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MEDIA RELEASE

AUSTRALIA'S FUTURE WORKFORCE: FRESH THINKING REQUIRED

Skills Australia has proposed a bold new approach to workforce development in Australia which goes beyond simply planning for future skills shortages. A comprehensive discussion paper, *Workforce Futures*, has recommended a broader and more multifaceted response from federal, state and territory governments, industry, and education providers to the nation's future workforce challenges.

Workforce Futures is supported by two background reports, *What does the future hold? Meeting Australia's skill needs* and *Powering the workplace: realising Australia's skill potential*. The discussion paper argues that only through the creation and implementation of an Australian Workforce Development Strategy can the nation ensure it has the workforce capacity to create a more productive, sustainable and inclusive future.

Chair of Skills Australia, Philip Bullock believes that industry and governments need to reorient their focus to not only encourage and support skills formation, but also promote greater demand for and the full use of higher level skills in the workplace.

"One issue that deserves further attention is the problem of skills mismatch. It's paradoxical that while a number of surveys indicate a significant proportion of both employees and enterprises believe workers' current skills are underutilised, the same employees also report difficulty recruiting skilled employees.

"We need policies and practices which focus on supporting people to participate effectively in the workplace and allow them to develop and apply their skills in a workplace context. We also need an environment where learning better translates into positive outcomes for enterprises, industry, the wider community, and individuals throughout their lives."

Workforce Futures utilises economic modelling and projections to plan for plausible futures for Australia in terms of skills demand and employment growth over the next 15 years. It also examines how Australia can improve the value it gets from its investment in skills, how to deal with entrenched disadvantage, and how innovation can create a workplace environment conducive to skills development and use.

"One of the questions Australia faces is how we can effectively join up separate areas of government action on workforce development, and coordinate efforts across education, government and industry sectors to encourage a shared approach to workforce development."

A copy of *Workforce Futures* is available at www.skillsaustralia.gov.au/Publications_and_Resources/Skills_Australia_public_papers.htm

Submissions close on 6 November 2009.

Media enquiries may be directed to secretariat@skillsaustralia.gov.au or Sue Beitz on 02 6240 7386.

