

Media Release —

Time To Make A National Investment In Vocational Training And Skills

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For Immediate Release

As some forecasts predict that unemployment could reach 15% as a result of measures taken to contain the Covid-19 virus, now is the time to make a national investment in vocational training and skills to support jobseekers. That's the advice which has been given to the Prime Minister by the Independent Tertiary Education Council Australia (ITECA), the peak body representing independent providers in the higher education, vocational education, training and skills sectors.

"Few things can be more devastating at a personal level than unemployment. As a nation, we need to send a clear and unambiguous sign to jobseekers that we believe in them and are willing to invest in their future. It's time that the Australian Government step-up and make a major investment in providing them with the education and skills that will get them back into work," said Mr Troy Williams, ITECA Chief Executive.

ITECA has put to the Prime Minister a bold plan and immediate and practical solutions that support jobseekers and also focusses on broader economic benefits for the longer term. This is to invest in training in occupations that currently appear on the skills needs list compiled by each state / territory. Students would be offered subsidised training via a direct Australian Government voucher which a jobseeker can 'redeem' at any Registered Training Organisation (RTO) in an accredited course to receive a full qualification (e.g. Certificate II, Certificate III, Certificate IV and Diploma) in occupations that are directly aligned with local needs.

"ITECA is recommending that the Australian Government act with some haste to develop and implement a range of measures to support jobseekers through job-relevant vocational education and skills. This needs to be targeted and also directed towards supporting the long-term economic prosperity of Australia," Mr Williams said.

The independent vocational education and training sector is positioned to take the lead role in this, given that it supports around 80% of the 4.1 million students in vocational education and training. An investment in the training and reskilling of jobseekers will also act to preserve the capacity of RTOs to support the nation during the economic recovery phase.

A recent analysis by ITECA has identified that three in four independent vocational education and training providers anticipate a reduction in their enrolments due to the Covid-19 outbreak.

"Recent Australian Government initiatives such as the JobKeeper payment and suspension of certain fees and charges levied by the Australian Skills Quality Authority (ASQA) will help the sector; however, the reality is that independent RTOs are struggling to assist students, support their employees and keep their doors open. It's time that the Australian Government step-up and back the sector," Mr Williams said.

Importantly, National Centre for Vocational Education Research (NCVER) data continues to show that independent RTOs enjoy superior completion rates, post-study employment rates and employer satisfaction than taxpayer subsidised public TAFE colleges.

"The NCVER data highlights the importance of making an investment in training and reskilling that will not only benefit jobseekers, but also ensure the sustainability of the independent vocational education and training system," Mr Williams concluded.

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