Hon Ian Macfarlane MP

Minister for Industry

STUDENT IDENTIFIERS BILL 2014 - SECOND READING SPEECH

Introduction

Australia’s continued prosperity depends in large part on the skills and knowledge of our people.

This will especially be the case as we move to reposition Australian industry to take advantage of the many opportunities and face the competitive challenges of the 21st Century.

The Government is committed to ensuring that the vocational education and training sector is ready to meet the skills and training needs of the nation and it is in this context that the Student Identifiers Bill is presented to the House.

Currently, information about vocational education enrolments, participation and completion is fragmented and inaccurate. Many vocational education students use more than one training provider.

This leads to wasteful and confusing duplication in the creation of student identities, which in turn makes it difficult to understand
pathways and patterns of enrolment and completion and to develop evidence-based and cost efficient programmes that effectively target skill shortages and the skills needs of industry.

Through the introduction of a national life-long unique student identifier for students who undertake nationally recognised training, the Bill will generate savings for individuals and businesses by enabling the streamlining of data collection and other processes in the Vocational Education and Training sector.

The unique identifier will assist industry in making better informed decisions about the skill levels and training needs of their workforces and effectiveness of training undertaken.

In addition, individuals will have easy, reliable, lifelong online access to a record of their training history from a single authoritative source.

Governments will have access to more accurate and complete data on training completions and pathways that will greatly improve the monitoring of the efficiency, responsiveness and effectiveness of the training system.
This will inform the development of a contestable training market and enable governments to target assistance to training providers, students and employers more efficiently and effectively than ever before.

**Specifics of the Bill**

The Student Identifiers Bill 2014 provides for the introduction of the scheme for students undertaking nationally recognised training in the VET sector.

It provides for the assignment of student identifiers and for their collection, use and disclosure.

While student identifiers will be mandatory for students undertaking VET courses once the scheme commences, there will be provision for the Commonwealth Minister to make exemptions under the scheme by legislative instrument with the agreement of the States and Territories.

A key principle underpinning the scheme is that individuals will have control over their student identifier and can determine who can have access to their personal and educational records associated with it.
The privacy framework for the scheme is intended to complement and work in conjunction with existing Commonwealth, State and Territory privacy provisions which will continue to operate in relation to personal information as they do now.

The Bill establishes a new Commonwealth statutory office holder, the Student Identifiers Registrar to ensure the protection and appropriate use of information.

The Registrar will be responsible for assigning student identifiers to individuals who apply for one and for providing authenticated VET transcripts upon request.

The Bill also requires the Registrar to submit an annual report to the Commonwealth Minister for presentation to the Parliament and to provide a copy to the Ministerial Council.

The functions of the Registrar will be funded from existing funding for the support of the national training system with the amount of the allocation to be agreed by the State, Territory and Commonwealth training ministers in accordance with the National Agreement for Skills and Workforce Development between the Commonwealth, State and Territories as is in force from time to time.
The introduction of the student identifier will be supported by the inclusion of additional requirements to the Standards for Registered Training Organisations under the National Vocational Education and Training Regulator Act 2011 and mirrored in the Australian Quality Training Framework.

The introduction of the student identifier will enhance the efficiency, transparency and responsiveness of the VET sector.

The Australian Government is committed to strengthening the training sector by providing a clearer picture of our skills base, confirming that future training can be targeted to meet the needs of industry and the economy.

(Ends)