

## **MEDIA RELEASE**

Monday 29 September

### **Preserving student choice for training post the Victorian election**

Australia's private technical and vocational training peak body, the Australian Council for Private Education and Training (ACPET), will be approaching both the Victorian Government and Opposition seeking clarification on the future of training investment in Victoria.

This follows presentations by both the Hon. Nick Wakeling, Minister for Higher Education and Skills and Mr Steve Herbert, Shadow Minister for Higher Education, Skills and Apprenticeships at the most recent ACPET Victorian State Committee Meeting held in Melbourne on 23 September 2014.

The Chair of the State Committee Mr Mel Koumides (Director of Academia International), acknowledged the commitment of the previous government to introduce a contestable training market in Victoria as well as the support of the current government in encouraging greater student choice for training.

Minister Wakeling confirmed that the current \$1.2 billion investment in training in Victoria will continue for the next four years. This commitment is the largest investment by government in Australia, equating to a third of the nation's funding for training.

Mr Herbert outlined that the opposition planned to reinstate the Community Service Obligation (CSO) for TAFEs but could not confirm at this stage if this would be funded from the current \$1.2 billion investment.

ACPET supports the role of a public provider, but emphasised that this needed to be shaped by the training market, not by withdrawing funds from students. The reintroduction of a CSO without additional funding would impact on the thriving student choice and participation that Victoria now enjoys, by potentially reducing the number of training places available to students.

Mr Koumides stated 'ACPET wishes to ensure Victoria maintains the highest participation rate in Australia by students and that government subsidised training is available to as many Victorian students as possible'.

Figures released in the Victorian Training Market Report Half Year 2014 confirm that under the current government funded student choice market conditions, students that require support that would be covered by TAFE community services obligations are in fact choosing private training providers.

The Market Report cited 42,100 enrolments by learners who are Indigenous, culturally and linguistically diverse, unemployed or have a disability at Certificate III (or above) or in specialised or in shortage occupations. This translates to a 20 per cent increase from 2013 and 128 per cent increase from 2010. In addition there are now 47 per cent more enrolments in regional Victoria in trades and other high-skill occupations than there were in 2010.

More interestingly, in terms of market share in 2013 over half of all unemployed eligible persons chose to attend private training providers, compared to 25 per cent choosing TAFE. Similarly 56 per cent of culturally and linguistically diverse students and around 40 per cent of students with a disability as well as Indigenous attended private training institutions.

ACPET will be seeking further clarification from both parties to ensure the opportunities and choice currently provided by government subsidised training is preserved for students.

**Contact (ACPET):** Madeleine Brennan, 0402 715 577