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## **BUDGET COMMENT 2007**

### **GOVERNMENT SWING TO SKILLS WELCOMED**

#### ***'FEE HELP' TO CREATE MORE EQUITY TO TAFE EDUCATION***

New measures totalling \$668M to support skills have been welcomed by TAFE Directors Australia. The DEST website [www.dest.gov.au](http://www.dest.gov.au) contains further information, with Budget Statement 3 showing funding allocations.

The 2007 Budget seeks to financially motivate TAFE Institutes to provide articulated diploma and advanced diploma courses, and collaborate extensively with universities. An additional feature includes cash-reimbursements to apprentices to encourage a lift in completions of skilled courses.

Martin Riordan, executive director, said the FEE HELP initiative will not apply widely for TAFE Institutes for some time, given the conditions that Treasurer Peter Costello applied to the measure. He added:

- TAFE Directors Australia's advocacy for FEE HELP to diploma and advanced diploma students has been recognised. The motivation for TAFE Institutes to ensure these courses are articulated to higher education is supported.
- Minister Julie Bishop's initiative for a new \$209M Structural Adjustment Fund to motivate Victoria-style dual sector university-TAFE structures to tertiary education will recognise the need for resource scarcity in regional Australia, and should fund opportunities toward more effective student services that are articulated courses.
- New cash grants to support low-paid apprentices is timely, with up to 50% of skilled students now dropping out of courses, in a buoyant economy.

A significant challenge remains for schools and universities to better recognise the opportunities in skills, and partnering with TAFE Institutes to widen student and parent choice for careers.

TAFE Directors Australia is the peak incorporated body representing Australia's 55 TAFE colleges and institutes.

*For further information:*

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