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## Communiqué for the COAG Skills Council Meeting

15 May 2020

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The Council of Australian Governments (COAG) Skills Council (the Council) met today to progress actions to continue to meet Australia's skills and training needs and to support the recovery of the Australian economy as COVID-19 restrictions begin to ease.

Skills Ministers welcomed the Hon Paul Kirby MLA, acting Minister for Workforce Training in the Northern Territory, to Council while Minister Uibo is on leave.

### ***Infection Control – national skill sets***

Council noted that since the last meeting, new national skill sets in infection control are now available. The skill set covers a range of sectors and are designed to give workers confidence by teaching them the skills and knowledge they need to decrease risk and transmission of infection while carrying out their daily duties.

Council also agreed to establish an \$80 million, joint Commonwealth-state and territory fund to accelerate the uptake of this critical training. The fund will support free, or low cost, training in infection control for around 80,000 key workers around Australia.

This training will play a vital role in ensuring workplaces are kept open, or can re-open with increased confidence as Australia transitions from the shut-down into a phased recovery.

### ***Critical skills***

Council welcomed the progress made by the Australian Industry and Skills Committee (AISC) Emergency Response Sub-Committee to support delivery of national training to meet critical workforce needs during the COVID-19 pandemic. These nationally recognised skills sets in areas such as entry to care roles and laboratory operations will provide support to industry, employers and students during the COVID-19 pandemic and into the recovery period.

Members also agreed to a revised Terms of Reference for the Sub-Committee to enable it to continue its role in fast-tracking national training products to meet longer-term skill needs beyond the COVID-19 health crisis period to support economic recovery.

### ***Provider viability and support for students***

Council acknowledged that all governments have put in place a range of stimulus and targeted measures that will support training providers to remain viable during the COVID-19 pandemic and into recovery.

Members agreed to continue to carefully monitor VET sector viability over the coming months and discussed national criteria that could be usefully applied to inform any future action.

Members reaffirmed their commitment to ensuring that as many students as possible can continue their training during the COVID-19 pandemic.

### ***Apprentices and Traineeships***

Members welcomed the establishment of a national working group of senior officials to urgently assess the impacts and consequences of COVID-19 on apprenticeship and traineeship employment.

The Council acknowledged the importance of ongoing collaboration and strong coordination between the Commonwealth, states and territories to improve support for displaced apprentices and trainees, and potential new employers.

Members noted limitations with the current data available and supported fast tracking the development of a more robust set of data to enable further analysis about the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Senior Officials will report to the Council on the progress of this work, including consideration of linking displaced apprenticeship registers, at the next meeting.

### ***VET Reform Roadmap***

Council agreed to a revised approach to the draft COAG VET Reform Roadmap (the Roadmap) in light of the impacts of COVID-19 pandemic. The revised approach will structure the Roadmap around the pandemic crisis response, economic recovery, and long-term reforms.

Members noted the strong engagement of stakeholders in the draft Roadmap and the importance of ongoing engagement as the next version of the Roadmap is developed and implementation commences.

Council reaffirmed the principles of relevance, quality and accessibility that underpin the Roadmap.

Council will endorse a final version of the Roadmap prior to progressing to COAG.

### ***Australian Training Awards***

Council agreed to conduct a holistic review of the Australian Training Awards for 2021. The review will include consideration of all state and territory nominated and direct entry categories, including consideration of the nomination terms and the potential for new awards.

The review will ensure the program continues to highlight the best the VET sector has to offer.

### ***Next meeting***

Ministers committed to monthly videoconference meetings to ensure key measures are progressed during the COVID-19 pandemic.