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**ACPET hits back: Extending public funding to private higher education providers is “right”**

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The Australian Council for Private Education and Training has today hit back at claims by Universities Australia that it is wrong to extend Commonwealth Supported Places beyond the public university system.

The recommendation was one of 17 made by independent reviewers the Hon Dr David Kemp and Andrew Norton in their *Review of the Demand Driven Funding System*, released on Sunday.

Chief Executive Officer, Claire Field, questioned why Universities Australia was now raising such matters when this recommendation was originally made by the Bradley Review of Higher Education in 2008.

In her review, Emeritus Professor Denise Bradley AC and her panel recommended that demand driven funding for higher education commence in the public university system, and following the establishment of a national higher education regulator that they be extended to non-university higher education providers.

The Tertiary Education Quality Standards Agency has now been in operation for three years.

Ms Field pointed out that “the work of TEQSA has ensured the quality and integrity of Australia’s higher education system. The time is now right to act on this remaining recommendation from Bradley”.

“Private higher education institutions deliver opportunities to a range of students, including a large proportion from low SES backgrounds, they have excellent graduate outcomes with their strong links to industry, and offer a range of niche courses as genuine alternatives to the current homogenous university offerings.”

“If government funding for higher education remains locked up within the public university system it is students who lose, because those seeking a degree through a non-university provider can only do so at their own cost. This is blatantly inequitable and unfair”, said Ms Field.

“Claims by Universities Australia that private higher education providers should be excluded from the demand driven system because some operate on a commercial basis, flies in the face of today’s reality. As a society we welcome the care provided to our children in their early years by commercial organisations, the care that similar organisations provide to our elderly, and we support people with a disability having a choice of who provides care for them with the introduction of the National Disability Insurance Scheme. It would seem that our public universities believe that the only group unable to take a sensible decision on the choices available to them are our best and brightest,” said Ms Field.

“The fact that the Group of Eight, the Regional Universities Network and the Innovative Research Universities have all supported the recommendations of the Kemp Norton review leaves one wondering which universities do not support a modern, innovative and responsive higher education sector underpinned by student choice, and why?”

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**Ms Field is available for comment: 0411 240 671**