



Australian Federation of Graduate Women Inc.

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27 November 2014

The Hon Christopher Pyne MP
Minister of Education
PO Box 6022
Australian Parliament House
Canberra
ACT 2600

Dear Minister,

I am writing on behalf of the Australian Federation of Graduate Women Inc because of the appalling results of private for-profit providers of VET courses expressed in the Annual Report of the Australian Skills Quality Authority.

As you will know AFGW is the national voice of graduate women working, since 1922, through initiatives in Education for the advancement and wellbeing of women and girls. While our main concerns have traditionally been with Higher Education in the sense of university education, AFGW has increasingly recognised that the blurring of traditional lines between the university and VET sectors, and the growth of pathways between them, means that the VET sector is now a matter to which we should pay greater attention.

In April this year we wrote to commend you on establishing the Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency (TEQSA) Advisory Council. One of our chief concerns is that quality should be maintained across all providers especially through their registration and course accreditation. Revelations in the ASQA report that 75 per cent of Registered Training Organisations are failing to meet training and assessment standards, should lead to tighter regulation of heavily subsidised for-profit providers. We are very concerned that the opening to public funding in the Higher Education sector and your proposal to handout \$450 million to private higher education providers over three years may lead to similar results. While we welcome the creation of additional opportunities for students to receive higher education, we urge you to establish stringent regulation and monitoring before progressing with such a move.

We are also very concerned for the students who enrol with private providers. For many students, the training they receive from these private providers will be their once-only chance to receive a government subsidy for their training, so it is crucial that it meets quality standards. In the case of the current VETs student enrolled with private we urge you to convene an urgent meeting with the Minister for Industry to ensure there are no abuses of the VET FEE HELP system by poor quality or unscrupulous providers.

Yours sincerely,

Tricia Blombery

Convenor Standing Committee for Education

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