



MEDIA RELEASE

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Cisco, Optus, and TAFE Directors Australia partnership to strengthen digital skills, with an innovation focus

- Cisco, Optus and TAFE Directors Australia sign a Memorandum of Understanding to meet future digital skills needs
- Follows the study tour to Niagara, Toronto, and Washington DC, supported by Cisco and Optus
- Report from the study tour, launched ahead of the [TDA national conference](#), entitled [Capitalising on the 'Blue Tech' opportunity](#) shares the vital role TAFE plays in equipping the Australian workforce for a digitised world

Cisco, Optus and TAFE Directors Australia (TDA) have signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to collaborate on a range of initiatives, which aims to ensure Australia can help to meet the future skills needs of the digital economy.

The MoU consolidates our working relationship with Cisco and Optus, to strengthen digital skills and the collaboration between industry partners and TAFEs as the cornerstone of the vocational education and training (VET) sector. The MoU arose from a recent TDA study tour, with participants from TAFEs and industry, to Niagara, Toronto, and Washington DC, supported by Cisco and Optus. The MoU also brings together the learnings of the study tour that are encapsulated in the *Capitalising on the 'Blue Tech' opportunity* report, to be launched at the TDA National Conference this week.

Automation, artificial intelligence and machine learning are transforming jobs across the economy and also creating new ones.

Given the state of flux within industries, and the promise of more to come, managing talent pipelines has never been more challenging. These challenges require firms and industries to partner with educators and training institutions to engage on key public policy issues, including on applied learning and technical skill acquisition.

The Chief Executive Officer of TDA, Craig Robertson, said TAFEs continue to play a vital part through their distinctive role in VET, schooling and higher education, benefitting both the community and the economy.

“TDA and TAFEs welcome this opportunity to closely collaborate with global technology firms Cisco and Optus.

“We know disruption caused by technology will be so profound that new workers are unlikely to have all the deep technical skills required and graduates will need to have ‘learnt how to learn’, be coachable and have the skills required to work in teams and collaborate.”

The report, *Capitalising on the 'Blue Tech' opportunity*, delves into the areas where TAFE plays a key role in equipping the workforce for a digitised world.

Cisco's Head of Human Resources for Australia and New Zealand, James Comer, shares the importance of building the skills of the future, as outlined in the report. "As we look for the best talent, nothing is more important to us and our businesses right now than building skills for the future. Cisco is accelerating investment into vocational education with a focus on digital skills and cybersecurity to support the creation of a workforce that is suitably equipped to gain the greatest benefit from digitisation."

"Building the skills for the future keeps us on the edge of innovation and allows us to transform our industries, businesses and people. Working closely with the VET sector is key to fuel Australia's talent for years to come," said Mr Comer.

Nicholle Duce, Head of Human Resources, Optus, said that as technology progresses faster than ever and continues to change our lives, it's important that industry, government and academia invest in the skills needed for the Fourth Industrial Revolution.

"Without effective strategies developed and planned collaboratively by business and academia, Australia risks widening its ingenuity gap. Joining forces with the VET sector helps us align curriculums to meet the digital needs of the economy and ensure enterprises and employees can realise their full potential during an age of unprecedented digital disruption," said Ms Duce.

The recent TDA study tour also identified several significant trends impacting skills development and human capital needs, outlined in the report, which includes:

- Industry needs people equipped for a dynamic, digitised world
- TAFEs must be funded to do applied research to remain relevant to industry
- There is a rising tide of 'Blue Tech' or Digital Trades that are the natural market for TAFE

See the report on the TDA Study tour: [*Capitalising on the 'Blue Tech' opportunity - The vital role TAFE plays in equipping the Australian workforce for a digitised world.*](#)

TDA is also pleased to announce Cisco and Optus as Gold Sponsors of the TDA Convention 2019 in Brisbane 3-5 September, with the theme of the [*Power of TAFE.*](#)

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TAFE Directors Australia is the peak national body representing 28 TAFE institutes, including six dual sector universities with TAFE divisions.