MEDIA STATEMENT
2 April 2012

Australia-US Joint Skills Initiative a step in the right direction

The Australian Council for Private Education and Training (ACPET) today commended the Commonwealth Government for recognising the need to work cooperatively with countries like the United States to meet the skills needs of the Australian construction and resources sectors.

Speaking after today’s launch of the Joint Skills Initiative by Minister for Tertiary Education, Skills, Science and Research, Senator Chris Evans; Minister for Immigration and Citizenship, Chris Bowen MP; and the United States Ambassador to Australia, Jeffrey Bleich; ACPET CEO, Claire Field, called the initiative “an important step forward for Australia”.

“While we all recognise the opportunities the construction and resources sectors offer to Australian workers and those currently unemployed, the reality is that the number of projects underway and in the pipeline is too great for a ‘locals only’ approach. The only sensible response is to look around the region for other workers to assist,” Ms Field said.

“An open rather than closed door to skilled migration is what the country and leading employers need to make these projects a reality.”

Ms Field said she was particularly heartened by Ambassador Bleich’s commitment to ensure that returning US veterans are aware of the opportunities offered by this initiative.

She noted that currently US forces do not receive formal credentials for the skills gained while serving. This initiative provides an important opportunity to have their skills recognised and to gain employment in areas where their skills are needed.

“It is heartening to see the Commonwealth Government take this step today. ACPET looks forward to seeing the government work with other governments to assist Australian employers in meeting the skills challenges faced by the resources and construction sectors,” Ms Field said.

Ms Field also urged the Commonwealth to commit to offer post-study work rights for international students studying at trusted VET providers as another means of ensuring Australia has the skilled workers it needs for a prosperous future.

Claire Field is available for comment.

Media contact: Trish Bancroft 02 8280 8116