

Subject: Education Providers

Good Morning!

I heard on the TV this evening that the Senate is having a look at VET providers. I think I also heard in passing that a program which started out costing about \$24 million a year is now costing around \$1.2 billion per annum.

That is hardly surprising after all it is a Federal Government program. I also saw a gentleman who is presumably an apologist for the Department administering the scheme, proudly telling us that it had identified and closed down 'over 100 providers'.

That might be impressive (a) if the department hadn't accredited the organisations in the first place, and (b) if we had any idea how many more of these shonks are out there.

About a week ago my 21 year old son received an unsolicited email from a 'provider' who was prepared to give him a Diploma of Management (of what?) in as little as six months over the internet. They would enrol him in their Rising Star program, and make him a Career Champion; wow!

The cost was a triffling \$19,900 all of which could be borrowed from the Government, plus the Government's 20% loan fee a total of about \$23,880.

It was not entirely clear which entity would grant this valuable qualification, but the following were mentioned in the email: Franklyn Scholar (registered training organisation No 7134), eddi, Spot Jobs, Spot Ed, Australian Qualifications Framework, and Acquire Learning.

I told my son to have nothing to do with it. If the Federal Government in in some form of financial crisis I could show it here it could save \$1.2 billion.

It wasn't the first time I had come across this sort of nonsense. In a bout 2006 a friend of ours who had come to Australia to study English had to return suddenly to Hong Kong. She asked for a pro rata refund of her fees and was told that she would not get a refund.

I did a little research and found that the 'provider' was acting outside the guidelines set down for these shonks and therefore outside the law. I lodged an appeal with the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal.

Almost immediately I had the Director, or whatever the senior peanut is called in these organisations, on the phone trying to buy me off with a couple of weeks fees. About a week before the scheduled hearing I received a cheque for \$4000, and after I had

determined that it wouldn't bounce, I withdrew the appeal.

I then wrote to the Department suggesting that they might have a look at the books of the institution to see how many other foreign students they had cheated, with a view to making them compliant with Australian law.

I never heard back from the Department, and given that someone would have had to do some work, I don't expect to hear from them. The Department has the power to regulate the 'providers', but having the power to do something and actually doing it are two entirely different concepts in the public service.

I formed the view that the Federal Department of Education and Training or whatever it calls itself this week, is like most other organs of the Commonwealth, a lazy, bloated, incompetent bureaucracy and a waste of taxpayers money. It is beneath contempt.

The VET Help scheme would have been a good idea if some reasonable ceiling had been put on the fees 'providers' could charge for particular courses, if it was properly regulated, and if it wasn't going to be administered by half wits in Canberra.

Publish my views by all means.

Subject: VET Help

Good Morning!

Here is a further submission for your 'Senate Committee' on the VET Help scheme:

1. The courses supported by the VET Help scheme appear in the main to be of a standard you might encounter at a TAFE.
2. With the exception of trade courses, most of the other academic courses offered at TAFE are of very little value. They are short in duration and academically undemanding; for many of them there are no jobs or insufficient jobs.
3. Wherever there is free money there will be unscrupulous entrepreneurs eager to take advantage of it. They will swarm like flies around a corpse. VET Help is free money.
4. I understand there are in excess of 7000 organisations tapping into VET free money. This is an absurd number on a number of levels.
5. It would not be possible to vet and monitor 7000 'providers' without at least as many assigned public servants, one to each. For the program to work effectively it is hard to see why you would need more than 100 'providers' across the whole country.
6. It is extremely unlikely that you could muster any more 'providers' who could teach the required courses to a reasonable academic level. Take a look at the qualifications of the staff in (say) the "Melbourne Institute of Technology". Better still, have a look at the "Franklyn Institute".
7. There is no reason to suppose on the basis of the 'National Curriculum' or any other enterprise of the Federal Education Department that anyone associated with it knows anything about education.
8. VET Help is a cruel hoax; a confidence trick. It holds out the prospect that with minimal effort you can get a worthwhile qualification which will help you gain and keep a good job. It won't. The certificates should be required to be printed on three ply crepe paper; then they could be put to good use.