

WAVE submission to Senate Inquiry into the operation, regulation and funding of private vocational education and training (VET) providers of Australia

Women in Adult and Vocational Education (WAVE) is an NGO, the only national organisation with a focus on women and post compulsory education and training. WAVE represents the interests of women and girls in the broad areas of adult, vocational and work-related education and training, and the links between these, employment outcomes and labour market positions.

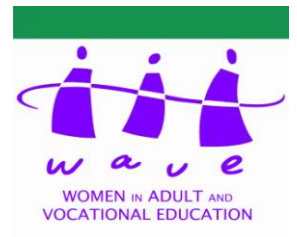
WAVE's research and consultation for the last decade and a half highlights the need for updating, resourcing and implementation and evaluation of specific policies for women and girls in vocational and work related education and training, along with improved employment outcomes.

WAVE wishes to make a short submission to this inquiry to ensure the issues relating to equity and women are clearly on the agenda. As part of the increased privatisation and marketisation of the VET sector, the recognition of VET's role in providing a second chance for many learners and in supporting some of our most disadvantaged adults to take the first steps to gaining qualifications leading to a satisfying career, appear to have been forgotten. There is no recognition of the equity role and responsibility for VET in a system so focused on only the requirements of employers and industry.

The current Federal Government has cut the National VET Equity Advisory Council (NVEAC) and not replaced it with any other committee or Board. Consequently there is no systemic way in which one can ensure that equity is considered in the drafting of VET policies nor allocation of funding. WAVE has also raised this issue in its submission around the Industry Skills Fund, and in its address to the Senate Inquiry into the Federal Budget, but these critical views appear to have been ignored. Appointments to current VET Boards also ignore the need for representatives from the equity areas.

In relation to the operation and funding of private providers, WAVE makes the following points:

- * government funding for all providers in VET must include targeted funding to provide programs for and support services for students with special needs. This may include women who are returning to the workforce, from non-English speaking countries, Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islanders, or with a disability



- * all private providers should be expected to demonstrate how their government funding is used to ensure women and girls have access to their programs and any special support required
- * some of the aggressive marketing practices currently adopted by private providers or their brokers, are targeted at women. For some women who have not had previous opportunities to study for a career, the enticement of a Diploma (and maybe the promise of a job) would appear very attractive, especially if they were led to believe it would cost them nothing and could be achieved over a matter of months. It is important that this type of marketing is stopped, given the negative impact it will have on many women
- * the push by governments and many private providers to enrol students in high level VET courses needs to be reconsidered. For many women the opportunity to study for free at Certificate 1 and 2 levels, is important as they then gain the confidence and initial skills to move on to higher and more vocationally oriented courses. This must be an important part of government funding.

WAVE welcomes the opportunity to contribute to the Senate Inquiry
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