A re-elected Labor government will train 3,000 new apprentices for skill shortage industries and fund $315.5 million in TAFE campus upgrades – as part of the Skills for Growth package announced today.

Training will be focused on skills identified by industry and government as growth areas for the NSW economy such as electricians, construction managers and IT specialists.

In addition to training 3,000 new apprentices, Skills for Growth will support 780 jobs each year for four years to deliver the $315.5 million TAFE upgrades.

“NSW was the first State to bounce back from the global financial crisis and has recorded seven consecutive quarters of growth – the best of any State in Australia,” Premier Keneally said.

“Skills for Growth will deliver the people with critical skills so we can help industries in NSW continue to grow and create more opportunities for young people.”

Skills for Growth will:

- Create 3,000 fully funded training places at NSW TAFE for new apprentices in skill shortage areas;
- Invest $315.5 million for new and upgraded facilities at NSW TAFE campuses;
- Create 780 jobs each year for four years as part of the $315.5 million upgrade and construction of NSW TAFE campuses;
- Maintain Labor’s concession fee system to ensure TAFE remains accessible to all;
- Improve links between schools and TAFE campuses to expand vocational options for high school students; and
- Make industry relevant green skills education a compulsory part of all apprenticeship training.

Projects to be funded by the $315.5 million TAFE NSW program include:

- Major upgrades for Nirimba, Nepean, Bankstown and Lidcombe TAFE campuses;
- A new automotive technology centre for Wetherill Park TAFE;
- A new sustainable design centre for Enmore TAFE;
- New green electrotechnology facilities for Ultimo, Petersham, St George and Sutherland;
- New training kitchens for Wollongong TAFE;
- A campus redevelopment for Kingscliff TAFE;
- A campus upgrade for Hamilton TAFE;
- A specialist facility to teach plastering and tiling for Maitland TAFE;
- A new joinery and carpentry building for Cooma TAFE; and
- New Aboriginal training centres for Tamworth and Orange TAFE.
Minister for Education and Training, Verity Firth said: “Skills for Growth will ensure TAFE NSW remains the leading provider of vocational training in Australia – providing opportunities for everyone, whatever their circumstances, to improve their skills and participate in the strong economic growth of our State.”

“The Skills for Growth package will help to continue the impressive economic growth we’ve seen here in NSW leading out of the global financial crisis. It will provide the highly skilled workers needed to boost industries affected by skills shortages.

“To date, Barry O’Farrell has failed to put forward any plans or new ideas to strengthen vocational training or our TAFE system.”

NSW has the second lowest unemployment rate in Australia at 4.9 per cent.

This is below the national average of 5 per cent, the Victorian unemployment rate of 5.1 per cent and Queensland rate of 5.6 per cent.

“While Labor is properly resourcing our TAFE system to deliver 3,000 extra highly skilled graduates to the workforce, the Opposition are planning to cut jobs to fund their energy rebate policy,” Ms Keneally said.

“Barry O’Farrell’s policies have already cut 6,700 jobs for NSW – he needs to come clean about what other jobs would be at risk from a Liberal Government.

“Barry O’Farrell has said he wants to create 100,000 new jobs – but my government has created 138,000 new jobs in 2010 alone.

“The Liberal Party cannot be trusted to create jobs and boost employment opportunities for NSW families – everything we have heard from Barry O’Farrell so far will hurt NSW families.”

Background Notes:

- NSW Labor has provided TAFE NSW with a record recurrent annual budget of $1.813 billion – an increase of $415 million since 2002/2003, which far exceeds the growth in the Sydney CPI for the same period.
- Under Labor, TAFE NSW has expanded to serve over 520,000 enrolments in 2010 in more than 1,200 work-related qualifications offered at over 130 TAFE campuses across the State.
- Under Labor, TAFE NSW is the leading provider of vocational education and training in Australia. TAFE has a particular strength in supporting apprentices, with more than 80 per cent of NSW apprentices and trainees conducting their formal training through TAFE.
- Enrolments in TAFE NSW have grown by more than 10 per cent since 2005.
- A 2009 survey found 90 per cent of TAFE NSW graduates are satisfied or very satisfied with their training – far higher than the average for the training sector.
- Under Labor, TAFE’s service to Aboriginal people has expanded dramatically. Since 2005, the number of Aboriginal students graduating from TAFE NSW has risen by 38 per cent. Today, 5.4 per cent of TAFE’s enrolments are by Aboriginal people looking to improve their skills.
- Students with a disability account for 9.3 per cent of TAFE enrolments.
- Labor has driven the creation of green skills training courses to make sure NSW has a workforce capable of delivering the energy efficiency and environmental management initiatives that will be needed in a future affected by climate change. Already, almost 8 per cent of TAFE NSW students are enrolled in green skills training subjects.