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TAFE sector outlines policy priorities at national skills summit

TAFE Directors Australia joined business peak bodies, education leaders, and trade unions for Labor's National Jobs and Skills Summit in Canberra last Friday.

The summit was held at Canberra Institute of Technology, with Leader of the Opposition Bill Shorten opening the event and being joined by key economic, skills and immigration shadow ministers.

TDA CEO Martin Riordan was a panelist at the morning session, joined by Jennifer Westacott (Business Council of Australia), Ged Kearney (ACTU), and Dr Damian Oliver (UTS).

Speaking on the current challenges facing the VET sector, Mr Riordan outlined three priorities:

- Achieving improved balance in tertiary education, with equal treatment for TAFEs and vocational education with universities, and the extension of 'Commonwealth Supported Places' funding to TAFE students choosing higher education courses and degrees;
- Restoring the reputation of the VET sector with the adoption of threshold standards to create alignment between quality training providers and federal funding, and;
- Utilising Commonwealth referral powers under the federal regulator, the Australian Skills Quality Authority (ASQA), to allow delegation of self-accreditation to RTOs – aligned to threshold standards of quality providers.

TDA also welcomed the joint announcement last week by three business peak bodies - ACCI, BCA and Ai Group - urging the Commonwealth renew the National Partnership Agreement (NPA) on skills funding, worth \$1.75 billion.

TDA spoke on the need to increase apprenticeships, and agreed that the NPA was necessary in light of a 40 per cent fall in apprenticeships since 2010.

For further information:

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