

Tuesday, 21 April, 2015

No voice for students, workers and unions on skills and training

Australian Unions are deeply concerned by the Federal Government's decision to scrap a successful twenty year partnership between employers and unions on vocational education and training (VET).

Industry Skills Councils have been one of the key strengths of Australia's vocational education and training system and the source of much of its strong international reputation is its industry focus and leadership – from both employers and unions.

The Abbott Government's announcement of new training arrangements signals an end to this collaboration.

The VET system is designed to meet the needs of both employers and employees, yet the government's decision to only focus on the needs of employers leaves students, unions and workers without a voice in the system.

The new competitive tendering of the Skills Service Organisations is likely to see development of training products left in the hands of the lowest cost provider with no concern given to the long term prospects for students and workers.

The work of the Industry Skills Council has been recognised internationally as a successful model for industry engagement in VET, including by the OECD, and the government has not provided any justifiable reason for scrapping existing arrangements.

The following quotes are attributable to ACTU President Ged Kearney:

“Australian Unions and employers have worked together successfully over 20 years to develop an internationally recognised skills and training system, yet the government is now scrapping that and outsourcing training development to the lowest bidder.

“The government needs to explain why it appears to be excluding unions, students and workers from having any input into Australia's vocational education and training system.

“This is yet another attempt by the Abbott Government to remove union and student representation off national VET bodies.

“The proposed new Industry Reference Committees and the Australian Industry Skills Committee announced today must include genuine representation from all sides of industry, including fair representation of the interests of workers.”

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