

Media Release —

ACT's Investment In Skills Returns Much Needed Funds

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For Immediate Release

As part of its economic response to the Covid-19 virus outbreak, the government of the Australian Capital Territory has reinstated funding to the vocational education and training system following deep cuts made early this year. This is a great outcome for both students and Registered Training Organisations (RTOs) according to the Independent Tertiary Education Council Australia (ITECA), the peak body representing independent higher education, vocational education, training and skills providers.

The ACT Chief Minister's office has advised ITECA that the government will reinstate the 2019 subsidy levels for the *User Choice* and *Skilled Capital* training programs. These programs had both been drastically cut at the start of the year. This change will apply only for 2020 enrolments and will be retrospective for students who have already commenced in subsidised courses this year.

"ITECA welcomes this step without reserve. From the outset we were critical of the cuts and the impact that they would have on students and existing workers looking to gain the training and skills for the next stage in their working career," said Mr Troy Williams, ITECA Chief Executive.

According to ITECA, the ACT Government's response is timely as the local economy comes to terms with the outcomes from measures to deal with the COVID-19 virus outbreak.

"In these challenging times where unemployment is sure to rise, the ability for independent providers to support more people by placing them in meaningful training is important, and that's what this decision makes possible," Mr Williams said.

The ACT Government's decision also provides timely support for the RTOs within the Territory's independent vocational education and training sector.

"ITECA members were doing it tough in the wake of the cuts, and then came along the economic impact of the response to the COVID-19 virus outbreak. Many providers are being pushed to the brink. This decision to restore funding to deliver skills across the Territory is timely, it will support ITECA members that have a track-record of offering students and their employers the outcomes they are looking for," Mr Williams said.

This outcome shows what member-driven advocacy can achieve according to ITECA.

"Our members were great and highlighted the impact that the ACT Government's cuts would have on students and the sustainability of the RTOs across the Territory. ITECA worked with our members in taking this issue to the ACT Chief Minister, and we then strongly – and most effectively – argued the case for change. This outcome shows what can be achieved when ITECA members come together.

The independent vocational and training sector is the dominant provider of skills and training in the Territory, and supports over 48% of the approximately 49,000 students in vocational education and training in the Territory at a substantially higher completion rate than other providers according to the latest data from the *National Centre for Vocational Education Research*.

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