

TAFE Futures

An inquiry into the future of technical and further education in Australia



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THE TAFE FUTURES INQUIRY

A DIALOGUE ABOUT THE FUTURE WITH THOSE WHO MAKE TAFE WORK

The TAFE Futures Inquiry: a dialogue about the future with those who make TAFE work

The TAFE Futures Inquiry was commissioned by the Australian Education Union in 2006. It has provided an opportunity for students, teachers, trainers, administrative workers and members of the community, as well as industry and employers who have an interest in the future of TAFE, to have their views heard about TAFE and its future.

Often, such reviews don't hear from the people who make TAFE run or from those who use TAFE. These people and groups are often left out of government consultations.

The TAFE Futures Inquiry has been an independent and open process and an opportunity for people to provide statements from all perspectives on the future of TAFE.

It's the voices of those who make TAFE work and who have an interest in TAFE and its future that this report will document.

The TAFE Futures report has several parts:

- **Part A** is a background about TAFE and context for this report. This section summarises some of the developments that have led to the commissioning of the TAFE Futures Inquiry.
- **Part B** is a summary of the national consultations conducted from 1 July 2006 until 15 August 2006. More than 80 consultations were held in capital cities, regional centres and by teleconference.¹
- **Part C** is a summary of the 102 submissions received by TAFE Future that have been posted on the www.tafefutures.org.au website as well as those of a confidential nature sent to the Inquiry.
- **Part D** is the proposals for renewal and change.

The appendices include a paper entitled *Current research on Partnerships in VET and TAFE: Opportunities for the future of TAFE* by Gillian Vogl and Peter Kell as well as the terms of reference for the TAFE Futures Inquiry.

How the TAFE Futures Inquiry has approached the future

Developing proposals for the future of TAFE is an ambitious task. Proposals should enable the development of practical and commonsense strategies, without taking a reductionist and instrumental approach that eliminates the social dimensions of any setting. Futuristic studies need to be tackled critically to ensure that they do not lapse into what futurist, Richard Slaughter refers to as "pop futurism", with tendencies towards marketing hype and mystification of new technologies. Other possible approaches include a problem-oriented futures work that is an improvement on pop futurism because it is more serious and well-grounded but it is still hampered by limited perceptions of reality and a tendency towards an instrumental and functional approach. Slaughter suggests a critical and epistemological approach that offers deep level meanings and interpretations. This third approach enables a social and cultural orientation that looks at the relationships, values and norms and the way in which interests are negotiated, contested and accommodated into the formal institutions (Slaughter 2002; Smith & Westerbeek 2004).

In this case, the formal institution is TAFE and through the processes of consultations, submissions and the examination of policy and literature, the TAFE Futures Inquiry will seek to explore the socio-cultural, as well as the functional relationships of TAFE with the objective of developing a vision of the future.

A vision of the future is very often a transportation of existing values, behaviours attitudes and social arrangements into another time and place. In many instances this is a task of identifying things that offer positive opportunities in the present and making suggestions about how they can be applied more broadly across another time and place. Part of this task is to identify and document those features that 'work well' and make more explicit the reason why they worked. Imagining the future is also about creating 'new' conversations and new dialogues around 'old' issues and questions. It is also an opportunity for those people who have not been heard to have their say.

This type of approach is consistent with the open-ended nature and different aims of the TAFE Futures Inquiry.

Footnote

1. Excerpts from consultations are cited from the Inquiry log, nominating the consultation by a number and the location of the citation by page.

THE TAFE FUTURES INQUIRY

A DIALOGUE ABOUT THE FUTURE WITH THOSE WHO MAKE TAFE WORK

The TAFE Futures Inquiry: why is the Inquiry needed?

This TAFE Futures Inquiry emerges as a consequence of developments in TAFE that have occurred over a period of 35 years. TAFE has strong support in the community and industry and is valued as a national asset both in Australia and by people overseas. However TAFE is at a 'turning point' that will determine where it goes as a public provider of education and training.

It is clear that TAFE is at an important moment in its history as a result of a combination of developments. They include:

- Poor resource levels and under investment in the sector resulting in a reduction of choices in courses offered and the resources to deliver high quality training at a time of shortages and changes in the nature of work.
- Increasing diversity of students and client needs and increasing complexity of learning and teaching in a community typified by inequalities, linguistic and cultural diversity and geographic location.
- Upfront fees and charges that act as disincentives for people who need to go to TAFE, even for those who qualify for concessions.
- Services that do not meet the diverse needs of students and do not recognise the diversity of students, their lives and their ambitions.
- Uncompetitive salaries and working conditions in comparison to industry equivalence as well as limited career options, and unsustainably high levels of casual employment for TAFE teachers.
- Outdated views about the nature of teaching and learning, poor learning resources and badly maintained teaching infrastructure.
- Systems and structures that frustrate opportunities to operate in a flexible and responsive way to meet the needs of communities and industries.
- Ambiguity and confusion about the direction of TAFE as a broad public institution and at a local institute level.

These are only some of the issues of the TAFE Futures Inquiry has been informed about through the consultations and submissions.

The dilemmas for TAFE described in the following section are the culmination of a range of policy options and circumstances that have shaped the environment and context of TAFE.

The next section gives a summary of these events and provides a context for the TAFE Futures Inquiry. It underlines why TAFE is at a critical turning point.

PART A
THE TAFE STORY AND
THE CHALLENGES OF
CONTINUITY AND
CHANGE



PART A

THE TAFE STORY AND THE CHALLENGES OF CONTINUITY AND CHANGE

The beginnings of TAFE: Kangan and 'second chance' education

TAFE emerged as one of the legacies of the Commonwealth's intervention into education in the mid 1970s. In 1974 the Whitlam government formed the Australian Committee of Technical and Further Education (ACOTAFE) chaired by Myer Kangan to investigate general priorities and the amounts and conditions under which Australian government funds would be advanced to the states. While the committee was required to take account of "manpower" requirements and the "emerging needs of industry commerce and governments as they adjust to technological, economic and social change", it also looked at "community attitudes and the needs and aspirations of individuals seeking to undertake courses in technical and further education" (ACOTAFE 1974 pv).

The outcomes of the ACOTAFE, widely known as the "Kangan Report", included greater access for women, migrants and other "minority groups" to further education. The Report also foreshadowed a broader purpose than technical training and signalled an emphasis on further education. At this time school retention rates were low and technical training was overwhelmingly directed towards meeting the needs of male apprenticeship training. The Kangan Report also saw a shared role for training between industry and the state:

The responsibility for vocational education and training does not and should not reside solely in the formal education system. This responsibility should be shared with industry, commerce and government which employ the output (ACOTAFE 1974 p10).

Other outcomes included an increased allocation of funding from the Commonwealth government to the state governments to run their TAFE Colleges by using section 92 of the constitution. The funding for student assistance and colleges rose by a record 263% (Whitlam p327).

The federal government also abolished all TAFE tuition fees and enacted legislation to compensate the states for the loss of fees.

While the federal government funded the states to conduct the national system and instituted a national committee called the Australian TAFE Council with the objective of overseeing national developments, the states continued to manage independent TAFE systems.

The post-Kangan period was also characterised by expansion and growth in the numbers of students going to TAFE. There was a growing proportion of women, and a boost of further education programs in TAFE designed to assist access of those groups experiencing educational barriers to training. These groups included students from non-English speaking background, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, people with disabilities and those living in rural and remote areas.

The emphasis of the post-Kangan period on boosting access programs ensured that TAFE became known as a provider of "second chance" education.

However critics of these changes argued that TAFE had become a "non-vocational" and "non-credit" based education system and argued that the bureaucratic nature of the TAFE systems made them inflexible to rapid change.

This was a period of rapid growth and change in the TAFE system and was seen by many as the zenith of TAFE and a "golden era". In this period TAFE remained substantially a government funded, public sector bureaucracy managed by the states and increasingly funded by the federal government. A centralised planning model based on consensus determined national training policy with TAFE as an unchallenged provider.

The banana republic: the national training reform agenda arrives

There was also a growing need for retraining as the Australian economy became influenced by the steady globalisation of the world economy. The changing nature of the global economy, the growth of technology in the workplace and the changing nature of work in the late 1970s and early 1980s posed significant challenges for TAFE, as well as Australian industry.

Industries where apprenticeship training dominated were subject to shrinkage as overseas competition made Australian manufacturing uncompetitive. A rise in unemployment at this time meant that larger amounts of funding, and TAFE activities, were directed towards labour market adjustment and unemployment programs. In response to this, Commonwealth government contributions to labour market programs lifted from \$12m in 1973/74 to \$850m in 1984/85. This funding assistance was mostly directed to employers to arrest a decline in apprenticeships, as well as increased efforts to increase training opportunities through newly created traineeships in new areas of the economy where there were no apprenticeships.

The mid 1980s saw a significant worsening of Australia's balance of payments with a falling dollar value boosting inflation and fuelling growing unemployment. The Australia industry was starting to be seen as uncompetitive in world terms and the vocational training system was under scrutiny for not providing skilled workers capable of making Australian industry competitive. The federal Treasurer Paul Keating warned that Australia was in danger of becoming a banana republic and in the budget papers of 1987 there were the first calls for the radical reform of Australia's vocational education training system.

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THE TAFE STORY AND THE CHALLENGES OF CONTINUITY AND CHANGE

The then Labor government argued urgently for a world-class training system to provide a skilled workforce capable of competing on a global level. The linkage of a training system with micro and macro economic reform typified this period with major reports such as *Australia Reconstructed and TAFE into the 1990s: Developing Australia's skills* reaffirming a need for training to be directed toward the workplace and meeting the needs of industry. The TAFE into the 1990s report identified this shift as:

The concept of skills formation is critical to the Future of TAFE because a great deal of the future learning and training will be geared to the workplace (NBEET 1990 p14).

The performance of TAFE was also subject to significant scrutiny and criticism and its role as the predominant provider of technical education underwent significant challenges.

In this climate of crisis and reform in the post-banana republic period the centralised award systems that had existed since the early 1900s also underwent reform and as part of that process training was identified as needing to be more responsive to "industry needs". This shift away from a broad-based notion of training with strong social obligations was also accompanied by a strong market ideology. The review into award restructuring proposed that a reformed vocational education and training system should be "a mix of private and public providers" in an "open training market". TAFE was positioned as inflexible and unresponsive and as occupying a monopoly position as the public training provider (TCRC 1990).

Further reforms were implemented under what was termed the National Training Reform Agenda (NTRA) including the introduction of:

- Competency based training (CBT) with a strong emphasis on the assessment of workplace competencies; recognition of prior learning; articulation and recognition of training and a replacement of "time served" training.
- The Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF) and the Australian Recognition Framework as mechanisms for recognition and transportability of all registered and vocational training programs.
- Registered Training Organisations (RTOs) including non-TAFE private providers as competition to TAFE.
- An open training market, consisting of contested government funds put out to tender, where TAFE and private RTOs would compete.

The open training market represented a considerable threat to TAFE as an increasing amount of funding previously delivered to TAFE was now "up for tender" and allocated on the basis of value for money. In some states such as Queensland and Victoria the open training market was enthusiastically adopted by state governments who saw a new market relationship where government was a 'purchaser' and TAFE was another 'provider' in a training market.

TAFE, with larger infrastructure than many private providers and relatively high on costs, was forced to make significant cuts in its operating budgets to meet the challenge of private providers as well as other TAFE providers in this new market era. In this period the state based TAFE systems were subject to cyclic restructures and realignments to enable them to be more efficient and effective in meeting the demands of the newly emerging competitive training and to introduce greater flexibility in the system. At the beginning of the 1990s, TAFE was under some challenge from private providers with a small proportion of its core funding for programs under threat through a tendering process.

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Towards a national VET system: TAFE becomes forgotten?

Concurrent with these changes, the federal government announced reforms in 1992 that promoted the development of a national vocational education and training system (VET). The federal government in agreement with the states created the Australian National Training Authority (ANTA).

ANTA functioned as a driver for reforms that characterised the NTRA by promoting and consolidating the open training market on a national basis. The creation of ANTA also resulted in \$720m of “growth funds” that were subject to regular negotiation between the states and the federal government. Growth funds were allocated by the federal government to each of the states with the condition that the states would maintain their enrolments and participation levels in VET.

This second era of central planning established a cycle of national VET priorities. However the operations of ANTA heavily favoured a shift towards a mixed system with a substantial presence of private provision and this was accelerated with the election of the Howard government in 1996.

Significant changes in VET emerged in this period with the federal government steering planning through ANTA. These changes were also negotiated through peak state and federal government committees such as the Ministerial Council for Education Employment and Training (MCTEEYA) and more recently the Council of Australian Government (COAG). The potential for TAFE to influence these bodies was often limited and many state ministers were not sympathetic to the needs of TAFE.

The dilemma for TAFE throughout this period was that the biggest single provider of education training was consigned to the status of just another VET provider. It was a status that has been duplicated in the thinking of many state governments as well, and this periphery status threatened the viability of TAFE. Yet paradoxically as these governments’ perceptions of TAFE’s importance diminished, TAFE’s role as a deliverer of social programs and of some aspects of governments’ social obligations remained undiminished and in many cases grew. The early 1990s were typified by high unemployment.

Further contradictions in the rhetoric of the market emerged in the decade between 1990 and 2000 as the elements of TAFE’s offerings in general education, equity programs and pre-vocational and access courses experienced diminished resources and support at a time when demand for them was high.

Another consequence of the era of the open training market was the re-introduction of fees for TAFE courses. Fees were initially disguised as “administration charges” in the late 1980s in many systems but the re-introduction of fees accelerated and there has been a growing reliance on both student fees and fee-for-service programs.

The penetration of the open training market also reshaped the way in which many of the state TAFE systems operated. Competition policy enabled TAFE systems to compete across state boundaries and many TAFE institutes competed against each other for

government tenders as well as for a growing fee-for-service market. A period of frantic competition facilitated by the restructuring of TAFE institutions in a number of states into “devolved and autonomous” business units contributed to a sense that TAFE had become a fragmented identity and that its ability to meet its social obligation had been sacrificed in becoming a training business.

This cycle has been arrested in several states as the systems have sought to rebuild the TAFE brand and operate in a more systemic and integrated way without the “rigidities” and “inflexibilities” of centralised bureaucracy. There has been a growing recognition about the importance of TAFE institutes to be connected with industry and community and there has been a significant change in the nature and character of TAFE institutions that sees greater connections, networking, interconnectivity and partnerships with industry, communities and schools.

The open training market also introduced significant changes for the work and practice of TAFE teachers with proposals to shift away from standardised institutionally based teaching to customised and negotiated courses. This shift has been loosely-termed ‘flexible delivery’ and has incorporated aspects of self-paced learning, mixed-mode learning approaches that use new learning technologies, as well as traditional institutionally-based learning. There was also a shift to delivering training in the workplace where teachers conducted training within the enterprises.

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The proposed shift from face-to-face teaching may not have affected all teachers but the need to configure resources around the needs of the market has accelerated the shift in the work of teachers into areas such as liaising with industry, brokering training with industry, working offsite and developing and customising training to meet specific enterprise or industry and community needs.

It is unfair to characterise TAFE teachers as resistant to change, as many critics of TAFE have, because many have enthusiastically embraced change and others have expressed a strong preference to work in new ways. But some teachers remain resistant to change and many are frustrated by a lack of resources and a failure of the TAFE system to introduce good business and support systems. The work of teachers has also been greatly influenced by several national initiatives emerging out of the NTRA. They are:

The Australian Quality Training Framework (AQTF). This national auditing system of all RTOs is designed to monitor and assess quality. The AQTF is reliant on significant documentation and evidence as a way of assessing quality.

Training packages. This approach to training is developed around endorsed competencies and sets of competencies agreed and endorsed by industry peak bodies. Training packages were an attempt to standardise competencies and assessment around industry needs.

Teachers' work has also been influenced by the way in which programs have been funded based on agreed formulas of student contact/curriculum hours, set at specific rates by state training organisations. These standard rates expressed as Annual Student Contact Hours (ASCH) have been set according to various benchmarks that have often been too low to conduct classes in such locations and remote and rural settings or in high costs programs.

For TAFE, additional complexities emerged because these formulas do not account for additional administrative resources, such as learning support and literacy and the infrastructure and on-costs associated with conducting state-wide public sector training organisations. This has featured "a leaner and meaner" organisational response to the needs of teachers with diminished opportunities for professional developments and restricted access to opportunities to develop innovative teaching and learning practices. The opportunities to develop innovations in teaching have been promoted by national schemes such as *Re-framing the Future* and Flexible Learning projects such as *Learnscope*, which are funded by the federal government but they are very often dependent on teachers securing joint funding from their institutions.

The policy of "growth-through-efficiency" saw extra capacity in the TAFE system extracted by reducing costs, organisational streamlining and savings on costs of delivery. In most states this drive for efficiency has led to a reduction in fulltime permanent teachers and a growth and reliance on a casualised workforce to complement the core of fulltime teaching staff. The TAFE teaching workforce has become one of the most casualised within the Australian economy. In general more TAFE teachers are employed part-time than fulltime. Most TAFE teachers are employed on a non-permanent basis and a high proportion of TAFE teachers (18%) are also self-employed (Clayton, Fisher & Hughes 2005 p8).

VIEWS ON TECHNICAL EDUCATION THROUGH HISTORY

1873 The Register Newspaper

If we sow fools we shall reap vice; if we sow larrikins we shall reap criminals; but if we sow practical knowledge, we must reap power and riches (The Register 1873 cited Miller 1982 p5).

1935 Gibson Royal Commission NSW

The more rationalised industry becomes, the more essential it is that the leaders of industry shall be men of broad vision and wide sympathies. It will be necessary for specific technical training to accompany as an education as possible particularly in the social sciences (Technical Education Commission 1935 p 40).

1974 Kangan Report

The main purpose of education is the betterment and development of individual people and their contribution to the good of the community. Technical and further education should be planned accordingly. Emphasis on the needs of the individual should lead to greater access to learning... (ACOTAFE 1974 pxxxv).

PART A

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TAFE 2006: globalisation and skilling Australia's workforce

The NTRA was developed in an economy on the verge of collapse and in a period of recession and the recovery period after that. Australia in 2006, like many other countries, is in a period of sustained global and national growth. This is recognised as being the consequence of a combination of external factors such as: the rapid growth of the Asia Pacific region (rise of the Chinese economy); the benefits of microeconomic reform made from the late 1980s; a more diversified Australian economy; and a more benign trade environment for Australian products. The sustained global growth is also characterised by a high demand for skilled workers and significant sections of Australian industry now finds itself facing a chronic skills shortage.

This shortage has been attributed to a range of factors including lags in worker supply, reductions in overall immigration, poor industrial and labour conditions in some occupations, a buoyant and competitive market for skilled workers, and under-investment in the education training sector. In the late 1980s and early 1990s, key sources of trades skills were eradicated when a number of state and territory governments divested themselves of their publicly owned and run utilities.

Australia's skills shortages are quantified as a shortfall of an estimated 100,000 jobs in areas as diverse as the construction industry, hairdressing, nursing and teaching as well as in unskilled areas such as fruit picking. One area of significant concern is shortages of qualified tradesman at a time of significant growth in the construction, mining, mineral processing and infrastructure sectors. This has placed a new focus on the performance of apprentice training and has once again called into question the ability of TAFE to lift completions in the 'traditional' trades.

