

MEDIA RELEASE

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Reforms must preserve the best of the VET sector

Figures released by the Federal Government yesterday are further evidence of the important role private providers play in helping Australians develop skills to enter the workforce, transition back into the workforce or reskill for new careers.

The Australian Council for Private Education and Training CEO Rod Camm said the 2015 VET FEE HELP (VFH) report showed that private providers accounted for 74 per cent of VFH enrolments in 2015, women outnumbered men accessing VFH loans by two to one, and the greatest increase in those accessing loans were aged 45 years and over.

“Approximately 80 per cent of VFH students reported that they were studying for reasons related to improving their employment or business prospects,” he said.

The report also states that since 2010, the percentage of full-fee paying students had risen from 61 per cent of total enrolments to 86 per cent in 2015.

“These are students who are not relying on government loans but are willing to pay to study with providers who deliver a range of high quality courses, with flexible delivery modes, in metropolitan, regional and remote locations across the country,” Mr Camm said.

“While there were very significant issues with the administration of the VET FEE HELP scheme, it is extremely important that, in fixing the problems, we don’t undermine the foundations of Australia’s strong and vibrant VET sector.”

Mr Camm will join ballet dancers, academics, actors, industry leaders, teachers and public providers who will present their concern with elements of the new VET Student Loans program before a Senate Inquiry in Melbourne today.

He said while there was widespread support for reforms, there was also genuine concern about the unintended, but foreseeable, consequences of the VET Student Loans program in its current form.

“We represent very different interests and have very different perspectives but we all agree that reform is needed that does not jeopardise students or damage Australia’s world-renowned VET sector,” he said.

Mr Camm said ACPET was very supportive of efforts to improve student outcomes by strengthening barriers to entry and ensuring only quality providers with a proven track record could participate in the program.

However, he said the VET Student Loans program, as proposed, will reduce student choice and access, limit the VET sector’s ability to respond to changing workforce needs and force high quality private providers from the market.

“The reduced eligible course list dramatically narrows the scope of the VET market and, in many cases, eliminates entire fields of study from the program,” he said.

“The caps on course fees are not reflective of the cost of delivery and this could have a negative impact on the quality of courses on offer or, at best, students will have to pay upfront fees to cover the gap.

“There are also other significant administrative issues with the new VET Student Loans program and we urge the Federal Government to take the advice of stakeholders and address these shortcomings before implementation in 2017.”

Ends.

Rod Camm is available for interview - 0409 484 051.