

Media Release

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TAFE SUPPORT FOR QUALITY-BASED FUNDING OVERHAUL

TAFE Directors Australia (TDA) today supported a recommendation for additional quality indicators as a condition for \$10 billion in annual public vocational education and training (VET) funding, announced in Skills Australia's report, ***Skills for prosperity: a roadmap for vocational education and training.***

TDA also welcomes a dedicated funding profile for TAFE Institutes.

TDA supports Skills Australia's goal of lifting public funding for VET by 3% – amounting to \$310 million each year – as one of five major recommendations that have been advanced by TDA. These include:

- **QUALITY** – The introduction of special quality standards before the 5,000 Registered Training Organisations (RTOs) are given access to \$10 billion in annual public VET funding
- **A LEVEL PLAYING FIELD FOR TAFE DEGREES** -- Current restrictions on Commonwealth Supported Place for degrees extended to TAFE and registered non-university VET providers
- **ROLE OF TAFE IN AUSTRALIA** -- A special funding case for TAFE Institutes, which invariably offer higher cost, higher infrastructure programmes and courses – currently rarely attracting special grants
- **APPRENTICESHIP OVERHAUL** – Support for a radical overhaul of Australian apprenticeships, and Australian Apprenticeship Centres
- **EDUCATION STANDARDS FOR VET TEACHING** – Strict new standards for VET teaching, with funding denied to those RTOs delivering the TAE (teaching) qualification without at least one additional vocational subject.

The Chief Executive Officer of TDA, Martin Riordan said the report provides a detailed plan for the continued improvement and relevance of the VET sector. TDA will study the report's detail, and the Government's response in the Federal Budget, while the report will be a major issue for TAFE members at its upcoming National Conference.

"This report is an opportunity to take an in-depth look at how the VET sector can be more responsive to the needs of industry in addressing Australia's skills shortages."

Mr Riordan says TDA supports greater access to education for all Australians through full public subsidies for all courses up to Certificate III. However he cautions that students may forego participating in higher-level courses because of the associated costs.

In recent years TAFE Institutes have been increasingly entering the tertiary education sector. TDA is particularly pleased with the recommendation aimed at ensuring a 'level playing field' between VET and higher education providers, as recommended by the Bradley Review.

“We believe TAFE Institutes will play a pivotal role in providing degree courses with a vocational focus, in areas which fill a demand or social need, and therefore they should have the same access to public funding as universities.”

TDA also welcomes measures which would allow for greater transparency and consistent regulation across the whole sector - public and private.

The report also agreed with TDA advocacy, that the new VET regulator, the Australian Skills Quality Authority (ASQA), remains grossly underfunded – overseeing more than 5,000 registered training providers, in comparison with the mere 192 higher education providers to be overseen by the tertiary regulator.

“We agree with Skills Australia that if a demand-driven system is implemented nationally, and public funding is available to private providers, then these providers should be scrutinised in line with public providers.”

The report recommends that the role of the public provider be maintained through state and territory base funding which would enable public providers to support training in areas which are not supported by a market-based system.

TDA also supports measures aimed at funding professional development for VET teachers, and raising the minimum standard of qualifications for teaching staff.

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