"TAFE Teachers Wrong’ says Private Sector Head

TAFE teachers who think reforms to Victoria’s training system are driving down the quality of education in the State clearly don’t understand what the changes mean, according to the Australian Council or Private Education and Training (ACPET).

The Australian Education Union (AEU) is using a survey of TAFE teachers to attack private vocational education and training (VET) providers and derail training reforms that deliver choice to students and employers, but ACPET CEO, Claire Field, said the AEU’s arguments are tired and wrong.

“Let’s be clear, TAFE Institutes are an important part of Victoria’s VET system, but the days when TAFE was the only option for training are over,” Ms Field said.

“Private VET institutions offer high quality, accredited courses that are held to account by the same standards as TAFE. We 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.”

TAFE providers account for just 26% of the full-time equivalent students in the country, while 74% - that’s 1.4million FTE students – are in private vocational education and training institutions.

National Centre for Vocational Education Research data reveals that students who undertake their training with private institutions instead of a TAFE find that their training is more relevant to their current job, are more satisfied with the overall quality of training, and that those that do not have a job before undertaking training are more likely to be employed after training.

According to Victorian Government data, over the last year private providers have substantially outpaced TAFE in growth of delivery to Indigenous students, students with a disability and students from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.

“It is clear that private institutions are doing a better job at delivering the training that industry wants, providing job-ready graduates and servicing the needs of the community. The challenge for TAFE is not to look backwards but to look at ways to innovate” said Ms Field.

Ms Field said that Victoria’s VET reforms deliver greater choice to students and employers, adding that current and previous Victorian Governments should be congratulated for their commitment and leadership on training reform, with their initiatives now being replicated in other States.

“Students today want to have a choice between attending a traditional TAFE or an innovative private institution, with closer links to their chosen industry and more flexible modes of delivery. Training should be driven by the needs of students and employers, not the needs of institutions”

“We know that making a choice from the more than 1000 training providers in Victoria can be difficult, but it certainly beats the days of having the local TAFE or nothing, which it seems the Australian Education Union would like to drag us back to.”

“We encourage students to make an informed choice, and if they choose a private institution, they should look for a provider with the ACPET logo - the mark of quality in the tertiary system.”

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