



## STRENGTHENING THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN HIGHER EDUCATION AND VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING

In recognition of the need for higher education and vocational education and training (VET) systems to work together to produce integrated responses to the needs of students and the nation, the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) have agreed to the formation of a single Ministerial Council for Tertiary Education and Employment (MCTEE).

MCTEE will provide an avenue for guiding the formation of an interconnected tertiary education and training system, while recognising the distinctly different roles that each sector plays.

The Australian Government will commission the Australian Qualifications Framework Council (AQFC) to develop strategies to improve articulation and connectivity between the Higher Education and VET sectors.

Funding for structural adjustment (\$402 million over four years from 2009-10) will support projects that will deliver greater sustainability, diversity and collaboration between institutions, with the potential to facilitate stronger connections between the higher education and VET sectors.

The Government also recognises the opportunity to achieve greater infrastructure synergies that will complement both sectors. In expanding the scope of the Education Investment Fund (EIF) to vocational education and training providers, the Government recognised that the renewal of the sector's infrastructure is vital to its continuing contribution to the development of a skilled workforce. VET providers will receive \$132 million of funding as a result of EIF Round 2.

The Government will also expand the ambit of Skills Australia so that it encompasses the full scope of Australia's labour market needs in its advice to the Commonwealth about workforce development and industry needs covering both the university and VET systems.

In addition, as part of the Compact with Young Australians, announced by COAG on 30 April 2009, there has been a commitment in-principle by all Australian Governments to the establishment of a national regulatory body for vocational education and training to oversee registration of training providers and accreditation of VET qualifications and courses.

### Benefits

These reforms will provide more unified governance of the VET and Higher Education sectors, and will deliver improvements in quality and national consistency of training providers and training courses for clients of the VET system.

The Government places a strong emphasis on providing more streamlined pathways between VET and Higher Education for Australian students. The work of the AQFC will address one of the key stumbling blocks for these pathways by creating better links between competency-based qualifications and merit-based qualifications.

The formation of a national regulatory body would be a step towards more national consistency in the way the VET system ensures high performance, and that courses and qualifications meet robust national education and training

standards. A national body provides the opportunity to reduce the duplication and inconsistent application of regulatory effort across states and territories which is particularly experienced by providers operating across state borders. It will allow providers to be benchmarked on offering high quality and relevant training. There needs to be a stronger focus in VET on the training effort, quality of teaching and student outcomes.

The AQFC has commenced its work to improve the articulation and connectivity between the university and the VET sectors.

A report on operational models for a national regulatory body for vocational education will be developed by a COAG sub-group based on consultations with the sector, including seeking the advice of Skills Australia, for reporting to COAG by September 2009.

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## Next steps

The June 2009 meeting of the Ministerial Council for Vocational and Technical Education in conjunction with the Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs will decide on arrangements to support the new Ministerial Council for Tertiary Education and Employment with a planned start-up date of November 2009.

