



# MEDIA RELEASE

## ASQA welcomes convictions relating to fraudulent documents

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The Australian Skills Quality Authority (ASQA) as the national regulator for vocational education and training (VET) welcomes the conviction of four people involved in creating false student records and other documents.

The Victorian County Court recently convicted Mr Baljit Singh, Mr Rakesh Kumar, Mr Mukesh Sharma and Ms Rekha Arora of conspiracy to defraud the Commonwealth and conspiracy to deal in the proceeds of crime.

The three men received prison sentences, with Mr Singh to serve a total of six years, with a non-parole period of three years and nine months, and Mr Kumar and Mr Sharma to serve a total of five years, with a non-parole period of three years. Ms Arora was also sentenced serve a total of three years in prison, but released immediately on a recognisance order with a \$5,000 bond.

In December 2014 the AFP and ASQA commenced Operation Aristotle a joint investigation into a conspiracy to defraud the Commonwealth and dealing in the proceeds of crime in excess of \$1 million.

ASQA Chief Commissioner Mark Paterson said the group presented fraudulent documents to ASQA in an attempt to achieve and maintain registration for their training organisations – St Stephen Institute of Technology and Symbiosis Institute of Technical Education.

Following the charges laid in 2015, ASQA suspended the registration of both training providers. The registration of St Stephen Institute of Technology Pty Ltd was cancelled by ASQA in November 2017. The registration of Symbiosis Institute of Technical Education Pty Ltd expired in 2016 and was not renewed.

ASQA values its liaison with AFP and other agencies to prevent fraudulent conduct in the training industry, and to ensure the high quality and integrity of Australia's education and training is not compromised by criminal conduct of certain individuals.

"There is no place in Australia's VET sector for companies and individuals who are not genuinely committed to providing high quality training and assessment that arms learners with the skills and experience that employers need and want," Mr Paterson said.

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