Ai Group comment on drop in apprentice and trainee commencements:

“New data out this week from the National Centre for Vocational Education Research (NCVER) revealing a drop in apprentice and trainee commencements is concerning particularly given the importance of these trade skills for our economic future,” Ai Group Chief Executive, Innes Willox, said.

“According to the NCVER research, after growth in the first three quarters of 2013 trade apprentice commencements have disappointingly fallen from 27 500 to 26 400. Also concerning is the drop in new trainee commencements from 41 200 to 38 800.

“These downward trends reflect continuing employer uncertainty about the state of the economy. It also reinforces the urgent need to reform the apprentice and VET system to make it more appealing to both potential apprentices/trainees and employers.

“The Government needs to take urgent action to ensure Australia continues to develop the trade skills base which is vital for our future. This should include:

- Pushing employer-driven reform to the apprenticeship system, thereby removing confusing and duplicating layers of bureaucracy and administration;
- Reinstating kick-start incentive payments for apprentice trades in shortage; and
- Guaranteeing Joint Group Training Funding in the upcoming Federal Budget.

“The Federal Government should also consider the establishment of an apprenticeship commission to enable a genuine national, effective and efficient system to operate – one where employers have the confidence to engage,” Mr Willox said.

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