PLEDGE TO PRESERVE TAFE IN QUALITY VET REFORMS

TAFE Directors welcomes Prime Minister’s statement

Today’s pledge by the Prime Minister to ensure Australia’s unique TAFE vocational education and training is preserved marks an historic point in the balance toward opening up taxpayer funding to Australian training to private colleges amid revelations of failed quality and past fraudulent rorting of VET funding.

TAFE Directors Australia (TDA) advocated that the role for the 61 TAFE public provider network in Australia should be preserved in current funding negotiations under skills and VET Reform with states and territories.

Prime Minister, the Honourable Julia Gillard committed future extra Federal funding totalling $1.75 billion over four years, to commitments from states and territories about how the TAFE system can continue in a competition reform environment, and other quality guarantees to Australia’s training and skills system.

Stephen Conway, Chair of TDA, attended the address by the Prime Minister at a special meeting of skills stakeholders, in Canberra today.

Mr. Conway said the commitment was welcome, along with new Government guidelines to introduce evaluations on VET quality. He said these were necessary after the early failures to open up the training market, only to find rorts and industry concerns about skills quality.

“The Prime Minister’s commitment is pleasing, as we have seen early experiences of open competition funding in jurisdictions like Victoria, where colleges collapsed, student fees lost, a grab by private colleges to seek access to publicly funded courses, with confidence in the training system shaken,” said Mr. Conway.

The Commonwealth proposals are yet to be signed by states and territories other than South Australia, and require a commitment to ‘Entitlement Funding’ with heavy subsidies for students seeking qualifications to Certificate III, and access to income contingent loans for diploma and associate diplomas.

TAFE Directors Australia represents Australia’s 61 TAFE Institutes, including the five dual sector universities with TAFE divisions, enrolling some 1.65 million students each year across 1,300 campus locations.

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