The response by the federal government has been to initiate several measures in the training system. The measures include:

- Abolishing ANTA in 2005 and the establishment of new structures to plan and manage VET, administered by the federal Department of Education Science and Training.
- The introduction of the *Skilling Australian Workforce* (SAW) Act that includes proposals for the nationwide recognition of qualifications, proposals for fast-tracking qualifications as well as agreements on resourcing the VET system.
- Use of the SAW Act to develop agreements with the states on funding of VET, TAFE infrastructure and working conditions of TAFE workforce that are compliant with the Work Choices legislation.
- Funds to increase subsidies and support to employers for apprenticeships. There are claims that some 167,000 new training places will be completed.

- Establishment of 24 Australian Technical Colleges, that will compete with TAFE institutes and also secondary schools, with 7,500 student places.

The federal government has also renamed the sector calling it "Vocational and Technical Education" (VTE). The federal government remains largely hostile to TAFE and has continued to favour policy responses to skills shortages that marginalises the public provider TAFE, and provides funding opportunities that favour private providers.

This brief description of TAFE's evolution over the last 35 years gives some background and context from which the TAFE Futures Inquiry has emerged in 2006. TAFE finds itself at a turning point in maintaining its status as the public provider of education and training. It has a challenge in maintaining its role in the context of the new interventions of the federal government.

Most importantly its challenge is to remain sustainable in the face of the squeeze on resources, described in this section and the significant re-alignment that has seen the erosion of its financial and capital resources. This has been at a time when there was an urgent need for TAFE to be well-funded. These developments are described briefly in the next section.

PART A

THE TAFE STORY AND THE CHALLENGES OF CONTINUITY AND CHANGE

Where does the money go? How TAFE gets funded and what are the funding trends

Any discussion on TAFE in Australia requires a broad description of the complexities of funding arrangements that exist in VET in Australia. This section will provide a broad overview, introducing some of the key issues concerning VET funding at the state and federal level, as well as a summary of the funding trends in the last ten years to VET and more specifically to TAFE. The nature and scope of that funding will also be discussed.

In 2005 Australian VET funding is comprised of the following contributions:

- State and territory governments (57%).
 - ANTA and federal government special purpose programs (22%).
 - Internally generated fee-for-service or ancillary services funds (16%).
 - Funds from fees and charges levied on students (5%) (Adams 2005).
- General profile delivery and institution-based administrative, student and property services support for the public providers (range 70–80%).
 - User choice delivery (range 10–20%).
 - Contestable delivery (range 5–10%) for both private and public funding.
 - State training authority and training department funds (1–5%) (Adams 2005).

The states and territories display a range of structural and administrative differences between the state governments and their TAFE systems, as well as the VET system in each state. Some have TAFE embedded with the state department responsible for training and others have TAFE independent from the authorities or statutory bodies responsible for training. However, the way in which the states conduct program delivery involves establishing contracts with the public and private providers of VET in each state around four main categories of funding. These are:

General profile delivery: In the general profile funding there are generally performance agreements and priorities set by the state training agencies or authorities. The profile and nature of delivery of TAFE institutes are determined through this profile process and there is an agreed annual performance target.

User choice: This is generally an off-the-job training program related to apprentices or trainees and the funding is paid to employers to engage a training provider of their choice. This may be TAFE or other private providers, such as industry themselves or group training companies and adult and further education providers. Public providers such as TAFE have been able to capitalise on established relationships, existing capital facilities and strong regional presence to dominate this form of funding.

Contestable delivery: These are funds that are put out to tender by the states to meet targeted areas and existing delivery. The private and public sectors are viewed as being equal competitors in an open training market. The feasibility of this is questionable, and it is dependent on a range of providers with the capacity to meet the contract conditions and the infrastructure and experience to participate in the tendering process.

State training authority funding: These are funds used for administering the state systems and managing the processes associated with dispersing and monitoring funds as well as registration and corporate and legislative responsibilities.

In general, the state and territory governments are the major sources of revenue of public vocational education systems. Other forms of revenue include fee-for-service activity, ancillary trading and student fees and charges. In 2004, the states and territories contributed \$2,619.4m and the Commonwealth provided \$1,049.3m to the publicly funded VET systems that include some community education providers. Fee-for-service revenue was \$534.3m, ancillary trading was \$294.7m and student fees were \$233.7m (NCVER 2005a). Total spending on Australia's public system in 2004 was around \$4,887.1m (NCVER 2005a). How this has changed over time can be seen in Table 1 compiled by the Australian Education Union.

TABLE 1: Classification of VET operating revenue (1997–2004)

REVENUE TYPE	1997	2003	2004	% Change since 1997	% Change since 2003
State government	2126.4	2580.7	2619.4	23.2	1.5
Commonwealth	947.2	1040.6	1049.3	10.8	0.8
Fee-for-service	351.1	529.9	534.3	52.2	0.8
Student fees	155.7	197.7	233.7	50.1	18.2
Ancillary trading and other	206.6	273.8	294.7	42.6	7.6
Total	3787.0	4622.8	4731.4	24.9	2.3

Datasource: NCVER 2005 compiled by the AEU.

PART A THE TAFE STORY AND THE CHALLENGES OF CONTINUITY AND CHANGE

TABLE 2: Real expenditure per annual hours of curriculum (2004) prices

	State	Commonwealth	Other	Total
1997	9.03	4.02	3.03	16.08
1998	9.26	3.66	2.83	15.74
1999	8.83	3.26	2.76	14.86
2000	8.40	3.08	3.15	14.63
2001	7.46	2.90	2.79	13.16
2002	7.52	2.95	2.88	13.16
2003	7.52	3.03	2.92	13.47
2004	7.65	3.06	3.10	13.82
% change	-15.28	-23.88	2.31	-14.11

Datasource: NCVET 2005 compiled by the AEU.

TABLE 3: Changes in student numbers and spending per student

	Students	Public and private expenditure per student (% increase)
Government schools	1	16
Non-government	13	25
VET	19	-18
Universities (total)	26	-4
Universities (Australian publicly supported students)	0	-7

Source: Burke & Noonan 2005

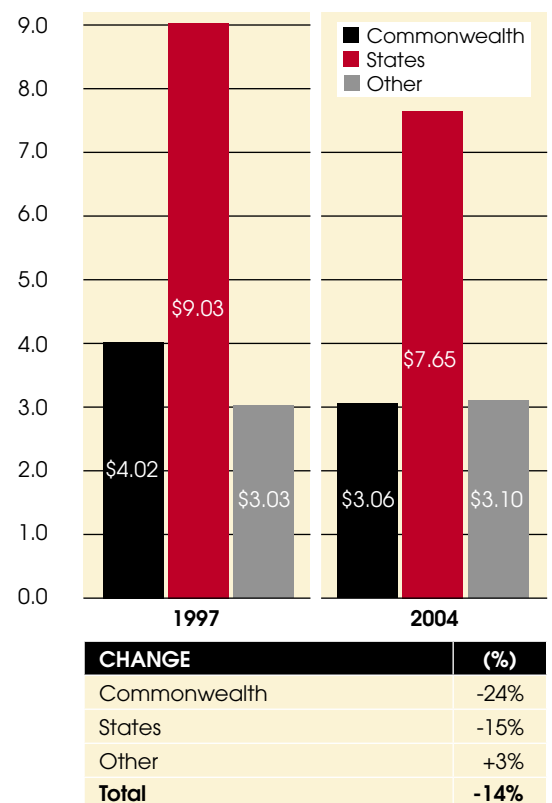
In the period 2003 to 2004, VET revenue grew by a total of 2.3%. The area of greatest growth was student fees and charges (18.2%). The Australian Education Union has factored in price movements and enrolments to estimate the movement in expenditure since 1997 and this provides an indication of real expenditure levels (AEU 2005 p1). See Table 1 on previous page.

The AEU data suggests that there has been a reduction in contributions from the Commonwealth by 23.8% and a fall of 15.2% from the states (AEU 2005 p1). See Table 2. Further analysis in Chart A represents the Commonwealth, the states and sources benchmarked from 1997 to 2004 (AEU 2005 p2).

A similar trend is evident in the analysis of Burke & Noonan (2005) at the Centre for the Economics of Education and Training at Monash University. Their analysis of funding trends suggested a steady growth of enrolment (77%) from 1991 to 2000. They contend that VET funding grew in real terms in the early 1990s but declined in the late 1990s. The Commonwealth share grew from 22% in 1992 to 28% in 1997 but has fallen to 24%. Similarly the states' share has fallen from 62% to 54% (Burke & Noonan 2005).

This analysis suggests that government funding in VET has proportionately fallen since 1992 and that Commonwealth funding has shifted away from funding delivery to funding apprentice initiatives, employer incentives and the Australian Technical Colleges. The analysis of expenditure per

CHART A: Real contribution to VET costs per student hour (\$ per AHC)



NCVER Financial Information 2004 and earlier, ABS 6401.0

student also indicates a large fall (18%) in the resources directed to students in VET. VET students are relatively worse off than students in other sectors, such as universities and schools where funding to students has been more generous (Noonan & Burke 2005). See Table 3.

Regardless of the modelling applied to funding, one of the chief outcomes is a squeeze on resources affecting TAFE students at a time when students are being asked to pay more and when industry is shifting the costs of training to individuals.

PART A

THE TAFE STORY AND THE CHALLENGES OF CONTINUITY AND CHANGE

Bricks and mortar? Funding TAFE capital works and infrastructure

The federal government has an important role in funding infrastructure for VET generally as well as TAFE specifically and operates a number of programs that fund major capital infrastructure in the state and territories. The government funds \$170m of capital grants for new buildings and maintenance (DEST 2006). New protocols for these grants require third party access to TAFE premises in a move that is designed to enable private providers access to publicly-funded resources. Other Commonwealth funding for industry-based skills centres is not available to TAFE. This scheme requires a 50% contribution from industry for the development of training. In 2000, 59 were funded but there were not enough applications to meet the allocation for these. TAFE's exclusion from this program limits its potential to develop partnerships and collaborations with industry around infrastructure.

Further funding was made available through skills centres developments with \$15m for skills centres for schools, as well as industry-based and Indigenous programs. New technologies funding of \$15m per annum was directed to such projects as the Australian Flexible Learning Framework and includes innovative teaching projects and professional development (DEST 2006).

There are still major debates about how infrastructure funding can respond to an environment where new technologies are the foundation for new teaching and learning. Choices concerning "bricks and mortar" or the new learning technologies create extra tensions in deciding how capital grants and infrastructure money should be spent.

The importance of infrastructure in maintaining the capabilities of TAFE in providing a contemporary training environment is underlined in the comments of the Business Council of Australia:

Of concern in relation to the ongoing sustainability of the public providers is that recurrent revenue lags recurrent expenditure, with cash balances maintained largely due to revenue not being set aside to cover the depreciation of capital stock. This means that when facilities reach the end of their useful life, special funding grants need to be sought from government to replace facilities. This often results in facilities not being replaced until they are well past their useful life (BCA 2004 p99).

Such comments highlight the need to maintain investment in education at a national level based on recognised world benchmarks.

National trends in VET and TAFE funding

The funding of TAFE has been strongly influenced by a general trend of the Australian government to reduce public expenditure in education generally and to shift existing funding into the non-public sector providers to encourage private expenditure in education. The Australian government provided growth in funding in the early 1990s but this has stalled over the period of the Howard government. There has been a steady shift from funding the public sector delivery of training to a growth of funding delivery by private providers as well as increasing incentives and subsidies for employers to support apprentices.

According to Ball (2005), Australian government expenditure on education is at the lower end of the scale of OECD nations. Government outlays on education and training in all sectors make up about 14% of all government outlays (Ball 2005 p76). This has been static with the gross value-adding of education as a percentage of gross domestic product declining from 4.6% in 1996 to 4.4% in 2000. The general outlays relative to gross domestic product have fallen from 37% in 1992–93 to 34% in 1999–2000 (Ball 2005 p76).

Growth in real expenditure on students has increased in schools but fallen in other sectors (Ball 2005). Based on evidence from ANTA annual reports, there are indications that expenditure per hour declined by 16% in real terms between 1997 (\$15.50) and 2001 (\$13.00)². While there was 6% growth from 2001 to 2003 to \$13.80, this is still below the 1997 levels. Overall the total adjusted annual curriculum hours delivered increased 22% from 227.8 million hours in 1997 to 277.7 in 2001 before declining to 276.0 in 2003 (Ball 2005 p79). According to Ball, real expenditure spending per hour by government on students declined by 11% between 1997 and 2003 (Ball 2005 p11).

Footnote

2. Based on 2003 \$ value.

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The federal government has shifted its priorities from funding VET delivery towards providing incentives to employers to support apprenticeship training. According to the 2002–2003 estimates of the Department of Education, Science and Training, incentives for employers amounted to \$566.019m, comprising \$437.122m in employer incentives and \$17.874m in personal benefits to new apprentices (living away from home allowances) and \$111.023m in payments to New Apprenticeship administration (Ball 2005 p78).

These funds, directed towards user choice funding, offer significant advantages to private providers at the expense of TAFE. Further evidence is also seen in the funding of the Australian Technical Colleges that are proposed by the federal government as competition to schools and TAFE.

In addition, expenditure by employers (including wages and salaries paid to employees while training) rose between 1989 and 1993 and then declined between 1993 and 1996, a period that parallels the decline of the training guarantee levy. This trend has continued more recently. While there was an increase in the incidence of training, intensity (measured by hours) fell. Wooden, cited by Cully (2002), identified a fall in average training hours for in-house training courses from 50.6 hours in 1989 to 36.2 hours in 1997. The 2001 Survey of Education and Training Experience confirms this trend with a fall in aggregate hours of 3.5% between 1997 and 2001 and a fall in average hours of training of 15.5% (Cully 2002).

Individual expenditure on public vocational education has been in the range of 4.1% to 4.4% over the period 1995 to 2003 (NCVER 1996–2003 cited in Ball 2005 p 83). While this is seen as being relatively low there has been a drop in employer-supported training, which means that students will be required to meet this shortfall. Hall, Buchanan and Considine (2002) have identified that in 1989, 9.8% of employees in training were not supported by their employers and this has grown to 20% in 1997. Dumbrell (2002)

has also estimated that just over 750,000 individuals incurred personal expense for their training in the 12 months prior to 1997.

While there has been a growing reliance on fees and charges in TAFE, Watson (2005) has identified that there is no consistency of pricing across systems and across similar courses. Watson also found that there was a range of “hidden” costs and surcharges, such as administration costs, materials and tools. TAFE students do not have access to HECS-style schemes of FEE-HELP where there are options for income contingent repayment through the tax scheme (Chapman 2003)³. Most TAFE systems have introduced an exemption scheme on an income contingent or means tested basis that is often operated at the institute level.

In summary, while there may be different perspectives about the way funds to the VET sector are distributed, there is strong evidence that the growth-through-efficiency policy and subsequent approaches by the federal government have tended to shift funds away from delivery. There has also seen the growth of a user-pays system with growing fees and charges.

Footnote

3. The recently released ALP White Paper, *Australia's universities: Building our future in the world*, has announced an intention of extending HECS for TAFE students undertaking associate degree programs. No other TAFE qualifications are proposed.

Has the training market worked for TAFE?

In a survey of TAFE and non-TAFE providers, Anderson (2005) has made some key findings on the nature and impact of the training market on providers.

In 1994 there were some 1,209 training providers in the training market. This expanded to 4,306 by 2001 and included TAFE institutes (Anderson 2005). The competition between TAFE and non-TAFE providers has grown greatly since the introduction of contestable funding with greater participation of private providers in user choice (Anderson 2005). Several features have influenced both TAFE and non-TAFE providers alike. They are:

- Complex and expensive regulatory structures, meaning there are high capital costs of entering the competitive market.
- A growth in administrative costs for providers in areas such as marketing, planning and financial services.
- Uncertainty at the benefit of competition in stimulating training by employers.
- Some areas, such as rural and regional regions, represent thin and unviable training markets.
- Fees and charges have risen. (Anderson 2005).

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Anderson (2005) also observed that the move to competition had stimulated some moves to diversifying training options in user choice rather than other areas, such as profile funding. The survey of providers found that there were closer relationships between providers and their clients through the competitive process. Anderson also found that in order to remain competitive, TAFE had been forced into a range of restructures and had adopted a more “bottom-line driven approach” to operations to gain more efficiencies. This had also meant that TAFE institutes were often competing against each other and diverting resources from training delivery into administration as well as giving a high priority to cost reduction rather than quality. Anderson found that:

Overall the balance of evidence suggests that the market reform has not improved the quality in TAFE, but may have done so for many non-TAFE registered training organisations (Anderson 2005 p38).

Most importantly for the role of TAFE as a source of second chance education, Anderson also found that:

The access and equity outcomes of the market reforms in VET appear to be generally negative. The surveys found that access for women, unemployed people and the disadvantaged groups has not improved under contested funding from either a TAFE or non-TAFE perspective (Anderson 2005 p39).

While these changes have occurred there is evidence that the shift to commercial activity is restricted to a minority of TAFE institutes with half of all hours funded by fee for service activity being in 15 institutes and half of all hours funded by full fee paying overseas students being confined to only five institutes (NCVER 2005b p18). The concentration of commercial activities tends to be growing in larger urban areas where there are bigger commercial markets as well as clients who can pay.

THE STATE OF TAFE IN THE STATES

NEW SOUTH WALES This is the largest TAFE system and operates as a department, under the direction of the NSW TAFE Commission. NSW TAFE has recently amalgamated into a single ministerial portfolio to form the Department of Education and Training. The restructure was proposed as a way of integrating schools and TAFE and to develop common business systems. User choice has not been adopted by NSW in the same way as the other states but the introduction of fees in the last few years suggests a sharpened focus on commercial and fee paying activities.

VICTORIA Along with Queensland, Victoria is the state where the open training market has been implemented most enthusiastically by successive governments. Since 1999, aspects of competition between TAFE institutes have been rolled back. Institutes operate as semi-autonomous bodies. The Victorian VET system claims the lowest ASCH rates nationally. As part of the processes of rebuilding the public TAFE system, Victoria has developed the Victorian TAFE Development Centre.

QUEENSLAND Queensland introduced an open training market and experienced rapid growth of private provision that threatened TAFE and fragmented its operations. In 1998 the new Labor government identified TAFE's social obligations, rolled back aspects of the open training market and consolidated TAFE's position as the public provider. This has further evolved with a white paper in 2006 foreshadowing the development of specialist training centres as well as a shift to higher-level qualifications as part of the Queensland Smart State program.

SOUTH AUSTRALIA: The South Australian government has been

attempting to recover the TAFE brand and reduce competition across the TAFE system. TAFE SA is in the final stages of a major restructure and now has three institutes.

WESTERN AUSTRALIA Along with South Australia, Western Australia is attempting to rebuild an integrated TAFE system after a period of sustained competition. Several colleges are being developed as specialised trade training institutes. This large and dispersed state has significant issues in delivering training in remote areas.

NORTHERN TERRITORY The major provider in the Northern Territory is Charles Darwin University, a multi-sectored university with a TAFE section. CDU is in the process of a major renewal after a recent review and restructure. Like Western Australia, the delivery of programs to communities—particularly Aboriginal communities—is difficult in a large geographical area. The Indigenous Institute of Tertiary Education at Bachelor also conducts VET programs for Indigenous communities in the NT and interstate.

TASMANIA Tasmania has a single institute with several specialist campuses and an innovative devolved structure of 92 teaching teams. This structure has been progressively developed since 1998. Apprentice and trade training is embargoed from competition.

AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY The ACT is a single institute system based on the Canberra Institute of Technology (CIT), which has benefited from this status as well as a benign political environment. CIT has been able to develop a range of innovations in areas such as degree level qualifications, research and programs for young people. Budget cuts in education foreshadow a harsher environment and a more competitive funding environment.

