



11 May 2017

TAFE welcomes Federal Budget measures to support a national training effort

TAFE Directors Australia (TDA) has welcomed measures in the federal Budget directed to improving opportunities for training in priority areas of the economy and placing greater focus on rebuilding apprenticeships.

The Chief Executive of TDA Craig Robertson said the budget provided good news for the TAFE system, with the establishment of the \$1.5 billion Skilling Australians Fund which will effectively replace the National Partnership on Skills Reform.

The skills initiative will be part-funded through fees paid by businesses that employ skilled migrants and will make funds available to the states, which must meet performance criteria and make matching contributions.

“TAFEs appreciate the focus of the Skilling Australians Fund,” Mr Robertson said.

“We would like to work with the Commonwealth, state and territory governments to ensure TAFEs assist in delivering on the priorities the government has identified.

“TDA suggests governments could consider supporting national projects of significance that will support large employers to engage in the training system,” he said.

The majority of training delivered by TAFEs support the priorities of the Fund and TAFEs stand ready to support the delivery of these projects.

As part of the new skills fund, TDA welcomed the focus on skills transitions for ex-defence personnel, following the TDA’s role in the ADF Skills and Apprenticeships forum in Canberra in March where the issue was discussed among stakeholders.

TDA also welcomed the new apprentice mentoring service which will provide \$60 million over two years to deliver specialised mentoring focussed on the first two years of an apprenticeship.

“This type of support for apprentices is a positive initiative because completion rates in some areas are unacceptably low, and TAFE has a key role in managing the needs, obligations and challenges faced by many apprentices in training,” Mr Robertson said.

The government’s decision to fully fund the NDIS will see the creation of a \$33 million Local Care Workforce Package to increase the number of local workers to meet the rise in demand for disability workers as well as aged care workers in response to the ageing population.

The government has also committed to investing \$55 million over five years to help Close the Gap employment target for Indigenous Australians – a measure with a strong focus on pre-employment training, training for Indigenous prisoners and wage subsidies.

“Overall, the budget has sought to balance a challenging fiscal environment with a need to rebuild the VET system and lift the number of people undertaking training and apprenticeships,” Mr Robertson said.

“Much will depend on the states playing their part in ensuring that genuine projects of significance are put forward with matching funding under the new arrangements.

“Across the VET sector, it will be important that there is sustained effort and investment so that skills creation and job prospects for Australians are not jeopardised.

“The TAFE sector looks forward to working with the states, Commonwealth and with its industry partners to ensure that the training effort is directed to where it can be most effective in terms of key jobs, skills and true nation building.”

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