

MEDIA RELEASE

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Student choice the driver of success in vocational education and training

The Australian Council for Private Education and Training acting CEO Larry Davies says an article in *The Australian* newspaper this week paints a distorted view of the vocational education and training market.

ACPET has written a letter to *The Australian* in response to the article titled “Payments under vocational equivalent of HECS leap 50-fold in five years,” by John Ross and Kylar Loussikian.

“The extension of HECS-style loans to vocational education and training students, regardless of the provider they choose, has enabled students to make their own decisions about where they wish to study, and not be penalised for choosing a private provider,” Mr Davies said.

“It should not come as a surprise that the changes prompted a doubling of the number of colleges registered for the scheme, and saw the most popular of these receive government funding that reflects the number of enrolments.

“Whether the authors like it or not, student choice is what drives the success of high quality training providers, regardless of whether they are private or public. That principle is now supported by most governments across the country, as well as students and employers alike.”

Mr Davies said in their haste to undermine student choice, the authors also question the integrity of two colleges, Evocca College and Careers Australia Institute with baseless criticisms. “Both colleges are awarded, high quality providers and their success is a sign of delivering courses students and employers want, not of any inappropriate behavior.”

Ministers at last week’s COAG Industry and Skills meeting agreed there are many positives about Australia’s VET sector and yet there is always room to improve. “As Australia’s peak private technical and vocational training body, we agree.”

Mr Davies said there is strong evidence from market systems such as Victoria’s that it is students, not bureaucrats, who are best placed to choose the qualification and college that meets their needs and improves their employability. There have also been significant benefits to the state, with overall growth in enrolments, and particularly in areas of identified skills needs and by learners from disadvantaged backgrounds (128% since 2010).¹

“Student choice, supported by high quality standards and a strong regulatory regime, are the best ways to ensure the highest quality training sector in Australia. Attacking student choice by presenting a distorted view of the training system and undue criticisms of high quality providers is not.”

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¹ Includes indigenous, culturally and linguistically diverse, unemployed or have a disability. Victorian Training Market Report Half Year 2014