

MEDIA RELEASE

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Large drop in government subsidies and apprenticeships in SA further disadvantages students and jobseekers

The Australian Council for Private Education and Training (ACPET) has called for the South Australian Government to urgently review its vocational education and training funding arrangements given the huge drops in subsidised training, apprenticeships and traineeships.

The National Centre for Vocational Education Research (NCVER) yesterday released figures for government-funded training in 2015 which showed that student numbers dropped by 16.8% on 2014 figures in SA, the largest drop of any state, compared with the national average decrease of 10.7%. When compared with 2013 figures, the level of funded training in SA dropped by 34.8%, compared with 13% nationally.

In addition, recent NCVER data has also highlighted that apprenticeships and traineeship commencements in SA have collapsed, from just over 28,600 in 2011-12 to around 10,200 in 2015, representing a reduction of 64% compared with the national average drop of about 20%. Traineeship commencements are even worse, with a reduction of almost 75% from over 23,000 to around 6,100 in 2015.

ACPET CEO Rod Camm said these figures are particularly telling when considering specific trades such as automotive and engineering, where commencements have nearly halved from their peak in 2007-08 of 1,750, to a low of approximately 960 in 2015. Construction and telecommunications trades fell around a third from the 2010 peak.

“With these results it’s difficult to see how the SA government can reduce unemployment, introduce innovation and transition its economy,” he said.

“This is a huge blow for students trying to make their way in the world and for employers who want to expand and build the capacity of their workforce.”

Mr Camm said funding cuts were severely exacerbated by the government propping up TAFESA with 90% of subsidies, thereby removing student choice of training provider.

“Our sector can help bridge this divide. Young people are the losers because of these policies,” he said.

“Not only do they have access to fewer funded student places, apprenticeships and traineeships, they also lose their right to choose their preferred training provider. Innovation and flexibility are key to finding ways to encourage an uptake in apprenticeship and traineeship commencements.

“If the SA government was serious about tackling its high unemployment rate and renewing the economy, it must reconsider the level of funding allocated to training the SA workforce and engage private providers who have strong links with employers.”

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