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THE TAFE STORY AND THE CHALLENGES OF CONTINUITY AND CHANGE

TAFE: what it looks like at the institute level

TAFE institutes are characterised by significant diversity. A profile of TAFE institutes compiled by the National Centre for Vocational Education Research identifies this diversity and the range of activities conducted by 72 TAFE institutes across Australia. The NCVER report found that:

- Student numbers range from 434 to 52,018 with a median of 15,786 (NCVER 2005b p11).
- The number of subjects per institute varied from 3,070 to 460,659 (NCVER 2005b p12).
- The smallest 20 institutes, measured by quantity of hours, ranged from 235,370 hours to 14,454,236 hours (NCVER 2005b p13).
- The smallest 20 institutes, measured by quantity of hours, accounted for less than 10% of the total subject enrolments (NCVER 2005b p13).
- Delivery locations varied from one to 281 with the median being 19 locations (NCVER 2005b p16).
- Proportion of students enrolled in AQF diplomas and higher qualifications is low and the proportions in certificate 1–4 in most institutes are substantial. It should be noted that a median 25% are enrolled in non-AQF courses in TAFE (NCVER 2005b p21).

The feature emerging from this recent NCVER data is that TAFE is characterised by significant diversity and that government policy needs to account for this diversity and ensure that responses are not framed around “one size fits all” standardised approaches to complex education and training issues.

Does TAFE meet the needs of students and employers?

There is strong evidence that TAFE meets the needs of students. In the 2005 TAFE student outcomes survey, most students reported moving into jobs after their TAFE training with 79% of graduates and 76% of students who completed a module being employed after their training (NCVER 2005c). A total of 89% of TAFE graduates were employed or are in further study after their graduation (NCVER 2005c). TAFE courses were seen as being relevant to the workplace needs of students with 74% of graduates reporting that their training was highly or somewhat relevant to their current job (NCVER 2005c). TAFE students were generally satisfied with the quality of training with 87% of graduates and 83% of module completions satisfied with the overall quality of their TAFE training. In general, the 2005 student outcomes data found that for government funded TAFE students’ satisfaction with training was the highest reported in five years.

Almost two thirds of employers, surveyed by the NCVER on their satisfaction with TAFE, indicated a preference for training with TAFE. Of these, 52% viewed TAFE as being the only suitable provider. A total of 79% of employers using TAFE for apprentice training were satisfied with TAFE as their trainers (NCVER 2005d p 9).

These surveys suggest high levels of satisfaction by employers and students who have established a relationship with TAFE.

TAFE at a turning point

However the TAFE system seems to be subject to continuing criticism with groups such as the Business Council of Australia suggesting that the public training system needs radical action. The Council says:

Discussion about their future role and resourcing is required. There are pressures around the ongoing financial viability of the public system due to relatively narrow funding bases, overwhelming dependence on government funding and the disjoint between recurrent expenditure—particularly in relation to the treatment of capital depreciation (BCA 2004 p11).

Although this position of the BCA questions the public role and argues for a more commercial focus it does have commonalities with some of the concerns of teachers, students and TAFE administrators about the adequacy of the funding of the public systems and its capacity to have a sustainable future.

This section has outlined the legacies of 35 years of change and continuity and the contemporary moment at which TAFE has arrived. The question about what TAFE will be like and what it will do in the future is partly shaped by this history.

PART B **WHAT AUSTRALIANS SAY ABOUT TAFE:**

A summary of national
consultations



PART B

WHAT AUSTRALIANS SAY ABOUT TAFE:

A summary of national consultations

TAFE: the dilemmas of identity, competition and status

In the majority of cases, those who participated in the TAFE Futures Inquiry spoke in positive terms about the role and mission of TAFE. One senior manager described TAFE as “well recognised internationally and nationally with great strengths but this is never recognised or captured in much of the contemporary policy discourse or the national media” (73 p1).

A strong sense of ownership about “our TAFE” was conveyed to this Inquiry and overwhelmingly there was strong support for the broader ideals of a publicly-funded education and training provider and for the work that it did for the community and with industry. This support was evident in statements such as “our TAFE is a good one and it’s basically sound and the core of it is good” (38 p2).

The consultations have been characterised by a passion and commitment to the notion of a publicly-funded, accessible, quality, diverse and comprehensive training provider. Many saw TAFE as a basically sound but “under-funded”. Some saw no viable alternative in developing a systemic response to training on a national level and that criticism of TAFE was “the product of unrealistic expectations on the part of some employers” (38 p1).

The TAFE Futures Inquiry is in part a response to the dilemmas that sees TAFE as hardly recognised for its position as the single biggest tertiary provider and subject to significant criticism and uncertainty about its role and its future.

TAFE’s contemporary dilemma includes questions about its identity. Is TAFE a business? What are its social obligations? Should it be guided and driven by industry needs? Is it a training enterprise or does it have a broader educational role as well? How should these issues be resolved? This dilemma was summarised by participants in the consultations who asked if “TAFE should be all things to all people?”

One example of these concerns is a statement by a teacher that “TAFE is doing good job and it has great future. It used to have goals, such as second chance education, and that needs to be clarified” (12 p1). Other participants saw that TAFE’s identity “was blurred” (12 p1) and that there was uncertainty about what TAFE’s priorities should be.

Many saw the need to reclaim the role that Kangan had identified for TAFE in the 1970s as a second chance educator and the need for governments to recognise their responsibility to fund TAFE. One of the most common themes emerging from the Inquiry consultations was the tensions around what was seen as the contradiction between TAFE’s social role and the shift towards commercial and market-oriented activities.

In most cases, the commitment to TAFE’s social role was seen as being “crowded out” by a combination of factors. These included a squeeze on resources and tight budgets that had forced TAFE to shift emphasis to commercial operations and fee paying and had eroded commitment to access, equity and social justice as a principle for TAFE’s operations.

This was referred to as the cleft between “the economic and social role and the need to fulfil social obligations” (1 p3). Another participant described this as a dichotomy between the economic and community role (5 p3). Some however saw this as “a systemic schizophrenia with no consistent view of the ‘beast’ that is confusing and difficult and a source of frustration that consumes much energy” (5 p1).

Others were concerned that TAFE should move from a bureaucratic and introspective role and adopt a new character that recognises its “quasi-government role” but also offered more opportunities to respond to ensure that TAFE could create “its own future” (1 p1). This was seen by some as merging these binary roles in creative and productive ways that built the capacity and the size of the organisation to ensure that enterprises and individuals in industry and the community prosper and realise their potential (5 p1). In combining these roles another system manager saw it as important to broaden the industry role to make the TAFE system more competitive and sustainable, to ensure it was able to meet its community obligations (5 p1). Some challenged the notion of “second chance education” saying “TAFE is not the last chance. It should be the first chance” (42 p5).

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At the institutional level this was expressed as a challenge to de-institutionalise TAFE in a post-industrial society and to develop an engagement with the community and industry in new and creative ways. In this new engagement TAFE could no longer be an isolated institution but has to engage with people throughout their lives from school to independent jobs in a continuum (5 pp2–3). Failure to do this was seen as contributing to “a hollowing out” of TAFE in the face of a hostile federal government, competition from private providers and the encroachment on many TAFE offerings by schools and universities.

The importance of the connections between TAFE and economic development was identified strongly in regional and rural locations visited by the Inquiry. TAFE’s role was seen as vital to the sustainability of the local economy in providing jobs and being a foundation for social and economic development. One mayor in a rural town spoke of TAFE as “the major employer, a great facility and a major part of the economy” (58 p1). Another mayor spoke of a world without TAFE as “a lost opportunity” and that “TAFE keeps opportunity alive in this town” (60 p1). TAFE was seen as valuable in assisting members of rural communities experiencing economic hardship to become “productive members of the community and not dependent” (61 p5).

Most importantly TAFE is “the only” provider of post-compulsory training in parts of Australia and being without TAFE would leave many with no options for training and education. This includes substantial remote and distance delivery using the latest new technologies of learning in “virtual classrooms”. The success of TAFE in various locations was attributed to co-operative and collaborative responses with an absolute commitment to the communities in which TAFE works (60 p4). Networks that promote sharing were seen as a feature of TAFE when it worked at its best and at its most effective.

The presence of private providers as competition and the potential for them to erode the status and position of TAFE was an overriding concern in the consultations. Private providers were seen as “cherry picking” low cost and high yield courses predominantly in entry-level courses. Private provision was seen as more dangerous in recent years owing to a federal government that is hostile to TAFE and more ideologically aligned with private providers.

There was a broad concern about the quality of provision of private providers and there were instances of TAFE picking up students and programs from collapsed private providers. Many of the training standards of private providers, particularly in the deregulated childcare industry, were strongly criticised.

Private providers were viewed as lacking the support systems such as libraries, counselling, welfare support and job referral networks. TAFE was seen as having the advantage of better quality systems, better and more visible pathways for students and having qualified and experienced teachers.

There was significant criticism of the Australian Technical Colleges, which were described as “duplication” and a “waste of resources” by many of those consulted. Although the ATC programs are targeted at schools and have a relatively small enrolment of 7,500, many people were angry and bewildered by this new level of competition that was seen as having the potential to “bleed” resources, students and staff.

Of similar concern is the changing nature of private providers, with an increasing presence of religious and faith-based groups being awarded contracts in equity programs and English language programs. Many participants questioned how these might erode the secular nature of the state provision of training, how these organisations respond to religious diversity and how they might occupy a role in an evangelical mission.

The performance of TAFE is viewed very differently at a local level than at a macro systems level. In several consultations, participants strongly identified with the work of the local TAFE and recognised the valuable work of teachers and the achievements of students. At the micro level, TAFE is “saying and doing the right things but there is a huge disconnect at the system level” (63 p3). This view was strongly put by many employers who saw some of the TAFE systems as remote, inflexible and characterised by an unwillingness to communicate with industry and community. Several industry groups expressed recognition of the difficulties but also frustration at the delays in responding to clients (40 p1). Many of these were dysfunctional communications and employers saw themselves as being strung out by the system when urgency was demanded (37 p2). These might seem ‘normal’ institutional ‘mess-ups’ but in the context of heightened and politicised scrutiny the dimensions of these trivial issues are amplified and need correction.

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This local/systems dilemma was summarised by a regional local council member who said “TAFE has very good partnerships with local government particularly with our economic arm. People are willing to be out and about and listen to industry but TAFE does lose a lot in responsiveness. It’s often a systems problem. There are lots of layers and the head teacher gets left with (it all)” (45 p3).

Several of the state TAFE systems involved in the consultations were seeking to rebuild and redevelop an integrated TAFE system after a period of fragmentation when an ethos of market competition had been the dominant management ideology. In these systems renewal and revival were strongly linked to creating an organisational presence at a state-wide level with an integrated and complementary provision by various institutes. Most systems visited were either in the process of a restructure or had undertaken one in the recent past. These restructures were in varying phases and in many ways are evidence of the dynamic nature of TAFE. In many cases, participants were critical of these restructures. The most telling criticism came from those consulted in industry who said constant restructures made it hard “to make and sustain long term organisational contact to develop partnerships” (11 p2).

Strong criticisms were also expressed to the Inquiry about the need for TAFE to be more demand driven rather than offering standard packages (41 p1). In many cases this actually meant TAFE was blamed for the inadequacies of training packages that were developed and endorsed by industry.

Some industry participants were highly critical of TAFE’s inability to deliver training in a flexible way to respond to the needs of industry and the community (31 p1). Tardiness in shifting from institutional based delivery to workplace delivery was cited as evidence and being unable to respond to industries needs during term breaks was cited as evidence of inflexibility.

In several states there was criticism by employers, industry and group training companies about TAFE cancelling classes when class numbers did not reach approved levels. One group training manager expressed exasperation at having a group, with 11 students, cancelled at short notice because 15 was the mandated level (63 p2). In one state, the response by TAFE was termed a failure to deliver “a curriculum guarantee” where funding difficulties meant the cancellation of VET in schools courses and impeded the growing relationship between schools and TAFE (60 p2).

However critics recognised that TAFE’s response was largely due to a lack of funding and they saw the need for additional resources, particularly in light of rising targets and diminishing resources.

Resourcing TAFE: more with less

Diminished resourcing and the squeeze on budgets were universally recognised as major impediments to TAFE performing its role and mission. A regional council member suggested, “TAFE doesn’t have the resources to put into learners that we need” (45 p3). Some industry representatives expressed frustration at the continuous shifting of “funding priorities with a limited envelope” making it difficult to work with TAFE (41 p2).

Participants spoke of the impact of the growth-through-efficiency as having “to do more with less” and “more with nothing”. The squeeze on resources, which affected teachers with hours being “shaved” and reductions of nominal hours in courses by as much as 50%, was justified by a perception that budget problems could be solved by students simply “learning quicker” (25 p1).

The impact on teaching resources and infrastructure was considerable. Teachers spoke of working with outdated and obsolete teaching materials and articulated an inability of the organisation to fund ongoing capital and infrastructure programs (19 p1). Teachers spoke about being “dated by the machinery they use” (19 p1) and of “having to share one computer amongst three staff” (69 p3) or not having the funds to buy the latest software. Some teachers said they were “hungry for change but frustrated by a lack of infrastructure” (12 p2).

Funding issues affected the attractiveness and competitiveness of TAFE teaching as a career option. TAFE teacher wages were seen as uncompetitive relative to the industry particularly in those states where there was a resource boom. In the heavy vehicle industry the top teacher rate of \$60,000 compared unfavourably with the \$100,000 wage level in industry but also an estimated \$80,000 for a fourth year apprentice (22 p2). Attracting and retaining good staff continued to be a major challenge in the face of high wages outside TAFE for skilled workers.

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Funding models were criticised as failing to acknowledge the diversity of learning needs in TAFE, and being directed to narrow and instrumental skills training (20 p4). Importantly, the ASCH formula came in for strong criticism as being an input measure that failed to measure performance and was often based on an historic view of what training had happened. ASCH was seen as an impediment to developing a culture of change in teaching and learning because the rigid formulas did not respond to diversity (73 p2). One system manager said “you can’t do it the same for cooks and mechanics” (73 p2). There was also concern that the funding formula used did not recognise the costs associated with flexibility (26 p4). Many participants argued for a complementary funding model to ASCH that enabled local initiatives to be developed (23 p7).

A reduction in funding had also led to shifts in the training profile that limited opportunities for students and the community. In one state, shrinking funding had resulted in the stripping out of all Diploma and Advanced Diploma level courses and priorities shifted to Certificate 1 to 4 level courses, which had undermined a commitment to a continuum of pathways (30 p1). In other states the development of “priorities” around the allocation of a state profile had the effect of shifting resources into a narrow range of vocational courses and away from general education and literacy support. The rationing of priority profile had also created a scarcity of training positions that could be offered on a fee-for-service basis.

Uncertainty about funding also eroded the capacity of TAFE to develop long-term partnerships with industry and the community (42 p2). Annual cycles of funding and the approvals associated with this created a hesitant ‘stop-start’ response and the ability to respond with immediacy was limited. More importantly, the capacity to sustain change in the TAFE system was questioned with managers saying “we need

to get more long term funding and not just a 12-month funding cycle as that means not much change except at the edges where innovations are made” (30 p6).

Responses to the funding dilemma saw many despair that a more co-operative and productive arrangement between the states and the federal government would ever occur. The Commonwealth’s behaviour was seen by a group of state managers as being loaded with challenges as 80% of the TAFE system was ignored in the rush for apprenticeships (26 p1).

The specific needs of some large states and territories with sparse populations outside the capital cities such as WA, SA, Qld and NT are seen as not being recognised in the funding agreements and this was seen as placing strain on delivery in rural and remote locations. In many cases there is “recognition of having to bite the bullet and run it expensive” (26 p1).

Suggestions for improvements in funding included less reliance on a centralised formula that fails to account for local and regionalised difference. It was also suggested that funding criteria needed to be open and rational and not based on ideology (38 p4).

Continued shrinkage and stress were seen as ongoing features of contemporary TAFE in response to “doing more with less”, unless significant funding levels were restored.

A question of image: the profile of TAFE

One of the challenges for the future of TAFE was seen as a need to lift its profile and to build esteem. Many said that TAFE lacked the prestige and status of universities and other VET providers. TAFE had to overcome some of the stigma of being seen as a “second string” to universities and some private providers (8 p2).

Securing a profile as the “trainer of choice” or “preferred provider” was seen as the biggest challenge for TAFE in the face of competition, shrinking budgets and contradictory directions (60 p2). One mayor said “there needed to be a change of thinking about TAFE being a second cousin and there needed to be an understanding that there is an integrity and pride in all vocations” (60 p1).

Part of the key to changing these perceptions was to change student perceptions about TAFE in general and about trades in particular and correct an erroneous view that “we send kids down the mines” (8 p1).

Many people saw the need for better school counselling services and the need for TAFE to maintain strong links with schools to assist young people to understand what careers were available through TAFE.

TAFE was seen as lacking a lobby group or similar group to promote and represent the interests of the TAFE sector. In one rural consultation, a newspaper owner and editor observed that TAFE was the most open and pro-active arm of government. He argued that it was not subject to the spin and elusive behaviour evident in other government departments (60 p5). This editor suggested that TAFE’s profile would be raised through better use of the web and some of the new digital media.

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The question of who might champion TAFE, in the way the Australian Vice Chancellor's Committee (AVCC) does in universities, was left open. Most consultations confirmed the importance of all staff being ambassadors and representatives of TAFE. One institute had sought to enlist the support of alumni but had not enjoyed great success and as a consequence, the institute had taken a higher profile in promoting itself and TAFE with some successes (16 p9).

New challenges and new frontiers: TAFE, schools and universities

TAFE operates across the spectrum of operations of schools and universities. Programs visited by the Inquiry spanned a youth transition programs such as YARDS at Canberra Institute of Technology for young people at risk to complete year ten to university degrees in performing arts at the Adelaide Performing Arts Centre. These programs in schools and in universities showed evidence of creativity, innovation and high quality. For details of these programs, see:

www.cit.act.edu.au/foccus/communitydevelopment/yards/

www.tafe.sa.edu.au/aca

Many TAFE institutes saw their future as offering alternatives to schools and universities using adult models of learning. Developments such as the Victorian Certificate of Applied Learning Education and the new Queensland certificate now provide significant opportunities for TAFE to offer senior secondary schooling. TAFE institutes are also conducting degrees within a fee-paying environment (1 p2).

Some TAFE institutes have been able to package degrees using Diplomas on the VET profile to lead into degrees. These degrees have been facilitated by universities in co-operation with the relevant qualifications authority. One example of this is the degree in criminal forensic science at the Canberra Institute of Technology (15 p1). Opportunities for TAFE institutes to offer degrees are limited by the challenges of marketing degrees in TAFE, difficulties in attracting a full-time cohort, attracting qualified staff, barriers to overcoming university protocols and difficulties in using training packages in higher education programs (1 p2). Articulation arrangements negotiated with universities involving joint degrees were evident in areas such as health care and nursing and these often involved collaborations with the state government health sector. One such example was seen at Cootamundra in NSW involving Charles Sturt University and the NSW Department of Health (58 p3). One teacher referred to this program as evidence of a "new TAFE" saying "our car park is always full" from this program, which enjoyed significant support from the local council (58 p3).

