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TAFE Directors welcomes funding overhaul on apprenticeships

TAFE Directors Australia (TDA) today welcomed the federal government's announcement that apprentices and their employers will receive greater support, with an emphasis on apprentice quality and completion.

TDA Chief Executive Martin Riordan said that apprentice completion rates need to be improved, and TAFE Directors had been advocating greater attention to apprentice recruitment and quality training, both on-the job and off-the-job.

"Apprentices are vital to Australia's future and without a strong focus on quality by employers, training providers and governments, Australia risks future skill shortages," Mr Riordan said.

"Australia's apprenticeship system underpins one of the best vocational training systems in the world.

"TAFE remains the dominant, preferred training educator in Australia, and we have been keenly interested in ensuring any reform would be targeted to help those students, and increasingly mature aged workers, enrolled as apprentices."

The redirection of funding had been advocated by TDA after a year-on-year double digit downturn in apprenticeships, impacted by large funding cuts of more than \$1 billion under Labor, and more recently, almost \$1 billion in the 2014 Budget.

Martin Riordan added: "We need to ensure that young people who have a passion for their trade get the chance to establish early workplace relationships, confidence and practice. We will be keen to monitor these new arrangements, and will be supporting employers in the transition.

"These are skills that are developed through an effective three-way partnership between employers, teachers and apprentices," he said.

TDA supports greater focus and promotion of supported pathways between VET-in-Schools, particularly School-based Apprenticeships and full apprenticeships.

TDA also supports the Government's new Training for Employment Scholarships pilot program, which will assist young unemployed people in regional areas.

"As the major and often sole training provider in regional and rural Australia, TAFE Institutes are strongly positioned to support employers under this program," Mr Riordan said.

TDA believes that youth unemployment cannot be seen solely as a training and education challenge, but must involve industry and employers to ensure that apprentices complete, not only their off-the- job training, but the full requirement of their contract with employers.

“The initiatives announced today represent some long overdue changes to the apprenticeship support system and, if well implemented, have the potential to make a lasting improvement to employment and training for the next generation of Australians,” Mr Riordan said.

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