

MEDIA RELEASE

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SCHOOLS AND TERTIARY REFORM SHOULD ACCOMPANY BIG SPENDING ON TECHNICAL COLLEGES

Australia's TAFE Directors today signaled that Labor's \$2.5B pledge for technical college facilities in secondary schools is an ideal opportunity to review the structure of secondary and current vocational education pathways.

Australian Government spending on Australian Technical Colleges has now topped \$550M, and Labor's proposed \$2.5B shows that such new public funds should be backed up with a review of existing school to higher education pathways system.

European countries have successfully lifted school participation rates to record levels, yet this required fundamental reform to school and tertiary education systems.

Martin Riordan, executive director of TAFE Directors Australia, pointed to Finland's success to achieve high school retention rates, and a big lift in skilling course completions, but only after system reform.

"Education in Finland was radically reformed to accompany big expenditures on technical college facilities," said Martin Riordan.

"Australian taxpayers – and our parents and school children – deserve better outcomes. It is certainly not clear how Australian schools could possibly deliver adequate skills without massive TAFE input and collaboration, and undoubtedly, a review of the school/skills pathway system itself.

"TAFE welcomes this new schools skilling pledge, yet we know after low enrolments at the 25 ATC Technical Schools – which had frequently excluded TAFE – that resourcing this infrastructure is vital, and a review of structure itself is essential."

The Finnish schools tertiary model was presented recently to a Worldskills Conference in Melbourne. (see Attachment)

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