



30 April 2009

AEU welcomes guaranteed education and training places for young Australians

The Australian Education Union welcomed the thrust of today's COAG agreement to provide every Australian under the age of 25 with a guaranteed education or training place.

"However, we will be seeking further guarantees in relation to some of the technical aspects of this policy, in particular, the funding arrangements," said AEU Federal President, Angelo Gavrielatos.

"Australia needs to ensure that we come out of the global financial crisis stronger than we were before.

"These must be fully-funded, high quality education and training places – what we do not want to see is the cost of training being put back on students, which ultimately creates barriers and denies access.

"A meaningful level of income support must also be provided to adequately support young Australians whilst in training.

"It is important that our world class TAFE system is central to the provision of these programs, to ensure quality training and access, to a much broader choice of qualifications," Mr Gavrielatos said.

Mr Gavrielatos also welcomed the Government's target to lift year 12 retention rates to 90 per cent by 2015, however warned there should be additional specific targeted funding to achieve this.

"Achieving a retention rate of 90 per cent to year 12 or equivalent is a critically important national priority. Research shows the important benefit to both individuals and society as a whole.

"Based on a detailed study conducted for MCEETYA, governments would be aware that public schools nationwide require an immediate \$1.4 billion per annum to implement proven programs aimed at lifting retention rates to 90 per cent," Mr Gavrielatos said.

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