While TAFE has shifted into degrees in several states there has been a long history of multi-sectored universities in several states and there is a significant co-location of TAFE and university campuses. Participants saw important challenges in securing a TAFE identity in these organisations and according to a manager: "there needed to be better agreement on what TAFE's distinct mission is" (8 p6). Referring to the relationship between TAFE and university, one manager said: "There is not an articulation god; I don't get out of bed thinking 'articulation' to motivate me" (8 p6). There was criticism about the lack of a dedicated management structure for TAFE, differentiation around governance and linkage with qualifications in many multi-sectored organisations (8 p6). In some organisations there were concerns that the management and leadership with a higher education background did not appreciate

the needs of the TAFE sector (30 p3). In some other multi-sectored locations, there was significant co-operation with staff saying "we are combining resources and that is superior because we could have a university here by itself" but "we are under pressure to compete against higher education as we are forced to shift up to Diplomas" (44 p2). Others spoke of the difficulties of using training packages in articulated programs such as the creative industries (44 p2).

Some students consulted had made the decision to use TAFE in a constructive way as a preparation for university and saw the process of transition from TAFE to university as a pathway. Students spoke of "using TAFE as a stepping-stone but I can't afford 'uni' just yet" (78 p1). Many participants saw the advantages of doing a diploma in TAFE and then using that for accreditation into university saying "this saves me a lot of money" (78 p3). Not all students wanted to go to university after TAFE and most students had made conscious decisions about going to TAFE as an alternative for "hands-on learning" (78 p1).

However many participants saw the prestige and status of universities as threatening TAFE's ability to attract high quality students. Career counselling and parent attitudes came in for criticism for failing to support TAFE as a post-school option (61 p4).

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However there is evidence in the sites visited of strong partnerships between schools and TAFE offering vocational education programs. One school VET co-ordinator said: “the co-operation between TAFE and schools is good, students can come and see what’s happening and I see lots of ex-school students in the TAFE College and that is good” (57 p3). The schools saw significant change for senior students “VET in Schools is not seen as an add-on, it’s changed our whole curriculum and students clearly want to engage” (57 p5). The outcomes for students were seen as very positive “VET in schools gives esteem and dignity to students and ideas about what they want to do” (57 p3). One TAFE teacher supported this saying “VET in Schools is ideal and children are now accessing TAFE” (57 p6). In one centre, a collective approach using four large industry sectors, the local council, schools and TAFE had been able to boost participation in VET in schools and stimulate interest in skills shortage areas (61 p3).

However in some states the specialist resources had not followed such programs and there was a situation in NSW where schools that used TAFE had their staffing resources reduced (60 p1). This was seen as a major disincentive in an area showing considerable support and outcomes.

There is clear evidence that the inter-sectoral boundaries are meaningless to many people in TAFE and there are new and organic partnerships developing between schools and universities. While the schools and TAFE are shifting into a new generation of established partnerships, the relationship with universities is patchy and will need to respond to TAFE as a provider of higher education in its own right. In most cases TAFE staff expressed frustration at the lack of transparency, inequities of articulation opportunities for TAFE students into universities and a general lack of interest from universities about working with TAFE (78 p5).

Skills shortages: a crisis for TAFE?

One of the key criticisms of TAFE by some sections of industry has concerned its capacity to respond to skills shortages. Throughout the consultations the view was expressed that “TAFE’s role was really to train workers who were employed and came to TAFE and that employers needed to lift their game” (12 p1).

The response of some governments to skills shortages was seen by TAFE staff and employers alike as short-term and damaging. Shortened programs, based around skills sets, were condemned as producing workers with a limited range of skills with reduced quality. One teacher spoke of the outcome in carpentry as being an “eaves carpenter” (11 p2). Presenting a more holistic view of training, an industry association representative said: “Knowledge is generally no great burden. If they learn something extra along the way that is not a real problem” (40 p2). The shortening of apprenticeships was also seen by some industry as a presenting risks for quality as well which would end up creating downstream costs to employers (40 p2).

One employer castigated state and federal governments under-investment stating: “if they are keen on addressing skills shortages they have to put in. They [the government] have to maintain funding” (61 p1). Another major multinational training director said the challenge was not simply training but better integration between HR and training policies to ensure all trainees were “tracked, trained and retained” to prevent good staff and apprentices being poached (28 p1). The same director also suggested “shortening time will do ourselves no favours in terms of value, quality and quantity” (28 p2).

The proposed fast-tracking of apprenticeships was considered a failure to understand that an apprenticeship involves nurturing personal growth to gain confidence and learn the responsibilities associated with working. This also requires mentoring by people who were experienced and associated with training young people, and could not be forced. One industry body representative spoke of an apprenticeship as a “learning experience” that needed to be an assisted one “that recognises that kids have a complex life and leave room for this” (40 p3).

The challenge was seen by one teacher as a divergence in opinions about the value of education and training: “employers only want a narrow skills set. On top of that, we need to develop transportable skills and a commitment to further learning” (42 p4). Strong support was shown for pre-apprenticeship programs and also ‘taster’ programs for women in non-traditional occupations as ways of developing improved links with employers. However, the main reason for skills shortages was seen as the poor conditions and wages for apprentices and this has significant commonality with the experience of many TAFE students.

Living and learning: life as a TAFE student

TAFE students are typically diverse in backgrounds, interests, needs and experiences. TAFE students span the full spectrum of ages from school leavers to existing workers to mature-aged students. This diversity is increasingly featuring high levels of expectations about the experience of learning in TAFE and high levels of motivation. Teachers spoke of a new generation of students where “young people have really changed; they are well motivated and want to be here” (19 p4). Students were seen as interested in achieving their career and learning goals and were people who took pride in their achievements. Many students spoke of TAFE as not only facilitating training and education but a life-changing process.

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Teaching staff also took pride in a transformative process. “We get kids with no hope, no job. Four years later we see a transformation” (22 p6). One student doing a tertiary preparation certificate spoke of the pride she had in this transformation: “I am really feeling good with what I have achieved. I didn’t think I could do it. I scoffed at it but I am so right where I am now” (50 p2).

Students were seen as making conscious and deliberate choices about their courses and were not tolerant of systems and structures that did not meet their needs. Part of this impatience was because students were required to juggle a range of commitments including work, family and social commitments (19 p5). Managing complex adult lifestyles that were different to 20 years ago was considered a challenge for students (16 p7).

Students of all ages took pride in their achievements with one mature-aged student saying: “I should have done this 30 years ago”. One TAFE manager observed that: “Most students want to do well. They are keen, keen to do well” (43 p4). Another teacher said they are “fine young people who want to make something of their lives” (43 p4). This meant that students are expecting more a more individual approach to their needs and expectations of resources and support services were heightened. Students were seen as being “intolerant of when things don’t go well. They don’t see the logic of some of our [TAFE] decisions” (16 p7).

Students said they were attracted to TAFE because of “hands-on practical skills” and “being treated like an adult” and “teachers who are willing to help you” (64 p3). One student said TAFE teachers are “fantastic” and “I do like TAFE teachers as they talk to you at the same level and they treat you equally” (64 p4).

Increasingly students were now interested in work-based delivery, online learning and self-paced delivery. In one college, more than 50% of 15–17 years olds were enrolled in flexible pathways (49 p5). However TAFE students did not like to travel from their local areas and their employers and parents expressed anxiety about them travelling away, particularly if they were considered young, immature and vulnerable to exploitation (45 p1).

The broader range of students also meant that TAFE was attracting a high needs group: which included younger students who lacked the foundations for an adult learning environment, such as basic literacy and numeracy and study skills. The combination of VET in Schools programs, Centrelink referrals and special needs programs, such as those where young people were excluded from school as well as homeless young people, presented new challenges for TAFE and TAFE teachers. These young people were seen as not being equipped with the emotional maturity and interpersonal skills to cope with an adult learning environment. The demand for support services, such as counselling, was seen as “going through the roof” with the advent of the welfare to work reforms commencing in July 2006 (62 p3).

The need for specialist support was further confirmed by the large number of reports that mental illness and behaviour management was becoming an issue across the system.

In this context, staff and students saw the importance of developing strong, collaborative learning processes including group support, such as mentoring. This was considered crucial for Aboriginal students in enabling them to gain confidence in an institutional environment in which they were unfamiliar (62 p2). Flexibility, in terms of delivery and assessment, was seen as essential to meet the individual needs of students (62 p3).

One teacher saw that for students: “Part of the challenge is the need to understand how to manage their own learning and we need to prepare them to become adult learners” (40 p4).

WHY STUDENTS CHOSE TO GO TO TAFE (78 pp4–5)

- **TAFE teachers care and are more approachable.**
- **TAFE is a warmer more caring environment.**
- **It’s not just sink or swim.**
- **There is a holistic approach to learning.**
- **It’s more practical. It’s hands-on learning.**
- **It’s not us and them—we’re more equal.**
- **Our opinions matter.**
- **We feel important rather than being dictated to.**
- **It’s more functional and that’s good when you have a dysfunction, and your life is dysfunctional.**
- **You can come here at my age, and my mum is her doing Year 10 as well.**
- **TAFE is good at helping people mix and integrate and improve their sense of worth.**
- **TAFE has a professional outlook and it encourages a professional approach.**

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Living on the edge: TAFE students on the poverty line

Student poverty is starkly confronting and influences the work of teachers in profound and moving ways. Students spoke of difficulties in meeting the costs of education but also the associated costs of transport, food, accommodation and child-care.

Students who addressed the Inquiry related the challenges of making ends meet to stay in training or education. Apprentices spoke of the difficulties of supporting themselves on \$6.40 per hour (12 p2). Apprentices spoke of how difficult it was to exist on wages of \$500 a fortnight and meeting the expenses of travelling to TAFE by car with distances of more than 200 kilometres (12 p2). Most said they were forced to live with parents and the combined effects of low wages, lack of independence and travel made aspects of their apprenticeship unappealing. One teacher related how one apprentice said “he was too ashamed to tell me how little he earned” (22 p5).

One group of teachers recalled an instance where students were enrolled in a cooking course and ate the food that was prepared for assessment. When asked to explain their conduct, the students said they were homeless and had not eaten for several days. The response of the institute management was to create a “breakfast club” for students. This was seen to be happening in several institutes visited by the Inquiry but “we are pinched to do it on our budget” (49 p5).

Homelessness and “lounge surfing” were reported by student unions as regular occurrences. Some students secretly slept overnight in computer laboratories and in lockers (18 p1).

In Canberra, the student union has been active in developing a response to homelessness and has introduced a student rental scheme. Using derelict ACT government homes the student union has been able to house 100 students. In addition, the Canberra Institute of Technology Student Association (CITSA) has introduced a loans and assistance scheme (18 p1). In general this student-owned and student-directed response to student needs was not evident across the system.

The Inquiry found that there was generally a lack of awareness of student poverty and the financial needs of all students.

Paying the price: fees and charges in TAFE

Fees were seen as a major deterrent to access to TAFE particularly for those in low wage jobs or areas of high dependency on social security.

In many consultations, the absence of the ‘working poor’ was cause for comment. Participants in the Inquiry said this was a virtually invisible group that did not attend TAFE. In particular, the extra cost of courses from Certificate Level III was seen as a deterrent (51 p4).

In many systems there was a growth in fee-paying courses that were also offered on the government profile. After the quotas for the government-funded priority programs were filled, additional places were made available on a commercial basis. In general, a rationing of hours across the system has promoted fee-paying courses offered by TAFE institutes or commercial arms of TAFE systems such as TAFE Plus in NSW and TAFE Solutions in the ACT. Some courses referred to during the Inquiry included domestic and international fees of \$A13,000 for hairdressing (61 p2). This fee would seem high given that hairdressing was reported as one of the lowest earning apprenticeships occupations.

In some systems students are entitled to exemptions on presentation of evidence of their personal circumstances. These exemptions were restricted in NSW to one per year. In securing exemptions some teachers said “people are put through a very inquisitive and demanding process which is intrusive and demeaning to get an exemption” (65 p3). Processing exemptions and fee support through agencies such as Centrelink “take[s] days” (16 p7). Loans offered through Centrelink were also seen by one student as placing stress on students to repay (58 p3).

The introduction of fees was also seen as changing the relationship between teachers and students. Teachers were concerned that “it was hard to build rapport when you are a debt collector” (19 p5). Some teachers argued that fees were inconsistent with full-timers being charged the same fees as part-timers and fee levels varying for the same course in different states.

Opinions on fees vary considerably. There is considerable support for the view that there should be no fees for TAFE programs. This is, of course, despite the fact that fees and charges exist in most of the state systems and are already seen as a barrier to participation.

In many of the consultations, participants firmly rejected up-front fees, arguing that TAFE is already funded by taxpayers and that each generation should pay for next through the tax system (19 p6). Some argued that students repay society once they are working and contributing in the workforce.

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Dissenting voices argued that “people tended not to value something that wasn’t paid for” and that “some nominal contribution may be needed” (65 p3) or that “they should pay something” (19 p6). There was a view that “some students do value better what they pay for and the whole society is user-pays and there are expectations to pay for things, but there are problems with equity” (42 p3).

There was universal agreement that an inability to pay should not determine a student’s ability to undertake studies and career options through TAFE. Enhanced options for loans and fee help were seen by some as a way of overcoming existing barriers to participate in training and overcoming the failure of institutes and systems to assist students.

Some argued that a HECS system could assist TAFE students (69 p5). Some expressed misgivings that fees would rise and creep up in the event of a FEE-HELP or HECS-type scheme and that students would incur high debts with little guarantee of securing highly paid employment (19 p5). In general, many people saw the treatment of TAFE students as inequitable when compared with the ability of university students to access credit for their studies. There was a clear message that fees should not “lock out” students from TAFE and that TAFE should be principally funded out of taxation revenue for the benefit of the whole community (19 p5). One teacher summarised this sentiment: “TAFE has always been an opportunity for lower socio-economic students to break the poverty cycle. Fees have stopped that access for students to move up and move out” (79 p6).

Teaching under the squeeze: life as a teacher in TAFE

The squeeze on resources has profoundly influenced the work of teachers. The application of business models and the continued quest for efficiencies has also shaped the nature of teachers’ work, their resources and the opportunities for developing a career in TAFE. A combination of diminishing resources, contradictory objectives and multiple accountabilities emerged as key themes that were strongly criticised by teachers.

At the same time, teachers and others spoke enthusiastically about the opportunities for innovation and the value of working in TAFE. They expressed frustration that the models of institutional management used to drive change were not inclusive and, in many ways, worked against meaningful change. Nevertheless, an energy and enthusiasm for change typified the consultations with teachers, which suggests there is a solid foundation for change into the future.

Teachers spoke of reduced support to teaching areas and teaching support and that in-service delivery or professional development was becoming more difficult to achieve and required significant input from staff. Many staff spoke of the human cost of trying to do more with less and saw increased levels of sickness and tension in the workplace. The levels of energy and enthusiasm for change were in danger of being eroded as staff were being required to support change in the context of a “minimalist” model for change (16 p1). Teachers spoke of “an expectation of change without much support” and “in many ways the administrative systems had not caught up with new teaching and delivery modes” (19 p2). Teachers spoke of “self-exploitation” and of working outside the industrial agreements to make things happen (19 p2). They spoke of “a pressure to do everything quickly and everybody being rushed” (10 p3).

One of the many downsides of this pressure is that teachers do not get time to think about change. Opportunities to reflect on change, as well as teaching and learning, are limited and although there is professional development in most systems, these opportunities are limited by an absence of replacement staff or inappropriate programs (19 p2).

In many cases, the “funding models had not yet caught up with such initiatives as workplace delivery and were not geared to flexible delivery” (69 p4). Committed staff were frustrated by the failure of systems such as learning platforms, email systems and timetable systems to recognise how different teaching has become in TAFE when flexible delivery is maximised. Teachers are working in industry programs around-the-clock but the systems were often not in place to support this (69 p4).

Teachers spoke of the multiple demands of teaching including: ‘traditional teaching’; increased responsibilities in counselling and welfare; liaising across TAFE; liaising and brokering with partner organisations; marketing; and recruiting for students. The new roles for teachers associated with flexible delivery and workplace delivery meant that they were constantly travelling and the emphasis had shifted from teaching to assessment. Travel and the fatigue and dangers of this in remote and rural areas were a constant feature of TAFE teachers’ work (13 p3).

Many participants mentioned that teaching was not a “homogenous job” and that effective teaching was now juggling a variety of roles to meet the needs of a wider range of students and clients. Some spoke of the need to recognise a shift away from ‘chalk and talk’ and a move to using several varied models of teaching to address diverse needs (25 p3). Some argued that teachers needed to be like nurses where there were specialist positions (20 p2). TAFE teachers now have to be “on the look out” and “have an antennae on what’s going on” in the community and promote TAFE as the provider of choice (8 p2).

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Part of the challenge of change was seen “to support people’s move into more flexible and customised repertoires of learning in a seamless manner” (71 p2). This was expressed as a shift from “controlled environments to uncontrolled ones” and moving from what was termed “teacher-centred to student-centric” (34 p3). Teachers also spoke of the need for more holistic approaches to teaching and learning.

Contemporary teaching also required greater amounts of administration by teachers as many of the TAFE systems chose flatter management structures and removed administrative positions. One overriding and continuing theme was the extraordinary levels of “administrivia” associated with accountabilities of auditing for such processes as the AQTF. These were seen as consuming unnecessary effort in human and financial terms and degenerating to meaningless “tick and flick”. There was an environment of “constant checking and rechecking” which undermined trust between management and teachers. While teachers were concerned about quality, they found it hard to see how these processes had influenced quality of the direct provision of teaching and learning. In one system it was identified that 50% of the audits were internally-generated. It was suggested managers needed to be more discriminating and that many of the quality systems are not intended as a market tool (16 p8). More inclusive and participatory processes, based on consensus, were seen as a way forward to ensure a culture of continuous improvement (16 p2).

These frustrations were seen as undermining the “goodwill” of staff and also symptomatic of a lack of recognition of teachers work as being a profession (25 p2). Teachers argued that their roles were not appreciated as professionals and teachers and that there was confusion about the notion of being a professional TAFE teacher (8 p3). These confusions are summarised in the question about where to put the emphasis in the terms “trade teacher” or a “teacher of trades” (8 p4).

Many felt that TAFE teaching had been ‘de-professionalised’ and that there was a need to re-engage in discussion on adult learning, pedagogy and focus on the learning needs of TAFE students. These issues needed urgent resolution to respond to the changing delivery needs, the changing nature of industry, and the broadening age range of TAFE students, according to participants. The participants spoke of the need to recapture an educational role informed by practice and theory and discussion and debate as an alternative to minimalist and instrumental training models.

Professional networks were identified as important sources of reflection and opportunities to share ideas, test innovations and develop interest groups. Many teachers spoke of the value of developing interstate networks and described how they used material and input from other colleagues in other systems. Retaining industry currency was seen as a big issue for teachers and although there were schemes for returning to work, many believed these schemes were difficult to access. Others saw a need for a project-based orientation to ensure that the experience was productive and maintained relevance to teaching.

Teachers spoke of the need to revitalise the processes of developing curriculum, which had been thrown out with disastrous consequences. Significant criticism was directed at training packages. The principal criticisms were that training packages were responsible for what was described as a “dumbing down” and that “underpinning knowledge” was missing from training packages (10 p1). This was articulated as the theoretical underpinnings of industry practice. Others spoke of the need to customise packages that were developed by industry peak bodies to the needs of local industry and business. Teachers related this confusion as: “we are told this is what industry wants but they say it isn’t” (10 p1). They referred to “training packages that are a skeleton that needs guts” and that “some support materials are trite and embarrassing” (4 p4). The composition of some qualifications using training packages appeared puzzling with ceramic design artists saying that kiln operations came from a package in building and construction and related to toilet pedestals and not pottery (76 p2). Confusion about the currency and endorsed status of some packages made their use risky as well. The deficiencies in training packages required significant alteration or “panel beating” to make them work, requiring time and effort that was not recognised, nor often supported with resources as curriculum support units were diminished in their capacity to assist teachers. One participant said: “the first training package I used had incomplete sentences and was cut and pasted from another package” (25 p6). The fact that the inadequacies of the training packages had been reverse-engineered and been made to work effectively was attributed to the 1980s generation of teachers with knowledge of curriculum who had been able to situate the learning in the experiences of the trainees and students.

