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| Higher Education and Skills Group**Participation Branch Memo****Department of Education and Training** |

***NUMBER:*** *2016 / 09 / 1*

**TO:**

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| Learn Local organisations *– ALL or RTOs only* | ACFE Board | ACFE Regional Councils |
| Adult Education Institutions | Learn Local Stakeholders | Participation Branch Staff |

**FROM:** Ryan Collins, Director - Participation Branch

**DATE:** 1/09/2016

**SUBJECT: Eligible asylum seekers access to government subsidised training**

**ACTIONS / CRITICAL DATES:**

* *Note the range of new measures to support eligible asylum seekers and refugees with temporary residence access government subsidised training*

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The Victorian government recently announced a significant expansion of the *Asylum Seeker VET Program* that provides for eligible asylum seekers to be exempted from legislated citizenship/ residency criteria for participating in a Victorian Training Guarantee course.

The expansion of the program includes a range of new measures that increase training places, broaden eligibility, lower fees, and make a wider range of subsidised courses available to asylum seekers holding a Bridging Visa class E (BVE).

Under new arrangements, the Victorian government increased subsidised places from 300 to approximately 1,500 per year.

Refugees with temporary residence who hold Safe Haven Enterprise Visas (SHEV) and Temporary Protection Visas (TPV) will be eligible to participate in these courses along with eligible asylum seekers.

In addition to Victorian Training Guarantee (VTG) courses, asylum seekers will be able to undertake non-accredited language and literacy programs as well as benefit from an integrated VET Learning Plan Program comprising community orientation, education and skills assessment, and advice about future training pathways.

As well as the government subsidy, training will also be made available at concession rates where applicable.

**Victorian Training Guarantee**

The Asylum Seeker Resource Centre (ASRC) has been contracted to refer eligible asylum seekers and refugees with temporary residence to RTOs for enrolment in VTG courses until December 2016. From January 2017, in addition to the referral of asylum seekers to VTG courses, eligible asylum seekers will be able to enrol directly with LLO RTOs and TAFE Institutes in a VTG course.

Learn Local RTOs with VTG contracts should consult the relevant Contract Notification to determine the impact of the changes on their contracts.

**Assistance for training organisations delivering government subsidised training to asylum seekers**

The ASRC has been contracted to make help desk services, resources, and workshops available to training organisations delivering government subsidised training to eligible asylum seekers. These new services are being made available in order that training organisations are supported in

* verifying student visas using the Commonwealth Government’s Visa Entitlement Verification Online, and
* providing advice about an appropriate learning environment for asylum seekers while studying on campus.

 LLOs will be provided with detailed information about these services later in 2016, providing time to prepare for the introduction of revised enrolment processes for asylum seekers from 2017.

**VET Learning Plan Program**

A training program will be made available to LLOs in 2017 that aims to assist eligible asylum seekers connect with their local communities, receive an assessment of their education and skills, and get advice about possible VET pathways.

It is anticipated that development and testing of the training program will be finalised this year with opportunities for LLO staff to participate in VET Learning Plan Program workshops from early 2017, preparatory to delivering a limited number of these programs to asylum seekers.

Details about how LLOs can register their interest in attending the workshops and delivering the VET Learning Program to eligible asylum seekers will be provided later this year.

**Language and Literacy programs for asylum seekers**

LLOs will be invited to apply to the Department to design and deliver a limited number of language and literacy programs for asylum seekers and refugees with temporary residence. These programs are not pre-accredited programs purchased by the ACFE Board but must be developed by LLOs using the processes and guidelines associated with the Pre-accredited Quality Framework. Further information about the asylum seeker language and literacy programs will be released later this year preparatory to the purchase and delivery of the programs in 2017.

**Eligibility for government subsidised training**

The new measures announced by the Victorian Government do not alter the usual citizenship criteria for accessing government subsidised training. However the new measures do provide pathways for exempting eligible non-citizens from this criterion so that they can participate in VTG courses as well as especially developed programs. While ACFE Board purchased pre-accredited programs continue not to be available to non-citizens unless they hold an Australian Permanent visa or are New Zealand citizens, the Board has been monitoring the training related challenges faced by asylum seekers and, in this context, is currently undertaking a review of arrangements for pre-accredited training.

**RYAN COLLINS**Director, Participation Branch