Inquiry into Vocational Education and Youth Training in the ACT – Final Report

June 2016

Standing Committee on Education, Training and Youth Affairs

Report 6

Committee membership

Mr Jayson Hinder MLA (Chair from 9 March 2016)

Mr Steve Doszpot MLA (Deputy Chair)

Mrs Giulia Jones MLA (on leave from 17 March to 4 August 2015)

Ms Joy Burch MLA (Member from 9 February 2016)

Ms Mary Porter AM MLA (Chair to 19 February 2016)

Ms Yvette Berry MLA (Member to 10 February 2015)

Ms Meegan Fitzharris MLA (Member (from 10 February 2015 to 9 February 2016)

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Resolution of appointment

To examine matters related to early childhood education and care, primary, secondary, post secondary and tertiary education and vocational training, non-government education, youth and family services, technology, arts and culture, sport and recreation.

Terms of reference

On 29 May 2013, the Standing Committee on Education, Training and Youth Affairs adopted the following terms of reference:

To inquire into and report on all aspects of current vocational education and youth training programs, strategies and resourcing in the ACT with particular reference to:

* Implementation of current ACT programs, including national programs for youth training and education;
* The effectiveness of current youth training programs and strategies;
* Current programs available through ACT secondary colleges, vocational training programs and tertiary institutions;
* The role and programs conducted by all Registered Training Organisations (RTOs);
* Provision of vocational education and training to culturally and linguistically diverse students;
* Relevant experiences and learnings from Australian State, Commonwealth and International jurisdictions; and
* Any other relevant matter.

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Recommendations

* + 1. Recommendation F1

[1.11 The Committee recommends that the Minister for Higher Education and Training compel CIT to review each electrical trade graduate and provide an assurance that combined courses set up following the unexpected combining of the ElectroSkills and CIT course resulted in all students completing all mandatory components or units to obtain the electrical trade qualifications they were awarded.](#_Toc453236485)

* + 1. Recommendation F2

[1.12 The Committee recommends that, following the review recommended in recommendation F1, should any deficiencies be identified , CIT ensure a catch-up or complementary course of training is completed by these graduates.](#_Toc453236486)

* + 1. Recommendation F3

[1.15 Given some perceived resistance by CIT to the Committee’s various correspondence , the Committee recommends that CIT identify processes and assessments it has taken to ensure all Electrotechnology apprentices who completed their Capstone exam (Electrical Systems Safety) have adequately demonstrated the skills and understanding to have become qualified after being transferred from the ElectroSkills Centre to the CIT. The Committee further recommends that should the Minister not be satisfied with CIT’s response, that an audit be conducted by an independent appropriately certified assessor or organisation. In addition, the Minister should respond to this Committee as soon as possible regarding this recommendation, but in any event by the first sitting day of the Assembly in August 2016.](#_Toc453236487)

* + 1. Recommendation F4

[1.16 The Committee recommends that CIT put in place a contingency plan to ensure continuity of tuition is available to all students should CIT be required to integrate large numbers of students into any of its courses in the future.](#_Toc453236488)

[1.17 Further, the Committee recommends The Minister for Higher Education and Training satisfy herself that the steps CIT takes to put in place a plan or protocol for the proposals put by the Committee in this report are adequate.](#_Toc453236489)

# 1 Final Report

The Committee tabled its Interim Report on this reference on 17 February 2016.

The Committee Interim Report, inter alia, discussed a narrative relating to matters that were raised with the Committee in 2015 regarding the administration of the Electrotechnology Course at (CIT), in particular the period following the incorporation of trainee electricians from ElectroSkills, a private training institution into the CIT course.

The Interim Report contained a number of recommendations including Recommendation 4 required the review of the Electrotechnology Course conducted by the Australian Skills Quality Authority (ASQA) in late 2015 be tabled by the Minister for Higher Education and Training and made available to the Committee. The Committee notes that the ASQA report of that review was subsequently tabled by the Minister on 7 April 2016.

Recommendation 5 related to CIT’s processes to ensure that students met minimum training standards.

The Committee’s Interim Report is attached as Appendix A.

Government Response to Committee Recommendations 4 & 5 from Interim Report

* + - 1. Government Response to Committee Recommendation 4

In her tabling statement, the Minister for Higher Education and Training drew attention to a number of matters which resulted from the ASQA Review and report. They were –

* The National Centre for Vocational Education Research has recently released data showing that nationally the number of apprentices and trainees in training as at 30 September 2015 has decreased 13.7 per cent from 30 September 2014. This decline was also reflected in ACT apprentice and trainee data, but CIT is bucking this trend with apprentice numbers holding steady.
* CIT trains 72 per cent of the ACT's apprentices. Reflected in student satisfaction rates of 93 per cent and employer satisfaction rates of 87 per cent, both of which are considerably above target.
* In May 2015 CIT committed to an improvement strategy through the Australian Apprenticeship Quality Improvement and Sustainability project.
* Electrotechnology is a key industry for the ACT and will be increasingly so with the ACT government's focus on renewable energy. It has been a priority focus area for this quality improvement project which has been informed by researching good practice in five TAFEs across four states and in consultation with ACT employers and apprentices.
* CIT has conducted a number of electrical trade employer forums which have resulted in improvements to the enrolment process and the reporting of student issues and student progress back to employers. Increased engagement with employers is formalised with regularly scheduled meetings to gather intelligence on changes in industry that CIT needs to incorporate into its educational delivery.
* ASQA initiated and conducted a compliance audit on 26 November 2015 on two competencies from the certificate III in electrotechnology electrician.
* CIT was advised by ASQA that the audit was only in response to media attention about the delivery and assessment of this qualification at CIT. I think it is important for members to note that ASQA were not in receipt of a direct complaint in relation to CIT.
* ASQA provided its interim audit findings to CIT on 17 December 2015, and further evidence was submitted by CIT on 22 January 2016.
* ASQA's report was finalised and provided to the CEO of CIT on 16 February 2016.
* There are references to "non-compliance" in the audit and it is important to put these in context.
* "Non-compliance" in these circumstances essentially means that on the evidence provided on 26 November there was a risk the organisation was non-compliant. More evidence was then provided on 22 January 2016, similar to a prima facie case to answer in a court case. In this case, once the evidence was produced and tested, CIT was found to be compliant.
* The final ASQA report finding on the compliance audit highlighted CIT's ongoing compliance with the VET quality framework as relevant to the scope of the audit. ASQA also maintained CIT's low-risk status. No further response to ASQA from CIT in relation to the compliance audit is required.
  + - 1. Committee Comment - the ASQA Review report