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Many people argued that there was “a loss of direction” in terms of career structures and that many of the attractions of teaching in TAFE had been removed. The lack of recognition and reward and the absence of career directions were cited as disincentives for a new generation of TAFE teachers at a time when there was a need for new teachers to replace what was termed “an aging workforce”. Promotional positions and head teachers positions were seen as unattractive jobs and poor career options because they were perceived as being overburdened with “administrivia”. Middle managers were described as the “lynch pins” in the system, mediating and translating from management to teachers, but the personal load and expectations on them was considered unrealistic (66 p2). In some organisations, there were few management opportunities for advancements meaning that career opportunities were limited, and this was cited as a de-motivating factor for teachers.

The ability to recruit teachers was seen to be hampered by a buoyant economy where high wages were paid for qualified labour at a time of shortage (16 p4). In regional and remote areas in all states, the situation has reached a critical level with some vacancies unfilled on a long-term basis and a high level of turnover. Unable to gain full-time staff, some referred to the system as “a cycle of managing casuals” (23 p2). One added, “we watch them come in and go out again” (19 p7). One regional manager said recruiting staff was a matter of “seducing” people gradually to come on board and was generally initiated by other teachers (23 p2).

Many permanent teachers expressed ambivalence towards casual teachers, suggesting that the casuals in some ways did not have the capabilities, such as teaching qualifications, knowledge of the TAFE systems, and abilities in dealing with diverse client groups. Instead they had been employed because they had recent industry currency and specialist knowledge. Some were referred to in disparaging terms as “walk in walk out part-timers” (12 p2). Overwhelmingly, there was sympathy and frustration about the level of casualisation in the system, but also recognition of the profound effect of casualisation on students and teachers alike.

Participants argued that casualisation was the product of resource squeezes and a response by managers to shrinking budgets. The Inquiry encountered many incidences where there had been unwillingness or an inability to convert long-term casual positions to permanent positions. Some people had been casuals for periods longer than 10 years. The value of industry experts being employed short-term was recognised but the expansion of casualisation was also seen as eroding the long-term capacity of the TAFE system.

Teachers saw the need to groom existing students, and in two cases the Inquiry heard from students who had ambitions to teach in TAFE in the future and showed evidence of how they were plotting their careers to achieve that goal. In most cases, teachers’ motivation was strong and included statements such as “I love my teaching and my dream was to become a TAFE teacher” (65 p5). The reason teachers chose their profession was the life changing impact of good teaching and was summarised by one participant as: “it’s good to light peoples’ fires” (20 p5). People saw themselves as most effective when they were working in teams of people, where ideas were shared and their value as teachers affirmed.

The notion of revitalising the TAFE teaching profession featured strongly in the discussions and one facet of this was recognition of teaching expertise. The need for an educational qualification to recognise expertise in teaching was seen as important in staking claims to being a profession. Teachers argued that “teaching qualifications are valued” and important in their work (25 p3). Participants conceded that the Certificate IV in Training and Assessment (TAA) was a good entry point for teaching casually or sessionally, but the upgrading of the TAA and its cost and complexity was now seen as a deterrent for newer entrants into TAFE teaching and contributed to the cycle of casuals (23 p6). The opportunity for staff to complete recognised educational qualifications was supported, but was dependent of support and release time. There was a perceived need for this to be linked to the promotional system.

People were seen as entering teaching for a variety of reasons, with some people coming in loving teaching, but unable to progress. In many states, there was a view that there was no promotion structure for teachers and that there was no career in being a lecturer or teacher (25 p3).

Teachers saw the shift to professionalisation as incorporating and balancing the educational needs of students with those of teachers, TAFE, employers and government and about exercising judgments that are based on sound learning practice, ethical behaviour, and concern about the broader social and civic environment (64 p5). Some spoke of the need to shift from a “process worker mentality” to “exploring and embracing new networks” (5 p3).

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Part of professionalisation was also a better recognition of career paths and a transition from entry to the profession towards an expert status. Professionalisation was also seen as promoting collegial and collaborative practices to overcome the fragmentation of competition (63 p3). Teachers spoke of the need for teacher networks saying, "it was time that these happened and it was time that teaching was valued" (19 p2).

Many system managers recognised this and one suggested more had to be done to acknowledge "the intellectual capital of the teachers we have"; that there is "something special about good teaching"; and that teachers have "passed the acid test" in matching industry's needs (35 p1). One system manager argued that teachers' mentality had to change to recognise scarcity; that "there is not another workforce out there"; and our role will have to be to "bring in the best and keep them" by "being an employer of choice and convince people to work with us" (35 p5).

A new TAFE?

Many people spoke enthusiastically and energetically of a "new" TAFE that had a more comprehensive and durable engagement with partners in the community and with industry (49 p6). Discussions about a "new" TAFE also described a learning environment that was less likely to have institutionalised courses but those that were negotiated with key partners. External participants observed a new philosophy on building partnerships with business (60 p1). Some referred to the partnerships as "innovative and not one-size-fits-all" and as "unique and extraordinary evidence of what TAFE can do" (49 p3).

Some suggested that the challenge was to develop expertise and a track record in managing sustainable partnerships (35 p6). This was referred to as a process where industry and TAFE take ownership of training and work closely together (49 p4). Some spoke of this as "a more complete" and contemporary engagement with industry and the community (5 p5).

Within the consultations there were many partnerships encountered and the most positive responses about TAFE came from external partners who recognised and promoted TAFE's role. This was not exclusively industry but included schools, communities and local councils. Some of the most enthusiastic partnerships included schools in VET in Schools programs. These were seen to give new opportunities to young people and to develop "a new notion of the relationship between school and work". Participants in one location spoke of the link between TAFE and schools as "second to none" having developed a community spirit, promoted lateral thinking on using resources and developed sustainable and innovative ways of working. However, while they spoke of community spirit they argued that this did not consume the need for individuality (61 p4). Other examples were evident in a range of centres and many of these were presented as "projects that provided a logical sequence to enable pathways" (49 p2).

These projects were particularly important in areas where equity needs are most apparent, such as rural and isolated regions and areas subject to economic decline and transition. Partnerships involved organisations involved in disability services, children's services and Indigenous organisations. In many cases they involved multidisciplinary approaches, spanning general education and skills training as well as a holistic view of people's needs. In other centres, strong partnerships existed around support for a clustered approach to industry, which involved relocating training into industry locations, sharing resources, promoting research and development and developing technical services as well as training (6 p5). TAFE is seen as "having a potentially fantastic role in bringing this together" (6 p5). In one case the Inquiry was privy to negotiations conducted with a private provider of aged care to develop a purpose-built training facility for TAFE to conduct its training on-site and in a workplace setting with mutual

PROFESSIONALISATION: WHAT IT MIGHT MEAN

Some ideas from teachers

- **Qualified in adult and vocational education and interested in developing further expertise through professional development or further qualifications.**
- **Industry qualifications and knowledge strongly grounded in contemporary practice of their trade/ specialisation/discipline.**
- **Commitment to maintaining connections and networks and developing wide frames of reference.**
- **Aware of and capable of working with a range of educational repertoires and theories.**
- **Interested in improvements and striving for innovation in TAFE and vocational education generally.**
- **Behaving and working ethically and with integrity towards students, colleagues and displays consistent and exemplary behaviour.**
- **Interested in the broad welfare of TAFE, the community and people involved in their programs and organisations and facilitate opportunities to grow.**
- **Opportunities to engage in forums, conferences, professional activities, read journals and to be involved in things to promote reflection in TAFE teaching.**

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objects of the public good (36 p1–2). Some businesses are also sharing staff across industry and TAFE (28 p1) and some had proposals to offer industry mentoring to new TAFE staff (40 pp1–2).

These partnerships often featured strong participation by local government working in multiple partnerships with TAFE and third party organisations. In some centres, TAFE was recognised as being at the centre of economic developments and was a key in developing both a role as a de-facto economic planning agency and a broker for economic collaborations. In several consultations it was clear that TAFE management and staff and local council were closely aligned in responding to the social needs of the community as well as attending to the more traditional role of conducting general education and training. A regional councillor saw TAFE as a “launching pad for growth” (45 p3). Some saw a role for TAFE as assisting the brokerage of whole of government approaches to skills development and economic planning saying, “we are doing that in a minor way but not doing it well because of resources” (30 p6).

It is clear from the consultations that TAFE is at its most effective when it is able to develop sustainable partnerships and alliances with the communities that it services. Strong local links bring a sense of success as well as recognition of teachers’ worth and a strong ethos of innovation and creativity. Most importantly, there is also great pride in the achievements of students.

This approach also challenges the sustaining ideology of competition. As a community leader in a rural location suggested: “our community is built on sharing and we are developing the social infrastructure and support for the families and what we offer will attract people” (60 p4).

One manager in a multinational transport company justified the need for partnerships as “they [TAFE] can’t do it all, we can’t do it all. What we have at the present, we will lose. TAFE has to be open and responsive to industry 24 by 7” (28 p2).

HOW CAN TAFE BUILD BETTER PARTNERSHIPS?

Those involved in successfully operating partnerships involving industry, TAFE and the community indicated several key success factors that seem to be evident across the system. These include:

- **Most successful partnerships were built on existing partnerships in an iterative manner, and a progressive way in a collaborative continuum. This continuum was expressed as emerging from networking to collaboration and then finally partnering.**
- **Clarity on objectives and what individual partners bring to the partnership.**
- **Trust and mutual respect by partners as well as an understanding of the limitations and assets of partners.**
- **Identified “leaders” in participating organisations who are the “calling point” for industry, TAFE and the community.**
- **Similar personal values and a commitment to the social goals of education and training.**
- **Leadership that is supportive and has a long-term view and accepts attendant risks (36 p2).**
- **Time frames for self-sufficiency need to be realistic (60 p5).**

Some chambers of commerce leaders suggested liaisons with industry could be assisted by TAFE resourcing such activities “properly” and not being in for “ten minutes”. They needed to lighten class loads. TAFE teachers and trainers “need time to gain familiarity with the training environment in industry if the system is going to move and to assist build a learning exchange” (41 p6).

Leadership in TAFE: new leaders for new times?

TAFE requires a different form of leadership and management, and people have described what is required in the consultations. In many cases, leadership was identified as remote, autocratic and unaware of the specific issues relating to vocational education. Many participants believed that senior managers in TAFE were unaware of the nature and character of training as an industry and that generic management skills were inadequate in a dynamic environment (26 p6). Some spoke of the need for “a leadership and teaching culture rather than a management culture” (11 p1).

The overwhelming focus on micro-management and a “bean counting” audit mentality were reported as having undermined a sense of trust between management and teaching staff (13 p13). One participant described “the need for leadership that is about inspiring people and about engaging them and knowing what they are good at. It’s about giving a damn about people” (12 p4). This lack of trust between managers and teachers and other general staff was seen as a big impediment to change and innovation. One participant said that in some institutes, management was typified as “a culture of bullying and intimidation” and that there was a malaise in leadership (2 p1). Others criticised practices of “nepotism, cronyism and self-interest” and lamented unproductive internal competition that set up units in competition against each other (22 p1).

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These reports suggested the presence of an insular and controlling management that is inappropriate to the needs of the future.

Many felt traditional structures did not contribute good or heroic leadership and reinforced “silos” (8 p4). Some saw leadership as needing to be approachable, visible and consultative and experienced and prepared in management and education training (25 p2). Like teachers, good managers were seen as hard to recruit and retain and there was a need to develop a commitment towards values-driven leadership (26 p6). Succession planning was seen as crucial and many programs already operated in institutes to develop a new generation of leaders with the skills and attitudes to develop new organisations.

One systems manager saw the need for leadership that “truly valued people” and had “mutual values” with the people in the organisation. Staff also had to see value in leadership and that leadership should enable staff and give authority (35 p4). Succession was seen as being posited on recognising that “there are not better people out there, we can’t just go and hire a lot more so we are focusing on leadership development” (35 p4).

VISIONS FOR THE FUTURE OF TAFE: some brief responses

There is generally a sense of optimism about TAFE and confidence that given certain conditions and resources it can continue to perform a valuable role as the “public provider of choice”.

- **TAFE supported and valued by government (59 p7).**
- **A stronger and improved identity (61 p7).**
- **TAFE recognised as the “first provider” (62 p6).**
- **TAFE responds to citizenship in a global engagement (8 p6).**
- **Having “cutting edge” technology (61 p6).**
- **Technology and administrative systems that talk to each other (48 p2).**
- **Being funded properly to talk to industry (65 p7).**
- **Clarity about who pays for what and why in TAFE (8 p6).**
- **Being able to talk to industry without constraints of bureaucracy (69 p6).**
- **An inverted triangle for funding where the money is at the bottom of the triangle (65 p7).**
- **Technology doesn’t get in the way of those encountering barriers (62 p6).**
- **Teachers doing teaching and not clerical work (59 p7).**
- **Flexible view of what teaching is (62 p6).**
- **Career paths for teachers to stay teaching and to do management if they want (65 p7).**
- **Being the premier provider to enable people to make transitions in their lives (59 p 7).**
- **Changes to industrial relations constraints so we prescribe certain things and include options for variance (62 p6).**

Working with diversity: TAFE and Indigenous communities

TAFE is seen as absolutely vital to the needs of Indigenous Australians. Much of TAFE’s delivery for Indigenous students is conducted in remote and isolated communities, as private providers tend to avoid remote communities where cost of delivery is high. For many Indigenous communities, TAFE is the only option for education and training (31 p1).

Many Indigenous people have not been to school or completed schooling. In the NT this is reported to be as high as 40% and means there is a considerable need for general education and programs that meet the students’ needs for literacy and numeracy programs (30 p1). One community leader said Aboriginal students “have to start somewhere and the stepping stones to vocational outcomes are important” (47 p3).

There are concerns that the diversity of TAFE’s provision is not recognised and that funding models used by state governments and the federal department, DEST, sees delivery in Aboriginal communities as homogenous. There was concern that “one-size-fits-all” models were inappropriate and that funding agencies’ ideas of successful outcomes did not correspond with the communities’ needs (47 p1). Indigenous leaders suggested “TAFE needs to see what the communities’ needs are rather than what the institutes’ needs are” (47 p4). In remote communities this might include a situation “where people might never get jobs and enable them to be prepared to work in the community” (23 p4).

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Indigenous leaders expressed concern about attempts to “mainstream” Indigenous students saying, “Aboriginal students have to be treated as Aboriginal students and their special needs recognised” (47 p5). Part of the challenge of working in TAFE in Indigenous communities was in customising and adapting programs to the needs of communities. Some successes had been evident with traineeships that were used as a way to overcome entrenched racism encountered in recruitment in many rural towns and the workplace environment. Traineeships in administration in places such as Broome were seen as offering a more user-friendly form of assessment and a more situated learning experience (23 p6). One example in Inverell, NSW was evident in the banking industry, where trainees were given a permanent job and were supported by Indigenous liaison workers and supported in their programs through OTEN. The program had been an outstanding success and employment opportunities were being opened up for seven Indigenous workers in western towns with the banking industry.

One Aboriginal worker said these programs were important in developing a “work ethic” because “kids don’t understand a work ethic as nobody understands work, nobody has worked and mentoring for this is important” (48 p3).

This places a big challenge on TAFE to see its relationship in the broadest terms and includes the needs for community building as well as getting Indigenous students a qualification or doing a course. It requires a broader and more sophisticated engagement with communities that support families and children. At Inverell the “baby dreamer” program conducted in a community house was described as breaking a cycle and forming new habits around child-care, early childhood and learning and homework centres. According to the program co-ordinators, “the children are learning to be learners. They struggle but at the early years they are getting the learning and this extends to possibility of work, to TAFE and we are trying to get an avenue to that” (48 p2). Community leaders were optimistic with a local government leader describing how “the developments in this house will lead to greater expectations in the future. In ten years time we will be having an educated and employable Indigenous workforce” (48 p4).

Indigenous leaders spoke of the need for non-Indigenous people who could liaise on behalf of the Aboriginal community but also spoke of the need to have Aboriginal teachers in TAFE (47 p5). The priorities for Indigenous teachers in primary and secondary education had tended to reduce the priority for Indigenous TAFE teachers. The need for teachers who were able to understand and communicate in Indigenous settings and who understood the structures of Indigenous communities was seen as important. In addition to industry currency, the need for a sense of personal responsibility, to see education and training having an active role in capacity building (31 p8) was also valuable.

The importance of literacy was identified in programs such as the night patrol course in NT communities where the training package challenged the skills of the participants. To make such packages relevant, teachers working in Indigenous communities had to be creative in mixing and matching courses. Aboriginal health care workers programs used a combined Certificate in Spoken and Written English (CSWE 2) course with the Certificate 3 in Aboriginal health work (31 p3). However this customisation pushed the hours beyond the nominal hours and funding contradicted this situated learning process (31 p3).

One teacher spoke of the dilemma saying, “training and skills are the way for Aboriginal people so we are making an effort but there is often little concern by the provider about the real need and taking on what its really like in regional communities” (31 p4). Another teacher in an Indigenous community argued that “training packages have to be linked to the needs of the community” (31 p5). Other needs included: “English instruction that is contextualised in the needs of the workplace and the need for an integrated delivery that includes general education, language and literacy and health and environmental education” (31 p6). There is a requirement for better integration of training, job link funding and the capacity to develop transitions from funded job placements into formal employment (31 p5).

Some of the key challenges in Indigenous education training relate to conducting programs across states. Providers reported considerable difficulties in registering apprentices when the provider was from another state. The Indigenous Institute for Tertiary Education at Bachelor NT runs programs in NSW, SA and NT and in order to streamline the outcomes there was a need for a skills passport, with national recognition being seen as important in overcoming these issues (31 p5).

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Emerging from the issues of customisation and national delivery, the production of culturally appropriate learning materials is seen as increasingly important. Some of these materials are being developed in local Indigenous languages and this is seen as very important in such areas as health, childcare, security, conservation and heritage programs. This places a new demand for organisations to either develop this capacity or have a curriculum unit deliver it (31 p5).

The influence of a more punitive response by the federal government to Indigenous affairs is a key concern for TAFE, with uncertainties about how welfare-to-work programs, shifting priorities and approaches in land management and community development will shape the priorities of VET and TAFE. The need for Indigenous TAFE teachers, a culturally appropriate curriculum, funding and delivery models that are customised to meet the needs of Indigenous people and communities are the principle issues discussed.

Programs that integrate with community needs have been identified as key areas for future development.

INDIGENOUS PROGRAMS

A selection of Indigenous Programs, with multiple dimensions and partnerships with TAFE, give an indication of future practice.

• ***“Baby Dreamers”; Inverell, NSW.*** This program that operates from a community house in a rural town and aims to respond to health, childcare and the school performance needs of Indigenous children. The house is operated by a local committee and has community health facilities as well as, a playgroup and early childcare facilities. This provides health support to many young mothers and their families as well as ante-natal advice, first aid and a safe environment for young mothers. In addition, there is a homework centre staffed by tutors from the community who assist older primary and secondary aged students. The house itself is well-equipped with a kitchen and a computer laboratory. Members of the community house stressed the importance of the program in assisting children to “learn to be learners”.

