

## Senate Committee: Education and Employment

### QUESTION ON NOTICE Additional Estimates 2015 - 2016

#### Outcome: Skills and Training

#### Department of Education and Training Question No. SQ16-000584

Senator Carr, Kim provided in writing.

#### *Advice provided to VET providers, agents or brokers*

#### Question

Has the Department provided any advice to VET providers, agents or brokers about these new requirements? Please provide a copy of the advice given to providers.

#### Answer

In early 2015 the Australian Government introduced a series of vocational education and training (VET) reform measures complementary to the VET FEE-HELP loan scheme reforms which included a number of changes to the way the scheme is administered. A letter dated 23 February 2015 was sent to all registered training organisations (RTOs) and broader VET stakeholders.

On 12 March 2015, Senator the Hon Simon Birmingham, the former Assistant Minister for Education and Training, formally announced a series of legislative and other changes to deal with rogue training providers and better protect students signing up for a VET FEE-HELP loan.

On 18 March 2015, all RTOs and broader VET stakeholders were sent a letter from Senator Birmingham with a link to a Factsheet that detailed the intended VET FEE-HELP reforms. Specifically, this included the introduction of extra eligibility criteria for training providers seeking approval for VET FEE-HELP and additional requirements for existing training providers. This new criteria would focus on the training and trading history of the applicant, and the ability of applicants to demonstrate financial viability without ambitious VET FEE-HELP revenue targets. The Factsheet also included notification that legislation would be introduced into Parliament to implement the criteria from 1 January 2016.

On 1 April 2015 the *VET Guidelines 2015* was made banning VET providers or their agents from offering inducements to potential students to encourage them to sign up for a training course and take out a VET FEE-HELP loan. A media release was issued by Senator Birmingham – see [www.senatorbirmingham.com.au/Media-Centre/Media-Releases/ID/2650/Time-is-up-for-shonky-VET-spruikers](http://www.senatorbirmingham.com.au/Media-Centre/Media-Releases/ID/2650/Time-is-up-for-shonky-VET-spruikers). Advice was provided in the 2015 April HELP Newsletter.

A further letter was sent on 15 May 2015 on the broader VET reforms and referencing the latest update in relation to the VET FEE-HELP reforms. Information on the VET FEE-HELP reforms was updated on the Department of Education and Training's (the department's) website [www.education.gov.au](http://www.education.gov.au) as further details of the changes to the scheme were announced.

On 1 July 2015 amendments to the *VET Guidelines 2015* was made, and a media release was issued by Senator Birmingham - see [www.senatorbirmingham.com.au/Latest-News/ID/2753/Tougher-VET-FEE-HELP-guidelines-effective-today](http://www.senatorbirmingham.com.au/Latest-News/ID/2753/Tougher-VET-FEE-HELP-guidelines-effective-today).

The reforms were covered at various sessions of the annual HELP Forum for providers on 3 September 2015, and covered in the related newsletter on 1 October 2015. On 8 December 2015 the department wrote to VET FEE-HELP providers outlining the changes effective from 1 January 2016.

In addition to the dates advised above, on 18 December 2015, all organisations applying to become VET FEE-HELP providers were further informed of the specific detail of the reform measures which came into effect on 1 January 2016 including new trading and training history criteria to be approved as a VET FEE-HELP provider.

On 24 December 2015, in response to a number of common questions being received, the department emailed links to specific fact sheets and other useful resources to providers.

As the reforms were of significance to the broader VET sector, advice was also included in industry newsletters, media releases on the Department's website and Ministers' media centre. The department also published an *Addendum to the VET Administrative Information for Providers – incorporating the VET FEE-HELP Reforms 2015/2016* (a manual to help approved providers interpret and implement the student support policies that are enacted under the *Higher Education Support Act 2003* and associated guidelines) and a *Question and answer* document. These documents are available on the department's website at [www.education.gov.au/help-resources-providers](http://www.education.gov.au/help-resources-providers).

## Attachments

Attachment	Description
Attachment A	23/2/2015 Letter introducing VET reforms
Attachment B	18/3/2015 Letter advising VET FEE-HELP reforms
Attachment C	Mar 15 VET FEE-HELP Reform Factsheet
Attachment D	Apr 15 HELP Newsletter 2015 April Edition
Attachment E	15/5/15 Letter re Budget
Attachment F	3/7/15 VET FEE-HELP Reform Factsheet - updated 3 July 2015
Attachment G	Jul 15 HELP Newsletter 2015 July Edition
Attachment H	Oct 15 HELP Newsletter 2015 Forum Edition <a href="http://www.education.gov.au/newsletters">http://www.education.gov.au/newsletters</a>
Attachment I	Oct 15 VET Administrative Information for Providers Addendum <a href="http://www.education.gov.au/help-resources-providers">http://www.education.gov.au/help-resources-providers</a>
Attachment J	8/12/15 Letter to providers re update on VET FEE-HELP reforms
Attachment K	Dec 15 HELP Newsletter 2015 December Edition <a href="http://www.education.gov.au/newsletters">http://www.education.gov.au/newsletters</a>
Attachment L	18/12/15 Letter to applicant organisations re update on VET FEE-HELP reforms
Attachment M	24/12/15 Email to providers providing links to information documentation <a href="http://www.education.gov.au/help-resources-providers">http://www.education.gov.au/help-resources-providers</a>
Attachment N	Dec 15 Student Factsheet <a href="http://www.education.gov.au/help-resources-providers">http://www.education.gov.au/help-resources-providers</a>
Attachment O	24/12/15 VET FEE-HELP Reform Factsheet - Edited 24 December 2015 <a href="http://www.education.gov.au/help-resources-providers">http://www.education.gov.au/help-resources-providers</a>
Attachment P	Dec 15 Provider Factsheet <a href="http://www.education.gov.au/help-resources-providers">http://www.education.gov.au/help-resources-providers</a>
Attachment Q	Dec 15 Questions and answers document <a href="http://www.education.gov.au/help-resources-providers">http://www.education.gov.au/help-resources-providers</a>