

## Media Release –

### It's Official – 90%+ Of Students In Skills Training Are With Independent Providers

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For Immediate Release

There shouldn't be any doubt that independent Registered Training Organisations (RTOs) are the preferred choice for students, with the latest official data showing that 90.5% of all student enrolments in skills training study with independent RTOs. The peak body representing independent RTOs, higher education, and international education providers, the **Independent Tertiary Education Council Australia (ITECA)** says that this highlights why political leaders need to radically rethink government policy.

“Too many politicians set out to denigrate independent quality RTOs, but students clearly see through this and overwhelmingly prefer the high-quality outcomes that ITECA members offer,” said **Troy Williams**, ITECA Chief Executive.

ITECA refers to the **data released today** by the National Centre for Vocational Education Research (NCVER) which shows that in 2023, independent providers supported around 4.6 million student enrolments in skills training, that's 90.5% of the total. The total number of students in skills training with all provider types grew to 5,056,845.

The official data shows that number of students with independent RTOs grew by 486,285 (11.9% growth) between 2022 and 2023 whereas the growth with public TAFE colleges was only 45,345 (6.7% growth).

“Both government policy and messaging need to respect the informed decisions that students make to study with independent RTOs. It's time to celebrate the quality of independent quality RTOs that are clearly trusted by nine-in-ten students across the country,” Mr Williams said.

ITECA has been highly critical of politicians who seek to put 'TAFE at the heart' of the skills training system, with ITECA arguing that government policy needs to put students at the heart of the system.

“It's time that our political leaders wake up and develop a firm understanding that students overwhelmingly prefer independent quality RTOs. This is hardly surprising since the official data shows ITECA members lead on most measures of student satisfaction, employer satisfaction and qualification completion rates,” Mr Williams said.

The importance of independent quality RTOs in helping employers address skills shortages needs to be recognised by the nation's political leaders according to ITECA.

“Around 4.6 million students studied with an independent RTO last year. It's time that governments stepped up and backed these students by allowing them to access government funding to undertake their study where there are skills shortages,” Mr Williams said.

ITECA has recently written to the Australian, state and territory governments recommending that the National Skills Agreement – the inter-governmental skills funding agreement – be recast to support more students to study with quality RTOs.

“Across Australia, too many students must fully fund their own studies in areas that are critical to the economy. It is now time for governments to back these students and allow them to access funding to study with an independent quality RTO, Mr Williams said.

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