FED: Gillard seeks school funds from states

By Paul Osborne, AAP Senior Political Writer

CANBERRA, Aug 24 AAP - Prime Minister Julia Gillard has challenged the states to boost spending on schools and training for the sake of jobs and economic growth.

Ms Gillard used a speech to the Victoria at the Crossroads conference in Melbourne on Friday to outline the economic benefits of greater education investment.

The speech comes just weeks ahead of the federal government's expected response to the Gonski review of schools funding and talks with the states on their contribution to an extra $5 billion a year in spending.

Ms Gillard said that while business chiefs and the coalition often mentioned workplace reform as a "magic bullet" to improve productivity, it was education and training that would transform the economy.

"If the states and territories fully implement our COAG education reforms, we stand to increase GDP by 6.2 per cent, a national average of $10 billion by 2040," Ms Gillard said.

"To put it another way, meeting the COAG goal to increase the number of young people who complete Year 12 could generate an average annual gain of around $11 billion."

"The benefit not only flows to the economy but to individuals as they lead more prosperous and purposeful lives."

She said the Commonwealth had put $18 billion into vocational education and training since 2007, with a $1.75 billion reform plan under way over the next five years.

It "defies belief" that states such as Victoria would cut spending on training in their most recent budgets, she said.

With the federal government seeking savings in the mid-year budget review to cover revenue shortfalls and spending promises, Ms Gillard said she would adopt the mantra of "not bigger government but smarter government."

She said public spending needed to focus on the drivers of growth and productivity such as education and skills, innovation, infrastructure and clean energy as well as regulatory and tax reform.

AAP pjo/lk/drp
Poultry CRC wins prestigious international award

The Poultry Cooperative Research Centre (CRC) has won the prestigious World’s Poultry Science Association’s (WPSA) Education Award 2012, recognising the CRC’s effort in outreach activities.

Poultry CRC CEO, Professor Mingan Choct, accepted the award at the 2012 World’s Poultry Congress in Brazil recently.

“This is poultry’s equivalent to an Olympic gold medal, as it happens once in four years and only one award is given out on education. As a nation accounting for less than 1 per cent of global poultry production, we are very honoured and proud to receive this award,” said Professor Choct.

The Education Program of the Poultry CRC has resulted in a major contribution to poultry-related education and training by targeting four key areas: University, Vocational Education and Training (VET), School, and Public education. The CRC aims to train personnel at all levels, providing vital skills and enthusiasm for the Poultry Industry, especially here in Australia.

CRC Education activities include: development of resources for each sector (including online), funding of undergraduate and postgraduate students, specialist training and industry internships, production of a Teachers’ Resource Kit for Australian schools and the online poultry-related information portal, PoultryHub (poultryhub.org).

Sustainable educational outcomes, such as the informative PoultryHub website, will be a significant legacy of the Poultry CRC. Receiving this award is confirmation that the Poultry CRC is a world leader in poultry education.
LET'S not beat about the bush. Tony Abbott (pictured) tells porkies. So what? Is there anything surprising about that? After all, he's a politician.

But it needs to be pointed out because the central message from Abbott supporters is that the Prime Minister is the liar – “Ju-liar”, in fact, according to the likes of Alan Jones.

The Opposition Leader is portrayed and portrays himself as the epitome of honesty. A man whose word can always be trusted.

Abbott's lieutenants were even pleased when he was tossed out of Parliament on Monday because it got his offending comment accusing Julia Gillard of lying into the headlines.

Abbott's own truthfulness came under the microscope after a blundering performance in an interview on ABC-TV's 7.30 program on Wednesday.

Earlier that day he had claimed BHP's decision to put the Olympic Dam mining project in South Australia on hold was partly due to the Federal Government's carbon and mining taxes.

That was a fib. BHP CEO Marius Kloppers had blamed such factors as the eurozone financial crisis, the slowdown of growth in China and weakness in commodity markets.

He had not mentioned the mining tax or carbon price in his statement explaining the decision to the stock exchange. In fact, Kloppers told journalists: “The tax environment for this particular project has not changed at all since we started working on it six or seven years ago.”
Gillard will never live down her broken “no carbon tax” election promise, and nor should she. And there are plenty of other examples of her being economical with the truth.

