

Senate Committee: Education and Employment

**QUESTION ON NOTICE
Supplementary Budget Estimates 2015 - 2016**

Outcome: Skills and Training

Department of Education and Training Question No. SQ15-000906

Senator Carr, Kim provided in writing.

Slogans used by RTOs

Question

Is the Department taking action on RTOs who use advertising slogans such as “government-funded courses” “funded by the government” or “study now, pay later”?

Is the use of these slogans permitted?

Has the Department or ASQA received complaints about training companies who use the abovementioned slogans?

There have been a number of media reports about job search websites providing the details of people looking for work to training companies and brokers. Is this permitted under the guidelines?

Answer

The Department of Education and Training takes action as appropriate on a case by case basis. Slogans used in the marketing of VET FEE-HELP need to be investigated on a case by case basis taking account of the context of the messaging, and whether a VET Provider can be identified.

From 1 July 2015 under the VET Guidelines, a VET provider or its agents must not at any time, including at the time of initial contact with a prospective student, market a VET course of study or VET unit/s of study as, free, without obligation to repay, or in any other way which would mislead a person into believing that VET FEE-HELP assistance is not a loan to be repaid by the person to the Australian Government.

The department has received 70 marketing related complaints between 1 July 2015 and 30 October 2015, which include complaints relating to the use of slogans indicating VET FEE-HELP eligible courses are free or government funded. Since the new Standards fully commenced on 1 April 2015, the Australian Skills Quality Authority has received 68 complaints about VET FEE-HELP related marketing, which may include complaints relating to the use of slogans.

The VET Guidelines do not deal with information management, the Higher Education Support Act 2003 (HESA) does. Job search websites are independent entities not controlled or governed by the Commonwealth, and unless they are approved as Higher Education Providers, or VET Providers, they are not bound by the HESA legislative framework.

Please refer to SQ15-000802 for related information.