

Submission

to

Senate Employment, Workplace Relations and Education
References Committee

Inquiry into the provisions of the Australian Technical Colleges (Flexibility in Achieving Australia's Skills Needs) Bill 2005

Submission no: 6

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Submitter: Mr Tim Smith
National Executive Officer

Organisation: Australian Council for Private Education and Training

Address: Box Q1076
QVB PO
SYDNEY NSW 1230

Phone: 02 9264 4490

Fax: 02 9264 4450

Email: Acpet@acpet.edu.au

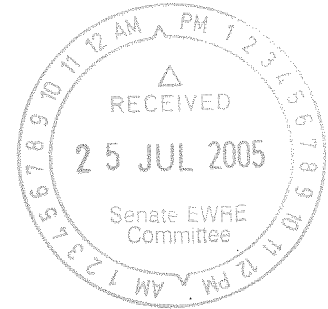
National Office: Box Q1076, QVB PO, Sydney NSW 1230
Suite 12, Level 14, 329 Pitt Street, Sydney NSW 2000

Ph: 02 9264 4490 **Fax:** 02 9264 4550



25 July 2005

Mr John Carter
Secretary
Senate Employment, Workplace Relations and Education
Legislation Committee
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600



Dear Mr Carter

Thank you for the opportunity to make a submission to the Senate inquiry into *Skilling Australia's Workforce Bill 2005*; and *Australian Technical Colleges (Flexibility in Achieving Australia's Skills Needs) Bill 2005*.

The Australian Council for Private Education and Training (ACPET) supports the passage of the *Skilling Australia's Workforce Bill 2005* and is pleased to provide the following comments as they relate to its membership:

1. Division 2 – Statutory conditions

Condition of grant – maximising choice for employers and new apprentices

ACPET supports the condition placed on the States and Territories to increase the proportion of apprenticeships and traineeships that are eligible for user choice funding under the New Apprenticeships Scheme. ACPET welcomes this condition being legislated for. However, we believe that there should be an increase greater than just 5 per cent each year, as stated in the Bill as progress to date with user choice implementation by the states and territories has been so slow.

Competition in the VET sector is supposedly achieved through user choice, whereby public funding supports the decision of employers and employees to choose a registered training organisation, whether public or private. However, despite all States and Territories agreeing to the principles of user choice, its implementation has been inconsistent across the country. The decision on User Choice and contestability for government funded training, taken by all Ministers in 1997, has been progressively whittled away both in terms of closed markets on a State basis – or closure to existing providers only – and in the fact that the pool of funding available has reduced. Indeed, from tentative early days, its implementation has effectively stalled, with some State/Territory agencies freezing the bucket of funds available under user choice policy.

Queensland: Suite 32, Level 8 Christie Corporate Centre, 320 Adelaide Street Brisbane QLD 4000

South Australia: Suite 29, "Carrington House", 61-63 Carrington Street Adelaide SA 5000

Victoria: Suite 101, Level 1, 126 Wellington Parade East Melbourne VIC 3002

Western Australia: Suite 12, 44 Kings Park Road, West Perth WA 6005

Web: www.acpet.edu.au

Email: acpet@acpet.edu.au

Clause 13 – Condition of grant – competence-based training

ACPET members – particularly its hairdressing member colleges – have been arguing for national consistency in trade skills recognition for some time. We support the inclusion of this condition calling for the removal of impediments in State awards so that training qualifications are based on competence, rather than length of time.

Smoother pathways for students between the sectors and the need for states and territories to improve the cross-border recognition of skills training is of paramount necessity.

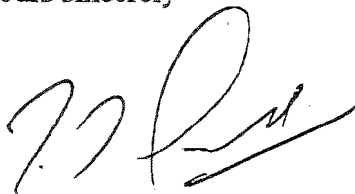
Clause 14 – Condition of grant – increased utilisation of publicly funded training infrastructure

ACPET is strongly supportive of this condition of grant in the legislation. Third party access increases the use of taxpayer funded facilities and maximises the return on this publicly funded capital investment. Private providers are often small and, whilst highly experienced in training and better suited to meet the specialist training needs of employers and employees, it is simply impossible to duplicate the expensive infrastructure in the TAFE system.

With reference to the *Australian Technical Colleges (Flexibility in Achieving Australia's Skills Needs) Bill 2005*, ACPET is supportive of the passage of the Bill since it will implement an important policy initiative to provide vocational skills training for young Australians.

ACPET would welcome the opportunity to appear before the EWRE Legislation Committee and give evidence at the hearing on 1 August.

Yours sincerely



Tim Smith
National Executive Officer