Is Abbott, though, any better?

The Opposition Leader has largely got away with being shamelessly loose with the truth, if only because attention has been focused on his opponent, but perhaps now it is starting to catch up with him.

Gillard had her problems this week, too – most notably in her handling of allegations about the circumstances surrounding her departure from the law firm Slater & Gordon 17 years ago before she went into politics.

But in a marathon news conference on Thursday, she answered every question on the matter that members of the parliamentary press gallery could throw at her.

It was a strong and competent performance, in stark contrast to Abbott’s embarrassing television appearance the night before.

A few more weeks like this would certainly worry the Coalition.

Abbott’s most serious error came at an education forum, after he had accused Gillard – despite her denials – of having a hit list of private schools that would lose funding under a proposed Government blueprint.

He pointed out that more state and federal funding goes to public school pupils than to those in the private education sector, and said: “There is no question of injustice to public schools here. If anything, the injustice is the other way.”

But he squealed with outrage when Gillard used the comment to accuse him of believing public schools get too much money and should have their funding trimmed.

Significantly, the Education Minister in the NSW Liberal Government, Adrian Piccoli, immediately responded that “most of the proposed funding increases should be directed to public sector schools because most disadvantaged students are concentrated in this sector”.

That was quite a whack at the federal Liberal leader from his own side.

Abbott’s bad week continued with his response to the Prime Minister’s press conference on the Slater & Gordon issue and her role in setting up a slush fund for her then boyfriend, an AWU official.

Abbott had claimed for days that this was an important matter and Gillard had questions to answer. Then he had to admit yesterday morning he had not bothered to watch the news conference right through or even to read the transcript.

Being less than obsessive in his approach to the truth is not Abbott’s only shortcoming.

His strength is the sweeping statement and going for the political jugular – not getting into the detail of issues and doing the hard yards.

Laurie Oakes is political editor for the Nine Network. His column appears every Saturday in The Courier-Mail.

(ABBOTT) has largely got away with being shamelessly loose with the truth.
Abbott has the skill to lie for Australia

Let’s not beat about the bush. Tony Abbott tells lies. So what? Is there anything surprising about that? After all, he’s a politician. But it needs to be pointed out because the central message from Abbott’s supporters is that the Prime Minister is the liar — Julia in fact — according to the likes of Alan Jones.

The Opposition Leader is portrayed — and portrays himself — as the epitome of honesty. A man whose word can always be trusted. Abbott’s lieutenants were even pleased when he was tossed out of parliament on Monday because it got his offending comment accusing Julia Gillard of lying into the headlines.

Abbott’s own truthfulness came under the microscope, however, after a blundering performance in an interview on ABC TV’s 7.30 program on Wednesday evening.

Earlier that day he had claimed BHP’s decision to put the Olympic Dam mining project in South Australia on hold was partly due to the federal government’s carbon and mining taxes.

That was porkie No. 1.

BHP CEO Marius Kloppers had blamed such factors as the Eurozone financial crisis, the slowdown of growth in China and weakness in commodity markets. He had not mentioned the mining tax or carbon price in his statement explaining the decision to the Stock Exchange.

In fact, Kloppers told journalists: “The tax environment for this particular project has not changed at all since we started working on it six or seven years ago.”

The mining tax, he explained, only covered coal and iron ore — not copper, gold and uranium, which Olympic Dam would produce.

When Abbott stuck to his claim, despite what Kloppers had said, interviewer Leigh Sales asked: “Have you read BHP’s statements?”

Abbott replied: “No.”

That extraordinary admission led to widespread criticism of the Opposition Leader, so the next day he claimed he had read the BHP announcement after all — soon after it was made. He attributed the damaging answer to a misunderstanding of what Sales had asked him.

But Sales’ meaning could hardly have been clearer. She had even gone on to say in her next question: “You haven’t read their statements today but you’re commenting about what they’ve announced.”

The conclusion appears inescapable that, in trying to explain away a dreadful gaffe, Abbott resorted to falsehood.

Gillard will never live down her broken “no carbon tax” election promise, and nor should she. And there are plenty of other examples of her being economical with the truth.

