

Committee Secretary
Senate Education and Employment Committee
PO Box 6100
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

To whom it may concern

Re: Higher Education Support Amendment (VET FEE-HELP Reform) Bill 2015

Thank you for providing us with the opportunity to provide a submission on the Government's proposed Higher Education Support Amendment (VET FEE-HELP Reform) Bill 2015.

Whilst Charles Darwin University supports the amendments that are being proposed we have provided comment on some aspects of the HESA (VET FEE-HELP Reform) Bill, for your consideration, in an attachment to this letter (attachment 1).

I would welcome the opportunity to discuss any of these points with you further.

Yours sincerely

Professor Simon Maddocks
Vice-Chancellor

Attachment 1

Introduction

Charles Darwin University (CDU) supports the measures that are being proposed in the Higher Education Support Amendment (VET FEE-HELP Reform) Bill 2015 and is of the view that these measures will strengthen the VET FEE-HELP loan scheme. Efforts to improve the quality of outcomes for students and uphold the reputation of the broader VET sector are also strongly supported.

There are some aspects on which CDU comments and these are provided below and concern: student entry procedures; eligibility criteria for new VET providers and power of the regulator. CDU requests that the Committee considers these comments in its review of the Bill.

Requirement of VET FEE-HELP approved training providers to develop and apply appropriate student entry procedure requirements.

It is already a requirement for registered training providers (RTOs) to apply appropriate entry procedures to admit students to their courses. Any additional requirement, particularly for compliant RTOs, should not be necessary and may result in an unnecessary increase in administrative burden.

It is the recommendation of CDU that issues concerning the application of appropriate entry requirements by RTOs be appropriately addressed by the Australian Skills Quality Authority (ASQA) standards for student selection and enrolment.

Add to the eligibility criteria required for admitting new VET providers to the VET-FEE-HELP loan scheme.

CDU strongly supports strengthened eligibility criteria and evidence of quality of training provision and student outcomes for new VET providers to the VET-FEE-HELP loan scheme. CDU is also of the view different criteria be applied to TAFEs and Universities (not just Table A provider) and all other providers.

Extend the Commonwealth and national VET Regulator's powers with respect to monitoring and investigation; and make consequential amendments.

CDU encourages the Committee to consider mechanisms that will ensure that any broker working on behalf of RTO's, through third party arrangements, be subject to strict standards and control.

Increased support for ASQA to maintain quality and consistency in the sector, as opposed to an extension of powers for monitoring and investigation, would also be welcomed by CDU.