ACPET welcomes greater choice for students through NSW skills reform

The Australian Council for Private Education and Training (ACPET) has congratulated the NSW Government on its implementation plan for skills reform, announced yesterday by Minister for Education Adrian Piccoli.

The plan includes the introduction of an entitlement for individuals to an entry-level training place up to and including Certificate III at an approved training provider of their choice. A skills list - based on industry consultation and labour market research - will define the courses that receive a government subsidy under the entitlement model.

ACPET CEO Claire Field welcomed the Government’s delivery on its COAG commitment to introduce a student entitlement, which she said would enhance quality delivery by providers in an environment of greater choice.

“This appears to be a well-designed set of reforms that will result in a more flexible and demand-driven vocational education and training (VET) system in New South Wales,” said Ms Field.

“A model that provides students with a funded course at their choice of high-quality providers - private or public - which reliable data shows will lead to a job, a career and/or higher level study ticks all the boxes.

“ACPET supports the introduction of additional quality criteria for training providers seeking to offer a student entitlement.

“ACPET has invested heavily in a professional development framework for the VET sector in 2012, as well as the piloting of independent validation models nationally. These initiatives embody our commitment to quality and align with the measures outlined in the implementation plan. We look forward to continuing our focus on quality and working with the Department to ensure contractual requirements are appropriate and ensure high-quality delivery,” she said.

“ACPET’s members have a strong track record of delivering training in close partnership with NSW business and are well-placed to match student course choices with local industry needs. We note that the Smart and Skilled reforms include additional funds to assist regional students to access quality training. ACPET members throughout regional NSW are already committed to meeting the needs of their local communities and will look to expand course delivery in line with regional skills lists.”

ACPET also welcomed other aspects of Smart and Skilled, including:

- TAFE NSW governance reforms that will separate TAFE management from the Department of Education and Communities
- greater autonomy for TAFE NSW institutes
- a separate budget for TAFE NSW with clear accountabilities
- the continuation of concessions and fee exemptions for disadvantaged students
- better information for students about training opportunities and job prospects through an online portal.

ACPET noted that NSW funding arrangements in 2013 will continue as per the 2011/12 contract. A new contract, including a requirement that training providers be based in New South Wales, will be developed by the Department for the introduction of *Smart and Skilled* reforms in 2014.

**Claire Field is available for comment: 0411 240 671**