

Communiqué for the Ministerial Council for Tertiary Education and Employment (MCTEE) Meeting – 28 April 2010

Today, Ministers met at Swinburne University of Technology, a dual sector institution, whose successful track record in educating both Vocational Education and Training and Higher Education students highlights the potential for educational institutions to provide better connected learning pathways to students. In a presentation to members on the university's achievements the Chancellor, Mr Bill Scales, announced a new initiative guaranteeing a pathway from vocational education and training to university.

The Hon Julia Gillard, Commonwealth Minister for Education welcomed new ministers the Hon Lin Thorpe MLC from Tasmania and the Hon Jack Snelling MP from South Australia who attended their first MCTEE meeting today.

ACCESS & PARTICIPATION

Progress towards COAG and Higher Education targets

Ministers noted a report on progress toward achieving the COAG and Higher Education participation and attainment targets. They were pleased to note in particular that the higher education target (that 40% of people aged 25 to 34 years will be qualified to bachelor degree or higher) was well on track.

Ministers agreed to continue monitoring progress regularly against all COAG targets and to make adjustments to policy settings as needed to ensure these will be met.

Ministers also announced details of the Youth Attainment and Transitions National Partnerships. These National Partnerships will ensure over \$200 million in funding will flow through to the states and territories over the next four years to develop programs designed to encourage students to stay in school until year 12 and on to further education.

Programs supported by these funds will provide a range of local services including:

- individual career development sessions for students;
- local mentoring programs;
- improved work experience opportunities;
- more targeted vocational pathways for years 9 and 10 students; and
- courses better aligned with local and regional labour markets.

REGULATION, QUALITY ASSURANCE & INTERNATIONAL ENGAGEMENT

International Education

Ministers were joined by Senator the Hon Chris Evans, Commonwealth Minister for Immigration and Citizenship, who provided an update on the changes to visa processing arrangements for international students in Australia. MCTEE members welcomed the opportunity to exchange views on

the link between immigration policy, international education and the provision of training.

Ministers noted the work of the Joint Committee on International Education (JCIE) and the considerable progress on matters referred by Ministers to the Committee during 2009. Members extended their thanks to the members of JCIE. Ministers also considered measures to lift the quality of international education, and agreed to work together to address recommendations of the Baird Review which recently released its final report into the legislation that governs international education in Australia. Ministers noted in particular, the need to improve arrangements for protecting the interests, including the financial interests of international students.

Regulation & Quality Assurance

Ministers were pleased to note the progress made by Australian Government officials working in partnership with states and territory officials, and other stakeholders in the VET and Higher Education sectors, on new national regulatory requirements to drive higher quality for both VET and Higher Education. The Regulation, Quality Assurance and International Engagement Principal Committee of MCTEE will consider governance matters and report to the next meeting of MCTEE. This work will ensure a successful and seamless transition to the new regulatory arrangements announced by COAG in 2009, including the establishment of a national VET regulator and the Tertiary Education Quality Standards Agency (TEQSA).

WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT, SUPPLY & DEMAND

Improving outcomes through more joined up services

As a part of the broader Australian Government objective of delivering services in closer partnership with the States and Territories, it was agreed that opportunities to better integrate the employment services and training sectors would be explored. The Australian Government will work closely with State and Territory Governments, at a regional and local level on ways to deliver services in a more integrated way, maximising training and employment outcomes for job seekers.

Productivity Places Program Review

A mid-term review of the National Partnership for the Productivity Places Program is currently under way. Ministers were informed of progress, agreed to more agile resolution of issues in program implementation and look forward to receiving the full report in June.

DATA & PERFORMANCE MEASUREMENT

Unique Student Identifier

MCTEE discussed COAG's request that it develop a business case for the introduction of a national unique student identifier for the VET system that is capable of being fully integrated across the entire education system over time.

MCTEE agreed on the scope and principles to be considered in developing a unique student identifier.

A more effective Ministerial Council

Ministers agreed to new arrangements to improve its operations and focus on matters of national significance. These will ensure MCTEE remains a forum of strategic significance focused on issues requiring national action and maximising efficient operation.

Ministers agreed on Chairs for each of the Principal Committees which will report to MCTEE. Members also welcomed the offer from Minister Arbib to assist the Chair of the Workforce Development, Demand and Supply Principal Committee.

| Principal Committee | Chair |
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| Workforce Development, Demand and Supply | Western Australia the Hon Peter Collier MLC (Commonwealth, Senator the Hon Mark Arbib, to assist) |
| Access & Participation | South Australia The Hon Jack Snelling MP |
| Data & Performance Measurement | New South Wales The Hon Verity Firth MP |
| Regulation, Quality Assurance & International Engagement | Commonwealth The Hon Julia Gillard MP |

Ministers also adopted a new Strategic Plan for the period 2010 to 2013 and a vision for MCTEE, which is that Australia's current and future workforce needs are met through increased participation, educational attainment, skills development and skills use to achieve greater productivity.

The next meeting of the Ministerial Council will be held on 9 June 2010, in Perth, Western Australia.