

Media Release

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Introducing National VET Provider Categories and Standards

TAFE Directors Australia (TDA) today released its detailed policy position on the introduction of Provider Categories and associated standards to be applied in Australia's skills and vocational education and training sector.

This would be a major step forward in the alignment of the TAFE/VET sector with the Higher Education sector as legislation for the two new national regulatory authorities is established. It is part of ongoing efforts by TDA to support the merging of the two bodies as smoothly and as quickly as possible.

Martin Riordan, CEO of TDA, said the Higher Education sector, with less than 500 Higher Education Providers (HEPs) including the 39 universities, has enjoyed the clarity of provider categories since 2000, whereas more than 5,000 Registered Training Organisations (RTOs) in VET remained a pool of unclassified entities.

He added: "The inability to distinguish between providers was one of the contributing factors to the demise of international education in the VET sector, which has caused significant damage to Australia's reputation."

The Federal Minister for Tertiary Education, Skills, Jobs and Workplace Relations, Senator the Hon Chris Evans, has pledged to re-open stakeholder consultations on legislation passed for a national VET regulator, to be known as the Australian Quality Skills Authority (AQSA). He will also consider proposals for improved alignment with the equivalent body for Higher Education, the Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency (TEQSA).

A process of review of the Higher Education provider categories for TEQSA, detailing standards and expected risk management, is already well underway. TDA has highlighted that the VET sector, with no parallel arrangements, is falling short in this regard.

A Training Providers Roundtable has been scheduled for Canberra later this month.

This issue is paramount for industry and community confidence in the shaken VET sector. Some 2.5 million public and private students enrol in TAFE and VET courses each year in Australia. The new legislation establishing AQSA, which recently passed the Federal

Parliament, sought to 'make a difference' with new standards for Australian skills and training.

TAFE Directors Australia (TDA) will submit its ***Case for Provider Categories in VET*** with the AQSA and the VET Standards Council when established.

Mr Riordan said identifying categories and standards would benefit industry and students alike, and would complement other changes in the VET and Higher Education sectors such as the revised Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF).

The MCTEE Communiqué (Nov, 2010) had noted the AQF will "result in an increasingly integrated tertiary sector, with stronger pathways between VET and Higher Education."

For a copy of the policy paper see attached document, or visit:

http://www.tda.edu.au/cb_pages/position_papers.php

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