

MEDIA RELEASE

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Market-based policies not best for education and training

The market-based policies applied to education and training, labour market and industry over the past decade have had negative consequences, according to Mr Julius Roe, National President of the Australian Manufacturing Workers' Union.

Australian governments should develop an integrated approach to industry, the labour market, and education and training to decrease inequality, and increase participation in the labour market and productivity, Mr Roe will tell the ACER Research Conference in Brisbane tomorrow.

According to Mr Roe, increased investment in and supply of education and training is not enough to achieve improved levels of participation in the workforce and productivity.

“Without complementary labour market and industry policy initiatives, many of those who get higher level qualifications suffer the frustration that their skills and knowledge are not utilised in their employment, he says.”

While there is growth in jobs for which higher level qualifications are required, there are also many jobs that are being deskilled and devalued.

Under market forces, public funds for training have shifted to those who are easiest to train, Mr Roe argued saying that “public investment must now be directed to lift the demand for training in the qualifications that meet trends in the economy.”

Mr Roe argues that the TAFE system is driving the devaluation of qualifications in their efforts to maximise market share.

“TAFEs are pushing for the government to fund and allow partial qualifications so they can attract employers to the system for narrow and short-term in-firm training and fee-for-service training currently paid for by the employers,” Mr Roe says.

TAFEs are also pushing for full-time institutional delivery of trade qualifications, which runs counter to labour market and industry needs where greater integration of theory and practical application are required.

“Public funding of this option would result in a decline in apprenticeships and traineeships as employers move to the cheaper option of full-time up-front training where the training costs are borne by the State and the individual.”

The 2008 ACER Research Conference, *Touching the Future: Building skills for life and work* takes place in Brisbane from 10 to 12 August.

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