

Media Release

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TAFE INSTITUTES CHALLENGE TO COAG SKILLS SUMMIT

WHITE PAPER ON REFORM

A 12-point strategy to streamline vocational courses and qualifications, widen R&D and innovation to Australia's TAFE Institutes – and extend reforms to TAFE itself -- was today unveiled by Australia's TAFE Institutes.

“Investing in Productivity! is a three-stage strategic map for change.

TAFE Directors Australia, the peak body representing Australia's 55 TAFE Institutes, prepared the White Paper to COAG before its Skills Summit, due 13 April 2007.

TAFE Directors outlined to COAG leadership that a combination of micro economic reforms – including to TAFE -- could eliminate what have been historic divisions between the higher and vocational education sectors. These issues continue to impact perceptions by parents and those choosing to enter skilling as a career.

The Paper's vision is to restore Skills Training as a First Career Choice under COAG in 2007.

Martin Riordan, executive director, said the “Triple A” strategy begins by challenging COAG leaders to recognise Australia's TAFE Institutes at a unique stage of maturity - - and success. It advocates for TAFE Institutes to move toward a ‘next phase’ of governance and development – as with universities decades before.

The 3-phased ‘Triple A’ Strategy provides for 12 recommendations, including:

- **Accelerating Skills** – EG -- Support for shortening apprenticeships, especially where technologies have created more specialist demand for specialist segments within the broad area of building and construction, and related industries
- **Advancing Skills** – EG – Introducing R&D and innovation opportunities for firms working with TAFE, in line with opportunities already available for companies with the Co-operative Research Centres (CRCs) operating with universities, and in line with the recent review on research by the Productivity Commission.
- **Activate Skills** – EG – The Australian Trade Diploma to widen pathways into trades, and Enterprise Qualifications to articulate the role of the associate professional. Governance reform also is listed as a further recommendation to enable advanced skilling capability by Institutes.

Martin Riordan, executive director, said the challenge for the COAG Skills Summit was not to restrict their agenda to top-up investment options in the sector.

“The COAG governments must signal to younger and older Australians that to relaunch Australian skills, governments must take action to eliminate the current deep structural discrimination dividing the university and the vocational education systems – impacting career choices.”

He added: “Making vocational education a First Choice Career will challenge COAG.

“This ‘*Triple A Strategy*’ builds on our Discussion Paper from September last year. It shapes TAFE as a contender to engage in rebuilding skilling, and across the 12 recommended reforms, see the unique TAFE infrastructure, skills teaching strength, and geographical advantage across city and regional areas, as assets to be utilised to rapidly boost skilled occupations.

“The winner will be in the outcomes: To accelerate how TAFE contributes toward easing worsening skills shortages facing Australia, and energise further a great brand and institution.”

TAFE currently enrolls 1.6M students each year for vocational education and training.

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***Investing in Productivity!* – Highlights of the 3-Stage Reform Strategy:**

1. ACCELERATE SKILLS DEVELOPMENT

- **SHORTER SPECIFIC SKILL APPRENTICESHIPS** - Create a set of National Qualifications to officially recognise specialised apprenticeships and implement competency based apprenticeships, recently introduced in various Australian states, for specialist trades skills.
- **OFFSHORE SKILLED ASSESSMENT CENTRES** - Increase the functions of the proposed COAG Skilled Assessment Centres to provide enhanced services to existing workers in countries where migration could be a high priority.

2. ADVANCE SKILLS DEVELOPMENT

- **ENTERPRISE QUALIFICATIONS** - Work with industry to articulate the role of the associate professional in the enterprise and ensure VET qualifications are available or created to meet these needs.
- **ARTICULATION PATHWAYS** - Increase the delivery of higher end VET qualifications that articulate to employment outcomes as well as higher level VET/university courses.
- **BUSINESS INCENTIVES FOR ACCREDITED TRAINING** - Undertake a study into methods to increase private sector investment in VET including incentives both for the private sector and the VET provider.
- **R&D MODEL FOR INVESTMENT** - Create a source of funding, similar to the Australian Research Council or Cooperative Research Centres programs and Australian Government Endeavour Scholarship Program, to encourage TAFE research and development.
- **TAFE GOVERNANCE** - State and Territory governments to take note of recommendations from the vocational education reviews in Queensland (April 2006) and from NSW iPART enquiry (December, 2006) to enhance financial flexibility and governance accountability for TAFE Institutes, especially with TAFE increasingly delivering programmes at domestic and international platforms.

3. ACTIVATE SKILLS DEVELOPMENT

- **THE AUSTRALIAN TRADE DIPLOMA** - Develop Australian Trade Diploma pilot programs in areas of critical skills shortages.
- **NATIONAL ROLL-OUT OF YOUTH GUARANTEE** - Adopt the Victorian model of Youth Guarantee Australia-wide.
- **INDIGENOUS TRAINING GUARANTEE** - Extend the Youth Guarantee to include indigenous people up to 30 years of age. This should be accompanied by new literacy and numeracy programmes.

- **FEE SUPPORT FOR VET** - Adopt international practice by extending fee support for high level qualifications across the VET sector. These should be accompanied by literacy and numeracy programmes.
- **LITERACY AND NUMERACY** - Extend the Human Capital Reform Agenda, specifically the high level outcomes on literacy and numeracy, to include adult key target groups.