• ***Yarakuwa Indigenous Knowledge Centre Aboriginal Group, Deniliquin State Forest Management project.*** Part of this program involves the preservation of a riverside forest within the township limits. This forest has heritage significance because several of the large river red gums are “scar trees” where Indigenous communities have carved canoes and shields from the trees. These sites have significant heritage value and require preservation and also provide an important community education resource. The forest is a major attraction for tourists to this small town. It is also a site of important spiritual site for the local people. The site has specimens of local plants that were used as medicines and food by Indigenous people. With the assistance of the local TAFE institute Indigenous people are being trained as heritage and environment workers and will complete a Certificate 3 in Aboriginal site preservation. This interface between the local needs and

educational organisation is important in building the capacity of the community and developing opportunities for enterprises. www.rit.tafensw.edu.au/ace/campuses/deniliquin

• ***Muurrbay Aboriginal Language and Culture Group and Many Rivers Language Centre, Macksville, NSW.*** One of the outcomes of the 200 years of European occupation in Australia has been the loss of Aboriginal languages from an estimated 250 major languages in 1788. This has been most apparent in the communities on the East coast of Australia. Initiatives in preserving and usage of Aboriginal languages have included producing learning materials that assist young people in schools. The Many Rivers group has developed resources and programs for school-aged children as well as adults. They promote the use of the local language of the Hunter River and Lake Macquarie district. Muurrbay has also developed a published grammar and vocabulary book as a guide to speakers and academics interested in Aboriginal languages. www.muurrbay.org.au

• ***The Bachelor Institute of Indigenous Tertiary Education*** is a comprehensive provider of higher education (including research degrees), TAFE programs (including apprenticeships) and community education. The programs are strongly focussed on the needs of Indigenous students and their communities. Programs in TAFE include studies in health, adult education, heritage and conservation amongst others. Bachelor has residential accommodation and a curriculum development unit that creates learning materials for adults and children in Aboriginal languages. The Institute conducts interstate programs including an apprenticeship program in building with the Wild Geese Building and Maintenance Group in Boggabilla/Toomelah. www.batchelor.edu.au

PART C **WHAT AUSTRALIANS** **SAY ABOUT TAFE:**

A summary of submissions



PART C

WHAT AUSTRALIANS SAY ABOUT TAFE:

A summary of submissions

This section provides a summary and a commentary of the 102 written submissions that were received by the TAFE Futures Inquiry.

These submissions are discussed around the themes that emerged from the background material in Part A: The TAFE story and the challenges of change and continuity as well as the consultations documented in Part B: What Australians say about TAFE.

The submissions, which are summarised here, are publicly available and open to viewing at www.tafefutures.org.au/subsreceived.html

The discussion in this section uses a limited selection of excerpts from the submissions to develop a narrative of the themes that have characterised the Inquiry.

The market, access and equity and TAFE

Many submissions addressed the tensions between the operations of the market and the ability of TAFE to meet its social obligations.

Some organisations suggested TAFE's profile in access and equity programs was in jeopardy owing to a commercial focus. Concerns were raised around the needs of newly arrived migrants and refugees from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds. In the area of English language services, organisations such as the Adult Migrant English Services Teachers Association (AMESTA), argued that the impact of the Commonwealth's tendering processes has a "negative impact on the provision of English language competencies and communication skills". AMESTA argued that money is wasted on the process itself, that long-term planning is not encouraged and knowledge passes away with increased casualisation of the teaching workforce (AMESTA submission 61).

In this environment, the most disadvantaged are groups include refugees, women and people with disabilities. One submission said that "the skill and expertise that TAFE has developed in dealing with migrant and refugee issues will be undermined and potentially lost in the future and programs/courses may be run by business organisations whose main concern is to make profits" (Macarthur Diversity Services submission 19).

In Queensland, the Townsville Education and Training Advisory Group (TETAG) indicated that core funding in equity programs had diminished by 50% and this has led to instability and uncertainty in the access and equity programs. The TETAG submission highlighted that a need for a "reasonable level of core funding is critical for regional institutes because the potential to earn extra revenue is much less than [in] metropolitan areas" (TETAG submission 59).

One consequence of tendering is a shift in the nature of services, and this is documented in the services to students from non-English speaking backgrounds (NESB). One TAFE institute identified the absence of bridging courses for skilled migrants to make the transition into the workforce, writing that local RTOs are "not resourced to provide bridging qualifications programs and our migrants do not want to start with an apprenticeship all over again". This has seen skills migrants in skills shortage areas not gaining access to training and limiting employment options (Mortensen submission 100).

Cutbacks and the consequences of organisational restructures were documented even in areas where development and growth was foreshadowed, such as distance and flexible delivery. In NSW, the Open Training and Education Network (OTEN) was subject to budget restraints and noted that "as a result of a restructure, the function of developing distance materials and resources necessary will be limited because of limitations on the curriculum hours necessary to produce the materials for over 38,000 students".

The submission from OTEN staff identified groups such as prisoners, young people in detention, and people in regional and rural centres as well as innovative programs for young people in partnership outreach models (OTEN submission 78).

The NSW Adult Literacy Numeracy Council sees TAFE as having an important delivery function in further education provision. The Council suggests there are three roles occupied by TAFE. They are: providing second chance education and further education to individuals who experience barriers; addressing literacy and numeracy needs of those already in the workforce; and contributing to the development of communities through formal and voluntary programs. This submission identified the importance of partnerships such as the Workplace English Language and Literacy Program (WELL) but suggests that owing to small enterprises needing to make long-term commitments to qualify for funding, the take-up of WELL is not being maximised. The Council urges restoration of specialist equity programs and less punitive ways of encouraging participation in welfare-to-work programs. It also argues for a cohesive suite of education offerings, where literacy and numeracy are situated, and preservation of fee-exempt status for basic literacy and numeracy. Also highlighted by the Council is the need for more appropriate funding models other than ASCH funding, as these do not meet the need for additional support for learners with either special language needs or interrupted education careers (NSW Adult Literacy Numeracy Council submission 34).

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The specific needs of women were identified in several submissions as another area that TAFE needed to pay particular attention to in securing relevance for access and equity programs. The Women in Adult and Vocational Education (WAVE) submission saw that TAFE is the main provider of equity programs for women, and cited recent research that documented the importance of access to affordable education as one of the principle ways in which women “obtaining economic security throughout their lives”. The WAVE submission proposed that the skills shortage enables a focus on customised pathways and recognition of prior learning for women, for example “pre-apprenticeship training for women in traditionally male-dominated skills areas”. WAVE has also proposed that more importance be attached to “soft” skills in such areas as communication cooperation, and education, and family support in the training offered in vocational education (WAVE submission 29).

The Australian Education Union (AEU) highlighted failure of the federal government to address the needs of women saying that the “2006 Budget abolished the \$38m ‘Women in Non Traditional Trades Occupations’ incentive, which encouraged more women to take up training in the traditional trades. The opposition has pointed out that women only account for one third of all apprentices in training, despite the skills crisis facing Australia—only 5% of young women who complete a VET qualification had been enrolled in a trades course” (Considine et al (2005) cited in AEU submission 94).

The needs of Indigenous students and communities are recognised as a being very important in developing skills, building self esteem, gaining employment, accessing further education and developing their communities. The AEU identified the need for action to train teachers with the cross-cultural skills to work with Indigenous students, train Indigenous staff and respond to curriculum and materials that were appropriate to the needs of Indigenous people and their communities (AEU submission 94).

The importance of appropriate programs to meet the special needs of students broadly in access groups was discussed in several submissions. The importance of the Certificate of General and Vocational Education (CGVE) and the Victorian Certificate of Applied Learning (VCAL) were seen by many submissions as positive developments in meeting the need for alternative pathways in a life-long education. The need for the appropriate resources and recognition of these programs as part of a comprehensive TAFE was strongly supported. However, these courses were also seen as necessary to assist the transition into workplaces for students. One submission recommended that: “staffing should be increased to allow for greater pastoral care and the monitoring of CGVE students throughout their studies and after they leave TAFE, to establish effective links with potential employers and with the local high schools for a better referral system” (Turnbull submission 82).

Many submissions described the changing demographics associated with access and equity programs and believed that this would bring challenges into the classroom for teachers. A submission from a TAFE counsellor highlighted this in the context of greater compulsion in the case of welfare to work programs. “The student demographic has changed, with an increasing number of students attending because of mutual obligations requirements for Centrelink payments. These students may lack motivation and cause disruption to the classrooms. Teachers require a different set of class management skills to successfully integrate such students into the classroom” (Fitzpatrick submission 42).

Many staff expressed concern about how TAFE was responding to students’ needs and proposed that in the future: “students are given real choices, choices are not made up for them, TAFE moves away from business plans to vocational plans. Students should have relatively easy access to TAFE and support from within, including removing disincentives such as fees” (Dreury submission 23). There was strong support for shifting the focus onto students’ needs.

One submission suggested that the way TAFE responded to students needed a sweeping change. “Contemporary VET pedagogy must become more learner-centred, work-centred and attribute-focused. Contemporary learning theories downplay traditional pedagogy in favour of one in which learners are active constructors of knowledge. This does not mean that traditional teacher-centred pedagogies are no longer useful or relevant, rather they are one category of a much larger available repertoire that should be utilised. This is a challenge to TAFE policy makers, providers and industry alike” (Fischer Associates submission 1).

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Some submissions saw the need for a delicate balance between the needs of industry and the social needs of the community. The Smith Family submission suggested that “the challenge is to strike an appropriate balance between investing in areas that are in interests of the community and industry and delivering in a way that is sufficiently flexible and engaging to meet students’ needs” (The Smith Family submission 3).

Some saw that the approach of TAFE to access and equity was in need of a redefinition. One submission claimed that the “TAFE/VET image is too narrow”. The submission continued saying, “we are seen as delivering ‘lower level’ employment prospects”. The submission also suggested that TAFE should emphasise an applied theory approach that recognises the hands-on nature of VET (Lee submission 28).

This shift in emphasis was also evident in a submission asking for a renovation of the access message of TAFE suggesting, “a first critical reframing has to do with the dated concept of TAFE as a provider of second chance education. This is a hackneyed slogan and portrays TAFE as an ‘op shop for education’. This is not to say that TAFE does not play a vital role for people in attempting to salvage their education and often their lives. However the excellence of contemporary TAFE is in its unmatched capacity to customise delivery to meet the education and training needs of a diverse range of learners travelling along the life-long learning continuum” (Jewell submission 67).

The notion of a continuum was seen as a strength in providing links between schools, TAFE and universities where “graduates can proceed seamlessly into higher education programs with appropriate credit, often within 12 or 18 months” (South Bank Teachers Branch QTU submission 62). However, while a large range of submissions saw this extension into the tertiary and higher education sector as an encouraging move, there were some notes of caution expressed by the National Tertiary Education

Union about TAFE offering degrees. The NTEU said that “from the perspective of a student’s educational experience, starting an Associate Degree course in one institution and transferring midway into a full... Degree in another institution can lead to unnecessary disruption and lead to transition difficulties”. The NTEU submission also questioned the ability of TAFE to have a conceptual approach that relies on research and that staff would not be able to keep abreast of research developments. Additional concerns were expressed about associate degrees being another form of competition and providing further financial uncertainties for universities (NTEU submission 57).

The links between universities, schools and TAFE were seen in a much more positive light by the New South Wales Teachers Federation, which wrote: “TAFE is also at the ‘educational’ intersection through the development of partnerships with schools and higher education institutions and adult and community education providers” (NSWTF submission 98).

This relationship with schools and universities was also seen positively by the TAFE Teachers Association of the New South Wales Teachers Federation, which stressed the importance of pathways across the sectors. “Teachers and educationalists in multi-sector campuses strongly supported this model of education and said that it gave students access to a wider range of facilities and experiences than they might have otherwise. However, it was acknowledged that there were far greater opportunities for joint courses than is currently being implemented. The bringing together of the expertise of both sectors—TAFE and university—to provide practical and theoretical education should be undertaken” (TAFE TA NSWTF submission 99).

While collaboration was seen as a way of responding to the dilemmas of the training market, private providers were seen as a significant threat to TAFE.

Competition for TAFE? Private providers

The AEU submission highlighted the fact that in period in which growth through efficiencies operated, the market share of private providers has grown “from almost nothing to as much as 20%” (AEU submission 94).

While some considered that TAFE was struggling to meet the challenges of the market, some submissions drew attention to the limitations of the market and the poor performance of some private providers. Criticism of private trainers was evident, with a dissatisfied former client of a private provider documenting some of the disadvantages.

“...they were not able to provide work-based learning courses that were necessary for our organisational needs. Since then we have used two private RTOs and have had no successful outcomes. The teachers don’t show up, they don’t pass on information, they don’t call back and they promise things they can’t deliver. The trainers are generic trainers, not professionals in the aged care field” (Mulally submission 18).

Private trainers came in for criticism for the tendency to cherry pick, with a submission from the CPSU claiming private providers tended to “focus on training related to the service industries rather than the high skill areas associated with manufacturing, construction, mining and the electronics and machinery servicing and other technical trades. We also believe that there are serious concerns about the quality of the training provided by some private sector training providers—the significant drop out rate—and a general concern about the system that delivers partial and incomplete skills that limit a student’s employment prospects” (CPSU submission 69).

In contrast, one of the advantages for TAFE was a qualified and skilled teaching workforce but submissions suggest there are issues of profound urgency in responding to workforce issues.

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Teacher professionalism: teachers' qualifications and professional development

The question about appropriate qualifications for TAFE teachers attracted significant discussion from a variety of submissions. A submission by the University of Technology Sydney (UTS) also addressed issues of teacher professionalism and in particular teacher qualifications. The submission identified that TAA "has emerged as the de-facto qualification for VET and adult education generally, it is important that VET professional practitioners are not perceived as second class teaching professionals by being denied the opportunity and requirement to gain a full undergraduate university degree as a minimum". The argument for upgraded qualifications is sustained with the comments that: "the contexts in which VET teachers are working are no less demanding than primary or school contexts... Adult education providers, particularly public providers such as TAFE and community colleges, should require their VET teachers and adult educators more generally to have at least an undergraduate university qualification, equivalent in rigour, to that expected of school teachers" (Alexander UTS submission 33).

The question of qualifications was placed in a market context with one submission from a teacher arguing that "minimum standards need to be set for people working as trainers in the VET sector, the introduction of Cert IV in Workplace Training and Assessment has lowered the qualifications for trainers. Registered Training Organisations, operating on a commercial basis, are engaging trainers with the minimum qualifications on lower wages which enables such organisations to undercut TAFE NSW in tendering for federal funds" (Watson submission 36).

Another submission argued that the use of the TAA has led to a "dumbing down of teaching skills" because they just "do to a two-day workshop and do some assignments and are granted a CIV in training" (Henigan submission 46).

The National Tertiary Education (NTEU) submission views the current requirements as "inadequate in developing a professional VET training workforce... that can take leadership roles in educating and training the future Australian labour force" (NTEU NSW submission 57).

Aside from concerns about qualifications, many teachers highlighted the importance of "opportunities to engage in relevant professional development activities that relate to changes in industry practices as well as changes in pedagogy". The availability of professional development was seen "as critical in maintaining a situation where teaching practice reflected good industry practice" (South Bank Teacher Branch of QTU submission 62). Many teachers saw the importance of collaborative models for professional developments and argued for "communities of practice" that assist teachers to solve problems, discuss insights and share information (Francisco submission 56). These could also support teachers to cope with the increasing demands and expectations placed upon them in their day-to-day work.

Workloads and status were themes that emerged from many of the submissions of individual teachers and teacher associations. The AEU said there was a "change fatigue" and that "teacher goodwill and unpaid effort have always been important contributors to the success of VET programs but many teachers are becoming very frustrated by what they see as the abuse of this goodwill" (AEU submission 94). The nature of the work environment is described by one teacher as "working in TAFE over the last decade... has meant working in a system in crisis. There has been a continual threat of disintegration,

with massive and frequent restructuring, persistent funding 'crises', administrative systems struggling to cope with constant change... and teachers struggling to cope with major changes in curriculum and delivery methods, about many of which they have deep reservations" (Clark submission 31).

Submissions outlined a widespread acceptance of high levels of casualisation in TAFE. The AEU submission presented evidence that TAFE teaching is among one of the most casualised industries in the economy saying "now casual employment ranging from 20% to almost 80% of the TAFE workforce across the country, is much higher than any other sector of public education and significantly greater than the Australian workforce as a whole" (Forward (2005) cited in AEU submission 94).

The AEU argues that there is a need to "reassert and support the professionalism of TAFE teachers. This should include their involvement in decision making, appropriate recognition of qualifications and experience and the provision of professional development". The union suggests that "the challenge is to identify and campaign for alternative policy scenarios that value TAFE teachers and recognise their professional commitment" (AEU submission 94).

The casualisation of the workforce, as well as the provisions of the Skilling Australia Workforce legislation, has promoted the use of individual contracts and Australian Workplace Agreements (AWAs), which is seen by the AEU as placing TAFE teachers "in an unprofessional and precarious position" (AEU submission 94).

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Casualisation and poor career paths were seen as contributing causes for a crisis in what was termed succession planning. The crisis was seen as being exacerbated by an aging TAFE workforce and poor working conditions and wages. The TAFE Teachers Association of the NSW Teachers Federation proposed some options for change that included:

- Schemes to support people from industry coming into teaching in TAFE on a part-time basis.
- Experienced teachers could be given responsibilities as part of their job to mentor new teachers.
- Scholarships to attract those interested in teaching as a career in TAFE (TAFE TA NSWTF submission 99).

The ACTU summarised the dilemma for TAFE in sustaining a workforce, arguing that: "the capacity to attract quality trainers to TAFE is influenced by the professional standing within which the role is held. If we want skilled workers we need quality training institutes with the best available teachers and trainers. This means we must be prepared to remunerate trainers appropriately and invest in their professional development" (ACTU submission 90).

Students' experiences: TAFE a life changing institution

The functional aspects of TAFE concerning skills training are well documented but there is also a broader dimension; TAFE promotes life changing events for students. Some students have described TAFE as providing an integration between developing a sense of well-being as well as achieving vocational outcomes: "My life has changed since I came to TAFE as I am no longer sitting at home feeling isolated and depressed and I am hoping that with the qualifications I achieve, I will be in a position where I can gain meaningful employment in the future" (Picciolo submission 55).

The sense of community was described by a student with disabilities. "The sense of 'family', of being respected and valued as a member of a learning team, that permeates the smaller campuses such as Inverell is something I have never experienced..." (Gaukroger submission 24). Concerns about the impact of a diminished TAFE presence in the regions was recognised by students who saw the social and economic implications saying, "Budget issues are also creating problems for TAFE... Courses and services are being cut due to lack of funds, which means potential students must move away to access courses and services. This may lead to shortages of trained workers for jobs within towns such as Inverell and may lead to businesses and services leaving town, which may lead to economic shortfalls" (Gaukroger submission 24).

Students also drew attention to associated course costs. A Diploma of Welfare student with a disability on a 240-hour work placement is forced to take taxis to attend her work placement at a cost of \$10 a day. I'm unemployed and live off benefits from Centrelink until I finish my course. This is also affecting the length of time I'm doing my placements as I can only afford to do three days a week, which is \$60 a fortnight out of my payments of \$480" (Fenning submission 8).

Submissions by student organisations also described the levels of assistance needed to support students in their day-to-day lives as well as their courses. The Canberra Institute of Technology Students Association (CITSA) submission indicated it had extended some 883 loans totalling over \$162,000 and provided 550 share accommodation places. These services were complemented by a 'job shop' and advocacy services in recognition of the difficulties that many students were experiencing (CITSA submission 66).

