

Media Release —

ASQA Review A Damning Criticism Of A Regulator On The Mend

— 1 May 2020
For Immediate Release

The report of the rapid review of the Australian Skills Quality Authority's (ASQA) regulatory practices and processes covers in painful detail the failings of the nation's vocational education and training regulator; however, it also presents a solid set of recommendations for renewal. That's the view of the Independent Tertiary Education Council Australia (ITECA), the peak body representing independent providers in the higher education, vocational education, training and skills sectors.

"This is a landmark report and clearly articulates why there is a massive trust deficit between ASQA and the ITECA membership. It highlights ASQA's past policy and regulatory failures and uses these to chart a future course for a regulator that's more engaged with the sector and focussed on student quality than administrivia," said Mr Troy Williams, ITECA Chief Executive.

The review of ASQA noted that effective and consistent assessment of the performance of Registered Training Organisations (RTOs) and the role of auditors was all important.

"ITECA's member have relayed some real horror stories about their audit experience where non-compliance was assessed based on the colour of a company logo rather than the student experience and the quality of training that was offered. That the report highlights the need to better train auditors to given them an understanding of the context of their assessment is pleasing," Mr Williams said.

Although the report is a damning criticism of ASQA's past performance, ITECA acknowledges the recent efforts taken to improve the regulator's engagement with the sector and its performance.

"The report reflects some of the activities underway to ensure that ASQA is more fully focussed on the issues that are important to students and providers. There is a shared interest in promoting quality and the excellent outcomes that independent RTOs provide, and the report sets out a series of recommendations that will be fundamental to this task," Mr Williams said.

One of the biggest challenges that independent RTOs face is understanding the confusing and contradictory requirements of ASQA. This drives ITECA's constant calls for ASQA to play a more educative role that, until recently, were ignored.

"Independent RTOs have a reputation for excellence and quality with little doubt that they want to be compliant. The challenge is trying to understand what ASQA considers compliance to be is often impossible. That the report makes a series of strong recommendations that will improve ASQA's stakeholder engagement and education is therefore pleasing," Mr Williams concluded.

The work of ASQA is of strategic important to the independent tertiary education sector that supports some 80% of the 4.1 million students in vocational education and training across Australia.

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Media Contact:

Michellé Mabile – ITECA Communications Director

e: media@iteca.edu.au m: 0436 522 189

[ITECA Ref: N9.2.4]