The Committee has considered the ASQA Review Report and the Minister’s statement to the Assembly of 7 April 2016, and makes a number of observations:

* It appears clear to the Committee the courses that were audited by ASQA on 21 November 2015 may not have been all of the courses undertaken by students enrolled in the Electrotechnology Course (both at CIT and at Electro Skills).
* The Committee is concerned it remains unclear from the evidence presented as to whether the conclusion that graduates of CIT have fulfilled the requirements of the Electrotechnology course and a successful Capstone assessment for electrical trade qualification, was warranted.

With regards to CIT, the concerns raised in submissions and evidence to this Committee in the earlier part of this inquiry - which are highlighted and dealt with in the Committee’s Interim Report at Appendix A - focused on the management and administration of the UEE11 Electrotechnology package. The central issue identified in submissions and evidence to the Committee was CIT handling of approximately 300 electrical apprentices that were transferred from the Electrotech Skills Centre (ElectroSkills)

The Committee also notes that the Minister’s statement to the Assembly acknowledged the role played by CIT in addressing problems for the cohort of students affected by the ElectroSkills/CIT courses ‘amalgamation’.

In preparing this report, the Committee contacted ASQA about two matters related to the review:

* To confirm that the sole reason the audit review was undertaken was the media report in the *The Canberra Times* of 9 September 2015 ; and,
* To ascertain whether any audit or review of courses undertaken as part of their training by the Electroskills trainees transferring to CIT were in compliance with applicable standards, and whether all students had undertaken appropriate level of courses.

The Committee has not received a response to its queries at the time of tabling this report.

* + - 1. Matters raised by the ASQA Review

In examining these matters, the Committee remains concerned that – in a dangerous technical course – public and industry confidence is retained following the difficult circumstances that followed the unexpected and unplanned amalgamation of two Electrotechnology Courses - one conducted by a private Registered Training Organisation (RTO), ElectroSkills -being merged with into the CIT course, late in the curriculum.

* + 1. **Recommendation F1**

The Committee recommends that the Minister for Higher Education and Training compel CIT to review each electrical trade graduate and provide an assurance that combined courses set up following the unexpected combining of the ElectroSkills and CIT course resulted in all students completing all mandatory components or units to obtain the electrical trade qualifications they were awarded.

* + 1. **Recommendation F2**

The Committee recommends that, following the review recommended in recommendation F1, should any deficiencies be identified , CIT ensure a catch-up or complementary course of training is completed by these graduates.

* + - 1. CIT Response to Committee Recommendation 5

Recommendation 5 of the Interim Report is as follows:

The Committee recommends that, in its response to the ASQA audit report, the Canberra Institute of Technology identify procedures it has taken to ensure all Electrotechnology apprentices who completed their Capstone have become appropriately qualified after being transferred from the Electrotech Skills Centre to the Canberra Institute of Technology. Furthermore, the Canberra Institute of Technology should provide this information to this Committee by 31 May 2016.

The Committee is disappointed, given several assurances provided to the Committee by CIT that a reply to the Committee’s queries regarding a response to Recommendation 5 was pending, that no response has been received from CIT or the Minister on this recommendation at the time of tabling this report.

**Recommendation F3**

Given some perceived resistance by CIT to the Committee’s various correspondence , the Committee recommends that CIT identify processes and assessments it has taken to ensure all Electrotechnology apprentices who completed their Capstone exam (Electrical Systems Safety) have adequately demonstrated the skills and understanding to have become qualified after being transferred from the ElectroSkills Centre to the CIT. The Committee further recommends that should the Minister not be satisfied with CIT’s response, that an audit be conducted by an independent appropriately certified assessor or organisation. In addition, the Minister should respond to this Committee as soon as possible regarding this recommendation, but in any event by the first sitting day of the Assembly in August 2016.

**Recommendation F4**

The Committee recommends that CIT put in place a contingency plan to ensure continuity of tuition is available to all students should CIT be required to integrate large numbers of students into any of its courses in the future.

Further, the Committee recommends The Minister for Higher Education and Training satisfy herself that the steps CIT takes to put in place a plan or protocol for the proposals put by the Committee in this report are adequate.

Jayson Hinder MLA

Chair

June 2016

[Interim Report](http://www.parliament.act.gov.au/in-committees/standing_committees/Education,-Training-and-Youth-Affairs/inquiry-into-vocational-education-and-youth-training-in-the-act/reports?inquiry=457739)

Interim Report by the Committee on this Inquiry tabled on 17 February 2016