



7 December 2015

## RESPONSE FROM TAFE DIRECTORS TO NATIONAL INNOVATION AND SCIENCE AGENDA

### Industry linkages critical to TAFE access to applied research

- ***Heavy reliance on existing tertiary education funding, quarantined to universities***
- ***TAFEs will focus on new incubator program and industry growth centres***

The federal government's \$1.1 billion National Innovation and Science Agenda (NISA) contains a significant focus on existing tertiary education funding, quarantined to universities under Australian Research Council and block grants, TAFE Directors Australia (TDA) said today.

However, the 'ideas boom' under NISA will provide new opportunities for start-ups and industry investment in innovation. This will provide scope for Australia's 57 TAFE Institutes to strengthen ties with industry and create opportunities to engage in much-needed applied research.

The government's efforts to encourage educational and industry incubators will also open opportunities to TAFEs. New efforts to encourage STEM teaching will support TAFE's strong role in delivery of higher technological qualifications and skills training.

New visa access for overseas researchers to work collaboratively with industry and educators may also add to TAFE capability.

Martin Riordan, CEO of TDA, said that across the four innovation 'pillars' – Culture and capital, Collaboration, Talent and skills, and Government as an exemplar – there was a heavy reliance on existing university funding.

"The Innovation and Science Agenda is to be commended. While the initiative identified block grant and ARC-funded opportunities for universities, it will be TAFE's closer links with industry that may spur greater innovation and workforce productivity. We will consult with government to identify how this can be maximised," Mr Riordan said.

"The establishment of a dedicated Innovation and Science Cabinet Committee, chaired by Prime Minister Turnbull, may also be a useful platform for new opportunities for non-universities and TAFEs, especially those offering higher education."

TDA will be reviewing the measures and engaging in wide member consultation.

TAFE Directors Australia is the incorporated peak body for the 57 TAFE Institutes, including six dual sector universities with TAFE divisions.

**Further information:** Bob Bowden, Foresight Communications 0412 753 298

Martin Riordan, TDA 02 9217 3180 or 0402 090 035