Is Abbott, though, any better? He has made a string of false claims about the impact of the carbon tax in particular, with the bodgie Olympic Dam allegation being just the latest.

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Gillard had her problems this week, too — most notably in her handling of allegations about the circumstances surrounding her departure from the law firm Slater and Gordon 17 years ago before she went into politics.

But, in a marathon news conference on Thursday, she answered every question on the matter that members of the Parliamentary Press Gallery could throw at her.

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In case anyone missed it, the Opposition Leader repeated the line about private schools possibly suffering an injustice. He had left himself wide open. But he squealed with outrage when Gillard used the comment to accuse him of believing public schools got too much money and should have their funding trimmed.

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Laurie Oakes is political editor for the Nine Network. His column appears every Saturday in The Daily Telegraph.
Minister’s message for National Skills Week 2012

Message from Federal Minister Chris Evans

WELCOME to National Skills Week. This week is all about showcasing the many career opportunities that are out there – and inspiring Australians to take up training to get the skills they need for the jobs they want.

To compete for the jobs of tomorrow, jobseekers will need to be more qualified. The payoff is better wages and more rewarding and interesting work.

An Australian with a Certificate III or IV will have improved earnings of more than $324,000 over their working life. A person with a diploma or advanced diploma can earn around $400,000 more over their working life than those with a Year 12 certificate.

The opportunities are not restricted to school leavers and young apprentices, but for all Australians – regardless of age or background – who are looking to join the workforce for the first time, to get a better job or to improve their pay.

Learning new skills is one of the greatest investments we can make. That’s why the Gillard Government is investing a record amount in the skills our businesses and our economy need now and into the future.

We are partnering with employers through the National Workforce Development Fund to help train new employees and upskill existing workers in the skills industry are demanding.

For individuals, skills are the passport to a better job, a higher pay packet and a more rewarding working life. For businesses, skilled workers are the critical ingredient for success.

We want to make sure Australians from all walks of life are able to maximise their potential to participate in the workforce and share directly in our continuing prosperity.

Chris Evans
PM: economic growth starts in classroom

PRIME Minister Julia Gillard has challenged the states to boost spending on schools and training for the sake of jobs and economic growth, and questioned Victoria’s recent budget cuts on training.

Ms Gillard used a speech to the Victoria At The Crossroads conference in Melbourne yesterday to outline the economic benefits of greater education investment.

The speech comes just weeks ahead of the federal government’s expected response to the Gonski review of schools funding and talks with the states on their contribution to an extra $5 billion a year in spending.

Ms Gillard said that while business chiefs and the coalition often mentioned workplace reform as a “magic bullet” to improve productivity, it was education and training that would transform the economy.

“If the states and territories fully implement our COAG education reforms, we stand to increase GDP by 6.2 per cent, a national average of $10 billion by 2040,” Ms Gillard said.

“To put it another way, meeting the COAG goal to increase the number of young people who complete Year 12 could generate an average annual gain of around $11 billion. The benefit not only flows to the economy but to individuals as they lead more prosperous and purposeful lives.”

She said the Commonwealth had put $18 billion into vocational education and training since 2007, with a $1.75 billion reform plan underway over the next five years.

It “defies belief” that states such as Victoria would cut spending on training in their most recent budgets, she said while spruiking the virtues of “smarter not bigger” government.

AAP
Train to sustain success

EDGAR D’SOUZA

NATIONAL Skills Week, now in its second year, will shine a spotlight on the hundreds of career opportunities and thousands of training places available to Australians.

Minister for Tertiary Education, Skills, Science and Research, Chris Evans, said the week was a time for a collaborative approach dedicated to raising the status of practical and vocational learning.

“To compete for the jobs of tomorrow, Australians will need to be increasingly more qualified,” Senator Evans said at the national launch of the event last week.

“Better skills not only lead to better pay and employment outcomes for the individual, but an investment in skills is also an investment in higher productivity and a sustainable economy.”

Senator Evans said the Federal Government was investing $15.6 billion in skills and training over the next four years to ensure all Australians are able to maximise their potential to participate in the workforce.

