
Communiqué for the MCTEE Meeting – 28 September 2009

Inaugural meeting of MCTEE

Today's inaugural meeting of the Ministerial Council for Tertiary Education and Employment (MCTEE) was held at a time of difficult economic conditions which demand the adoption of decisive improvements to the nation's employment, training and productivity agenda.

Quality of tertiary education

The provision of high quality tertiary education and training is critical to advancing Australia's productivity, meeting the expectations of domestic and international students and employers. Australia is currently implementing reforms to encourage the growth of a more connected tertiary education system in Australia.

At today's meeting, Ministers agreed upon a range of measures to further enhance the nation's reputation as a provider of quality tertiary education services. In response to recent concerns, a delegation of international students from the recent roundtable on the international student experience was asked to present their concerns and experiences to the Ministers.

Ministers agreed to co-ordinated actions in the following areas:

- *Enhancing the Quality of Tertiary Education in Australia through progressing:*
 - national VET regulatory arrangements including through further consideration of options for a National VET Regulator to be considered by COAG in December.
 - the establishment of the Tertiary Education End Quality Standards Agency (TEQSA), the new quality agency for higher education in 2010.
- *International Education through*
 - agreeing to progress identified measures to improve the quality of the international student experience in Australia by:
 - providing accurate up-to-date information for international students about studying and living in Australia through the provision of an on-line manual for international students to be available by mid-2010
 - working together to develop models for the delivery of information services to international students
 - endorsing a credible voice for international students, including by establishing arrangements for ongoing communications between international student representatives and governments
 - engaging with state and local authorities responsible for laws and regulations governing the use of private accommodation in each jurisdiction to raise the priority given to preventing exploitation of international student tenants and unsafe housing being made available to international students

Ministers noted

- that the Commonwealth is facilitating discussions between the National Union of Students (NUS), the Council of Australian Postgraduate Associations (CAPA) and International Student Roundtable participants to develop arrangements for international students to have an ongoing opportunity to raise and discuss matters associated with studying and living in Australia – these discussions will include public and private providers in the VET and higher education sectors
- progress made in developing nationally consistent procedures for re-registering Australian providers of international education and training by 2011.

Ministers agreed to further consider progress made by the Joint Committee on International Education on these matters and to consider the outcomes from the ESOS Review being conducted by the Hon Bruce Baird and the COAG National International Student Strategy, at its meeting in November 2009.

Effectiveness of training provision

Ministers acknowledged that Australia is facing a range of economic challenges including the impact of the global recession, the urgent need to transition to a more sustainable economy and to prepare for skills demands as the Australian economy recovers from the current economic downturn.

Ministers agreed to significant vocational education and training reforms to respond to ongoing changes in economic conditions.

Ministers also agreed to facilitate more effective connections between employment, training and community services to further improve training and employment outcomes that will benefit all Australians.

It was agreed that the following areas would be addressed:

Employment and skills formation

- improving connectivity between Government skills programs and outcomes for employers and individuals
- identifying the most effective approaches to joined up servicing to be applied regionally and nationally
- improving the tracking of individual progress through training programs
- improved flexibility of available VET funding to support training and skills development to meet short and long term training needs
- greater transparency and information sharing on current and emerging training demand to better inform policy responses
- increasing capacity of the national training system to respond to challenges and opportunities arising from nationally significant projects such as the recently announced Gorgon project in Western Australia.

Responding to future challenges including sustainability and green skills

- Ministers acknowledged the significant work already being undertaken by the National Quality Council and the development of a green skills agreement.

Creating a tertiary education system that works seamlessly across sectors and with other areas of government delivery to meet the needs of learners and employers will be at the heart of the new Ministerial Council's policy agenda.