MEDIA RELEASE

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Subject: E-learning offers second chance for disadvantaged youth

A specialised training project is giving disadvantaged youth the chance to gain basic literacy, numeracy and employability skills.

“Disadvantaged young people need a champion to help them address their literacy and numeracy issues, and to provide guidance and positive role-modelling of behaviour to support them to succeed in their education and employment,” says project manager Kay MacDonald, Strategy and Operations Manager of the Career Skills Education Faculty at TAFE NSW Hunter Institute.

“Through the REAL.ed project, an expert team of teachers and support staff is providing a supportive, educationally sound and flexible study program, enabling participants to take the first step on their path to educational and employment success,” says MacDonald.

The project is being conducted by TAFE NSW Hunter Institute, in partnership with Break Thru People Solutions and JobQuest. It has been made possible through funding from the National VET E-learning Strategy, whose Partnerships for Participation program offers opportunities, through targeted funding, to develop e-learning approaches to improve the e-literacy, foundation skills and pre-vocational skills of individuals experiencing disadvantage.

E-learning is an integral part of the project – sessions based around the use of blogs, e-portfolios, digital storytelling and toolboxes allow trainers to better engage young people who have had limited access to technology due to socio-economic disadvantage.

“For many, the under-development of technological skills is a significant barrier to successfully gaining employment or completing higher level studies,” says MacDonald.

A critical aspect of the project is the provision of mentoring which will ensure that students experience maximum support throughout their training, with a ‘home room’ for all class sessions providing students with a sense of belonging and an expert team of teachers and other support staff will work with these young people to ensure their success.

The initiatives that have been implemented by Hunter Institute with young disadvantaged people have resulted in many success stories with many young people who had previously given up on the possibility of a better life, finally seeing their full potential as a student and employee.

The National VET E-learning Strategy is the responsibility of the Flexible Learning Advisory Group (FLAG), a key policy advisory group on national directions and priorities for information and communication technologies in the VET sector.

“By sponsoring e-learning programs, we are expanding participation and access for learners, stimulating innovative approaches to training and employment, and improving the skill levels of the Australian workforce,” says FLAG Chair Raymond Garrand, Chief Executive of the South Australian Department of Further Education, Employment, Science and Technology.

ENDS
Core statements for editorial use

- The National VET E-learning Strategy 2012-2015 (‘the Strategy’) is aimed at strengthening the Australian training sector’s use of new learning technologies, stimulating innovative approaches to increasing participation in training and employment, and improving the skill levels of the Australian workforce.
- Investment in the Strategy will stimulate innovative approaches to increasing participation in training and improve the skill levels of the Australian workforce.
- To enable the three-year program of action, government funding has been approved to:
  - capitalise on the rollout of the National Broadband Network by demonstrating the benefits of the national investment in broadband.
  - support large-scale workforce development in industry through partnerships and comprehensive e-learning advice.
  - expand participation and access for individuals through e-learning programs delivering foundation skills and e-literacy.
- The Strategy is managed by the Flexible Learning Advisory Group (FLAG), a key policy advisory group on national directions and priorities for information and communication technologies in the VET sector.
- The chair of FLAG is Mr Raymond Garrand, Chief Executive of the South Australian Department of Further Education, Employment, Science and Technology.

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