MEDIA RELEASE

Friday, 31 May, 2013

NEW TERTIARY NETWORK LOOKS TO THE FUTURE

A NEW network of leading public tertiary institutions was announced today which is designed to bring the best of vocational and higher education together.

The Australian Polytechnic Network (APN) is being founded by the University of Canberra, Melbourne’s Holmesglen Institute, Northern Sydney Institute, South Western Sydney Institute and Brisbane’s Metropolitan South Institute of TAFE.

The announcement follows the decision this month by the Minister for Tertiary Education, Skills, Science and Research, Dr Craig Emerson, to approve Commonwealth Supported Places for delivery of University of Canberra degrees at the network member campuses from 2014.

The APN leaders applauded the Minister’s vision and decided at a meeting in Melbourne yesterday to ratify the formation of the network.

University of Canberra Vice-Chancellor Professor Stephen Parker said he hoped leading tertiary providers in other jurisdictions would consider coming on board as well.

“Australia needs a more integrated tertiary system and encouragement to develop curriculum and new approaches that are focused on industry needs, work-readiness and practical learning at the highest level,” Professor Parker said.

“Universities are good at some things; vocational institutes are good at other things. Drawing on the strengths of each will add a new style of higher education which is part of the mix in some other knowledge economies but which meets Australia’s Higher Education Standards in all respects.”

The Commonwealth Supported Places now to be available in Melbourne, Sydney and Brisbane are within the load growth profile used for last year’s $26 million Structural Adjustment Fund grant to
the University of Canberra and so do not have budget implications for the Commonwealth beyond those already anticipated, but they enable UC to acquire national reach.

Holmesglen Chief Executive Bruce Mackenzie said “we now have a sustainable model for evolving this network, to provide greater opportunities for more Australian students.”

“This is a way forward for higher education in Australia – a system that spans boundaries to provide degrees and courses in a range of locations drawing on the strengths of the members.”

Mr Mackenzie said that Dr Emerson’s decision would help the federal government reach its attainment and equity targets.

“Our network of TAFE students will now have seamless pathways into UC degrees, which will open up a whole new world of opportunities, particularly for those from lower socio-economic backgrounds,” he said.

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Mr Mackenzie and Professor Parker are available for interview.

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