus in Adelaide late last year, said there was nothing under British law to stop such merger.

In the short term, however, "the creation of joint-venture vehicles to operate a discrete brand on behalf of those institutions" was more likely, he said.

Mr Stanfield, co-author of a legal guide for universities operating under British law, prepared for the UK Higher Education International Unit and released earlier this month, said education was Britain's third-largest export in balance-of-payment terms. The guide was intended to allow it to continue to export successfully.

"It is possible -- and we expect to see this -- for joint ventures between UK and Australian universities to offer degree programs either on a dual or joint degree basis, that is, either a single award or two separate awards," he said.

"They could open joint campuses or campuses based on the other's campus to offer complementary courses.

"In law courses, for example, there may be some real value in having a law degree that can be used for legal qualifications in the UK and Australia. Going further, it may be possible to see a merger between an Australian and a British university."

The chapter in the guide on Australia gives a synopsis of the present situation, including the types of higher education providers involved, funding arrangements and how to establish a British campus in Australia.