“The $700 million National Workforce Development fund is making it easier for businesses and employees to get the training they need,” he said.

SkillsOne chief executive Brian Wexham said National Skills Week would provide a positive focus on Vocational Education and Training (VET).

“It will bring to life the positive messages, highlighting the talents, skills and the value of apprentices and trainees across Australia to the wider public and employers,” he said.

Every year the diversity and depth of talent is showcased at the Australian Training Awards, with each state and territory acknowledging its best candidates in VET via the State Training Awards.

Winners of the state awards then become nominees in the Australian Training Awards, which this year will be held in Melbourne on November 16.

Australian apprenticeship ambassador and hairdresser to the stars Renya Xydis said an apprenticeship in any occupation provided job seekers with real world skills, as desired and needed by industry.

This is the week to discover the career opportunities a new skill could bring. For more details and to find out the events and activities taking place, go to www.nationalskillsweek.com.au

It will raise the status of practical and vocational learning and allow us to acknowledge the contribution of our skilled workers to our economy and community.

Senator Chris Evans
MINISTER for Higher Education and Skills and the Minister responsible for the Teaching Profession, Peter Hall, will do the honours at the Victoria launch of National Skills Week in Melbourne on August 27.

To be held at the Kino Cinema, guests will get to share the experiences of three young workers as they tell their stories.

The trio are this year’s Apprentice of the Year finalist, Sevag Parseghian, Trainee of the Year finalist, Stephanie Greene, and Justin Stankovic of East Coast Aviation in Traralgon.

The night will also see the premiere of Le Chef, a French culinary tale about having a passion for your trade and what hard work can bring.

Catering for the event will be handled by Victoria University Academy Sofitel culinary students.

Work Place Connect chief executive Nicholas Wyman said by 2015, Australia would need 2.4 million new workers with Certificate 3 (apprentice level) qualifications.

As such it was imperative to encourage and engage more young people in skilled careers. “Given the limited number of young people entering the pipeline, many businesses may find it hard to find workers in the future.” he said.
Skills breed success

TRAINING FOR A BETTER LIFE

Sarah Sharples

BETTER skills equal a better life for individuals and a better nation for all.

That’s the equation the federal government hopes to hammer home during National Skills Week 2012.

Tertiary Education and Skills Minister Chris Evans said the week aimed to showcase the many career opportunities out there and inspire Australians to take up training and get the skills they need for jobs.

National Skills Week is August 27 to September 2.

With Australia continuing to see an increased demand for skilled labour, Senator Evans said job-seekers would need to be increasingly better qualified to compete for the jobs of tomorrow.

“Better skills not only lead to better pay and employment outcomes for the individual, but an investment in skills is also an investment in higher productivity and a sustainable economy,” he said.

A Certificate III or IV is estimated to increase lifetime earnings by more than $324,000 while a person with a diploma or advanced diploma could earn around $400,000 more during their working life than those with a Year 12 certificate.

He said the federal government had established the Australian Workforce and Productivity Agency to engage with industry on how to meet current and future skills demands.

SPECIAL WEEK

Now in its second year, Skills Week is designed to highlight the huge variety of opportunities and careers available through vocational education and training.

An additional 2.4 million workers will be needed with qualifications of Certificate III level or higher by 2015, says Skills Australia.

Tertiary Education and Skills Minister Chris Evans is urging people to train today for the jobs of tomorrow.

Picture: KYM SMITH
Talent breeds success

SKILLS WEEK
TIME TO ACT

Sarah Sharples

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Senator Evans said the federal government had established the Australian Workforce and Productivity Agency to directly engage with industry on current and future skills demands and how best to meet them.

He said the government was partnering with employers through the National Workforce Development Fund to help train new employees and upskill existing workers.

“For individuals, skills are the passport to a better job, a higher pay packet and a more rewarding working life. For businesses, skilled workers are the vital ingredient for sustained success.

“We want to make sure Australians from all walks of life are able to maximise their potential to participate in the workforce and share directly in our continuing prosperity.

“The opportunities are endless,” he said.

SPECIAL WEEK

In its second year, the week is designed to highlight the huge variety of opportunities and careers available through vocational education and training.

