MEDIA RELEASE
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ACPET Welcomes COAG Commitment to Skills Reform

The Australian Council for Private Education and Training (ACPET) today welcomed a commitment by Minister for Tertiary Education, Skills and Workplace Relations, Senator Chris Evans, and the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) to develop a skills reform agenda by early 2012 that would see demand-driven funding for education adopted in more States and Territories around Australia.

Following the lead of Victoria and South Australia in moving to a demand-driven funding model for Vocational Education and Training (VET), the agreement reached by COAG on Friday is critical to addressing skills shortages, increasing economic productivity and enhancing individual life chances for students.

ACPET CEO, Claire Field, said Victoria’s reforms to the VET system have boosted education and training enrolments and lifted economic productivity in the State, and she commended COAG for its efforts to widen the reforms to other States and Territories.

“Demand driven funding for VET is great for Australian businesses looking for skilled employees. Victorian reforms have seen a 23% growth in government-funded enrolments in fields that address skills shortages, such as health, social assistance and construction,” Ms Field said.

“These reforms will also be great news for students, particularly those from disadvantaged backgrounds. In the 12 months since implementing these reforms in Victoria, enrolments by students with diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds are up by 26%, enrolments by students with a disability are up 22% and Indigenous student enrolments increased by 16%.”

Ms Field called on COAG to ensure that by early 2012 the agreed reforms are backed by five year plans demonstrating how the States will move during that period to a truly demand-led system.

“Having a choice of training provider is a great opportunity for students, but it is vital to the success of these reforms that prospective students and businesses understand the increasing options they will have for training, so that they can make an informed choice.

Ms Field also said it would be important that the newly established Australian Skills Quality Authority (ASQA) is adequately resourced during any transition process.

“ASQA must strike the right balance between tackling pockets of poor quality provision, while not dampening or further restricting the innovation and growth of high quality providers, but rather supporting their ‘day to day’ business operations.

Claire Field is available for comment
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