

What are my employment rights?

Am I being treated fairly at work?

Where do I go for help?

PRIVATE TRAINING COURSES

DISCLAIMER

This infosheet contains information of a general nature only and is not a substitute for professional legal advice. You should obtain legal advice from a lawyer about your particular situation before acting on any of the following information. This infosheet is designed for Victorian and national system employees in Tasmania and Queensland only. If you are not a Victorian employee or a Queensland or Tasmanian national system employee, you should obtain specialist legal advice about your case as soon as possible.

What you should know

If you are considering undertaking a private training course there are certain things you should consider. Private training can be very expensive, and you will want to get value for money. Be wary when paying any fees for training.

Remember: private trainers are businesses wanting to sell a product. Buyers have to be aware of risks, and should choose courses and colleges with care. Remember, many private training courses are offered without any government approval. You have to make the choice. It's your time and money.

Here is a checklist to help you make the best decision

1. Find out what is on offer

- Shop around. Compare courses at a number of private institutions with your State's TAFE Colleges.
- Seek advice about which courses suit the jobs you want (see “

Where to get help” on p5. for contact details). For example, you can go to your careers teacher, local library, Career Information Centre, the relevant Department of Education’s Job Guide and websites like <http://www.myfuture.edu.au> and www.youth.gov.au.

2. Enroll in an officially recognised course

- Your State government has the power to grant registration to private training organisations and give accreditation to courses offered by registered colleges. Some courses are registered, some courses are not. Registration is voluntary in most cases.
- **Registration** tells you that a private college is believed to be ethical and competent in terms of the staff skills, premises, equipment, resources provided, financial arrangements and refund rules, and protection of student fees (e.g. trust funds).
- **Accreditation** tells you that the teaching or training methods and curriculum standards of the course have been examined, and that the contents and standard of the course have been verified for the level of qualification offered.

For details on registered training organisations and accredited courses go to the National Training Information Service website www.ntis.gov.au

Remember, even if a course is accredited and the College is registered, you should still check it out thoroughly.

3. If the college/course is not officially recognised, get more information about these things

INDUSTRY ACCEPTANCE:

Get an opinion from a related industry association and employee organisation (for example, you may contact the Australian Hotels Association and the Liquor, Hospitality and Miscellaneous Union about hospitality courses). Also, you may contact the personnel managers of key employers in the field. In the Yellow Pages Telephone Directory look under:

- Business and Professional Organisations; or
- Unions.

Ask if the college/course:

- is accepted in the industry;
- teaches skills used in the industry;
- gives graduates real job prospects; and
- generally has a good or bad reputation.

Get an opinion from someone in that field or industry.

RESOURCES:

To see if the organisation can really deliver a course, make sure you:

- ask to see the **facilities** and **equipment**;
- ask about the student/teacher **ratio**;
- ask about the **qualifications** and **training** of the teaching staff; and

- compare these with what's available at TAFE colleges and Registered Training Organisations.

FINANCIAL ARRANGEMENTS:

Beware of up-front payments. Ask for written details of:

- the terms and conditions of the enrolment contract;
- any fines, penalties and additional charges clauses;
- the cost of the course and payment arrangements;
- the conditions under which refunds are given;
- the associated costs, such as uniforms, equipment etc; and
- the arrangements in place to safeguard students' up-front payments.

JobWatch can give you information and referrals to other relevant organisations.

Be sure you read and understand any written clauses about payments before you make your decision.

4. Youth Allowance and Austudy eligibility

Accredited training offered by Registered Training Organisations may be approved for Youth Allowance, Austudy or other forms of financial assistance. Check with Centrelink Youth and Student Services: Tel. 132 490

5. Be a smart consumer!

Beware of advertising slogans like "employment guaranteed", "employers recognise our course", "quick low cost training" etc. Be particularly vigilant when it comes to courses offered by correspondence.

If the course/college claims to be "government recognised", make sure it is officially registered by visiting the www.ntis.gov.au.

For your nearest Community Legal Centre contact the National Association of Community Legal Centres on (02) 9264 9595. Remember, you are making a big commitment so take the time to organise things thoroughly.

Many private courses are now being conducted at TAFE colleges. This does not guarantee quality, so you still need to check out the courses thoroughly.

Never be pressured to sign a contract on the spot, or pay deposits or fees. Be satisfied that

the course/college is officially recognised or otherwise satisfies your needs. Have documents checked by a solicitor or other qualified adviser before you sign it.

Read everything you are asked to sign. Keep copies of all written information you receive from the college or training organisation and don't sign anything you do not understand. Some operators have asked people to sign application forms for courses and they turn out to be a binding contract.

Don't allow yourself to be pressured by the people selling the course to you. Take the time to go away and think about it.

6. Problem Industries

JobWatch regularly receives complaints and enquiries about private training courses across most industries. Some industries are complained about often: for example, the **beauty industry** (hair care, make-up, nail care); **modelling industry**; **IT industry**; correspondence courses; **private security industry**; and some **natural therapy** courses.

Be wary of 'fashionable' or 'flavour of the month' language in advertisements such as, "Internet", "Marketing" or "Multi-media".

7. Know where to refer problems

If you are unhappy with training you can contact the Consumer Affairs in your State – see ‘Where to get help’ below.

You may have rights to recover monies you have paid.

Where to get help

For further information regarding private training courses you may wish to contact the relevant organisations below:

ORGANISATION	PHONE	WEBSITE
JobWatch <i>(Telephone interpreters available for non-English speakers.)</i>	Metro: 9662 1933 Queensland, Tasmania & Regional Victoria: 1800 331 617	www.jobwatch.org.au
Fair Work Infoline (Office of the Fair Work Ombudsman)	13 13 94	www.fairwork.gov.au
Australian Competition and Consumer Commission	1300 302 502	www.accc.gov.au
Consumer Affairs Victoria	1300 558 181	www.consumer.vic.gov.au
Office of Fair Trading Queensland	13 74 68	www.qld.gov.au/law/your-rights/consumer-rights-complaints-and-scams
Consumer Affairs and Fair Trading – Tasmania	1300 65 44 99	www.consumer.tas.gov.au
National Association of Community Legal Centres	(02) 9264 9595	www.naclc.org.au
Youth.gov.au <i>(information about career directions and job seeking)</i>	1300 566 046	www.education.gov.au/youth
My Future <i>(information about career planning, education and training options for Australian jobs)</i>		www.myfuture.edu.au
National Training Information Service <i>(information on registered training organisations and accredited courses)</i>		www.training.gov.au

Centrelink Youth & Student Services <i>(for Youth Allowance and Austudy)</i>	132 490	www.centrelink.gov.au
Department of Education and Training <i>(for copy of the Job Guide)</i>	1300 566 046	www.education.gov.au/job-guide

JobWatch acknowledges and is grateful for the financial support of the State and Federal Governments, the Office of the Fair Work Ombudsman and Victoria Legal Aid.

