MEDIA STATEMENT
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AEU Fear Campaign Misguided and Offensive

The Australian Council for Private Education and Training (ACPET) today rejected as offensive and grossly inaccurate a vicious attack on Australia’s private vocational education sector by the Australian Education Union (AEU).

In South Australia this week, the AEU's Federal TAFE Secretary, Pat Forward, mounted a misguided fear campaign designed to derail SA training reforms by attacking private education providers, but ACPET CEO, Claire Field, says Ms Forward’s criticisms are full of errors and exaggerations, and show how out of touch the AEU is with the success of similar reforms to Victoria’s training system.

“The AEU ought to check their facts before making vicious and baseless attacks on private education providers, which only serve to show how little they understand about Victoria’s vocational education and training (VET) sector,” Ms Field said.

“The fact is that since contestable, demand driven, funding for vocational education and training was introduced in Victoria, the State’s training market has grown by 35%, delivering more than 200,000 additional nationally accredited qualifications in 2010 than were awarded before the changes.”

“It’s not only high quality private providers that are experiencing growth. Victoria’s TAFEs now deliver 12.5% more AQF qualifications than before the changes. TAFEs are as much the beneficiaries of a growing, vibrant VET sector as are students and the broader State economy.”

“Training reforms are underpinning Victoria’s response to skills shortages. In the last 12 months, Victoria has seen 23% growth in government-funded training enrolments related to industries experiencing shortages, including health, social assistance and construction,” Ms Field said.

Ms Field said the AEU’s tired accusations of private education driving down the quality of education are out of touch and belong in the ‘dark ages’ of education policy.

“Private VET institutions in South Australia offer high quality, accredited courses that are held to account by the same standards as TAFE. They employ a skilled workforce with strong links to industry, and deliver flexible and innovative training that better meets the needs of students looking for a reliable career pathway and employers looking to upskill their staff.”

“Research conducted by the National Centre for Vocational Education Research (NCVER) shows that students in private institutions are more satisfied with their training and enjoy better graduate employment outcomes than students at TAFE.”

Ms Field said the South Australian Government should be commended for its progressive approach to training reforms, and she urged the SA Government to see through the tired, inaccurate, spin from the AEU.

“Diverse, high quality and industry responsive education and training is crucial to sustained productivity growth in South Australia.”

“The SA Government’s Skills for All reforms will help to achieve that, and deliver students in SA a genuine choice between attending a traditional TAFE or an innovative private institution, a choice which apparently the AEU doesn’t think students deserve.”

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