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TAFE RESPONSE TO COAG SKILLS AND TRAINING REFORM

TAFE Directors Australia (TDA) has acknowledged today’s historic COAG agreement on a new national approach to reform of vocational education and training (VET), and the place it affords TAFE as a key driver of the reform agenda.

Martin Riordan, Chief Executive Officer of TDA, said that the COAG agreement noted only the extension of income contingent loans, which TDA argues should be accompanied by transparent and sustained investment by government, as a co-contribution to training.

TDA welcomes the broad thrust of the COAG agreement:

- A more level playing field for those undertaking vocational studies, where course quality and delivery are given greater priority.
- The move to an entitlement system for training, which will provide access to fundamental skills and employability for thousands of Australians.
- The introduction of income contingent loans for those seeking higher level skills, which removes a significant barrier to skills attainment and a hurdle faced by the VET sector in contrast to those in higher education,
- Measures to “support and strengthen” TAFE as the public provider of vocational education and training within a competitive VET landscape.
- COAG’s agreement to expedite the implementation of the revised framework for low immigration risk providers so that they are able to have access to streamlined student visa assessments in the second half of 2012.

The extra Federal funding of $1.75 billion over four years is the centrepiece of a reform program that will seek to place industry at the centre of the nation’s training needs, with a TAFE system that delivers quality and value-for-money in a competitive environment.

TDA welcomes the huge opportunity that the agreement may open to those currently having difficulty acquiring or up skilling within the current VET system.

“We will be seeking input into the negotiations between Commonwealth and the States on the detail of the final national partnership agreement,” Mr Riordan said.

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