

Objective 1

1. Are there further reforms governments should consider that will improve the quality and integrity of the sector?

The government should ensure that PRISMS improvements are made ASAP. This will help identify unscrupulous actors in the industry. Currently all VET providers being tarred with same brush. The PRISMS data will enable data-driven decisions from government on which providers are acting in bad faith.

The government should also ensure that regulatory bodies like ASQA take more of an account management approach to the VET providers so they can understand the business operations of these providers and weed-out the shonky colleges. If ASQA were to take a look at all the timetables of a college and the payroll data, they will see that one trainer is 'teaching' multiple classes at the same time. This is hard evidence that a school is shonky.

Government should recognise that private vocational trainers are not all bad. Some are motivated by a desire to deliver quality training! How to know who to support? Support those in the regions, whose business models, by the very fact they are operating in the regions, are not targeting course hopping students or visa factories. See which providers have the support of industry either via embedded work placements or association membership and support those providers with incentives to stay delivering critical training in the regions. Also help them to attract international students to the regions where more international students are desperately needed by those regional economies.

2. What more can providers do to improve the integrity of the international education sector?

The ownership of private RTOs is a key indicator of the culture of the RTO and whether the mission is legitimate. Private RTO owners should be asked to undertake an annual review of their performance in delivering quality outcomes to students. The owners (not senior managers appointed by the owners) should be asked questions with their review submission tested and questioned by a panel in a 15minute interview. The panel should be able to determine any red flags which would lead to further investigation.

Objective 2

1. What factors should inform government's approach to allocating international student enrolments across sectors, providers, and locations in Australia?

Regional Australia MUST be supported. International students do not immediately wish to study in the regions, but that does not mean that those that do have a poor experience. Quite the opposite. The challenge is getting them there in the first place.

Government should remove cities such as Brisbane, Perth & Adelaide from the definition of regional and offer greater incentives to students studying in Wollongong, Newcastle & Hunter, Bendigo, Geelong. These regions actually need international students to stimulate the local economies. Furthermore, places like Newcastle & Hunter who are transitioning from heavy industry economies like mining to new economies like tourism should be assisted by government by:

1. ensuring all students, higher education or VET, are eligible for 2 years PSW rights regardless of what disciplines they study
2. ensuring that students who have an in-built industry work placement in their certificate, diploma or degree are given priority status when applying for a visa (a dodgy school will not offer work placements).
3. provide small scholarships to international students that include VET students. Destination Australia a good program but should be open to VET students too.

4. ensure that incentives and support given to TAFE is also extended to private VET providers in the regions.

2. What considerations for government should inform the overall level of international students in Australia?

Whether international students and the associated economies (tourism) will have a positive impact on the specific economy of that city/region.

More international students in Sydney or Melbourne would be less likely to have a positive impact, however in Newcastle and Bendigo, the impact could be transformative for those regions.

3. How will this approach to managing the system affect individual providers?

The government should ensure that any caps have tolerance for over enrolment. Some students take longer to complete than first expected, others need to defer short periods for personal reasons.

The proposed caps could be tied to employability outcomes post completion.

4. Should sectors other than higher education and vocational education and training, such as schools, ELICOS and non-award be included in approaches to manage the system for sustainable growth?

Packaged ELICOS should be uncapped.

However, many ELICOS schools have entered the VET market by offering low quality certificates and diplomas to their ELICOS students simply for the purposes of extending their visas. This should be scrutinised.

5. How should government determine which courses are best aligned to Australia's skills needs?

Listen to the industry and recognise that each region is not the same. Newcastle has a boom in 5 star hotels but has no staff to work in them. That means that all students who study in Newcastle should be eligible to fill that workforce shortage, regardless of what they study.

However, another region, like Geelong or Wollongong will have very different needs.

So government should engage with regional industry groups and major employers to determine what skills are required.

6. How should government implement a link between the number of international students and an increased supply of student housing?

Incentivise private companies to build student housing in the regions. Give housing incentives to students in the regions.

7. What transition arrangements would support the implementation of a new approach?

Ensure that visa processing is fair and equitable. You already know the bad actors in the industry. Remove their SSVF.

Objective 3

1. What are the barriers to growth in offshore and transnational delivery of Australian education and training?

RTO providers should be given grants by the federal government to export training offshore. This should be an application process whereby government is reassured as to the quality and mission of the provider before issuing the grant.

2. Where can government direct effort to support transnational education?

Through grants and incentives to RTO providers, upon application.