

Superior Training Centre

Objective 1

- 1. Are there further reforms governments should consider that will improve the quality and integrity of the sector?**
- 2. What more can providers do to improve the integrity of the international education sector?**

Objective 2

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

The Vocational Education and Training (VET) sector plays a critical role in Australia's education landscape, providing practical skills and training that are essential for the workforce. The allocation of international student enrolments within the VET sector requires a strategic approach to ensure quality, equity, and alignment with national priorities.

Capacity and Resources of VET Providers:

Infrastructure and Facilities: Evaluate the physical and technological infrastructure of VET providers to ensure they can support the influx of international students.

Qualified Trainers and Staff: Assess the availability and quality of trainers and support staff to maintain high standards of education and student support.

Regional Development and Diversity:

Support for Regional Areas: Allocate enrolments to VET providers in regional areas to promote regional development, alleviate skills shortages, and support local economies.

Diverse Student Body: Encourage a diverse distribution of international students across different regions and providers to prevent over-concentration in major cities and enhance cultural exchange.

Alignment with National Skills Needs:

Addressing Skills Shortages: Prioritize enrolments in VET courses that address identified skills shortages in critical industries, such as healthcare, technology, and trades.

Workforce Development: Align VET enrolments with national workforce development goals to ensure the sector contributes effectively to Australia's economic growth.

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

There is an opportunity to oversee and incentivise students to take courses that assist Australia in filling skills gaps in trades and sectors such as healthcare, aged care, information systems, and data. Having only students who work and study in these areas ensures that the students are committed to staying in that work area post-graduation.

The government now has the Jobs and Skills Councils (JSC) to determine future demand as best they can. The Government can modify work restrictions on student visas for trades and sectors where work-and-study or a work-integrated learning model may be best. A tripartite consultation between unions, providers, and industry can identify the JSC jobs that need gap-filling beyond what can be supplied by Australian students and apprentices. A student visa with enhanced work rights and oversight of employers

via universities, RTOs or a Group Training Organisation model can allow some of the skills needs to be met via international students.

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

It is crucial for the government to consider the potential adverse effects of imposing restrictive caps on the number of international students that VET providers can enrol. Such restrictions could severely impact the business operations and financial viability of these educational institutions.

Concerns

Impact on Business Planning:

Imposing a cap lower than the CRICOS (Commonwealth Register of Institutions and Courses for Overseas Students) allocated number of students will significantly disrupt business planning for VET providers. Unlike other exporters, education providers would face unprecedented restrictions that limit their capacity to operate effectively.

Evaluation of CRICOS Allocations and Facilities:

It is essential to ensure that the CRICOS allocated numbers and the facilities available at each provider are accurately assessed. Any adjustments to student enrolment numbers should be based on a thorough evaluation of a provider's capacity and infrastructure to accommodate international students.

Current Challenges with Visa Refusals:

The sector is already facing substantial challenges due to restrictions on student numbers through visa refusals. These refusals are placing quality Registered Training Organizations (RTOs) and ELICOS (English Language Intensive Courses for Overseas Students) colleges under significant financial stress. The lower visa grant rates are causing these institutions to refund money to students whose visas have been denied, further exacerbating their financial difficulties.

Potential Negative Impact of Additional Restrictions:

Introducing further cuts and restrictions could have detrimental effects on providers, potentially leading to the closure of quality, long-term RTOs and colleges. Such an outcome would not only harm the providers but also damage Australia's reputation as a premier destination for vocational education and training.

Recommendations

Review and Adjustment of CRICOS Allocations:

Conduct a comprehensive review of CRICOS allocations to ensure they reflect the actual capacity and facilities of providers. Any necessary adjustments should be made transparently and in consultation with the affected institutions.

Minimise Additional Restrictions:

Avoid imposing additional enrolment restrictions that could further harm the sector. Instead, focus on supporting providers in maintaining high standards and addressing the root causes of visa refusals.

Enhanced Collaboration and Communication:

Foster greater collaboration and communication between the government, regulatory bodies, and VET providers to ensure that any policy changes are well-informed and consider the impact on the sector.

Conclusion

The government must carefully consider the potential consequences of imposing restrictive caps on international student enrolments for VET providers. By reviewing CRICOS allocations, minimizing

additional restrictions, supporting financially stressed providers, and enhancing collaboration, the government can help ensure the stability and growth of Australia's VET sector.

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?

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

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

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

Objective 3

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

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