There must be no more delays establishing a national vocational education regulator, a Senate inquiry was told yesterday.

The Australian Council for Private Education and Training (ACPET) told the inquiry into a law to establish a national regulator that delays would risk more states “changing their minds” and dropping the plan.

Victoria and Western Australia have already walked away from the process over the issue of states’ rights to regulate providers. The two states would adopt the standard national legislation, but retain the right to enforce it.

The legislation may be further delayed if it needs to be amended following the report of the Senate committee. Obtaining agreement from states on amendments could be a lengthy and difficult process, according to Labor Senator and committee chair Gavin Marshall.

In submissions to the inquiry, the Australian Council of Trade Unions and Australian Education Union (AEU) made a series of recommendations on how to strengthen the bill’s quality framework. The AEU suggested training organisations be required to operate in the best interests of students.

At the hearing, Senator Marshall gave an example of one provider offering a Certificate 3 in baking that required two weeks’ study and two weeks’ experience.

He said industry self-assessment was not sufficient protection for students.

ACPET Victorian board member Mel Koumides insisted a provider’s reputation was a significant motivation to provide quality training. “We live and die by our reputation,” said Mr Koumides, who is also a director of training provider Academia International.

The committee will report to the Senate on March 21.

The Australian Financial Review

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