

Media Release —

4.1 Million Students In Vocational Training – 71% With Independent Providers

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For Immediate Release

The latest data from the National Centre for Vocational Education and Training (NCVER) shows that it's the independent vocational education and training (VET) sector that continues to do the heavy-lifting when it comes to providing the workforce with the skills that it needs. In reviewing the data, the Independent Tertiary Education Council Australia (ITECA) notes that the increase in students enrolled in subjects that are not nationally recognised highlights the growing importance of micro credentials in helping individuals adapt to the changing nature of work.

Over the period 2015-2018 there has been a decrease in the number of students enrolled in nationally recognised training. In 2018, there were 4.1 million students enrolled in the VET sector and approximately 2.5 million students were enrolled in subjects that were either stand-alone or not part of a nationally recognised program.

“This shift away from full qualifications to training that's shorter and often not government funded highlights that in order to ensure their skills remain current, workers and their employers are increasingly looking at the offering of independent providers that deliver bespoke occupation-specific training,” said Troy Williams, ITECA Chief Executive Officer.

The shift from full qualifications is most prescient when considering that over the period 2015 to 2018 the number of government-funded VET students has decreased 7.3% while domestic fee-for-service students have increased by 13.7%. As the Australian Government sets about reforming the VET sector, ITECA emphasises the fact that its independent providers that do the heavy-lifting in the VET sector.

“Workers and their employers are voting with their feet – and their wallets. The NCVER data is clear, when it comes to providing high-quality vocational education and training there is a clear preference for independent providers. It's hardly surprising as the research shows independent providers achieve higher completion rates, higher post-training employment outcomes and higher student satisfaction levels,” Mr Williams said.

The NCVER data shows that in the context of nationally recognised training, over 71% of students were enrolled at an independent provider in 2018, nearly 2.9 million students. This number has been increasing each year since 2015 and equates to an increase in students of 6.6% over the period 2015 to 2018. Comparatively, in 2018 only 19% of students were at a public TAFE college.

“As governments across the nation grapple with enhancing the vocational education and training system this most recent NCVER data suggests a clear pathway, and that's to make government funding entirely contestable. Let's allow public providers and independent providers the opportunity to compete on an equal footing for the money to train and reskill Australia's workforce.

The latest NCVER data is contained in a report entitled *Total VET students and courses 2018* released on 28 August 2019.

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