TRAINING REPORT

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It is with great pleasure I present my second report as leader of the Federal Training Portfolio. An increase in motions presented at Federal Conference saw the Portfolio remain firmly committed to ensuring students who choose trainee or apprenticeships, have equitable opportunity to access tertiary training. Financial assistance for students who relocate to complete compulsory work experience remains a high priority lobby, along with changes to Youth Allowance criteria.

The government remains committed to maintaining a high-quality VET sector that works for students, employers and taxpayers despite the National Centre for Vocational Education Research (NCVER) reporting a decrease of 4.5% from December, 2015 to December, 2016 of the number of apprentices and trainees.

Apprenticeship Training Pilots
In September, 2016 five industry pilots were established under the *Apprenticeships Training – alternative delivery pilots.* Broken into two streams; with both underway:
- Stream One represents industry sectors vital to the national economy such as building and construction, electrical and communications and will trial training modules for traditional trade apprenticeships.
- Stream Two pilots will deliver higher level qualification apprenticeships, with participants having the opportunity to complete an advanced qualification.

Funding is available until June 2018 and all funded pilots will be evaluated and assessed along with their potential to be adopted throughout the industries.

VET Student Loans
On January 1st this year, the VET student Loans program commenced – this is a new student loans program replacing the VET FEE-HELP scheme which ceased in December 2016. The program aims to give eligible students access to higher level VET qualifications, particularly those students who could not otherwise afford to pay upfront. Other than specified exceptions i.e. Aviation, there are three loan cap bands of $5 000, $10 000 and $15 000 based on cost of delivery. A snapshot can be accessed on https://docs.education.gov.au/system/files/doc/other/vsl_info_for_students_170412.pdf

HELP Loans (which includes VET training courses)
From July 2018 the threshold for repayment for these Loans will decrease from $52 000 to $42 000.

Budget
The spotlight has been placed onto apprenticeships and traineeships with announcements by the Government seen as injecting enthusiasm and providing more opportunities for apprentices and traineeships.
- **The Skilling Australians Fund,** which supersedes the National Partnership Agreement on Skills Reform ending on 30 June, aims to revitalise focus on apprenticeships and traineeships as an alternative to university education by prioritising projects which support apprenticeship and traineeships in high demand occupations. This fund, which the government claims will generate 300 000 apprenticeships, will include in their target group regional areas.

- **VET (**Better Alignment of Student Payments) – subject to the passage of legislation to commence in January 2018, its purpose is to improve consistency across VET courses that are approved for different types of Commonwealth Support.
- Approval of tertiary VET courses, at a diploma level or above, will be restricted to those tertiary VET courses and education providers that are approved for VET Student Loans.
- Included in the Higher Education Reform Package, the Govt allocated $15.2m towards establishing and operating eight regional study hubs for higher education students in rural and remote areas.
- Also included in the Higher Education Reform Package, the Government will spend $24 million over four years to fund the Rural and Regional Enterprise Scholarships which will support more than 1200 regional and remote students to undertake (STEM) science, technology, engineering and maths studies. Vocational education students are eligible to apply for these scholarships.

Regional, Rural and Remote Education Review
Of interest to the Portfolio was an election announcement in mid-2016 by the Coalition of a Regional, Rural and Remote Education Review. ICPA (Aust) will address many issues facing our cohort when accessing tertiary training, including financial assistance for students who relocate to complete compulsory work experience and youth allowance criteria.

Review of the VET Students Loans Eligible Course List and Loans Caps Methodology
In February, 2017 the Government commenced a review of the methodology of the VET Student Loan Courses list and loan caps. This Review is expected to be completed within the third quarter of 2017 with any changes expected to commence January 2018.

VET Review
More recently in June 2017, The Hon Karen Andrews MP, Assistant Minister for Vocational Education and Skills announced a major review of the framework which governs the regulation of Australia's VET sector. This review will evaluate whether the Australian Skills Quality Authority (ASQA) has the capacity to efficiently and effectively regulate the VET sector.

Trade Support Loans
Trade Support Loans offer loans of up to $20 000 to assist apprentices cover daily expenses including equipment purchases associated with completing an apprenticeship. Like the HECS system, the loan is repaid through the tax system. As an added incentive a 20 per cent discount on the loan amount is offered to apprentices who have successfully completed their apprenticeship.

Useful websites include:
- **My Skills** website provides information on training providers, courses, campus facilities and services. www.myskills.gov.au
- **Australian Apprenticeships** is a very useful website which provides up to date information including a comprehensive FAQ section. https://www.australianapprenticeships.gov.au/
- Or phone: Australian Apprenticeships Referral Line **13 38 73**

The Australian Apprenticeship Support Network website lists a state by state guide to some financial incentives and benefits for apprenticeships. www.apprenticeshipsupport.com.au

Thank you to the States for their support and our members who have contacted me and put forward motions.