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MEDIA RELEASE

TDA RELEASES PAPER ON INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION

TAFE Directors Australia today released a paper on International Education which identifies a number of impediments to increasing the TAFE sector's export of education services and recommends a ten point action plan designed to address these problems and to enhance TAFE's international education efforts.

The Chair of TAFE Directors Australia, Gillian Shadwick, said that TDA is keen to work closely with government on the issue. "International education makes a very important contribution to the Australian economy. It also brings important wider social, cultural and other benefits both to the nation as a whole and to the education institutions and student communities directly involved.

"We believe that there is considerable potential for growing the TAFE sector's involvement in international education, especially given that the TAFE sector's share of the international education market is quite small compared with some of the other education sectors. We have therefore been putting effort into what needs to be done if TAFE is to be successful in enhancing its international education efforts.

Ms Shadwick said that "Many of the impediments stem from government requirements or policies which are within the Government's power to address. The sector would also benefit enormously if a more focused and strategic approach were taken by the Australian Government in promoting the Australian vocational and education training sector internationally. At the same time, TDA recognises that if TAFE Institutes are to be more successful in the international market, they will need to strive for service levels and market approaches that are characteristic of best practice exporters. However TAFE efforts will be in vain unless there is strong national leadership and a collaborative approach involving all government agencies."

The recommended action plan includes

- the collection of better data to enable an improved understanding of the breadth and extent of the TAFE sector's current international effort including both onshore and offshore activity
- setting goals for international education, identifying systemic barriers to achieving those goals and strategies that might be adopted
- benchmarking current performance including the performance of TAFE Institutes, TAFE project oriented companies and the role of Australian government agencies compared with international counterparts
- establishing professional development programs for those involved in international education

- action to ensure that Australian VET products are acceptable and attractive to the international market, that there are better articulation arrangements between TAFE and university courses, and that there is better coordination between assessing Australia's future skill needs, the development of export education strategies and DIMIA's policies on skilled migration and student visa requirements.
- adequate action by regulatory authorities to ensure the quality of the VET product
- assessing and analysing international student outcomes and using this information to promote the Australian system internationally
- getting better leverage from offshore programs and projects
- implementing improvements to the student visa regime; and
- ensuring that Australian visa fees and other government charges are internationally competitive

Copies of the report can be obtained from the TDA Secretariat.

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