

[Skip to content](#) [Skip to navigation](#)



# [Ministers Media Centre - Employment, Education and Workplace Relations portfolio](#)

## Global menu

- [Home](#)
- [Subscribe](#)

## Navigation level 1

- [Julia Gillard](#)
- [Mark Arbib](#)
- [Kate Ellis](#)
- [Jason Clare](#)
- [Ursula Stephens](#)

## Navigation level 2

- [Media](#)
  - [Media Releases](#)
  - [Speeches](#)
  - [Transcripts](#)

## Search Media

Search Media Centre

Minister

Month

Type

All  
Media release  
Speech  
Transcript

Keyword

[Search help](#)

## You are here:

Your location: [Ministers Media Centre](#) > [The Hon Julia Gillard MP](#) > [Media](#) > [Transcripts](#) > Transcript - Speech National TAFE Day - Parliament House



## **The Hon Julia Gillard MP**

**Minister for Education. Minister for Employment and Workplace Relations**

**Minister for Social Inclusion**

**Deputy Prime Minister**

28 October, 2009

## **Transcript**

### **Transcript - Speech National TAFE Day - Parliament House**

**E&OE TRANSCRIPT  
SPEECH  
NATIONAL TAFE DAY  
PARLIAMENT HOUSE CANBERRA  
700PM WEDNESDAY  
28 OCTOBER 2009**

**ISSUES: National TAFE Day**

We're here of course to celebrate the formidable contribution to Australia and to its people of our great TAFE system.

That contribution has been immense, going back to the establishment of workingmen's colleges and mechanics institutes in the Nineteenth Century.

TAFE, though, has moved with the times to become a 21st-Century vocational education and training leviathan.

Last year combined Commonwealth and State funding for the TAFE network was close to \$4.3 billion.

Today around 1.6 million Australians are getting superb instruction in 12,000 courses, across more than 50 institutes and hundreds of campuses across the country.

That's one in every fifteen Australians attached to TAFE at any one time. Few Australian organizations have such a reach or touch the lives of so many people as our TAFE institutes.

And the system's quality and strengths have been recognized internationally, including by bodies like the OECD.

Earlier today, along with Senator Mark Arbib, I had the pleasure of welcoming home Australia's young skills champions, the Skillaroos. TAFE had a hand in training 23 of those 26 skill Olympians.

TAFE is a unique network of teaching and innovation in vocational education and training. One that makes a substantial national contribution that cannot be taken for granted.

In Australia we rightly celebrate our higher educational success. Our Nobel Prize winning scientists, our writers and our universities are often headlined and praised. And rightly so. We don't need to set one system against another – that debate is over.

There are so many examples of great outcomes from Australia's TAFE network. George Calombaris, a legend in the Melbourne food scene, fashion designer Colette Dinnigan, Backyard Blitzers Scott Cam and Jamie Durie, to name a few.

But we too often overlook the important contribution to our nation's success of vocational education and training, led by its flagship provider, TAFE. It's just as important as universities – and for millions of Australians, even more so.

Consider the Australian economic success story of the last decade and a half.

The resources boom. The housing boom. The expansion of our services sector. None of this would have been achieved without the skills provided by TAFE.

Think of the infrastructure that made that success possible.

The harbours, ports, roads, rail lines and bridges. The housing. The telecommunications links. The retail centres. All built by people who went to TAFE.

And then reflect on the people who provided the services, sold the goods, cooked the food, drove the trucks and installed the technology that made it all work. Many of them proud holders of world-recognized qualifications from TAFE.

The Australian dream of suburban prosperity and social mobility, so envied around the world, was made possible in large measure by TAFE.

TAFE changes lives. It is the backbone of trades training in this country. It enables adults to change careers. It caters for students who prefer an adult learning environment rather than school. It has a truly national footprint and plays a vital role in regional Australia. It does so much to build a love of learning and to boost national productivity.

## **CONSTRUCTING A FUTURE FOR TAFE**

This puts TAFE at the centre of Australian life.

Our aim must be to keep it there and keep its contribution going strong into the future.

The Government's skills policies have been about laying the foundations for the future by supporting skills training at every level.

We have elevated vocational education and training and TAFE to a major national priority.

The foundation for future expansion and modernization is being laid by major increases in capital expenditure.

Between 2005 and the beginning of 2008, VET infrastructure spending by the previous government averaged just \$185 million per year.

In 2009 alone, VET infrastructure expenditure committed by the Rudd Government will exceed \$900 million.

We have expanded the scope of the Education Investment Fund to include the VET sector. We will deliver a Vocational Education Network to extend online and digital learning to every TAFE institute across the country.

We are determined that the technology and the hardware needed for vocational learning is modernized and suited to developing the skills demanded by the jobs of the future.

## **PLAYING A PART IN THE ECONOMIC RECOVERY**

TAFE is, of course, also playing a huge role in helping Australia recover from the global economic recession.

