

**Submission by Northern Territory Department of
Education and Children's Services**

April 2013

**Senate Committee on Education, Employment and
Workplace Relations**

Student Identifiers Bill 2013

Introduction

This submission details the Northern Territory Department of Education and Children's Services (NT DECS) views on selected issues related to the Student Identifiers Bill 2013 (the Bill).

Key Points

- NT DECS broadly supports the measures outlined in the Bill as an important step towards more efficient systems and programs. The measures will have long term benefits for the Vocational Education and Training (VET) sector in providing to the needs of the economy and the labour market.
- Having access to de-identified data of students' enrolments and achievements will be important especially in the assessment of progress of Northern Territory (NT) Indigenous students as well as other disadvantaged groups.
- As VET can be an important part of students' completion of the Northern Territory Certificate of Education and Training (NTCET), to be able to obtain a consolidated record of achievement for students will assist in the completion of the certificate especially for Indigenous Territory students. This is both from the perspective of subject pattern planning and for recognising achievement that may otherwise be overlooked, forgotten or not understood to be able to be used as part of a student's completion by students and their parents. In addition the same will apply to completion of VET certificates which are important alternative pathways for students and their future education, training and employment.
- As NT DECS is a Registered Training Authority (RTO) in its own right, the establishment of the Unique Student Identifier and a consolidated record of achievement will assist NT DECS in its delivery of VET courses, conduct education related policy development and will increase the accuracy of reporting VET related information internally, to the Northern Territory Government as well as its various reporting obligations under the VET standards.

Issues

The major issue for the NT and for NT DECS as an RTO will be providing sufficient evidence to verify the identity of some individuals. This will have a major impact upon Indigenous students particularly for those from remote and very remote areas of the NT. Our experience in managing student identities as they enrol for school would indicate that many of our most disadvantaged students will have difficulty providing enough evidence to satisfy the requirements to be issued the USI and subsequently enrol in vocational education and training courses. This would not only include students of school age but adults who want to access VET. Currently many interstate RTOs seek verification of identity such as driving licenses. However the NT's experience is that generally there is no

local capacity to enforce this in the NT and it is not a requirement for local RTOs at present.

NT DECS understands that the Student Identifiers Agency is likely to adopt similar identification processes as Centrelink which include such things as birth certificates and ID cards (driver's licences, bank account cards etc.) and that the required number of ID points has been relaxed from 100 to 50 points. We also understand that letters from community leaders or councils may be considered as proof of identity where individuals have no paperwork.

NT DECS would like to propose that school identification processes for students who attend NT schools be sufficient for identification requirements in the case where no other identification is able to be provided by school aged VET students. A school enrolment, identification by school teachers, and the master data management that NT DECS has in place would be at least as good if not a more robust means of identification as identification by community leaders. Letters from community leaders or councils may still potentially allow duplicates if students are known in more than one community and by different names. NT DECS deals with multiple identity issues regularly and append these identities to a master identity as they are discovered. Most identity issues are resolved by the time a student is old enough to undertake VET. In addition our systems are now more sophisticated so that identities and enrolment records are transferred from school to school to avoid duplications.

NT DECS also seeks clarification on whether Departments of Education will be recognised as VET-related bodies or whether they may be able to apply to be recognised as such. This may not be so much of an issue for NT DECS because it is a Registered Training Organisation and as such would be able to collect and use USIs under the regulations. It is important that NT DECS, given the consent by the individual or in the case of minors, their parent or guardian, is able to access authenticated VET transcripts for the purposes of subject pattern planning and for recognising achievement to be used as part of a student's completion of the NTCET. This is important if Indigenous students in the NT are to be able to reach their fullest potential and to be able to close the gap in achievement between Indigenous and non-Indigenous students.