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'TOWARD A NATIONAL TAFE ACTION AGENDA'

15 November 2006

A new **National TAFE Action Agenda** for federal, state and territory governments on Australian skills shortages will be a feature of the COAG review on skills, according to TAFE Directors Australia (TDA).

One proposed element of the Action Agenda - an innovative new Trade Diploma qualification - may be launched as a key part of a national re-packaging of trade skills to Australian school leavers and adult Australians.

The 2006 National Conference of TAFE Directors Australia met in Adelaide at the TDA National Conference to prepare a '*White Paper*' from TAFE to submit to the April 2007 Meeting of the Council of Australian Government (COAG).

The highlight of the **National TAFE Action Agenda** included proposals to forge industry and stakeholder agreement for TAFE to better respond to the national skills shortages.

A first step would be special Industry Working Groups to develop for domestic VET students a new Trade Diploma qualification -- a course already offered for international students in selected general vocational areas such as cooking.

The Trade Diploma might supplement existing apprenticeship schemes, and would be a key vehicle to re-launch trade skills to school leavers and mature-age students.

TDA is already in discussions with one state for a pilot launch of the Trade Diploma for selected skilled trades, with negotiations expected in coming weeks.

Martin Riordan, executive director, said the **National TAFE Action Agenda** would be the key to successfully indicate to VTE funding and licensing authorities how TAFE can significantly contribute to new solutions to Australia's skill shortages.

Other measures under review for the **NATIONAL TAFE Action Agenda** include:-

- **PRODUCTIVITY IN EDUCATION** – TAFE institutes to quickly respond to Australian Government data showing a lift in engagement in vocational education as vital to Human Capital development – and engaging some 750,000 Australians without post-secondary school qualifications. This will begin with TAFE Institutes wishing to be recognised as eligible Registered Training Authorities for the Prime Minister’s \$837 million skills voucher scheme
- **HIGHER EDUCATION PROTOCOLS REVIEW** -- Review of regulations curtailing delivery of higher-level skill qualifications in some state and territory by TAFE institutes. The overhaul of Higher Education Protocols is designed to match industry seeking higher level skills training for workers.
- **REVIEW OF AUSTRALIAN TECHNICAL COLLEGES** – That COAG review efficiency of the existing \$350 million investment for 25 Australian Technical Colleges, mostly with contracts excluding collaboration with TAFE skilled campuses, yet with few student enrolments. TAFE seeks an independent audit review across ATCs to compare new vocational college education models launched in NSW, Victoria and South Australia.
- **INNOVATION PLATFORM** – Development of new opportunities for innovation collaboration with community and industry partnerships.
- **PUBLIC PRIVATE PARTNERSHIPS** – Opening ‘Public Private Partnerships’ to create new skill delivery in specialist areas, such as the Oil and Gas Institute joint venture with Woodside Petroleum, Chevron, Honeywell and other corporations with Challenger TAFE, WA.
- **RESEARCH & DEVELOPMENT** – Creation of a suitable governance framework for industry investment in research and development, as currently takes place with higher education institutions.
- **TAFE GOVERNANCE** – Review of TAFE governance, following calls by Queensland and NSW VTE inquiries to create more effective financial platforms for TAFE colleges to compete across Australia and internationally.

Mr Riordan said the 55 TAFE Institute CEOs have endorsed a new level of industry and community engagement to successfully deliver a dynamic **National TAFE Action Agenda** before COAG meets in April.

“The broad principles adopted suggest TAFE will emerge in 2007 as an even stronger competitor and provider of quality vocational education,” he said.

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