

CM2020/2493

Portfolio: Tertiary Education

ISSUE: IMPACT OF AND RESPONSE TO COVID-19 – CANBERRA INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY (CIT)

Talking points:

- Term 2 commenced at CIT as scheduled on 28 April. CIT is confident that the various measures in place ensure all students who wish to remain engaged in some type of learning are able to do so. However, this may not be in the format they are used to or in the course they originally enrolled in.
- CIT commenced a gradual return to campus from Tuesday 2 June. CIT is still focused on operating remotely where possible. Staff and students that can work and learn from home will continue to do so consistent with health advice and guidelines.
- Priority to return to campus is being given to students where access to CIT's campus-based resources is critical to achieving their course outcomes. Some of these high priority areas include Australian Apprentices who are nearing completion and Year 12 students in alignment with ACT schools.
- Given the success of the transition in the first two weeks, CIT has established a framework for the second phase of the transition to occur from 15 June 2020 in consultation with teaching staff, industry, unions and ACT Health.
- CIT's plan continues to prioritise learning outcomes for students, but also puts the health and wellbeing of students, staff and the wider ACT Community at the forefront of decision making.
- While CIT is part of the education sector, CIT is different to the school system – students study in different patterns and the demographics of the student population is more varied. CIT is also different to the university sector, with Vocational Education and Training (VET) focusing on the practical application of skills and skill-based assessments.

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Cleared for release	Yes	
Information Officer name:	Andrew Whale	

- Processes and protocols have been developed for the use of spaces and equipment that will ensure social distancing and hygiene requirements can be managed.
- CIT's existing range of fee assistance mechanisms will continue to be made available to any students requiring them. These include fee deferral options, course credits, concessions, payment plans and refunds where appropriate.
- CIT is providing ongoing and up-to-date advice and support for all students including its international students. The International Services Unit has an emergency number that international students have been provided with that can be used for out-of-hours support.
- The planning of a gradual return to campus is ongoing and the transition planning process is assisting CIT in considering the way forward for Semester 2 which is still scheduled to commence from 20 July 2020.

Key Information

CIT'S WORKFORCE

- Most of CIT's workforce are still working from home with limited staff attending campuses to teach a small number of classes, manage the response to COVID-19 and some normal business. These staff adhere to strict social distancing and hygiene protocols.
- These changes are in line with the ACT Government's direction for staff to continue to work from home where possible and reduce unnecessary travel.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

- CIT's capacity and capability to operate in a remote environment is varied across the organisation. In some subject areas online learning is not a viable long term solution given the applied application and practical nature of VET.
- Training Package curriculum, led by industry, has stringent requirements regarding demonstration of competence particularly in areas where services are provided to vulnerable groups or to protect the safety of workers.
- Many Training Packages also require students to have access to simulated work environments to demonstrate competence prior to being able to enter the workplace.

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- Support services are available for all students, either via phone or online.
 - Students have been encouraged to stay engaged with learning and their teachers.
 - CIT Student Services is available to answer general queries and provide fee assistance and advice.
 - CIT Student Support is providing guidance and referrals including counselling and support services which are free for all students, and
 - The CIT Student Association is available to provide support to all students.

Background Information

- CIT activated its Business Continuity Plan on 17 March and has used it to provide a framework of management and responses to the ever evolving challenges.
- With the immediate risk of COVID-19 contained, and economies moving into recovery it is clear that unemployment rates are higher, a portion of businesses closed and in some part a new economy is emerging. CIT is needed to respond across the breadth of these changes. This will be a period of increased demand for skills as workers transition to new jobs and upskill or reskill to be competitive in the workforce as job seeker numbers increase.
- In the short term there is a potential economic impact on CIT's revenue base. Approximately 30% of CIT's revenue base (\$32M in 2019) is from student fees, international student fees and contestable revenue sources. At biggest risk is CIT's annual international student revenue of approximately \$9M. If the ban on international flights continues for an extended period, 2020 semester 2 and 2021 revenue would be dramatically reduced. Additionally, if the current social distancing rules remained in place beyond term 2, CIT's contestable revenue may also continue to decline.
- CIT Solutions is a wholly owned subsidiary of CIT, however, its unique corporate governance and structure makes it ineligible for accessing any of the Australian Government COVID-19 stimulus support, and given the dramatic impact of the pandemic on the company's revenue, its short to medium financial viability is at risk. CIT is working with CIT Solutions and the ACT Government on options to help ensure the job security of the CIT Solutions workforce as well as to maintain its viability.
- CIT's cash balance is being closely monitored and remains at a sufficient level to ensure the timely meeting of payments as they fall due. CIT and the CIT Board will continue to closely monitor the impacts of the COVID 19 situation on revenue and CIT's overall financial position.

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- CIT has been consulting regularly with the [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] [REDACTED] and more closely in the last three weeks. CIT has also formally established a CIT Campus Implementation Committee including representatives from [REDACTED] and [REDACTED].
- There is a range of stakeholder views in relation to CIT's approach to returning to campus. CIT endeavours to engage and consult with all stakeholders and keep them informed of plans as they evolve. However, not all requests can be accommodated as it is not possible to apply a consistent approach or quick fix to the current environment resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic.