

Media Release —

Education & Skills Amalgam In Departmental Reorganisation Welcomed

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For Immediate Release

The creation of the Department of Education, Skills and Employment, brought about by today's Australian Government departmental restructure, has been welcomed by the Independent Tertiary Education Council Australia (ITECA), the peak body representing independent providers in the higher education, vocational education, training and skills sectors.

ITECA believes that the consolidation of employment and skills within the one portfolio presents the best opportunity to secure the reforms that will allow students and their employers to obtain the quality outcomes they are looking for.

"ITECA is a strong proponent for one tertiary education system in which the higher education and the vocational education and training system operate as one yet retain their separate identities. It's in this context that ITECA supports the return of skills within the education portfolio," said Troy Williams, ITECA Chief Executive.

It's a period of major change for Australia's tertiary education system where the qualifications framework, funding models and the work of the Australian Skills Quality Authority (ASQA) are all under review. According to ITECA, aligning responsibilities for education and skills within the one portfolio provides the best opportunity to strengthen the system.

"The reforms underway require careful planning and implementation – it's challenging work for the public servants responsible for progressing reforms and key stakeholders such as ITECA. The hope is that with the education and skills portfolios operating as one, we'll see a considered and coordinated approach to development and implementation of these important reforms," Mr Williams said.

According to ITECA, the creation of the Department of Education, Skills and Employment will directly benefit, over the long-term, tertiary education students.

"Once a person leaves secondary school it's likely they will transit in and out of higher education and vocational education throughout their working lives in order to ensure that their knowledge and skills remains current. To create a tertiary education system that permits this to happen, we need a wholistic approach to reform, something best achieved with the amalgam of the education and skills portfolios," Mr Williams said.

The structural change of departmental responsibilities within the Australian Government are of profound importance to the independent tertiary education sector. Independent providers support more than 70% of the 4.1 million students undertaking VET program, including 58% of students undertaking a VET Diploma, 64% of students undertaking a Certificate IV and 58% of students undertaking a Certificate III. Independent providers also support around 10% of the students in higher education.

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Media Contact:
Michellé Mabile – ITECA Communications Director
e: media@iteca.edu.au m: 0436 522 189

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Independent Tertiary
Education Council Australia Ltd
ABN 63 054 953 758

ITECA Nationwide
t: 1300 421 017
f: 1300 421 018

ITECA National Office
GPO BOX 1939, Melbourne, VIC, 3001
e: enquiry@iteca.edu.au

ITECA Government Affairs
a: GPO Box 450, Canberra, ACT, 2601
e: policy@iteca.edu.au