



ABN: 39 070 265 734

National Secretariat

Sydney Institute of TAFE NSW

Turner Hall (Building B)

Ultimo College

**Crn Mary Ann and Harris
Streets Ultimo NSW 2007**

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Migration revamp puts everyone in limbo

TAFE Directors Australia (TDA) today cautiously welcomed the decision to replace the Migration Occupations in Demand List (MODL) but questioned the timing of the announcement given the new Skilled Occupation List will not be in place for several months.

The Acting CEO of TDA, Ms Pam Caven said the introduction of a more targeted and potentially more fluid list of occupations may better serve the needs of Australian industry and commerce, particularly if it reflects the specific needs of each State and Territory.

"The new list should have been ready to implement from day one of the announcement. We now face a period of uncertainty for potential international students who may well choose other options for their overseas studies," Ms Caven said.

TDA is also concerned that the emphasis on 'high-end applicants' may not adequately meet the emerging skill demands across the country. Recent announcements in Western Australia and Queensland of major resource contracts clearly indicate an ongoing demand for people with diploma level qualifications in many of the trade and services areas.

It is also vital that decisions on the future Skilled Occupation List are based on accurate data on the migration and employment outcomes of international students, and not merely on possibly highly emotive hearsay. TDA has called for more research into this important area or, if research already exists, the release of such data on which the Government decision is based. This sort of transparency in decision-making would assist in explaining the Government's actions to the affected students.

The vocational education and training sector should not be discriminated against because of the actions of a few unscrupulous private providers who attempted to sell permanent residency under the guise of an Australian qualification and who exploited a system which was slow to react.

TDA reaffirmed its belief that the skilled migration program greatly benefits from international students studying in Australia before applying for permanent residency. It is one of the most effective means by which potential migrants are welcomed and integrated into our workforce and our communities. A period of study in Australia makes their transition into our workforce that much easier and certainly more cost effective for the employer.

Contact: Pam Caven, TAFE Directors Australia, 02 9217 3180 or 0403 383 024