NSW training sector to benefit from new skills agreement

The Australian Council for Private Education and Training (ACPET) has congratulated the NSW Government for signing up to the Prime Minister’s “Skills for All Australians” reforms at last week’s COAG meeting, with the peak body saying the State’s economy and industry will be the better for it.

The reform package, first announced by Prime Minister Gillard last month, will see NSW’s Vocational Education and Training (VET) students receive guaranteed government subsidised training to Certificate III level, a HECS-style loan scheme for students at Diploma and Advanced Diploma level, and greater choice between private and public institutions through new contestable funding arrangements.

ACPET CEO, Claire Field, said opening up NSW’s training sector to competition between providers was in the best interests of students, institutions and employers alike, and she added that similar reforms in Victoria and South Australia have already been implemented with great success.

“The time is right for the NSW Government to implement vital skills reforms, which have been proven to deliver increased student numbers, greater student satisfaction and a more industry-responsive training sector,” Ms Field said.

Ms Field said private and not-for-profit vocational training providers in NSW already had a good track record of delivering employment-related training, and opening up the State’s training sector to a more diverse range of providers would allow students to choose between a greater range of high quality providers.

“NSW’s private VET providers have an outstanding record of getting graduates jobs, with 89.4 per cent of students in employment related training getting a job when they complete their studies,” Ms Field said.

“Private providers are also performing well at meeting the broader equity and access goals of training, with 88.2 per cent of female graduates gaining employment, along with 83.2% of those who speak a language other than English at home and 70 per cent of those with a disability.”

“The COAG is right to push for consistent national training reforms that are good for students, employers and governments alike. The added incentive of more than $2.8 billion in funding for the NSW Government to introduce the reforms make this a real win-win for the State: a better training sector and more federal funds to operate it.”

“I applaud the NSW Government for tapping into the potential of a high quality, diverse and contestable training sector,” Ms Field said.

Another key outcome of Friday’s meeting for high-quality VET providers in NSW was the Commonwealth’s commitment to ensuring greater access to streamlined visa processing in the second half of 2012.
“ACPET understands that NSW Premier Barry O’Farrell took a lead role in securing this commitment, and we commend the Premier on his leadership on this important issue,” Ms Field said.

“We note the Premier’s previous comments that visa arrangements should be relaxed for reputable institutes like TAFE, and remind him of the vital contribution being made by private providers in attracting and delivering high-quality education and training to international students to NSW.”

Recent AEI data shows 93 per cent of international VET students are enrolled with private providers, with private providers delivering courses to 63 per cent of students across the ELICOS, VET and higher education sectors.

Claire Field is available for comment.  
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