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Training sector gets tough on unscrupulous operators

The Australian Council for Private Education and Training has called together the leaders from Australia's private higher education and training sector and industry to meet this week to develop an industry-led response to ensuring the integrity and quality private tertiary education.

The extraordinary meeting between the Australian Council for Private Education and Training (ACPET), English Australia, International Education Association of Australia, Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry and the Chair of the Vocational Education and Training Advisory Board was convened by the new CEO of ACPET, Rod Camm, in response to reports about providers distributing misleading advertising, delivering poor training and soliciting students for courses they are possibly not suited to.

Mr Camm said private higher and vocational education providers had a proud history of delivering high quality and flexible programs.

"Our industry shares the concerns about inappropriate behaviour and it is vital that the sector takes a tough approach to poor practice, which undermines all of the good work that is happening across government, industry and the tertiary education sector".

"Nobody is more frustrated or disappointed by poor practice than our quality members," Mr Camm said.

"When unscrupulous operators do the wrong thing, they tarnish the reputation of our entire sector, which is overwhelmingly comprised of hardworking, reputable training providers that deliver high quality courses and achieve great outcomes for their students," he said.

"When the leaders of the private peak bodies and industry meet this week, we will develop a response to poor behaviour - put simply they are not welcome."

Mr Camm said ACPET recently expelled a member for misleading advertising, and has introduced a quality support service to improve performance across its membership. This will be the foundation for further changes and other industry peak bodies were doing similar things to ensure quality standards. He said it was vital that the industry work in a coordinated way, alongside state and federal regulatory authorities, to identify any weaknesses in the current approach.

"We need to eliminate poor performance so that it doesn't undermine the sector's reputation in the middle of much needed reforms that improve the flexibility, competitiveness and industry relevance of both higher and vocational education. Students and industry overwhelmingly support greater choice and diversity, but they need to feel confident that the sector is committed to upholding the highest standards," he said.

"Regulation is an important element, but so to is an industry-led approach. Our members are overwhelming committed to those high standards, but we also have a responsibility to weed out those that are not."

The meeting of the sector's leaders will take place in Sydney on Thursday (October 30).

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