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INVESTMENT IN QUALITY THE REAL WINNER FOR COAG ESTABLISHING A NATIONAL VET REGULATOR

COAG BRISBANE MEETING -- COMMENT

The decision to create a National Regulator for vocational education and training will be a relief to the thousands of students currently completing vocational qualifications, as they break for Christmas.

The COAG Brisbane Communiqué is a commitment by Government to lift quality controls following a spate of recent private college failures and subsequent closures, displacing hundreds of international students and having a negative impact on Australia's prized reputation as a quality education and training provider on and off-shore.

Australia's vocational education sector has grown to be more than twice the size of universities and higher education, enrolling more than 2M students a year. Moves toward a national regulator support calls by TAFE Directors Australia to impose far stricter controls on private colleges. TDA recommends that entry requirements to the vocational education and training industry for new providers need to be more stringent, and should include the need for significant financial guarantees to protect the interests of students.

Martin Riordan, CEO of TAFE Directors Australia, said the COAG decision was far reaching.

“TAFE Institutes employ thousands of highly qualified teachers serving student needs across the nation’s 58 TAFE Institutes, including the five dual sector TAFE divisions in universities. We will keenly support an improved quality focus for registration and audit, especially as this impacts our reputation and role across domestic and international education.

“Government leaders across Federal, States and Territories have rightly identified at COAG that the scandals of past months required the most far-reaching attention,” Martin Riordan said, in Sydney.”

Martin Riordan said recommendations by TAFE Directors Australia advocated that Governments needed to not merely act rigorously, but invest more robustly to ensure that Australia’s reputation for quality provision of education and training is protected.

Mr. Riordan added: “This COAG Brisbane Communiqué now needs backing up with a credible business plan for the National Regulator and Audit regime. This issue, once settled may assist a decision for Victoria and Western Australia, which otherwise may complicate the new national arrangements by remaining outside the decision.”

BAIRD INQUIRY SUPPORT

Meanwhile TAFE Directors also supported the recent interim report reviewing international student regulation by the Hon. Bruce Baird, and noted concerns about current operations of the ESOS Fund.

TAFE Directors Australia has advocated a review of the current costly ESOS Fund management contract, instead proposing that TDA play a significant role on behalf of the Australian Government, for TAFE Institutes to be officially included when help is needed to place international students abandoned by closures of private colleges. In recent closures numerous students impacted had already been subject to previous closures and anxiety about their course fees.

TDA proposes it is ideally placed to be given a major role in new industry-based tuition arrangements for students, taking note of its current successful management in the area of tuition assurance.

TAFE Directors Australia is the national peak body for Australia's 58 TAFE Institutes, and dual sector TAFE divisions of universities, along with the Australian Pacific Technical College. TAFE Institutes enroll some 1.45M students a year in accredited training courses.

For further information:

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