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## **VET REFORMS POSE THREAT TO CULTURAL SECTOR**

The next wave of Australian acting talent will be put at risk by a federal government decision to axe hundreds of vocational education and training courses, warns the union for Australian performers.

The Media, Entertainment & Arts Alliance (MEAA) is dismayed that the removal of all acting courses from VET eligibility has gone ahead without any consultation with industry stakeholders.

553 out of 800 courses (70%) are headed for the VET chopping block, including highly credible courses that provide professional training for stage, television and film performers. These courses depend on eligibility and access to fee help to ensure they produce a diverse pool of talent.

Only 12 courses in the screen, music, media and design areas look like maintaining eligibility, unless the government heeds the industry's calls to retain courses.

The director of MEAA Equity, Zoe Angus, said that while MEAA accepts that steps are needed to be taken to rid the VET sector of fee-gouging operators and sub-standard courses, we are concerned that long-running credible courses will be abandoned in the name of efficiency and convenience.

"Accreditation and fee-help eligibility has broadened the socio-economic and ethnic mix of the new generation of Australian actors," Angus said. "They have attracted incredibly talented students who have not been able to access bachelor programs."

These courses routinely take on small numbers of students and they have strict entry criteria. Diploma tutors are among some of the best-known names in TV, stage and film; they depend on teaching work to sustain them during between periods of acting work.

The removal of courses for performers is also at odds with the planned retention of 'behind camera' courses<sup>1</sup>.

MEAA strongly believe that the courses are needed for *in-front of camera* and *behind camera*. These are all specialist occupations and to do otherwise may lead to distortions in the availability of qualified employees in the future.

Australia's cultural industries generate over \$50bn each year in spending.<sup>2</sup> Ticket sales in performing arts exceeded \$1.5 billion in 2013.<sup>3</sup> It is a vital area of economic activity. As the Australia Council has reported, about 85% of Australian believe that the arts made for a more rich and meaningful life in 2013 - up from 71% in 1999.

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<sup>1</sup> Diplomas of Screen and Media and the Diploma of Live Production and Technical Services.

<sup>2</sup> ABS data from 2008-09

<sup>3</sup> Arts Nation, 2015 Edition, Australia Council



“The Diploma of Screen Acting and courses like it conform to industry best-practice. They are well-governed and have strong links with industry,” Angus said.

“Although these are not STEM<sup>4</sup> courses, diplomas for performers fit the revised criteria for eligibility to a tee. Their continuation should not be threatened by a prejudice towards cultural industries.”

MEAA is calling on the Federal Government and to take close account of these courses’ histories and success and rather than the blanket removal of all acting diplomas, to undertake a careful review of these courses, assessing on the basis of quality and vocational atuneness, with a view to urgently reinstating proven courses to the eligibility list.

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**The Media, Entertainment & Arts Alliance - the people who inform and entertain**

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<sup>4</sup> Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics