

## **MEDIA RELEASE**

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### **Disadvantaged students the real losers in Senate decision**

Australia's national industry association for private tertiary education, the Australian Council for Private Education and Training (ACPET), said today that the defeat of the Higher Education Reforms in the Senate is a major blow for low SES and regional students across Australia.

Broadening government supported places to non-university higher education providers (NUHEP) and removing the 25 percent administration fee for HELP assistance would create a level playing field for all higher education students.

By blocking these reforms students at private colleges will continue to pay full fees and face higher debt levels to access loan assistance compared to their public university contemporaries.

"These reforms are about supporting student choice, not resourcing for public universities. Unfortunately sensible debate has been derailed by myth and misinformation, and students are worse off for it," said ACPET CEO, Rod Camm.

"Without reform, students from disadvantaged backgrounds striving to gain higher education qualifications through alternative education pathways will continue to be penalised for their efforts."

"When the Senate gets the opportunity to reconsider higher education reform in 2015, I urge Senators to look at the evidence supporting student choice and not be spooked by myths and scare campaigns," Mr Camm said.

The Department of Education 2013 data on low SES undergraduate enrolments for NUHEPs reveals a similar proportion of disadvantaged students study at private colleges as those at public institutions, at around 16 percent of enrolments.

"Private colleges specialise in providing pathway courses for students to progress to higher level qualifications. Without these reforms, disadvantaged students will be denied an alternative pathway, and continue to pay a premium. I fail to see how this can be seen as just and supporting student choice." Mr Camm said.

ACPET believes the inclusion of government supported places for students attending private colleges would have been likely to place downward pressure on higher education fees, particularly with the removal of the 25% HELP administration fee.

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