SA’s training sector to benefit from new skills agreement

The Australian Council for Private Education and Training (ACPET) has congratulated the South Australian 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 COAG’s decision to follow the lead of SA’s own training reforms was an endorsement of their approach.

The reform package, first announced by Prime Minister Gillard last month, will see SA’s Vocational Education and Training (VET) students receive guaranteed government subsidised training to Certificate 3 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 the national reforms draw heavily from the successful blueprint of similar reforms already developed in Victoria and SA, proving that competition between providers is in the best interests of students, institutions and employers alike.

“COAG’s decision last week to adopt the Skills for All reforms is a strong endorsement of the SA Government’s leadership on training reform, which will put the State ahead of the game in delivering 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 SA 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 will allow students to choose between a greater range of high quality providers.

She also cautioned that the success of the South Australian model could be at risk if new pricing wasn’t introduced. Ms Field questioned how the South Australian government could justify funding for public TAFE institutes being set at two and three times the level being provided to private providers for delivery of the same course.

“In many cases, the private provider subsidy level is below the cost of delivery and significantly less than amounts paid under current government ‘User Choice’ arrangements. For example, for the Certificate IV in Business, TAFE SA will receive an average subsidy of $5,096 while a private training provider would receive $1,880 for delivering the same qualification.”

“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 $649 million in funding for the SA Government can be a real win-win for the State: a better training sector and more federal funds to operate it. It is crucial though that funds are allocated in a more equitable manner.”

Claire Field is available for comment.

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