MEDIA RELEASE

‘ASIAN CENTURY’ REPORT TARGETS SKILLS & TRAINING
LINKAGES FOR LIFTING PRODUCTIVITY

Australian tertiary policy ‘bias’ needs overhaul in new policy response

For immediate release: 28th October 2012

Today’s release of the Henry Report on ‘Australia in the Asian Century’ deserves credit for placing education as a key pillar, and recommending that improved linkages through skills and training with Asia are fundamental to the nation’s growth and productivity.

TAFE Directors Australia (TDA) said the Henry Report places urgent pressure on the Australian Government to overhaul current tertiary education funding and policy on international student visas.

Both areas continue to dominate with great support for university students, but legislation remains in place creating imbalance to tertiary education policy, and presents enormous obstacles to skills students – both for funding and student visas. Neither is sustainable if the Henry recommendations are to be effective in lifting skills and training with Asian countries.

Chief Executive of TDA, Martin Riordan said the Henry recommendations endorse strategies by TAFE which now see some 55,000 Asian students studying a dual qualification offshore, with some 45,000 students at China polytechnics and colleges alone.

Next month the Australian Government has commissioned TDA to host an inaugural meeting in Melbourne of regional technical college and TVET provider leaders across all 18-national East Asia Summit (EAS) nations. The purpose of the EAS TVET Network is to look at skills cooperation, including steps to research possible mutual recognition of
skilled qualifications.

Green skills and collaboration on sustainability in skills curriculum will be a key part of TAFE’s work with Asian leaders. These remain areas uniquely led by Australian TAFE, with private colleges yet to demonstrate capacity at a large scale in these areas, along with the bilateral partnerships TDA and TAFE members have achieved with China, Indonesia, India and the Middle East.

“The Henry Report deserves credit for identifying education as a key pillar to future productivity growth.

“That skills and technical training were nominated as a key ingredient shows why balance is now required to tertiary education policy in Australia, and as a starting point, an urgent overhaul is justified to policies on funding, and student visas.”

TAFE Directors Australia is the peak body for Australia’s 61 TAFE (technical and further education) Institutes, with a national secretariat based in Sydney.

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ENCLOSURE – Extract from Media Statement, Tertiary Education Minister

Senator Hon. Chris Evans
EXTRACT FROM MINISTER EVANS MEDIA STATEMENT
28th October 2012

Senator Evans said young Australians will play a major role in improving community understanding of Asia, building the capabilities of our workforce and enhancing people-to-people links.

“Education is at the core of the Gillard Government’s plan to create greater links with our Asian neighbours—through universities, research, industry and business,” Senator Evans said.

“Tomorrow’s leaders need a greater understanding of the countries in the Asian region to meet the challenges posed by the changing global economy.

“Continuing to strengthen our ties through education, research and training will ensure we remain competitive in the Asian century.”

Research and teaching links will also be encouraged between Australian institutions and those in the region with support through the Australian Research Council.

Senator Evans said harmonising vocational training standards will help support a highly skilled Australian workforce able to continuously develop its capabilities in the changing economy.

“We will work with business and Australian industry partners through regional forums and bilaterally, to build in-country partnerships and to develop complementary skills and qualification assessment and recognition,” Senator Evans said.

“Expanding training services and strengthening networks between Industry Skills Councils, Australian industry and unions, and their Asian counterparts, will help also support Australian businesses and workers to have a greater presence in Asian markets.”