The \$500 million teaching and learning capital fund for VET, announced last December, is rolling out now and will fund improvements in every TAFE institute in the nation.

These capital works projects of themselves will employ many Australians.

But TAFE's role in beating the recession is more direct still.

It's about preparing people for the high skill, high wage jobs of the future.

TAFE is a crucial partner in the country's apprenticeship system.

As we know, when there's a downturn the first people who usually go are the apprentices. This is a false saving that prevents companies and the economy from recovering quickly and fully.

It's crucial we don't repeat that mistake this time around.

That's why the Government has asked the States and Territories to ensure that 10 percent of all contract labour hours in infrastructure stimulus measures are undertaken by apprentices.

And as the economy begins to recover and the demand for skills increases, we need to ensure we're not held back by a severe shortage of human capital.

The first challenge will be meeting the rising demand for apprentices.

Our \$100 million Apprentice Kickstart Package will help to reverse the decline in traditional trade commencements.

\$80 million of this will provide incentives for employers to take on new apprentices.

And the remaining \$20 million will provide pre-apprenticeship training support to another 5,000 young

Australians now considering a trade.

TAFE will be there for them too!

All up, the Government's support for apprenticeships will increase by an additional quarter of a billion dollars over the next eighteen months. That's a major vote of confidence in our trade training system.

## **CREATING GREEN SKILLS**

Our second challenge is to make sure the skills we teach meet the needs of tomorrow, especially as we seek to build a sustainable economy.

In all the desperate debate that's occurred over climate change, something has been forgotten. It's about jobs.

Big enabling policy changes like the Carbon Pollution Reduction Scheme and the Renewable Energy Target are necessary. They're a vital first step. But they're really enablers of something else – what we will do in the workplace.

The transition to a low carbon economy means providing better pathways for low-skilled workers. It means embedding green skills in every area of the economy. And it means a major effort to help existing workers retrain so that their industry can become cleaner and greener.

I mentioned earlier many of the developments and achievements that wouldn't have been possible without TAFE in the last decade.

Here are some things that won't be possible without TAFE in the next decade: the national broadband network, cleaner power generation, hybrid and electric vehicles, more efficient houses and buildings, capturing carbon...

Meeting Australia's sustainability targets and goals will require us to re-equip or re-skill millions of Australians between now and 2025.

This is TAFE's new frontier.

It gives TAFE an absolutely vital role in helping create a sustainable economy for the era of climate change.

For example the partnership between Bunnings and TAFE NSW - Northern Sydney Institute is providing sustainability training to Bunnings Do-It-Yourself (DIY) presenters. The training focuses on water, power, lighting, waste management, recycling and composting. The participants were selected by Bunnings management and represented stores from across both metropolitan and regional store locations. The training will enable the presenters to increase the general sustainability awareness and provide better advice to customers on sustainable solutions to their household, business, building and gardening needs.

The National Green Skills Agreement between the Commonwealth and the States and Territories, currently being negotiated, will develop new green training packages and develop new national standards of sustainability practice and teaching in vocational training.

And to kick-start the process, we will be investing \$200 million to assist TAFE Institutes with the hardware needed to train for the green skills of the future.

## QUALITY ASSURANCE INTO THE FUTURE

And our third challenge will be keeping the quality of our vocational education and training system high.

An important step will be putting in place the regulatory system needed to ensure we have the qualifications and high quality pathways this country needs.

Earlier this year the Commonwealth and State Governments agreed to develop a national regulator for vocational education and training.

Our intention is make substantial improvements to qualification standards and the quality assurance of providers through the creation of a single national regulator.

With skills so crucial to our future economic future, we can't afford to leave its quality to chance – and we won't.

## CONCLUSION

Before I finish, I want to mention one other thing: the people behind TAFE.

We have a great TAFE network and many excellent TAFE institutions. But it's the educators and teachers that make a difference.

TAFE's future depends on its people. More than 40,000 of them.

You have one of the most important tasks in the country – to provide opportunities for working people and an economic future for the entire country.

So as we celebrate TAFE this evening, we celebrate the people who make TAFE such a success.

The greatest tribute we can pay to you is to ensure the people who follow you have the resources they will need to continue TAFE's great job into the future.

It's going to take new ways of working in partnership with industry and government and unlocking new sources of investment.

It's going to mean even closer relationships with schools and universities.

It is going to require stronger pathways for students so that they can move seamlessly across sectors.

None of this starts from a blank page. Nevertheless, developing the high achieving TAFE network of the future will involve considerable change.

And it won't be easy in a world of competing priorities.

But I think the Australian people understand that it's a task we must take on – because they know just how important TAFE is.

Thank you.

Media Contact:

[media@deewr.gov.au](mailto:media@deewr.gov.au)

Non-media queries: 1300 363 079

# Site and legal information

- [Copyright](#)
- [Disclaimer](#)
- [Privacy](#)
- [Site feedback](#)

Ministers Media Centre