BENDIGO TAFE RESPONDS TO GOVERNMENT DECISION ON RETURN ON ASSETS

Bendigo TAFE will work for the best possible outcome for Bendigo and the region in responding to government decisions that require structural and asset reform of the Victorian TAFE system, CEO Maria Simpson said today.

Ms Simpson said the government’s long-awaited response to the TAFE Reform Panel’s recommendations provided major challenges for Bendigo TAFE.

“While the government has not imposed structural change such as amalgamation on TAFE institutes, we are required to work with government-appointed facilitators to review a range of options on innovation, collaboration, structural reform and business transformation that would improve our financial sustainability and meet commercial obligations,” she said.

“We are also required to meet a new performance expectation for a return on assets which is a big challenge for Bendigo given our large footprint and heritage infrastructure that is extraordinarily expensive to maintain.

“Bendigo TAFE will work constructively with government and its facilitators to access government funding to review the range of options arising from these reforms.

“We will have no option but to make some very difficult decisions to rationalise our asset base.”

Ms Simpson said: “It will take time for us to consider this thoroughly and determine the best options for retaining a strong and broad TAFE offering for the students of Bendigo and the region and finding the most effective way to manage TAFE assets into the future.

“We will investigate collaborative partnerships and commercial arrangements with other education providers aimed at maximising the opportunities for providing TAFE-based VET services in Bendigo and the region.”

Ms Simpson said delivery of services to students in 2013 would not be compromised by the government’s announcements today. “For our students nothing changes this year. We will meet our commitment by delivering the courses they’ve enrolled for in 2013. The needs of our students in future years will be paramount in determining the outcome for the way ahead.

“We have been working for a number of years with La Trobe University in developing pathways for students from TAFE to go to university on a number of programs. That has continued during the past eight months with a renewed focus to ensure the best outcome for TAFE students’ education,” she said.
Ms Simpson renewed her appeal to local communities to choose Bendigo TAFE as the preferred provider for vocational education and training. “Like any other business that needs support, for Bendigo TAFE to remain a strong and healthy entity in this region, we need community support from students and employers alike.”

She said the government’s new governance arrangements for Boards might mean that not all existing members of Bendigo TAFE Board would be appointed to the new board.

“Our hope is that there is little change as we have a strong skills-based and committed board that has been hugely supportive during the past year. The present Board has an excellent spread of skill-sets and it would be beneficial in this time of significant change for the new Board to retain a degree of continuity and that expertise.”

For further information or interviews with the CEO, please contact: John Rossi on 03 5434 1818