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Media Release

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TAFE Institutes Urge Federal Review of Changed Model to Immigration Points System for Skilled Migration

TAFE Directors to appeal to Minister Hon. Chris Bowen

TAFE Directors Australia has requested an urgent review by Federal Immigration to consider a range of implementation strategies, to avoid a potential devastating impact under its new points system proposed for skilled migration to Australia.

The National Board of TAFE Directors Australia met in Parliament House, Canberra, late last week (18th Nov), and took part in a peak education body meeting with the Federal Minister for Immigration and Citizenship, Hon. Chris Bowen, today.

TDA is critical that the Federal Department of Immigration and Citizenship released details of its points system without adequate industry review, no Parliamentary comment, and has sought to abandon the accredited training for points model.

Martin Riordan, Chief Executive of TDA, said the new model proposed had not been tested, and Federal Immigration has proposed to launch a new skilled migration model instead of adjusting unworkable elements of the existing points migration system which led to abuses by some private colleges seeking to enrol students in courses with low skill outcomes.

The National Board of TAFE Directors Australia expressed its alarm that in the first instance, large numbers of international students may be exposed after enrolling in courses in Skilled Occupation List course areas under old regulations. These students may now be ineligible to apply for skilled migration, and TDA CEO described the transition provisions as “woefully inadequate”.

Under the proposed scheme students are required to achieve 65 points to apply for migration, however:-

- A young international student aged 18-24 who studied a trade or a diploma or even a degree in a major Australian city and worked for one year post achieving their qualification, may still have difficulty gaining the necessary 65 points applied under the new system
- The maximum number of points such a young international trade or diploma students can achieve without **IELTS 8** is 55, while a degree student can achieve 60
- Even if the international student studying a trade or diploma is aged 25-32 they will still only score 60 points without IELTS 8 – IELTS 8 would be a challenging English language level for most Australians to achieve.

Martin Riordan, Chief Executive, TAFE Directors Australia, said while TAFE supported the overall intent to drive higher qualifications and quality, the unintended consequences left a devastating outlook for international students in Australia's TAFE Institutes – and beyond into universities.

“It is clear the new ‘Points Plan’ will have a severe impact on Australians industries, especially key sectors such as building and construction and national infrastructure,” Mr. Riordan said.

“The transition arrangements are equally poorly outlined, and woefully inadequate. The regulations are a large scale re-modelling of the Australian skilled migration system with a points regime that may leave imbalances to the workforce, and at a time of increasing student costs because of the fluctuating Australian dollar, will trigger wider harm to Australia's reputation in international education.”

Mr. Riordan added: “We fear that unless the implementation is reviewed, and especially removing discriminatory age treatment of those seeking migration who are under 24 years-of-age, and differential treatment for VET qualifications vis-à-vis degrees – including para-professional qualifications -- the outlook is grim for 2011 and for the future of satisfying shortages for skilled occupations in Australia.”

TDA welcomed the reported comments from Australian Industry Group to its concerns, and seeks to engage with the Government to seek a review of the implementation.

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