A price too high: fees and charges in TAFE

Several submissions addressed the issue of costs and TAFE fees directly. One submission documented the growth in fees and the impact of fees on equity and access programs saying "while there has been some consideration given to courses in Access Education where courses are free, other General Education and VET areas are experiencing annual course fee increases". The submission documented in detail a selection of course fees in NSW and identified rises from 2.9% to 3.3% per annum. This submission also presented data that indicated a fall in enrolment at a time when the fee increases were highest, claiming that enrolments across NSW fell by 6.4% in 2004, with the exception of OTEN Open Training and Education Network (Nand submission 10).

This submission on fees concludes: "the general feeling among staff... is that their students are... all hit with hefty fee increases. Student numbers are dwindling as many cannot afford this increase and the associated cost attached to their course of study" (Nand submission 10).

The impact of fees on access was evident in a submission from a teacher who said: "there are not enough students willing and/or able to pay the exorbitant fees to start the classes... This semester, students enrolled and paid their fees only to be told it was cancelled" (Coady submission 63).

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The issue of fees was also placed in broader context by the CPSU submission saying “our future must lie in social co-operation and participation to enable individuals to meet their full potential at work and in personal lives. Policy that excludes individuals because they lack the financial resources is not acceptable” (CPSU submission 69).

The TAFE Teachers Association of the NSW Teachers Federation saw the issue of fees and charges as important in sustaining the role of TAFE as a public provider that is accessible, arguing that “ideally, TAFE should be free. If not, fees and charges should be kept to minimum levels, and exemptions provided to students who are not able to pay. The issue of student poverty is a large one, and should not be ignored” (TAFE TA NSWTF submission 99).

One of the controversial issues raised during the TAFE Futures Inquiry is the question of a HECS or FEE-HELP scheme for TAFE. The Inquiry received two submissions from Professor Bruce Chapman (Research School of Social Sciences, Australian National University), discussing issues relating to fees in TAFE, cost-benefit and earnings of TAFE graduates, and opportunities emerging from income-contingent loans—such as HECS and FEE-HELP—as a response to upfront fees in TAFE in promoting access.

Chapman argues that “the central point about access is that the high cost of participation in TAFE (both through direct living costs and foregone income) combined with a lack of family and capital market sources of finance, potentially creates a significant barrier for many students which is necessarily exacerbated by the imposition of up-front fees. However schemes such as HECS and other feasible income-contingent repayment arrangements considerably diminish these problems because they reduce significantly the importance of the financial situation of the prospective student’s family” (Chapman submission 54–2).

The Chapman submission addresses concerns about rising charges, barriers to poorer students and the potential effect of exemptions. For TAFE, the most important consideration is the following statement in the submission: “recently the Australian Council of Private Education and Training (ACPET) has called for FEE-HELP to be made available to the students of all private tertiary education institutions. If and when this happens, TAFE will be sitting in a very strange place as the only remaining area of Australian post-compulsory education without access to an income-contingent loan. *This would very likely mean that TAFE would be swamped by private sector alternatives and cease to be viable as an education institution*” [author’s emphasis] (Chapman submission 54–2). This is a particularly worrying scenario for TAFE and one that needs to be addressed in terms of the future viability of TAFE as well as access for Australians to TAFE.

Funding TAFE: getting it to all add up

Concerns about the under-investment in education and training, as well as for TAFE itself, were evident in almost all submissions. A selection of submissions gives an idea of the dimensions of the issue.

The urgency for a turn around in the financing of TAFE is well expressed by the AMWU. “TAFE is chronically under-funded and immediate steps should be taken by both state and federal governments to identify the priorities and implement effective funding solutions to establish appropriate infrastructure to meet the challenges, both economic and social, that confront the community” (AMWU submission 30).

A concern about funding also resulted in some proposals about changing the way funding was allocated. Alternative funding models attracted significant attention with one teacher saying, “a funding model needs to be established that will rank courses according to the needs of local communities and industries and provide sufficient resources to adequately cover the cost of running such courses while ensuring equal access for all...” (Watson submission 36).

The Townsville Education and Training Advisory Group (TETAG) mentioned the need to develop planning cycles that are integrated with funding cycles arguing that “planning cycles are presented on a triennial basis but funding is provided annually only. This is a serious problem for proactive management”. TETAG called for the alignment of the planning and funding cycle (TETAG submission 59). Similar requests were made by the Maritime Union of Australia, suggesting that a long-term approach to skills shortages was needed, requiring “planning on a possible five year plan, which would allow flexibility to adjust to industries’ and national economic demands” (MUA submission 53).

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The TETAG submission also addressed the need for governments to recognise the special needs for regional and remote communities. The submission argued that “Australian and state governments must adequately fund TAFE in the regional areas of Australia because often there are no providers of vocational education and training” (TETAG submission 59).

An industry submission also identified a need to pool resources. There needs to be a shift in thinking from the current “bricks and mortar approach to TAFE funding and capital investment in order to achieve this” (Service Skills Australia submission 74).

It was not only that funding levels needed to be lifted, according to the TAFE Teachers Association of the NSW Teachers’ Federation, the way funding was allocated also needed to respond to a range of needs and be flexible to:

- a) respond quickly to local needs
- b) work with local government industry and community groups in real workforce development planning for regional, rural and particular metropolitan needs
- c) take on innovative programs that will advance Australia economically and lead industry through innovation
- d) address disadvantage in local areas, including requirements of target groups such as Indigenous groups, youth at risk and people with disabilities (TAFE TA NSWTF submission 99).

TAFE’s future, according to several submissions, would rest on being able to diversify funding sources, lessening its dependence on government grants and increasing commercial and student revenue. The Australia’s Association for VET Researchers (AVETRA) submission sums up the dilemma: “If VET is to continue to be heavily reliant on government funding, then its should be resourced accordingly. If not, then providers must be freed up and given the capacity to generate additional income from non-government sources. TAFE institutes must be positioned to operate far more effectively in commercial training markets to increase non-government revenue. Industry co-contributions, HECS and FEE-HELP options must be considered and public funding must be effectively targeted” (AVETRA submission 83).

Where to in the future?

Many believed that the future of TAFE lay in consolidating its existing role and extending and enhancing the functions and programs of TAFE across the community. However, the importance of government in supporting and funding TAFE was clearly articulated.

The MUA believes that, based on years of experience and involvement in VET, “Australian TAFE colleges are the backbone of industry training” (MUA submission 53).

The ACTU argued that: “there is a perception amongst some (unfounded in our view) of TAFE as an ‘aged’ institution—driven, in part, by the lack of respect shown to the TAFE system by the federal government and, in part, through public perceptions of TAFE as a poor (in all senses) second cousin to the universities. TAFE must engage with the public to showcase itself as a modern, vibrant organisation with state-of-the-art facilities and intelligent, engaged teaching staff” (ACTU submission 90).

Some submissions were critical of the ability of TAFE to respond to change. Service Skills Australia’s submission said that, “TAFE exists largely unchanged from what was first established in the 1970s, however, it exists within a redefined national training environment. While it remains just as important to the skilling of Australian workers, it appears to be challenged in defining its purpose in this new era” (Service Skills Australia submission 74).

The broader role of TAFE as a provider of comprehensive education is also supported by a submission by University Technology Sydney, which argued: “the education TAFE provides is distinctive in its practical focus, but is an effective pathway alternate to the HSC into university courses. This is due to the ‘E’ in TAFE that ensures that TAFE courses are not only about skills training (Alexander UTS submission 33). This sentiment was confirmed by a union submission: “TAFE plays an important social role subject to effective funding in maintaining equity of access to developmental opportunities generally unavailable in the commercial, survival of the fittest, economy in which we live” (AMWU submission 30).

The dual role of industry trainer and meeting the social and political goals in government are described in several submissions. These submissions highlight the tensions in the context of the training market. Gillian Goozee has put this in a historical perspective. “TAFE has been used by governments as a vehicle to achieve their economic and social objectives. However over the past 15 years there has been a shift in focus from TAFE to VET and the subsequent shift of Commonwealth government funds from the public to the private sector. This has put considerable pressure on TAFE institutes as they have been required to deliver programs with less funding. Unless this situation is reversed and the TAFE system adequately funded... [it] will be hard put to meet both current and future skills needs” (Goozee submission 49).

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The AMWU stated that: “Australian governments and industry must recommit themselves to the national training system and discontinue the encouragement they give to pursue a narrow enterprise focus, geared to short-term skills developments that impede the growth of the skills base of the country (AMWU submission 30).

The involvement and leadership of the federal government is seen as increasingly important and was identified in a submission by Gillian Goozee. “Little appears to have been done by the Commonwealth government to develop a dynamic policy framework supported by the funding necessary to enable TAFE in particular to provide the programs to meet Australia’s skills needs. Until there is a shift of emphasis, and the critical role of TAFE is recognised and adequately funded, Australia will continue to experience skills shortages and social inequity” (Goozee submission 49).

“...in order to break through to a future where TAFE is identified as a vibrant and contemporary organisation, a process of re-thinking, re-framing, re-badging and re-education may be seen as both desirable and inevitable” (Jewell submission 67). Revitalising TAFE was seen as the responsibility of TAFE management, with an industry submission saying “the leadership of TAFE ought to view this development as ‘leading staff on a journey’ where KPIs are articulated in terms of the shift in thinking, rather than their ability to teach, develop curriculum, etc” (Service Skills Australia submission 74).

Partnerships and the TAFE institute of the future

Several submissions spoke positively of the partnerships that TAFE has developed with schools, universities and local government and many submissions saw these as the way of the future.

Local government emerged as a strong supporter of TAFE and identified the importance of TAFE in economic planning and social development. The submission by Berrigan Shire Council stated that: “TAFE has had a key role in economic development and growth for our community. Management and staff at the Riverina Institute of TAFE... have built and maintained strong relationships with local businesses, the Finley High School, the community and the Berrigan Shire Council”. The submission also documented TAFE’s role in “assisting the development sustainable and liveable communities by building intellectual and skills capital”. Berrigan Shire noted that “this TAFE [Finlay] provides an excellent quality service within limited resources and infrastructure available” (Berrigan Shire Council submission 21).

Some submissions described an interdependent relationship between TAFE and communities saying that building communities and relationships is the current strength of the TAFE system. TAFE, with its regional presence, is frequently the glue that holds communities and regions together (AEU Tasmania submission 71). Some examples of this were described, with WorldSkills Australia (WSA) saying that: “TAFE is the national glue for the success of WSA competitions at the regional, national and international level. The combination of a national network of over 100 TAFE institutes and the commitment of thousands of hours of work by TAFE staff acting in concert with local industry and communities make the competitions sustainable and effective” (WorldSkills Australia submission 79).

The importance of partnerships was identified as a good development but some submissions included a cautionary note. In Queensland, several institutes have been earmarked as ‘lead institutions’ in the new TAFE restructure and it is proposed they will participate in public private partnerships (PPPs). While these PPPs are a welcomed initiative, there are as some reservations about how they might operate. A group of teachers from one of the lead institutes wrote: “the initiative of sharing training resources with industry and the introduction of skills institutes are also likely to ensure that the resultant skills developed will reflect the level and type of competencies that are required. However, they also need to be monitored to ensure that the skill development reflects needs across the whole of industries and is not limited to powerful companies who can afford to have their interests noted and incorporated” (South Bank Branch QTU submission 62).

The AEU was optimistic about the future of TAFE institutes given certain conditions. “TAFE institutes are well placed to provide programs that are responsive to local needs but have been constrained... by factors such as the requirements of training packages, government edicts, the forces of a competitive training market, etc” (AEU submission 94).

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Some also see the current structures as a major impediment to developing partnerships, saying that “serious consideration must also be given to the dismantling the institute structure, it is too clumsy and costly. A smaller structure, to allow a quick response to industry and community need, is most likely the way to proceed in the future” (Tweedie submission 80).

The submissions from unions also supported a change in the way the TAFE Institute works. The AEU argued that “a public service provider in no way undermines the importance or necessity for TAFE institutes being dynamic, effective and efficient enterprises, which can be centres of excellence and innovation” (AEU submission 94).

However, many submissions indicated that this will require a change in the way in which the sector will operate. One submission put this in a historical context: “When uncertainty is high, a choice has to be made between trying to reassert more control or to decentralise decisionmaking and allow diverse responses” (Fischer Associates submission 1).

VIEWS ON TAFE

“TAFE as the publicly-funded provider of VET, is expected to provide a benchmark of quality training and education and act as an exemplar to other training providers. Training is expected to be consistently high with a degree of innovation and research not necessarily readily available in the private training sector” (Australian Nursing Federation submission 101).

“The ACTU supports the role of TAFE in the delivery of vocational education and training in Australia. In addition, TAFE plays a broader role in meeting personal, social and cultural objectives” (ACTU submission 90).

“TAFE has a role in providing community members with opportunities to increase their life opportunities, as well as securing their vocational futures” (AEU submission 94).

“...TAFE fulfils a social obligation as an arm of government, by providing second chance and recurrent education for socially and economically disadvantaged Australians. In essence, TAFE is a key player in providing the tools for people to actively contribute to the creation of a sustainable economy and a tolerant, diverse and cohesive society” (NSWTF submission 98).

“The future of TAFE rests largely with TAFE. While we believe that there

would be very little argument that TAFE has a future, what remains to be seen is how TAFE will address the critical issues that it faces. What does TAFE believe is the role of the public provider in this new era of vocational and technical education? What does TAFE believe is their role in addressing equity? What will funding to TAFE in the future be spent on? How will the TAFE leadership, educate their staff and stakeholders on the answers to these questions?” (Service Skills Australia submission 74).

“TAFE VET may be seen as an extremely important response to the incidence of financial disadvantage and social deprivation in our community. Furthermore, successful participation in education is a vital foundation in enabling Australians to become life-long learners, sufficiently equipped to adjust to changing circumstances across the life course” (Smith Family submission 3).

“TAFE is central to the economic, social, cultural and political success of this nation. It provides opportunities for Australians who would otherwise be left with a lesser ability to become active members of our society. TAFE has been particularly successful in offering second chance education and catering for youth at risk. TAFE is a key component in the development of a fairer Australia” (Greens submission 92).

PART D **NEW FUTURES FOR TAFE:**

Renewal and change

“The visionaries are
the true realists”

Federico Fellini,
film director.



PART D NEW FUTURES FOR TAFE:

Renewal and change

A principled future for TAFE

The TAFE Futures Inquiry has found strong support for the role of TAFE as the public provider of first choice in post-compulsory vocational education and training in Australia.

The Inquiry was told of the need for greater clarity around the role of TAFE and its relationships with governments.

The TAFE Futures Inquiry proposes six guiding principles as a basis for the action required by Australian governments to maintain a sustainable, high quality, and accessible TAFE system.

- **Principle 1** TAFE is endorsed by all governments in Australia as the nation's 'first choice' public provider of vocational education and training for all Australians.

- **Principle 2** TAFE provides education and training across the full spectrum of post-compulsory education. It works in partnership with, and in, secondary schools, universities, other further education providers, commerce and industry. It also engages in community development programs to meet the need for both broad general education as well as vocational and technical education of Australians.

- **Principle 3** TAFE is funded by all governments to be a provider of a comprehensive educational and training experience for students using professionally qualified teachers, managers and support staff and providing high quality and safe student services, equipment and facilities to enable learning that is relevant, appropriately resourced and connected to the broad learning needs of students, the community and industry.

- **Principle 4** TAFE actively and vigorously promotes the access of all Australians to education and training around the following propositions.

1. No Australian student should be refused access to TAFE because they cannot afford course fees or the costs associated with their training.

2. No Australian resident should be refused access to high quality English language teaching on the basis of cost, limitations of hours or location.

3. Every Australian requesting education and training in TAFE must be provided an appropriate program by TAFE that accounts for their locality, their previous learning background, and their health and social circumstances as well as their learning needs.

- **Principle 5** TAFE teaching is recognised as an autonomous profession with fair employment conditions, qualifications appropriate to the status of a profession. The nature and character of TAFE teachers' relationships with their employing bodies reflects that professional status.

- **Principle 6** Australian governments work in a consultative and co-operative manner with the community, teachers, students, industry and trade unions to support TAFE in fulfilling these principles.

Directions for the future

The principles outlined above, will be valuable in addressing what the TAFE Futures Inquiry has identified as necessary change. The following steps are critical:

- A broader and organisational role for TAFE institutes that enables an engagement with the community, industry and individuals in new and more holistic ways.

- A shift in the balance of TAFE's approach from a predominate role as a client of industry and government towards an increased focus on meeting the needs of students as adult learners.

- A reaffirmation by TAFE of its commitment and role in providing access programs, or what has been seen as second chance education, for all Australians. This needs to be undertaken in an environment characterised by the impact of globalisation, entrenched social inequalities, policies that promote user-pays options and policies that allocate equity a low priority. Renewing this mission for TAFE is an essential foundation for addressing participation in post-compulsory education and training as well as skills shortages.

- An acknowledgement that TAFE teaching is an autonomous profession. Accompanying this is the need for fair and reasonable working conditions as well as the structures that promote a culture of reflection, innovation and interaction on professional issues. It should also be understood that the continued casualisation of TAFE teaching and the absence of career structures and options for teaching specialisations, as well as limited options for professional development, do not assist to retain and recruit teaching staff (and others) when there is concern about a wave of retiring teachers who will need replacement.

- A reversal of the policies that have placed a squeeze on funding under the guise of efficiencies and claims about "meeting the training market" is urgently required. There is a critical need to move into an investment phase in education and training generally and to increase funding to:

- recruit, retain and train a professionalised TAFE teaching workforce for the future

- reduce the financial barriers that inhibit the participation of students and to boost resources to assist the retention and completion rate of students

- change the way funding is allocated to enable funds to be allocated on a negotiated model that would promote some local partnerships

- lift the levels of expenditure on capital, infrastructure and the technology to keep pace with the best and latest training equipment.

PART D NEW FUTURES FOR TAFE:

Renewal and change

- To create an environment in which all governments are able to explore an integrated national approach to support a renewal process in TAFE. Improved working relationships between governments dealing with TAFE issues, would promote interaction, sharing and exchanges of professional practice, resources and systems and would be a step towards developing a national response that would make a difference to TAFE. While COAG has assisted national co-operation at a macro level, a networked approach by TAFE might also make a difference at the grass roots level.

To develop a process of change, the TAFE Futures Inquiry has identified the need for five waves of renewal:

Wave 1: A renewed organisational rationale in TAFE.

Wave 2: A renewed relationship with learners in TAFE.

Wave 3: A renewed commitment to access for all to TAFE.

Wave 4: A renewed professionalism for teaching in TAFE.

Wave 5: A renewed resource and funding strategy for TAFE

Wave 1: A renewed organisational rationale in TAFE

The outcomes of the NTRA and training market have been patchy. At one level the push to commercialisation has stimulated innovation and change. There are many examples of people working in creative ways to develop new programs, new partnerships, new work practices and in working with new students.

At another level, the competition has caused a fragmentation and erosion of the system's capacity. This is evident in both the consultations and the submissions. Many people are embittered and cynical about the potential for change. Yet there is a broad sense that TAFE does work well and could work better if it was given the resources and the support of the community.

Many TAFE systems are seeking to revive and rebuild their TAFE institutes. This needs to be done without a 'circling of the wagons' or nostalgic views of TAFE. Similarly, reviving the public provider should not be seen as a green light for new forms of bureaucratic inertia. A sophisticated response to the external environment is needed. Much has been made of the notions of partnerships and collaboration throughout this TAFE Futures Inquiry and there is compelling evidence that this style of working has significant benefits for all parties. A culture of collaboration and collective ownership of education and training issues is essential to avoid the duplication and gaps that emerge from the experience of competition.

