

MEDIA RELEASE

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BACKPACKER TOURISM OPPORTUNITIES TO FLOW FROM NEW EUROPE-AUSTRALIA TAFE LINKS

TAFE taps into multi billion dollar international backpacker market to step up study in Australia

Australian TAFE Institutes may play a key role in cementing Australia's position as one of the world's great backpacker tourism destinations following a proposal to link skills study in Australia with European backpacker travel.

The plan would also help create shared teaching opportunities between leading European and Australian TAFE skill institutes.

Martin Riordan, Chief Executive of TAFE Directors Australia (TDA), representing Australia's 57 TAFE Institutes, today raised backpacker tourism as an innovative area for collaboration between Australian and European training institutes in order to address shortages in skills training, and facilitate inter-country backpacking.

Mr Riordan was addressing the iMOVE Education Export Conference in Berlin, hosted by Germany's Ministry of Education.

He participated in a new inter-country workshop to lift interest in skilling and find ways to jointly boost vocational education as an export industry.

"New and innovative collaboration is possible between Europe and Australia, where both countries enjoy developed vocational education systems," he said.

"There is a need to create innovative pathways to better link with domestic and international students seeking skilled trades courses, including health sciences, nursing and technology and new media based courses – in Europe and Australia."

Australian education already ranks No 4 in world student destinations – behind the US, UK and France, and the surge in students seeking Study in Australia had helped education rise to the nation's third largest export industry.

Martin Riordan said: "The greatest limiting factor to Australian education to date has been its singular focus and investment on universities, at the expense of TAFE.

"Recent Australian Education International (AEI) data confirmed growth rates of 44% in international student enrolments with vocational education supporting continued lifts in students from Asia-Pacific nations."

Mr. Riordan said TAFE Institutes in Australia were seeking a more sustainable model, with new levels of collaboration.

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“Our message to German educators and European vocational education systems is that far from relying on age-old national competition, recent Australian success shows that a key growth strategy for vocational education will be to collaborate across our specialist skilling institutes, nationally and internationally,” he said.

“This might include inter-country educational skill agreements allowing backpackers to begin competency based skills training in Australia, and completing these in Germany or other EU home markets.

“TAFE Institutes might also link with European Institutes, to support major new vocational education college projects being established in India, Pakistan, SE Asia and Greater China.”

“This collaboration might include the exchange of senior staff, incentives to create secondment of multinational executives into other country education systems, to align institutes and technology with industry export and manufacturing needs.

“This is a new model for growth to create ‘win-win’ outcomes for both Europe and Australia, and deliver wider opportunities for students, while accelerating education as a robust export industry for the 21st Century.”

TAFE Directors Australia (TDA) last month outlined its 2007 Election Manifesto, *‘TAFE Directions: Balancing Tertiary Education’* which called on both political parties to significantly support Australia’s TAFE skill institute, and unshackle regulation to allow their growth to meet new regional demands.

TDA is the incorporated body representing Australia’s 57 TAFE and technology Institutes.

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