



TAFE DIRECTORS AUSTRALIA 2007 NATIONAL CONVENTION

CONVENTION COMMUNIQUE

Following is a Communique from the TAFE Directors Australia (TDA) National Convention - *Reframe, Refresh, Fresh Start* - which concluded in Melbourne today:

Australia's TAFE Institutes have the opportunity to bring leadership to the Skilling Australia framework, focusing on TAFE autonomy and lifting investment in skilling.

TAFE Directors received a Convention message from the Prime Minister, the Hon John Howard MP, advocating closer linkages with universities in developing seamless educational pathways.

The TDA National Convention has provided detailed plans from both the Federal Government and Opposition parties, supporting autonomy for TAFE Institutes.

Autonomy

There was increased support from political parties and TDA for TAFE Institutes to embrace greater independence and move to a system of self-governance - allowing the Institutes to develop partnerships with local business and industry and provide courses and training directly relevant to the local requirements of students.

This was a dominant theme through the Convention, following two days of presentations from senior Government and Opposition spokespeople, international speakers and representatives from TAFE and industry.

Business of TAFE

- There were a number of calls to ensure the TAFE workforce had the necessary skills and capability to meet the training requirements of the broader Australian workforce;
- There was support for TAFE Institutes to develop a more entrepreneurial culture to better meet the needs of local business, industry and students;
- The Convention heard TDA Deputy Chair, Bruce McKenzie, speak of the need to ensure regional TAFE Institutes have the necessary funding and support for tailored courses to meet regional growth needs.

The Hon Andrew Robb, AO MP

Federal Minister for Vocational and Further Education, the Hon Andrew Robb AO MP, told the Convention TAFE Institutes needed to become more entrepreneurial and less bureaucratic, or risk increased competition from private training providers. Mr Robb also made it clear the Government would be using the COAG funding arrangements with the States to press for greater self-governance

Stephen Smith MP

Opposition spokesman for Education and Training, Stephen Smith MP, released an 11-point plan to detail the strategic focus for Labor, if elected. While refusing to release detailed funding proposals, Mr Smith's address focused on three imperatives:

- Labor's \$2.5 billion infrastructure investment for schools, indicating TAFE would be critical to this pledge;
- Workforce engagement, especially mature-aged males; and
- Addressing future skilling needs with an ageing population, and their engagement.

He called for greater devolution of decision making to local TAFE Institutes, in order to provide early warning of skill shortages and to provide better flow of information and personnel between industry and TAFE.

Institute for Trade Skills Excellence

Chief Executive of the Institute for Trade Skills Excellence, Brian Wexham, noted forecasts of an annual 15% growth in skills requirements. This growth will present new opportunities and capability for TAFE Institutes to expand their business in fields such as mining and IT.

Skilling Australia

The Convention heard that the issues confronting the TAFE sector in Australia were not unique. Speakers from Scotland and New Zealand confirmed that similar issues confront vocational education and training providers around the world.

Business/Tertiary Roundtable

Several Convention sessions - including a Business/Tertiary Roundtable, Reframing the Focus on Youth, the COAG Agenda and TAFE/Industry Partnerships - highlighted issues such as attracting apprentices, providing relevant training packages and working with employers and industry, as vital to the future of TAFE.

For further information on the TDA Conference, including sessions and speakers, please refer to the TDA website www.tda.edu.au and link to the Conference.

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