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Trade Training Centres & School Vocational Colleges

National Research looks at successful models and Year 12 retention

New national research has examined models of successful alternate school and trade centres across Australia, along with options to keep students at school up to Year 12.

The research report was launched today in Parliament House by the Minister for School Education, Early Childhood and Youth, the Hon Peter Garrett MP.

The report, *'Enhancing the retention of young people to Year 12, especially through vocational skills'*, profiles nine innovative training models that have succeeded in keeping young people in education for longer.

The report featured best-practice examples of vocational programs from across Australia, and described their impact on student retention and contribution to successful pathways to further education and skills training.

The project was an initiative of peak education body The Australian College of Educators (ACE), and for skills, TAFE Directors Australia (TDA), representing Australia's 59 TAFE Institutes. The project was funded by the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR) and ACE.

The research undertaken by the Work-based Education Research Centre at Victoria University, found that the most effective programs are relevant, engaging, flexible, supportive and fun, and that they build relationships between teachers and students as well as amongst students themselves.

The factors that hinder success include:

- vocational courses not being perceived as valuable in the eyes of some parents, career advisors and teachers
- logistical issues between schools and TAFE Institutes
- the inadequate basis for funding of vocational courses

The Chief Executive Officer of the Australian College of Educators, Margaret Clark, said that too many students who enrol in a vocational course at school do not complete Year 12 or its equivalent.

“It is the most disadvantaged and least engaged students who over-participate in the lowest level courses and fail to complete courses that open up pathways to further learning or work opportunities. This report makes it clear that it doesn’t have to be that way.

“ACE was very keen to get involved in this work because we understood that VET in schools is essential if Australia is to meet its participation and social-equity targets.”

Chief Executive of TAFE Directors Australia, Martin Riordan, said the report is the result of a two-year collaboration between TDA and ACE, and was designed to add insight into the vocational programs – and trade school models – with some 40 per cent of Year 11 and 12 students now enrolling in VET in schools across Australia.

“Vocational programs for young people have been identified as having both economic and social benefits, so it is critical that we make the programs as engaging and appealing as possible in order to encourage retention,” said Mr Riordan.

“Governments across Australia have invested heavily in Trade Training Centres. In addition, Governments have set ambitious education targets for Year 12 completions, and we need to understand how vocational education can play its part in helping students achieve this important milestone.”

The national research report sets out an evaluative framework that can be used by other schools not involved in the project to plan and evaluate their own programs, and thereby improve the retention of their students.

Copies of the report are online at www.ace.edu.au and www.tda.edu.au

For further information

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