

Tuesday 1st May, 2018

Victorian budget a significant boost to VET, school to work transition and apprenticeships and traineeships in Victoria, says Victorian Skills Commissioner

Victoria's students, workers and employers will receive better support from the Vocational Education and Training system in wake of the 2018/19 Victorian state budget released today, says Victorian Skills Commissioner, Mr Neil Coulson.

Designed to help job-seekers get the opportunities they deserve, the Budget has provided the Victorian Vocational Education and Training system with a major boost.

The Budget provides a significant investment in training via fee-free TAFE places for people seeking to work in existing and emerging industries, in line with government priorities and industry demand. This incentivises people to choose a VET pathway to gain employment in these areas, thereby supporting local people into local jobs.

Victoria needs a highly skilled workforce, more apprentices and trainees in both new and emerging industries, and a lifting of the standing of apprentices and trainees. To this end, \$44 million over four years is provided to:

- work in partnership with industry to expand independent assessment of apprentices and trainees at the end of their training;
- reintroduce trade papers to recognise completion of a quality apprenticeship; and
- invest in high quality, up-to-date learning materials

This funding will better serve Victoria's economic growth by meeting industry needs and comes off the back of the Victorian Skills Commissioner's Victorian Apprenticeship and Traineeship Taskforce Report, *Rebalance and Relaunch*, which called for a reinvigoration of the state's apprenticeship and traineeship system.

"Late last year I led a six month investigation which found a disproportionate move to university education at the expense of skilled apprenticeships and traineeships and called for increased recognition and promotion of the benefits of apprenticeships and traineeships. Improving the quality of training outcomes is essential for raising the status of apprenticeships and traineeships," Mr Coulson said.

An important ingredient in rebuilding or enhancing employer confidence in apprentice and trainee skills is a greater focus on proficiency, underpinned by appropriate independent assessment. In a first for state training systems, the introduction of independent assessment will ensure students gain a higher level of proficiency and will rebuild the confidence of industry in graduates of the Vocational Education and Training system. This new allocation will also modernise and update the quality of apprenticeship training by allowing the development of updated learning materials necessary to train the next generation of apprentices and trainees in contemporary practices and technologies.

The 'Head Start Apprenticeships and Traineeships' initiative provides \$48.8 million to give secondary school students greater opportunities from a renewed focus on apprenticeships and traineeships at school.

“This is a bold initiative aimed at building a better connection between schools, students and industry. It is an appropriate initiative to pilot as it can reinvigorate school-based apprenticeships and traineeships, which can only flourish with industry support and involvement” Mr Coulson said.

Speaking to the significant investment announced in transforming careers education in schools, the Victorian Skills Commissioner said, *“Young people can spend up to 20 years in school and higher education, but spend a further 40 years in the workforce. The Andrews Government should be congratulated for recognising the importance of providing quality information and advice so that students can make more informed choices about subjects at school and pathways available through VET for gaining a job or building a career”*.

Skills mismatches have been a structural issue in most OECD countries, but the Victorian Skills Commissioner believes these Budget measures are a significant step in the right direction.

Victorian Government infrastructure investment is forecast to average \$10.1 billion per year over the next four years. Mr Coulson said that this investment in major infrastructure projects, and the decisions by private enterprise to establish or expand operations in Victoria, relies upon access to a skilled workforce, with this investment expected to support the creation of over 75,000 new jobs.

“I am thrilled that the Andrews Government have been able to provide additional support in the Budget, as aligning skills development with skills demand is central to the achievement of Victoria’s economic and social objectives”, said Commissioner Coulson.

<ENDS>