

Media Release —

ASQA Chief Commissioner's Departure Signals Important New Direction

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For Immediate Release

A change of leadership at the Australian Skills Quality Authority (ASQA), the regulator for the Vocational Education and Training (VET) sector, has been welcomed by the Independent Tertiary Education Council Australia (ITECA), the peak body representing the independent higher education, vocational education, training and skills sectors.

The Australian Government has announced a number of reforms to ASQA that seek to ensure that training providers are well placed to understand their requirements and that ASQA has the right tools and information to regulate them effectively. As part of these changes Mark Paterson AO, the ASQA Chief Commissioner, has decided the new direction for ASQA provides an appropriate time for him to step down and pass responsibility for managing the next phase of ASQA's evolution to others.

The Joyce Review noted its concern about the quite surprising high levels of disquiet in the provider community about the way ASQA currently conducts its regulatory activity. The report concluded that there is always some tension to be expected between the regulator and the regulated, but it founds the issues expressed in this case go beyond that sort of healthy tension.

"ITECA looks forward to working with the new Chief Commissioner to build confidence in the work of the regulator. We have a shared commitment to ensuring that the regulatory environment supports training providers that seek to provide the quality outcomes that students and their employers are looking for," said Troy Williams, ITECA Chief Executive.

The Joyce Review also noted that many providers worry whether ASQA will treat them fairly and reasonably during the audit process. They have little understanding of the approach ASQA will take when it comes time for their next audit.

"We're confident that the reforms currently progressed by ITECA, coupled with new leadership at ASQA, will offer the transparency, consistency and timeliness of regulatory decision-making," Mr Williams said.

One of the key conclusions in the Joyce Review was that ASQA offered limited proactive engagement and guidance and this left training providers confused and worried about meeting requirements.

"In recent times ASQA has been actively engaged with ITECA on ways to improve the regulatory guidance available to training providers, and that Mark has proactively led these discussions is a tribute to him. We wish Mark well in the next stage of his career and look forward to working collaboratively with his successor," Mr Williams said.

The latest data from the National Centre for Vocational Education and Research (NCVER) shows that the independent VET sector supports some 70% of the 4.1 million students enrolled in a VET course throughout Australia.

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