



24 January 2017

ACPET calls on WA politicians to prioritise skills development

The Australian Council for Private Education and Training (ACPET) has urged Western Australian politicians to prioritise skills development to facilitate the State's future economic growth.

ACPET CEO Rod Camm said economic changes were having a significant effect on Western Australia.

"The WA economy, its business and industry, more than ever, will require a highly skilled workforce that is able to respond to an increasingly global market and the growing pace of technological change and innovation," he said.

"Unfortunately, training in WA, like the rest of Australia, is suffering from reduced government funding and declining enrolments."

Mr Camm said the sharp decrease in the number of new apprentices and trainees was particularly alarming.

"Recent data showed that apprenticeships in WA dropped 33.4 per cent over the year to June 2016 against a national decline of 10.5 per cent and nationally traineeship numbers are at their lowest level in almost two decades," he said.

"There are various reasons for this decline, not least difficult economic conditions for the state's employers and the cessation of some employer incentives, but we know the apprenticeship model is a good one and we urgently need a strategy to boost numbers in WA."

Mr Camm also urged both the WA Government and the Opposition to drive the development of new national VET funding and governance arrangements.

"Current funding arrangements are complex and not fit for purpose. The expiry of the National Partnership on Skills Reform in less than six months provides the perfect opportunity for governments, industry and providers to collaborate on a comprehensive rethink of how to deliver a highly skilled and innovative workforce that will help WA realise its economic potential," he said.

"It is time to end the uncertainty around training funding and ensure that we establish a seamless tertiary education and training sector that offers genuine equity, choice and flexibility for students and employers."

Mr Camm said WA was geographically well positioned to capitalise on Australia's growing international education market.

"International education is already Australia's third largest export industry, and WA is well placed to drive that even further," he said.

"International education presents a real opportunity and WA needs to significantly upgrade its approach to attract more students."

Mr Camm also urged WA's political leaders to maintain the current commitment to quality private providers.

"Private education and training providers play an integral and valuable role in offering students and employers flexibility and choice to meet their individual skills needs," he said.

“The existing contestable funding available under Future Skills WA should be expanded to increase enrolments and choice of training to ensure that WA is well prepared for future workforce demands.”

[ENDS]

Rod Camm is available for interview. Please phone the SAS Group on 07 3221 9222, or directly on 0409 484 051.