

Media Release —

ASQA & TEQSA Cost-recovery Should Be Delayed To Support Sector

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For Immediate Release

Just as the current COVID-19 situation threatens the sustainability of independent providers in the higher education sector and the vocational education and training sector, the Australia Government is set to introduce an onslaught of new fees and charges. The peak body representing the sector, the Independent Tertiary Education Council Australia (ITECA) is calling on the 1 July 2020 implementation date for these new fees and charges to be set back by twelve months.

The fees and charges come in the form of the move of both the higher education sector's regulator, the Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency (TEQSA) and the vocational education and training sector's regulator, the Australian Skills Quality Authority (ASQA), to full-cost recovery from 1 July 2020. This means that all costs incurred through the regulation of the tertiary education sector by TEQSA and ASQA must be met by the providers themselves.

"As a nation, we depend on the independent tertiary education sector to provide business with the skilled workforce it needs. Further, the sector supports those in vocational education and training as they transition from one career to another. Independent tertiary education providers are facing some real challenges; challenges that genuinely threaten the sustainability of many sector participants in the wake of the response to the COVID-19 outbreak, so delaying the introduction of the new TEQSA and ASQA fees and charges makes sense," said Troy Williams, ITECA Chief Executive.

Across Australia there are around 135 independent higher education providers and some 3,000 independent vocational education and training providers.

"ITECA has noted that the response by government to the COVID-19 virus outbreak is set to hit providers hard, particularly those that support international students who are effectively no longer able to travel to Australia due to travel restrictions," Mr Williams said.

The strength of Australia's independent tertiary education sector can be found in the many small providers that have a track-record of offering students and their employers quality outcomes in niche disciplines. The government response to the COVID-19 virus outbreak will affect the viability of these small providers.

"The independent tertiary education sector includes a large number of small businesses and not-for-profit providers that lack the robust balance sheets and government backing of large public providers. In this context, the delaying of the introduction of TEQSA and ASQA cost recovery will provide much needed support for Australia's independent tertiary education sector," Mr Williams concluded.

Australia's independent tertiary education sector supports around 10% of the students in higher education and more than 70% of the students in the vocational education and training sector.

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