

MEDIA RELEASE

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The future of skills system needs attention

The Australian Council for Private Education and Training (ACPET) has indicated its support for a detailed examination of the Vocational Education and Training sector following the announcement by Shadow Minister Sharon Bird of a national review by an incoming federal Labor Government.

“The VET sector is vitally important to the future prosperity of Australia and meeting the career aspirations of students. At a time when there needs to be a real focus on lifting investment in our workforce, government funding has gone backwards,” said ACPET CEO Rod Camm.

“We’ve also got a complex mix of state and federal government responsibility for the sector that needs to be sorted out,” said Mr. Camm.

“The Federation reform process is also looking at these issues but the debate about a federal takeover has taken the focus off the need to consider what’s best for students, business and industry and the Australian economy.”

The need for a major overhaul of government funding arrangements has been confirmed by the Mitchell Institute report, VET funding in Australia: Background, trends and future options, that was released today.

“The Mitchell Institute report confirms the deterioration in government funding for VET. More importantly, it highlights the diminishing opportunities for school leavers wishing to undertake training and for workforce retraining and upskilling,” said Mr. Camm.

While these fundamental issues with the sector need to be addressed, the proposed Labor review should not be about attacking private providers and returning to a TAFE monopoly, according to ACPET. “We have a world class training system that is the envy of many other countries. There’s nothing to be gained from trashing the sector. Any review must be based on the facts that the problems cited stem from a program that accounts for around 6 -7% of total VET enrolments. A great sector needs a different approach but not a review focussing on the small number of poor providers,” Mr Camm said.

“The great bulk of private providers are delivering high-quality training that is responding to the diverse needs of students and business and industry across Australia. There needs to be a strong, vibrant network of public and private providers. The private sector can bring the flexibilities and efficiencies that are vital in an environment where public funding is constrained.”

“ACPET supports any reforms that have a focus on ensuring that the quality of the sector is maintained and enhanced. There also needs to be real consideration of the regulatory arrangements for the sector. The regulators need to have the tools to do their job,” added Mr Camm.

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