



MEDIA RELEASE

MINERALS COUNCIL OF AUSTRALIA

MINERALS COUNCIL CALLS FOR REPOSITIONING OF VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Australia's Vocational Education and Training system should be reviewed to ensure it meets the needs of the rapidly expanding minerals industry for a skilled workforce, according to the Minerals Council of Australia's Executive Director, Victorian Division, Mr Chris Fraser.

"There is no shortage of applicants for unskilled positions in the industry but there is a critical shortage of skilled trades people, experienced miners, supervisors, technicians and professionals", Mr Fraser said, delivering the Australasian Institute of Mining and Metallurgy's Sir Willis Connelly oration in Melbourne.

"The growth of our industry over the past few years has put the spotlight on the fundamental shortcomings of our national education and skills formation infrastructure", Mr Fraser said.

"While the industry has experienced an overall 66 percent increase in employment over the five years to June 2007, the minerals industry will require an additional 70,000 workers by 2015 - 27,000 of these, will need to be tradespeople and 22,000 skilled operators with VET qualifications and skill sets."

Mr Fraser welcomed the Labor Government's commitment to making the national vocational education and training system a centrepiece of its agenda.

"Building on existing initiatives, there is a need to continue to attract skilled people to the industry and for a further intensified focus on education and training to ensure that potential employees are aware of the pathways into the industry and have appropriate skills for entry".

Mr Fraser outlined a four step government-business strategy to overcome the chronic shortage of skilled people in the minerals industry, which is expected to worsen as the industry continues to expand. These are:

- Firstly, Federal and State and Territory Governments take steps to improve literacy and numeracy of school leavers.
- Secondly, Federal and State and Territory Governments continue the VET sector reform agenda at an accelerated pace to transform the VET sector so that it delivers competency based, market responsive, flexible, quality training to service the needs of the minerals industry in remote and regional Australia.
- Thirdly, companies are encouraged to find innovative ways of fast tracking apprenticeship training.
- Fourthly, the minerals industry, in collaboration with Federal and State Governments review the possibility of establishing a network of VET level mining education and training centres in the principal mining regions across Australia.

"The initiatives outlined here will contribute to delivering the skilled workers so critical to the sustainability of the Australian minerals industry and the Australian economy.

"The strategy will require a co-ordinated program of reform by the Australian and State and Territory Governments working together with companies and the VET sector.

"Ensuring a suitably skilled workforce for the expanding minerals industry is crucial if all Australians are to benefit from the best opportunities experienced in the minerals industry in a generation", Mr Fraser said.

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