



Media Release

**SHADOW MINISTER FOR FEDERAL STATE RELATIONS
BOB MCMULLAN MP**

17 July 2007

AUSTRALIAN TECHNICAL COLLEGES AN EXPENSIVE FAILURE

The Shadow Minister for Federal/State Relations, Bob McMullan, last night told a meeting of the ALP in Canberra that the Government's Australian Technical Colleges have been an expensive failure.

Mr McMullan said that figures released on the weekend illustrate the worst features of the Howard Government's failed strategy in this area of federal/state relations.

Only 21 of the 28 mooted colleges have opened so far, and those that are open are struggling for enrolments. Only 2 of the 21 that are open have met their 2007 target enrolment figures. The budget to run the whole 28 has recently been raised to \$552 million and, given the low numbers of enrolments, this equates to nearly \$175,000 per student.

Mr McMullan told the meeting, "The Australian Technical Colleges are expensive, inefficient and ineffective. Labor has always been concerned that they merely attempt to duplicate the services already offered by TAFE, but without the networks and the access to apprenticeships that TAFEs have.

"The money allocated by the Government to the Colleges could have been used instead to upgrade existing TAFEs".

Labor's stated policy on these colleges is as follows:

Labor will maintain established Australian Technical Colleges.

However, the management of Australian Technical Colleges will be transferred to State and Territory Government and Catholic and Independent school sectors to improve the coverage of vocational education training offered by schools nationally.

This will be done on a case by case basis through consultation with all interested parties and as contractual agreements allow.

In addition to this stated policy on the future of the Colleges, Labor has a plan to help address the current shortages in skilled labour in Australia. This plan will:

- Provide secondary schools with between \$500,000 and \$1.5 million to build or upgrade trades training facilities;
- Provide \$84 million to ensure all vocational education and trades training students get one day a week of on the job training for 20 weeks a year; and

- Develop a new *Job Ready Certificate* as a statement of a student's readiness for work in addition to a Year 12 Certificate and any separate vocational education and training qualification.

“The Australian Technical Colleges’ disaster is another illustration of the Howard Government’s failure to rise to the challenge of managing federal/state relations in the 21st century. He continues to look at federal/state relations as a way of scoring points while he plays the blame game, instead of using it as a positive opportunity to generate a cooperative commitment to a new national agenda.”