

MEDIA RELEASE

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TDA welcomes expanded role for TAFEs proposed in Universities Accord Final Report

The TAFE sector has welcomed the expanded role and increased opportunities for the public sector provider outlined in the recommendations of the Australian Universities Accord Final Report, released today.

The report, released by Education Minister Jason Clare proposes a new tertiary education funding model that would see a significant increase in publicly funded higher education places, including at TAFEs.

The report proposes an ambitious target of lifting the share of the workforce with a VET or university qualification from the current 60% to 80%. As part of that, the number of 25–34-year-olds with a VET qualification would reach 40% by 2050.

The Chief Executive Officer of Tafe Directors Australia (TDA), Jenny Dodd, said the report recognises the central role of TAFE in meeting Australia’s skills targets and the great opportunity to enhance its contribution, especially for equity groups.

“This is a landmark piece of work that sets out a clear path to creating a seamless tertiary education sector where there is greater collaboration and integration between universities and TAFEs.

“The report recognises the enormous potential for TAFEs, with their established links with students and industry, to work together with universities to deliver the significantly larger numbers of tertiary students.

“We welcome the work of Professor Mary O’Kane and the Accord panel that has consulted widely in developing this important vision for the future and responding to a genuine need for change,” Ms Dodd said.

The report says the proposed expansion of tertiary education will require “new institutions, more diverse operating models and more cross-provision between VET and higher education providers, including opportunities to expand the role of TAFEs.”

A key element in ramping up skills delivery, would be through use of collaborative infrastructure such as the new TAFE Centres of Excellence. The review also says TAFEs could be assisted to broaden their higher education offerings to “become a new model for dual-sector, teaching-only delivery”.

The report recommends a pathway for TAFEs to become self-accrediting in VET at the Australian Qualification Framework (AQF) Level 5 and above in areas of national priority.

It calls for a new, independent tertiary education Commission that would oversee the sector. As a first step the review recommends the Commission, “working with TEQSA, encourage and assist TAFEs to build the institutional capability to attain self-accrediting status in higher education”.

It also recommends that Commonwealth supported places be allocated to high-performing TAFEs and TAFE Centres of Excellence offering higher education – a measure that would significantly improve student equity and do much to improve parity of esteem across higher education and VET.

“This is an important step in recognising the valuable part of TAFE dual sector providers and the strength that can come from the two sectors working more closely,” Ms Dodd said.

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TAFE Directors Australia is the peak national body representing 28 TAFE institutes, including six dual sector universities with TAFE divisions and nine TAFEs that are also non-university higher education providers.