

MEDIA RELEASE

9 June 2016

Student flexibility and choice at risk

Flexible learning, quality study programs and industry standard training are at risk for more than 2.2 million Australian students studying with private higher education and training providers each year.

Australian Council for Private Education and Training (ACPET) Chief Executive Officer Rod Camm said private providers were an essential element of Australia's higher education and training sector, offering students a wide choice of courses, flexible delivery options and access to industry professionals.

"There are countless examples of how our members are meeting demand from Australia's students and employers, right across the country," he said.

The Master Builders Association of Victoria represents employers and is also a private training organisation.

Master Builders' General Manager, Commercial Operations Viviana Hood said the organisation offered a Certificate IV in Building and Construction (Building) specifically for Building and Construction workers in an immersive simulation centre to allow student to confront challenges faced on real building sites. As 96 per cent of their students work full time, the training is provided at night and on weekends.

"Industry training providers are an essential component of Australia's skill development sector, as they can provide specialised training services that are tailored towards the students working in the industry and deliver the best outcomes for them," she said.

Dubbo-based RuralBiz Training offer flexibility for farmers to tailor training times according to farm operations, so they can defer their training during busy times such as harvest. Many of RuralBiz's trainers are also farmers themselves and are able to earn off-farm income while students benefit from their experience.

The Engineering Institute of Technology delivers vocational training and higher education programs to more than 1,400 students each year in approximately 120 countries, with 50 per cent based in Australia.

Engineering students working in remote and regional areas can continue their education through an innovative online learning platform. One Australian student has been able to 'attend' sessions while deployed to work in Brazil, Lesotho and South Africa.

However, Mr Camm said the private higher education and training sector was under threat from short sighted policy proposed by the Australian Labor Party that would see the majority of funding directed to government-run TAFEs and an arbitrary cap on student training loans.

"We fully support the need to minimise student debt and ensure prices are justifiable, however an arbitrary one-size-fits all cap will fail students looking for quality education," he said.

"While the Liberal and National parties have announced a review into the VET-FEE HELP loan system, it is imperative that a stronger message of support is provided to students as any suggestion that they won't be able to choose the best course and best provider to suit their needs must be rejected.

"ACPET supports any measures that ensure that only the best higher education and training providers are able to deliver publicly-funded courses and **student choice** must remain central to any policy redesign."

ACPET has launched the **Student Choice Counts** (www.studentchoicecounts.com) campaign to ensure that the rights of students, and employers, to choose their preferred higher education and training provider is maintained.

ENDS

For further information: SAS Group 0467 792 013