An additional 2.4 million workers will be needed with qualifications at certificate III or higher by 2015, says Skills Australia.
Blight sparks National Skills Week focuses on education.
Many paths to work goal

Today’s VET system may offer more chances to skill up than many realise, writes Sue White.

Our vocational education and training (VET) system finally seems to have the numbers behind it.

About 1.7 million Australians a year take a vocational education course, 449,000 apprentices and trainees were mid-qualification last December and recent figures show graduate tradies hold their own against tertiary graduates in terms of salary.

However, according to the director of National Skills Week, Brian Wexham, VET is not without its challenges.

“One of the biggest difficulties lies in getting people to understand what vocational education is all about,” he says. The answer, according to Wexham, is diversity.

“People understand that trades are learnt through apprenticeships, but there is incredible diversity available in VET,” he says.

From horticulturalists to health workers, Wexham says many areas of skill shortage can be addressed by encouraging Australians to undertake VET training.

“Health is one example,” he says. “We need a lot more health workers, as the average age of our health workers is about 50.

“As well as the skills gap created by these retiring workers, the ageing population means we will need more people to look after us all.”

Though the federal government is behind National Skills Week – with the Minister for Tertiary Education, Skills, Science and Research, Chris Evans, officiating at the recent launch – for those in Victoria at least, encouraging students to choose VET training is difficult given there have been significant state-based budget cuts.

“From a federal government point of view, they’ve provided more money into the VET sector … but [state-based cuts affecting Victorian TAFE’s] are a very difficult situation,” Wexham says.

“I do empathise with them.”

While the final fallout from the cuts to Victoria’s TAFE funding is to come, those in the system remain convinced that VET is worth the investment.

Colin Wilson is one example: at 35, he re-entered the VET system to retrain as a chef after a diverse career spanning fitting and turning, engineering and even cycling.

Now, the 2011 apprentice of the year is happily running the Sweetwater Cafe at the Yarra Valley’s Chateau Yering, a job he scored within a year of graduating.

“I think the combination of on-the-job training and study works really well,” he says of the VET system.

“You are paid while you learn and, while going to school gives you the ‘why’, work gives you the “how’.”

Heading back to TAFE in his 30s worked well for Wilson.

“Coming to it a bit older, I found it easier knowing what needed to be done, and what’s required, sooner,” he says.

“I was also more focused.”

Wilson wasn’t the oldest in his
group. Today’s VET demographic goes well beyond school-leavers preparing for traditional apprenticeships and diplomas.

In NSW, more employers are sought to take on school-based teens in programs such as the state government’s Bright Future Campaign. Across the country, partnerships between TAFE institutions and universities are trending in everything from retailing to architecture, and registered training organisations (RTOs) fill the gaps.

“RTOs tend to specialise in a certain area – some specialise in media or commercial cookery and do only that,” Wexham says.

But the boom in RTOs means that both they and TAFE have to work increasingly hard to attract students. “I always think choice is a good thing,” Wexham says.

“But from a TAFE point of view, they have to compete with the private sector in a way they perhaps didn’t have to before. They’ve always provided quality outcomes [but] they’ve not necessarily had to promote it before.”

While cuts to TAFE funding in Victoria are making RTOs even more of a threat, those within the RTO space point out it’s also a competitive market in and of itself.

“It’s hugely competitive,” says the managing director of the RTO Leadership Success, Anthony Nash. “The challenge is separating the good from the bad.”

His business focuses on leadership and uses a VET framework to train middle managers, usually within their own work environment.

“We work mainly with employees who’ve been promoted from the shop floor into a middle-management role,” he says. “They may have a lot of expertise in their particular skill, but not in leadership. The VET framework allows us to provide practical, work-based experience and qualifications. and to take that training internally so the assignments, tasks and learnings are all relevant.”

A new focus on compliance for RTOs means staying registered is becoming more difficult.

Despite the challenges, it’s a move Nash welcomes.

“Higher compliance standards are helping weed out those organisations who may have been delivering substandard outcomes,” he says.

National Skills Week runs from August 27 to September 2. See nationalskillsweek.com.au.

NSW employers interested in the Bright Future program should phone 1800 009 310.