



MEDIA RELEASE

Smart and Skilled: Far from perfect, but a step in the right direction

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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The Upper House committee inquiring into vocational education and training in New South Wales tabled its report today. A key focus was the NSW Government's Smart and Skilled reform, introduced at the beginning of 2015.

The chair of the committee, the Hon Paul Green MLC, said: 'At its heart Smart and Skilled implements the shift to a contestable training market. This means students eligible for government-subsidised training can choose to use that subsidy to study at any approved registered training provider, public or private. Having considered the evidence, the committee believes that a contestable training market will benefit all parts of the sector over time, driving up quality and efficiency, and ultimately benefiting students, industry and the economy. We also acknowledge that the TAFE system will always play a very important part in vocational education and training, particularly in regional, rural and remote areas'.

Mr Green continued, 'This doesn't mean there haven't been real problems with the way that Smart and Skilled was designed and implemented. The report makes 25 recommendations to fix these problems. This will make Smart and Skilled fairer for students and providers alike, as well as improving access to vocational education and training more broadly, including for students with a disability and those living in regional, rural and remote areas'.

Mr Green also said, 'The committee received abundant evidence concerning the botched roll-out of the new TAFE IT system known as SALM/EBS. The committee is deeply disturbed by the significant and ongoing problems with the system, with the burden falling on TAFE teachers and students. While TAFE needed to introduce a new IT system to support Smart and Skilled, we have no confidence that SALM/EBS can be made to work. The SALM/EBS system is so dysfunctional that it must be abolished. The government should go back to the drawing board'.

'Vocational education and training has the power to change lives. In the past, TAFE was seen as the working class's university and carried the load in this regard. Today, I call on the NSW Government to implement the recommendations in this report so that future generations of students can experience the power of vocational education and training. Our report will also assist TAFE and other registered training providers to upskill and retrain workers, fuelling job creation and economic growth,' Mr Green concluded.

The committee's report, along with other information about the inquiry, is available on the committee's [website](#).

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For further information please contact Committee Chair, the Hon Paul Green MLC, on 9230 3484