

23 October 2016

Senator the Hon. Simon Birmingham
Minister for Education and Training
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Dear Minister,

VET FEE-HELP funding cuts – impact on professional dance training

Ausdance is deeply concerned about your decision to include some of Australia's leading professional dance training courses in the crackdown on courses eligible for VET student loans.

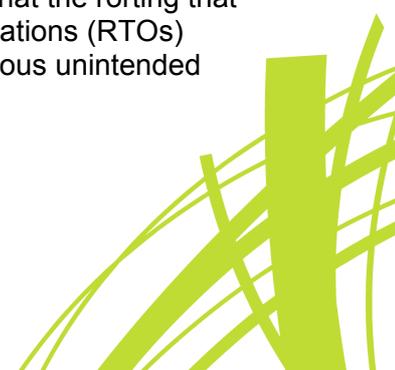
We are particularly concerned about the statement that these professional dance training courses are being subsidised because they are 'used simply to boost enrolments, or provide "lifestyle" choices, but don't lead to work'.

Ausdance worked closely with some of Australia's leading dance training institutions to develop the VET diplomas and advanced diplomas that would provide high-level professional dance training to Australian artists. In particular, the Diploma of Dance (Elite Performance), the Advanced Diploma of Dance (Elite Performance) and the Diploma of Dance have been central to high quality dance training at institutions such as the Western Australian Academy of Performing Arts (WAAPA), and the TAFE SA Dance program, delivered by the Adelaide College of the Arts. Students at these institutions are also offered the option of converting Diplomas and Advanced Diplomas into Bachelor degrees.

Both of these institutions – along with others such as The Australian Ballet School and the National Aboriginal & Islander Skills Development Scheme (NAISDA) – are among world leaders in providing ballet and contemporary pre-professional dance training.

As convenors of the Tertiary Dance Council of Australia (TDCA), Ausdance is well aware of the exceptional career pathways these courses offer their graduates, both in Australia and overseas. Australian dance companies and independent artists' projects are almost entirely made up of graduates, and international companies look to Australian-trained dancers for technically and artistically mature artists.

Many of the Diploma and Advanced Diploma dance courses on the hit list are, without doubt, major contributors to Australia's leading edge dance training. We suggest that the rorting that is occurring is actually the fault of some of the Registered Training Organisations (RTOs) concerned, and that targeting the courses themselves has led to many serious unintended consequences.



We therefore recommend that:

- There be extensive consultation and evaluation of the quality of the professional dance courses currently labelled 'lifestyle' choices, and that their impact on professional practice in Australia be properly evaluated.
- Some of the RTOs offering dance courses be much more rigorously monitored and struck off the register if found to be rorting the system.

We support closing the loopholes that allow some RTOs to claim government subsidy when their offerings are sub-standard, and we will be happy to provide further information and support for a proper consultation and evaluation process if required. In the meantime we suggest you request from the dance training institutions lists of their graduate profiles to assist in evaluating the difference between 'lifestyle choices' and leading edge professional dance training.

Yours sincerely,



Shane Colquhoun
Ausdance National President

[Emailed](#) 23/10/16

