MEDIA RELEASE

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Ensuring a sustainable tertiary education sector

The Minister for Tertiary Education today announced that courses offered by public universities leading to qualifications below bachelor degree level will be subject to annual allocations agreed between the Government and each university.

This decision will ensure that the higher education sector does not expand at the expense of TAFEs and other vocational education and training providers in the new demand driven funding system which comes into effect next year.

Qualifications such as diplomas and advanced diplomas can be offered in both the VET and higher education sectors.

With the introduction of the demand driven funding system, vocational education and training providers have expressed concerns about their ability to maintain market share at the diploma and advanced diploma level.

“The changes announced today signal the Government’s desire for universities and VET providers to complement each other in the delivery of courses that meet Australia’s training and education needs,” said Senator Chris Evans, Minister for Tertiary Education.

“The Government does not wish to see universities offering higher education Commonwealth supported places next year in courses below bachelor degree level to the detriment of the vocational education training sector.”

The designation of diplomas, advanced diplomas, associate degrees and enabling courses means that places for these courses will be allocated by the Minister rather than funded on a demand driven basis.

Courses at the diploma, advanced diploma, associate degree and enabling level account for only 3% of total Commonwealth supported undergraduate places at Australian universities.

The Government has previously announced that non-research postgraduate degrees and medical degrees offered by public universities will not be part of the
demand-driven funding system from 2012 and these degrees will continue to be subject to annual allocations agreed between the Government and each university.

Diplomas, advanced diplomas, associate degrees and enabling courses will now be treated in the same way.

The decision supports the Government’s objective of creating a more joined-up tertiary sector which promotes greater collaboration between higher education providers and vocational education and training providers to increase opportunities for students.

“A number of universities are putting in place better articulation arrangements so that students who complete TAFE degrees and other VET qualifications are given credit for prior study and streamlined entry into bachelor degree programs,” said Senator Evans.

“We want to see greater collaboration between universities and TAFEs, rather than have universities expand their course offerings downwards in the demand driven funding system to push TAFEs out of the market.”

The Government will shortly be announcing the outcomes of the Structural Adjustment Fund applications. The funding for the successful projects will also support greater collaboration and pathways between the VET and higher education sectors.

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