

MEDIA RELEASE

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Independent providers welcome Labor's tertiary sector review

The Australian Council for Private Education and Training (ACPET) has welcomed the Labor Party's announcement of a review of the tertiary sector should it be elected to government.

ACPET CEO Rod Camm said he recognised the importance of Labor's commitment and the announcement was consistent with ACPET's call over the last year for a wholesale review.

Mr Camm said there was a need for the review to consider how to put VET and higher education on an equal footing.

"Government funding for VET is in decline with enrolments dropping. Addressing this decline must be a priority," he said.

Mr Camm warned that to future proof the sector, the review must encapsulate the entire elements of both Higher Education and VET.

"That means how to ensure TAFE is able to meet the needs of the future economy and the important role that quality Independent providers now play," he said.

"The facts are that the independent sector delivers around 60 per cent of all VET student enrolments nationally (2.5 million of 4.2 million enrolments in 2016) and about 90 per cent of international student VET enrolments.

"Independent providers also enjoy student and employer satisfaction levels on par with TAFEs.

"Australia needs a sector that empowers students to choose between well-functioning TAFEs and quality Independent providers and likewise in higher education, where Independent providers are growing their footprint.

"It is critical that the review harness this capacity to ensure Australia has a tertiary sector that can respond to the changes sweeping our economy and workforce.

"It is in no-one's interests to create barriers for students, as that will also lock in inefficiency and declining outcomes.

"Australian students, industry and the economy need greater innovation and flexibility - not less. Not a week goes by when there isn't a report about the impact of the 4th Industrial Revolution, the Internet of Things and the vulnerability of so many of our existing jobs to restructuring or replacement".

Mr Camm said an important aspect of the review must be to consider how the funding and governance arrangements can ensure students can make the best choices for their careers.

“The demand-driven, open-ended funding for public universities and the reduced government funding for VET has skewed the decisions being made by students. VET funding is a chaotic, inconsistent and inadequate mess,” he said.

Mr Camm said the review should also provide the opportunity to address some of the blatant discrimination Independent Higher Education provider students face in undertaking their study, through the 25 per cent administration fee collected by government.

“ACPET welcomes the opportunity to contribute to reforms that ensure Australia has the very best tertiary education and training sector,” Mr Camm said.

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