

Media Release

13 April 2011

TIME FOR TAFE FUNDING TO BE PUT ON PAR WITH UNIVERSITIES

TAFE Directors Australia (TDA) today called for Commonwealth funding to be extended to TAFE Institutes delivering degrees in areas of skills shortage and to assist students from low socio-economic backgrounds.

In its submission to the Higher Education Base Funding Review, TDA says that extending funding to TAFE Institutes would help overcome a growing imbalance between funding to universities, and funding to TAFE Institutes that are delivering degree courses.

The Chair of TAFE Directors Australia, Mr Bruce Mackenzie said that TAFE Institutes have become more involved in the delivery of higher education programs, particularly in areas where they build upon vocational qualifications, and in fields with a strong industry focus.

“The current higher education funding system is entirely out of step with Australia’s skills needs as a result of Commonwealth funding being allocated almost exclusively to universities,” he said.

As part of its response to the Bradley Review of higher education, the Government has agreed to fund Commonwealth Supported Places (CSPs) for students undertaking eligible courses at public Higher Education Providers (HEPs).

But contrary to the Bradley Review recommendations, this funding is limited to public universities and the Batchelor Institute of Indigenous Tertiary Education.

TDA believes strongly that the definition of a “recognised public higher education provider” should be interpreted more widely and should include TAFE Institutes that are registered as HEPs.

This would enable TAFE Institutes to have access to CSPs for degrees offered in identified areas of national skills shortage. It would also allow the TAFE system access to Commonwealth funding for degrees provided to economically or socially disadvantaged students.

National Secretariat

Sydney Institute of TAFE NSW
Turner Hall , Ultimo College
Cnr Mary Ann and Harris Streets
Ultimo NSW 2007

Ph: 02 9217 3180

Fax: 02 9281 7335

Website: www.tda.edu.au

ABN: 39 070 265 734

“Better utilisation of the capacity of TAFE Institutes to provide tertiary education will assist the country to meet future economic challenges and support regional development,” the submission says.

Only two TAFE Institutes registered as HEPs have access to CSPs and these are confined to nursing and early childhood development.

“This may reflect the fact that TAFE Institutes are relatively new entrants in the higher education market, but should not continue indefinitely”.

In the competitive higher education market of recent years, TAFE Institutes have responded directly to industry demand, with a strong emphasis on a mix of knowledge and applied technical skills, particularly in areas such as building, engineering, electrical/electronics, health and early childhood.

TAFE Institutes are well or even better-placed than universities to address skills shortages because of their close association with industries and enterprises, and the role they play in workforce development.

The two-tier funding system impedes the development of a diverse tertiary sector because it represents a disincentive for TAFE Institutes to fully engage in the tertiary market.

The TDA submission says it’s time that the contribution of TAFEs to national productivity was recognised through support within the tertiary education funding framework. Also, withholding CSPs from TAFE Institutes does not meet the government’s fairness objectives since TAFE is catering to many more students from low socio-economic backgrounds.

Adopting TAFE Institute funding as part of the higher education review would help to deliver a fairer and more productive Australia, and help position the country to meet future skills challenges.

The submission will be available on the TDA website:

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

For further information:

Pam Caven, TDA, 0403 383 024