Students in need to benefit from training sector reforms

The Australian Council for Private Education and Training (ACPET) has decried alarmist statements made by the Victorian TAFE Association (VTA) that students with a disability, Kooris, and special needs students will miss out on vocational education and training as a result of the Victorian budget cuts in the vocational education sector.

CEO of ACPET, Claire Field, pointed out the falsity of the claims made by the VTA, noting that Victorian government data shows that the changes made in recent years to the training system are designed to provide greater choice to all students and that those who have benefited most are those from disadvantaged backgrounds.

“Offering students a government funded place in the provider they choose has been critical in the increasing number of students with a disability, from Indigenous backgrounds, from low socio-economic backgrounds, and others enrolling in a training course in Victoria for the first time” Ms Field said.

The Victorian government’s figures show that the number of VET students with a disability rose by 25% between 2010 and 2011, with over 34,000 disabled students undertaking training in 2011. There was also a 16 per cent increase in indigenous students undertaking training between 2010 and 2011 (5,584 students). Furthermore, there was a very strong increase in enrolments by students from non-English speaking backgrounds with 97,670 students studying in 2011, representing a growth of 38 per cent since 2010.

“TAFE is an important provider in the vocational education sector but it is not the only provider, and indeed the evidence shows that when offered a choice of a place at TAFE or another independent or not-for-profit provider, students overwhelmingly do not choose TAFE.”

Private and not-for-profit vocational training providers in Victoria have a strong track record of delivering employment related training. “Victoria’s private VET providers have an outstanding record of getting graduates jobs, with 80.5% of students in employment related training getting a job when they complete their studies,” Ms Field said.

“Private providers are also performing well at meeting the broader equity and access goals of training, with 81.2% of female graduates gaining employment, along with 72.9% of those who speak a language other than English at home and 60.9% of those with a disability.”

“While ACPET shares the concerns of TAFE Institutes at the funding proposed in the Victorian budget for some VET courses – it is grossly inappropriate to suggest to learners from disadvantaged backgrounds will be singled out and won’t find places at TAFE and non-TAFE providers” Ms Field said.

Claire Field is available for comment (0411 240 671)