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## Media Release

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### **SKILLS REPORT ADVANCES CRITICAL ROLE OF TAFE**

TAFE Directors Australia (TDA) has welcomed the breadth of Skills Australia's vision for improving Australian workforce participation, articulated in its publication *Australian Workforce Futures*.

TDA's 58 member TAFE institutes are the largest deliverers of accredited national training delivering to 1.68 million students in locations throughout Australia. In its pre-Budget submission to the Treasurer, *Ideas and Priorities for Vocational Education and Training*, TDA outlined its priorities and funding requirements for the vocational education and training sector in achieving the COAG targets.

TDA Acting Chief Executive, Pam Caven said it is pleasing that many of TDA's priorities have been reflected in the Skills Australia report.

"More than ever there is a need for a VET workforce that is skilled in delivering training and assessment to diverse clients and is expert in contemporary work practice. TDA wholeheartedly supports Skills Australia's strategy to develop and implement a workforce development strategy for the tertiary education sector".

Located in the centre of the post-secondary education spectrum, with universities on one side and schools on the other, the structures and operations of TAFE institutes need to accommodate both the changing nature and role of the other sectors, while being well placed to continue providing leadership in vocational education and training. TDA supports the proposed "new partnership approach" with industry, community organisations and governments "to drive participation and productivity improvements".

Skills Australia's position is consistent with TDA's position – more funding is required to support individuals' participation in higher level qualifications. Additional funding should be directed to TAFE institutes, which are catering to the largest numbers of students, not to organisations that are at the margin of vocational education.

"TDA supports the report's strategies to enable individuals, especially those from disadvantaged backgrounds, to engage in education and training. TAFE institutes have proven experience and expertise in working with disadvantaged students, especially in rural and remote regions and recognize the additional costs in supporting these students to achieve employment and further study outcomes," Ms Caven said.

TDA supports the report's recommendation of targeted funding to literacy and numeracy, enabling skills that will underpin increased participation in education and training. Such skills are critical for those seeking to enter the workforce and for those in employment seeking to upgrade their skills.

TDA agrees with Skills Australia that the decline in public funding for the VET sector is of concern. Australia needs its TAFE institutes to be agile and innovative in their responsiveness to the needs of individuals and enterprises. The acknowledgement in *Workforce Futures* that public funding per student contact hour to TAFE institutes has been falling in recent years may now give impetus to this situation being redressed by both state and Commonwealth governments.

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