



MEDIA RELEASE

2 April 2019

Budget points to a new, positive future for VET

TAFE Directors Australia (TDA) said that the Government, in responding to the Expert Review of VET by the Hon Stephen Joyce, has signalled a new direction for vocational education and training (VET) in Australia.

“The Government is to be congratulated for setting out a new direction for VET and focusing on the future, through its skills package,” the CEO of TDA Craig Robertson said.

In a plan that some in the sector may liken to bringing back the Australian National Training Authority, the Government will establish a National Skills Commission which will look at the skills and knowledge needed for the future and develop efficient pricing for training in conjunction with the Productivity Commission.

Mr Robertson added, “job projections show that the majority of new jobs need VET-trained entrants, so the task before it will be clear in terms of current training demand.”

In a welcome development, the package acknowledges that the VET sector is a key agent in the economy, preparing Australians for future work.

“TAFEs have always had this as their mission but VET qualifications which are determined centrally by government simply specify skills needed for today’s jobs. We must build in students the capabilities to navigate the future,” Mr Robertson said.

TDA also cautioned that the task set for the commission of developing efficient pricing for training must not be seen as a signal for further cuts in funding for training.

“The Government is already out of touch with costs of training in the loan limits it places on VET Student Loans, which have not been adjusted in this Budget.

“The VET sector has suffered from efficiency cuts for the last 20 years resulting in quality concerns which have dogged the sector. An efficient price must be the reasonable price to deliver a quality training experience,” he said.

The government will double incentive payments to employers to \$8000 for engaging an apprentice in high priority occupations, and the apprentices will receive \$2000. TAFEs train the vast majority of apprentices and welcome efforts to grow numbers.

It is hoped the Government will engage with states and territories to ensure funding is provided for off-the-job training, a crucial element of apprenticeship success and the avenue for training in new technology and techniques.

A concern in the package is the small proportion allocated to actual delivery.

“It is disappointing that only twenty per cent of the package is dedicated to delivery at a time when every data point shows declining training,” Mr Robertson said.

TAFEs and TDA will work with the Government to help in the design and delivery of the proposals outlined in the Budget.

“Design without TAFE at the table is poor design,” Mr Robertson concluded.

TDA will comment later on the Report of the Joyce Expert Review of VET .

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