

MEDIA RELEASE

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Victorian blitz on poor training highlights the need for national action

Australia's national industry association for private tertiary education, the Australian Council for Private Education and Training (ACPET), has again called for a national approach for protecting student interests and handling complaints.

"While ACPET applauds the recently announced recommendation from the Deloitte External Review of Quality Assurance undertaken for the Victorian Government," CEO Rod Camm said, "it has raised the issue of adequate consumer protection in the VET sector nationally."

Mr Camm highlighted that, through its Code of Ethics and membership application process, ACPET does not admit unscrupulous training providers for membership. However, ACPET members constituted less than 20 percent the 411 private providers that were government funded in Victoria in 2014.

"At present most unethical behaviour by providers is not illegal," Mr Camm said. "As part of the Victorian VET Funding Review, consideration should be given to legislated fines and exclusion from future funding for serious non-compliance."

Mr Camm said the recommendations of the review echo ACPET's advocacy for a sustainable, transparent and outcomes driven VET funding model for Victoria. "We are keen to work with government to ensure that poor market design does not reoccur and that regulators are fully supported."

In its submission to the VET Funding Review, ACPET highlighted that the barriers to entry for Victorian Training Guarantee (VTG) funding should be sufficient to ensure only experienced, quality public and private providers are contracted to deliver subsidised training.

"It is fantastic to see Minister Herbert has supported similar recommendations from the Deloitte review," Mr Camm said. "Taking this one step further, ACPET recommends physical visits should be made to potential VTG providers to assess facilities, training staff, RTO experience and the appropriateness to deliver training."

The Deloitte findings also recommend a body for student complaints established, which Minister Herbert has also supported.

"As the Victorian Government considers referral of RTO regulatory powers to the Commonwealth, this is a perfect opportunity for Victoria to lead a national push for a national industry ombudsman for domestic VET students," he said.

In submissions to both the Senate Inquiry into Private VET providers in February this year, as well as the Victorian VET Funding Review, ACPET proposed a national consumer-focused complaint handling process for students and providers, as existing ombudsman arrangements focus either on government-owned providers or international student issues.

ACPET believes a National Training Ombudsman would result in a number of major benefits cited in the Deloitte Review recommendations including: maintenance of consumer protection for Victorian consumers in the event of referral of VRQA powers; improved industry image; cost effective resolution option; improved communication; and early warning signals to regulators for unscrupulous provider behaviour.

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