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## **ACPET calls for a level playing field in South Australia**

Responding to yesterday's release of the South Australian budget, Claire Field, Chief Executive Officer of the Australian Council for Private Education and Training, has called on the government to come clean about the impact of its reforms on non-government providers and their staff. "While I note public statements that *Skills for All* will receive an additional \$52 million over the next two years, this appears to be contradicted by the budget papers. They show funding for vocational education and training will be cut by \$90.7 million, from \$405.2 million in 2013-14 to \$314.5 million in 2014-15."

"In previous years the budget has provided a substantial amount (\$25.4 million in 2013-14) for voluntary separation packages for TAFE teachers, which appears to be in addition to the \$17.3 million paid to TAFE SA last year for 'transitional support'. The amounts allocated to support TAFE SA in 2014-15 and the redundancy packages the government will provide their teachers are unclear. What is clear, is that this budget offers nothing for teachers in the non-TAFE sector, who're being laid off as providers respond to the government's funding cuts", said Ms Field.

The evidence contained in the Budget papers shows student satisfaction is strong (across both public and private providers) since competition was introduced into the South Australian training market. Ms Field noted that "while TAFE SA has a long and proud tradition of delivering training in the state, so have the many independently owned South Australian training providers. It's these providers who're suffering and the government is offering them no support. *Skills for All* has wiped out previously strong fee-for-service training offered by non-government providers. On top of that, non-government providers are now dealing with substantial cuts in the amount of government funded training they're able to offer."

"It's been a surprise to the South Australian government, but not to the training sector, that when offered a choice of which provider they can study with, many students entered a training course for the first time and many decided to study with a private provider. The Budget papers show the South Australian government has achieved an increase of more than 100,000 additional people in training three years ahead of their projections. These reforms have seen an increase in enrolments by the following groups who face barriers to participation in education and work:

- Young people (38%)
- Mature aged people (159%)
- Women (69%)
- Aboriginal people (69%)
- People with a disability (58%), and
- People from low SES backgrounds (60%)".

"ACPET recognises the government's attempts to seek input on changes to *Skills for All*. What the budget papers demonstrate though is that these processes have not been sufficient. What's needed now is an open and fair process to determine how the government can make a sustainable investment in training, which delivers certainty for the sector and achieves the most for learners, employers and the broader South Australian community."

"That might mean the government has to cut back on generous subsidies to TAFE SA. It also means providing support to private providers and the staff they're being forced to lay off."

"We've had plenty of discussions with government since *Skills for All* was rolled out, but what's needed now is a transparent agreement on what training the government should fund and a clear path to transition the training sector to new arrangements. Endless changes to the courses which are eligible for government funding, and the offer of free training to everyone, is just not sustainable" said Ms Field.