

## **MEDIA RELEASE**

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### **We all lose if governments pick winners**

The Australian Council for Private Education and Training (ACPET) has urged the Federal Education Minister to reconsider slashing the list of courses eligible for VET Student Loans under the new scheme announced this week.

ACPET CEO Mr Camm said ACPET welcomed the announcement of the new VET Student Loan scheme but was concerned that some elements could have unintended consequences.

“We are disappointed that the Government has indicated that not only will courses be funded based on arbitrary bands but that the number of courses eligible for VET Student Loans will be halved,” he said.

“Preferred skills lists are tantamount to governments “picking winners” and distorting markets, reducing student choice and hindering Australia’s ability to develop a flexible workforce of the future.”

Senator Birmingham indicated on Wednesday that courses must be included on at least two State and Territory skills lists to be eligible, and those courses without strong employment outcomes will not be funded.

“We understand there is not a magic pudding of funding available but skills lists can be very narrow in focus,” Mr Camm said.

“The debate seems to have forgotten that this is student money, not government, and they have every right to select a course that best suits them. State skills lists are about jobs of today not tomorrow and are rarely focussed at the Diploma and above level.

“I have grave concerns about the creative arts and qualifications that result in self-employment under this model. Australia’s challenge is to prepare a future workforce for jobs that don’t yet exist and develop portable skills in people who will have careers with multiple jobs in multiple industries.

“Courses that develop communication, critical thinking and creativity are as important as those that deliver technical skills and we need to broaden our thinking about their role.”

Mr Camm said halving the number of eligible courses from 800 to around 400 would further limit student choice and opportunity.

“I don’t understand how a public servant in Canberra is better placed to decide what is, and what is not, appropriate to study than well-informed students and their families,” he said.

“A student-focused system should facilitate greater ability for students to select the course and provider that suits their needs.

“We ask the Government to take the opportunity in redesigning the VET Student Loan program to take a broader, long-term view of vocational education and training and what are considered successful outcomes for our future workforce.”

Ends.

**Rod Camm is available for interview - 0409 484 051.**