

Message from Dr Tom Karmel, Managing Director, NCVER (Australia) to the Skills 2010 International Conference, Hyderabad

There can be no doubt that Vocational Education and Training (VET) is an important education sector, and governments around the world have been giving it increased attention— especially in terms of its link to increasing national productivity.

While general education is very important, and there is no stopping the rise of higher education, there is a widespread view that VET is particularly important because of its focus on skills needed for the workforce. It is also important because it, more than the other education sectors, plays the preeminent role in addressing social and economic disadvantage. To this end, VET needs to focus on providing skills that enable individuals to obtain gainful employment and to provide adequately for their families. This will require a strong focus on those things that are important to improving the wellbeing of individuals and communities rather than necessarily being distracted by changing education fashions.

To prosper VET will need to continually reinvent itself in order to mould itself to changing occupational structures, changing technology and changing social conditions. And, with ever greater levels of labour mobility occurring across the world, skills will be needed that can be portable between different countries and contexts.

On behalf of NCVER, I commend the organisers of the Skills 2010 conference for their focus on some of the big issues facing the modern training systems of today, such as policy and planning for skills development, the impact of emerging technologies on skills acquisition and international cooperation in vocational education.

I wish all participants an enjoyable and productive conference.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Tom Karmel".

Tom Karmel