This does not necessarily mean that the notion of competition is redundant; there is a difference between remaining competitive and being in competition and acting as a competitor.

The TAFE Futures Inquiry has heard about the need for a new culture within TAFE. This is beyond narrow arguments about restructures and realignments and endless discussions about centralisation and decentralisation. The discussions of those at the 'leading edge' in TAFE are about creating new relationships that reflect better the challenges of the moment.

These challenges are to build safe, secure and prosperous communities for families and individuals. The TAFE Futures Inquiry has been fortunate to witness people striving to achieve these broad aims for their community and utilising and harnessing the resources in the TAFE system. TAFE is most effective and derives greatest recognition when it is at the centre of broad economic planning. In some regional areas, TAFE institutes have been at the centre of driving social and economic change and the links with local government in these areas have been numerous and highly effective.

This provides a bigger challenge for TAFE than simply responding, in a segmented way to industry. Rather, industry needs should be balanced against those of all stakeholders including schools, universities, group training companies, the local community, local government and non-government agencies. The aim is to not only develop enhanced co-operation, but to provide a more coordinated and holistic approach to training and education. This is needed to answer criticisms raised during this Inquiry regarding the education levels and work readiness of students. When stakeholders are working in coordinated and collaborative ways, the needs of students are more often identified and supported rather than simply criticised.

PART D NEW FUTURES FOR TAFE:

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How might this work in the future?

TAFE should start to develop and harness community economic planning expertise and roles so that training is better linked to community needs identified through processes of collaborative joint planning. There are many examples of TAFE, local government and local communities working in strong partnerships and integrating their planning through a 'bottom-up' process.

New joint planning processes and procedures are needed that include the community, students, industry and government departments. The suggested model would be an extension and expansion of the local learning and employment network (LLEN) concept developed in Victoria, where key stakeholders may agree on a plan and distribute resources. They include, most significantly, some devolution of responsibility and funding to the local and institute level.

Organisational structures need to be developed to enable this 'bottom-up' process. Also, the organisational culture of TAFE needs to change to place a higher value on openness and autonomy. Successful partnerships are developed around a sense of trust and mutual responsibilities. Organisational structures cannot create these emotional and psychological bonds that make strong partnerships but they can frustrate or enhance them.

Paramount to this is a changed set of relationships within TAFE that enable greater autonomy and are consistent with a collaborative culture. Extending trust has been identified as a key component that needs to be encouraged if TAFE is to meet the challenges of the future. Breaking out of rigid and bureaucratic hierarchies is the key to a new future. The development of team-based structures, where teachers and staff are clustered in collaborative groups, is also a central requirement. Mutual support and a critical mass of expertise provide advantages to teachers and their students.

In TAFE Tasmania, the teaching team concept has energised some aspects of the organisational culture and is seen by many as a positive development.

Middle management, hitherto neglected, overworked and burdened with trivia, will have a vital role in developing team-based approaches. Its role will require a shift from systems management to relationship management. This new role will focus on the interpersonal supports for teaching teams and maintaining strong connections and networks. Likewise, TAFE managers will have to develop the skills to manage this new interconnected environment and to facilitate an environment where autonomy and innovation are nurtured recognised and rewarded.

Actions for expanded TAFE institutions

- TAFE be funded and resourced to develop an enhanced role in economic and social planning with a view to improving the coordination between economic planning and training.
- TAFE develop and be funded for a research capacity to conduct planning and innovation roles.
- TAFE organisational structures incorporate broad participatory structures to assist this planning process and to better link planning to delivery of services.
- This collaborative planning process should involve a rigorous process involving schools, industry, universities, community groups, state and local government.
- TAFE managers be trained and supported to develop new organisational cultures that support broader collaborative cultures and engagement with the community.

Wave 2: A renewed relationship with learners in TAFE

Teaching and learning in TAFE and VET generally require significant change. Some of the national directions concerning training packages and the application of aspects of competency-based training require significant rethinking.

The criticisms of the training packages by industry and teachers that emerged in the Inquiry clearly identify that the tools used for learning with adults need to be situated and grounded in the context of both the enterprise and the needs of the learners. The one-size-fits-all approach of many training packages means they require considerable modification and customisation. Unfortunately TAFE often wears the criticisms of training packages that they do not author.

It is unfair to suggest that teaching and learning in TAFE is devoid of innovation. On the contrary, practice has significantly shifted from narrow models, where the learners are passive recipients of pre-packaged and pre-determined lesson material. Students spoke of how practical and hands-on their learning in TAFE was and how involved in their own learning they were. They spoke of learning in TAFE being "life changing" experience.

There have also been significant shifts in delivery methods and practices. The Inquiry saw new flexible delivery models incorporating new learning technologies and teachers teaching in workplaces, using diversified models of delivery. Instances of new learning strategies, such as project-based learning, problem-based learning, simulated activities, and coaching and mentoring all create an exciting repertoire of learning experiences for students.

In some cases these transitions have been painful and have not been helped by poor systems that don't integrate with changed practice. Innovation for teaching and learning clearly needs to be supported with better resources and this will be discussed in Waves 4 and 5.

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Technology is reshaping the processes of learning because students have to learn about technology but also now have to learn using technology. Learning is likely to be increasingly distributed, conducted asynchronously and throughout the day and the night. It is more likely to be multi-modal learning using multiple technologies and these new forms of learning will have implications for both teachers and students.

There is major shift in the way students learn, which sees them often wanting and having greater autonomy over their own learning. Self-directed learning is becoming more evident because the needs of students are increasingly diversified. Students who enter TAFE are also more considered and pragmatic about their career and learning goals and achievements. Their preferences seem to be for learning strategies that enable them to balance multiple commitments and are efficient in a time-poor environment.

The key feature is that the new learning technologies give students more control over the processes of learning and in how they might direct their learning. Many of the sites visited indicated that students are using advanced technology and also managing their own learning.

A major shift is required in TAFE to enable students to be self-directed and autonomous. In the future, learning is most likely to be:

- highly situated and linked to specific professional or workplace needs
- changing rapidly with an increased redundancy factor
- diverse and adaptable to different contexts
- transferable and mobile across different settings
- reflexive and will enable learners to learn about themselves (ACDE 2001).

This means the application and context of learning are highly individualised but will often require joint planning.

The Charter for Australian Education, developed by the Australian Council of Deans of Education, summarises how self-directed learning might be developed in consultation with others:

The key to self-directed learning is not to create learners who learnt things (and who come into a new situation overconfidently thinking they 'know'), but to foster learners who will be designers of their own learning experiences, in collaboration with others as well as by themselves (ACDE 2001 pp86–87).

Often students' learning goals and direction are developed in consultation with their friends, families and their employers. It is common for employers and students to negotiate and plan learning directions around mutual goals. Without this approach, both the employment and training relationship may break down.

This places a different focus and a new meaning on training being relevant to industry needs. It is a much more individualised and grounded approach and situated in the 'real' world of work.

How might this work in the future?

This will mean several things for TAFE. There will need to be a shift of the balance away from macro issues associated with education planning and a reorientation towards the needs of individual students. Too many resources have been frittered away on grand plans and ill-directed attempts to meet 'industry needs' without consideration of the needs of individuals.

A good example might be apprenticeship training. How could the retention and completion rate be lifted if more resources were directed to the learning and personal needs of apprentices without encumbering employers? This is a big shift in thinking but a more commonsense approach to solving training and education problems and issues.

This means that students will need to have assistance in determining course direction, monitoring their progress and getting resources, and student services need to be more focused on a self-service basis. This might have the added bonus of reducing 'administrivia' from teaching staff as well. However this should not be used as a cost-shifting exercise to dump more costs onto students or an excuse for making administration staff redundant.

There will also need to be more resources to assist students develop course plans and long-term education plans. This would help organisational planning if TAFE institutes know of students' intentions and would link to the type of planning proposed in Wave 1. But, most importantly, these plans could enable students make the life-changing choices that they have told the TAFE Futures Inquiry, typifies the positive impact on their lives of TAFE.

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Students could be assisted with what TAFE Futures proposes as the TAFE Life-long Learning Plans (TAFE 3LPs) that should be developed in consultation with trained advisors. They are plans for education and training that can include the courses and programs in TAFE, in schools and involved pathways. This could happen when potential students are at school or in a job. It is a good way of assisting students to make conscious choices about their own life changes and enabling them to make deliberate decisions about their pathways.

Actions for student learning in TAFE

- Student learning becomes the central operational rationale of TAFE.
- TAFE systems and practices are directed to nurturing the notion of a self-directed adult learner.
- TAFE students would be able to access services and advice from qualified people to assist them to develop their individual TAFE 3LPs in consultation with their families, employers and others.
- TAFE 3LPs include a life-long continuum of general education and skills development and employment advice and should include schools, universities and the workplace.
- Counselling and vocational advice would be geared towards assisting students develop TAFE 3LPs and be resourced to enable this to happen on a national basis using the complete TAFE network.

The advent of the TAFE 3LPs would enable TAFE to assist people develop their own learning lives and is a first step in making TAFE a provider of first choice.

TAFE 3LPs should not be a bureaucratic exercise but an organic process.

It is an important shift in thinking to position the learner back at the core of the activities of a renewed TAFE.

Wave 3: A renewed commitment to access for all to TAFE

TAFE has a long and commendable history of second chance education. The legacy of the Kangan Report is deep and enduring and it has ensured that TAFE has maintained a strong commitment to social justice and equality of opportunity for all members of the community. Few government institutions have had such a positive effect on the lives of so many Australians and enabled them to achieve educational objectives, economic goals and gain a sense of control and empowerment in their lives. TAFE has enabled many Australians to make significant contributions to the Australian community. TAFE is widely recognised by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, migrant and community groups, people with disabilities, regional organisations, and prisoners as having made long-term and enduring contributions to individuals' lives and the future of their communities.

This commitment to access and equity has been represented in the consultations as TAFE community obligations and the retention of this is strongly supported by all participants. TAFE Futures proposes that this mission and scope should continue to be enhanced around Principle 3, outlined earlier in this section.

Every Australian requesting education and training in TAFE must be provided an appropriate program that accounts for their locality and geography, their previous learning background and their individual health and social circumstances as well as their learning needs.

However, there are several dilemmas in a changing environment that suggests that social obligations and access mission of TAFE is in need of renewal to account for several developments internally, nationally and globally.

Rival providers in the access and equity business

The environment since Kangan has changed with a range of private and other community organisations providing access and equity and basic education services. Many of these organisations have specialist functions and ancillary services, such as employment agencies and networks that assist students. Many of these organisations, including charities and churches, are securing tenders in areas traditionally occupied by TAFE. TAFE needs to be aware of this challenge and commit resources to meet it in order to retain a comprehensive response to access.

Social obligations vs. Industry training

The consultations and some of the submissions identified a perception of division between TAFE's social obligations and its commercial and industrial focus. This also suggests a separation between general education and vocational education, which is between skills formation and broader notions of life-long learning. There are also other constructed binaries between arts and humanities and engineering and traditional trades. Arts, humanities and general education are criticised as not being part of the core business of TAFE and suffers from often unjustified cutbacks as a consequence of this ill-informed view.

These practices and views suggest a type of organisational ambiguity about what TAFE does. This is an unproductive and unnecessary division because, as this TAFE Futures Inquiry has been shown, when TAFE works well these barriers and demarcations are not apparent and TAFE operates a comprehensive service to its students and clients in a seamless manner. Yet many of the access areas are experiencing shrinkage and this is undermining the capacity of TAFE to offer this comprehensive service. Perceptions need to be changed if TAFE is to remain relevant to many people, requiring a comprehensive education training that offers opportunities for a life-long continuum.

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The Inquiry has encountered criticism that TAFE's access programs perpetuate dependency, operate in a deficit paradigm and operate on outdated paternalistic welfare models. Some have argued that these programs are disconnected from mainstream activities of TAFE. These are old criticisms and these need to be continually refuted but they will also need to account for the backlash of the politics of entitlement.

The backlash of the politics of entitlement

The last decade has seen aspects of the welfare state under attack and the claims of those needing welfare undermined. Paradoxically, special programs have been criticised as promoting greater inequalities and giving advantages to groups, such as Indigenous communities, women, refugees, prisoners and others. Despite the social indicators to the contrary, many politicians continue to criticise such programs arguing that participants should be 'mainstreamed'. This has been seized on by many system managers in TAFE as an opportunity for the rationalisation of access and equity programs and the transfer of these resources to other more vocational programs. It has also fuelled criticism of those experiencing exclusion and marginalisation as being blamed for their own plight and this is evident in the stringent and punitive conditions under which welfare recipients live and the new forms of surveillance that adult learners in TAFE programs are subjected to.

Much of the justification of this backlash is shaped by a view that such programs do not respond to the needs of a new 'aspirational' class interested in social advancement. This argument is dangerous for TAFE as it is a guise for privatisation and the continued introduction of a user-pays system.

Mainstreaming, unless handled sensitively, has the potential to consolidate barriers to participation and will perpetuate marginalisation. This happens at a time when globalisation has the potential to radically change the living and working arrangements of those who thought they were immune from the deleterious effects of deregulation, shifting world markets and the resultant impoverishment. The dynamics of globalisation, with deregulated world markets and the radical shifts in economic fortunes, means many of the so-called 'mainstream' are going to be requiring special programs. It also means there might be a requirement for TAFE to address the needs of those who can never work but may want to contribute to society in creative and meaningful ways.

The differential impact of globalisation in creating wealth and poverty as well as concerns about the homogenisation of 'local' identity and culture are also issues that have an influence on access and equity programs. The debate about national identity, which is emerging in the context of the globalisation, migration and the so-called 'war on terrorism', presents new challenges for access and equity programs.

In this environment, programs for newly arrived migrants, skilled migrants and members of non-Anglo ethnic communities assume a greater importance. The capacity of these groups to gain employment and acceptance in the Australian community is dependent on the ability to have existing skills recognised and to gain experience in learning and using English in a vocational context. Several responses are needed.

Actions for skilled migration and language programs

- Recognition of skilled migrant qualifications and skills needs to be expedited at the local level with processes that are rigorous and verifiable. The processes should enable people to demonstrate vocational skills and have these assessed promptly and with minimum bureaucratic delays. TAFE needs to create or divert these resources to enhance and boost the capacity for recognition of prior learning and to do this in cooperation with employers.
- Opportunities for skilled migrants and others to have employment placements to enable them to have direct experience of Australian vocational English should become a priority in access programs.
- English classes should be free of charge. Access to English classes should be maximised, particularly for women. The restrictions on English language entitlement, introduced by the Howard government should be lifted. TAFE should make English programs a priority as a part of its access and equity programs.
- A national policy of English for adults should become a priority for any future government.

These issues need to be considered in the context of the proposed Principle 3 for the future of TAFE:

No resident of Australia should be refused access to high quality English language teaching on the basis of cost, limitations of hours or location.

Indigenous Australians have strong levels of participation in TAFE. TAFE has provided opportunities for individuals and communities that schools and universities have not been able to do. The challenge is to lift the number of students who complete a qualification and to develop programs that contribute to the health, social, economic and cultural well-being

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of Indigenous Australians. A holistic and comprehensive approach to meeting the needs of communities and individuals, rather than conforming to what systems think Indigenous communities need, is another important challenge expressed to the TAFE Futures Inquiry.

The discussions around mainstreaming delivery are counterproductive in the context of Indigenous Australians. Strong representation from communities stressed the need that Aboriginal students be recognised as Aboriginal students. The need for general education and literacy to be seen as an integral part of skills and employment training was also stressed, along with a requirement to customise delivery to meet the needs of the communities and account for their educational capabilities. Necessarily, this means such communities will often require additional resources, in terms of hours and support, and this needs to be built into the funding structures applied in remote and regional areas.

Actions relating to Indigenous communities

Two areas of importance emerged as priorities:

- Culturally-appropriate learning materials are required as many of the training packages are inadequate for Indigenous settings and learners. There is a need for curriculum and language resources for Indigenous people that are appropriate to the needs of Indigenous people.
- Indigenous TAFE teachers are required. Their training and preparation must recognise the geographic, social and cultural obligations.

Important and significant developments are happening in Indigenous education in TAFE but they are often dispersed and not well known and recognition of these achievements is minimised. A clearing house or a repository of the initiatives might assist the recording of these achievements. Another initiative that might be considered is the establishment of a 'lead institute' to champion the development of culturally-appropriate materials as well as teacher training. Organisations, such as the Batchelor Institute of Indigenous Tertiary Education in the Northern Territory and the Tropical North Institute of TAFE in far North Queensland—both recognised specialist centres for Indigenous—may be suitable lead institutes.

Globalisation requires an engagement that promotes a notion of global citizenship. TAFE has a range of international programs and there are more than 21,000 international onshore students in TAFE courses. These students provide scope for TAFE to expand globally but this is hindered by restrictions on visas and many students transferring to universities. The international model of engagement for TAFE is a market relationship. This also needs to shift to a partnership model with other international public sector organisations with a similar purpose to TAFE. This would be very important in working with less developed nations in the Asia Pacific region. Several proposals are:

TAFE going global

- TAFE should have a central Australian agency for negotiating and managing international projects and international student matters.
- TAFE institutes should be encouraged to develop memorandums of understanding with international public VET providers.
- Agreements with international providers should be used as a way of promoting exchanges of staff as well as students' participation in courses and exchanges.

The TAFE Futures Inquiry has encountered a range of views about the social obligation of TAFE and they have been overwhelmingly supportive of this role but there is clearly an undercurrent and anxiety about these programs and their future. Unless some of these tensions are resolved internally, the outlook for such programs will continue to be condemned to a cycle of uncertain funding and peripheral status within institutional priorities.

Perhaps the biggest barriers to access encountered by the Inquiry were the question of fees and charges in TAFE, financial hardship and student poverty.

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Paying the price of poverty: access and fees for TAFE students

The biggest barrier to participation and retention of TAFE students is a lack of funding. This includes up-front fees, as well as course costs such as materials and other fees levied by institutes. Students are finding the cost of accommodation, transport and other living costs high and unsustainable. Part of the problems associated with completions of apprenticeships can be directly attributed to financial issues as apprentices try to cope on low wages.

Student poverty exists and TAFE institutes, student unions and guilds are forced to respond with charitable initiatives, such as breakfast programs and accommodation services. These are commendable activities but they are not an adequate response to the issues that see TAFE students confronting poverty. They also do not promote autonomy and independence on the part of the students.

While there are local arrangements for exemptions and loans, these are at best band-aid measures. Seeking such assistance can also be a humiliating and invasive experience and leaves students at risk of inconsistent administrative decisionmaking.

Fees and charges in TAFE, considered moderate by some, present an enormous challenge to many people experiencing and battling financial hardship or seeking to make the transition from welfare to work, from a bad job to a better job or wanting to make a contribution to their community.

Undertaking a course in TAFE can be a risky business for students who have to make sacrifices and changes to their lives and defer income for the period of their course. It is risky because relationships with employers, family and friends can become stressed as a consequence of seeking education and training. The risks are heightened when the financial viability of individuals and families are placed in jeopardy.

How fees and charges might work in the future

This situation is unlikely to change as governments favour competition between private and public providers. The ongoing commitment to a market forces approach, as well as rationing of government funding through so-called priorities will see fees and charges drift through all parts of the VET and TAFE system. Employers are increasingly unlikely to pick up the bill for their employees to undertake training using the public provider.

Sections of the union movement are right to voice opposition to the introduction of HECS or FEE-HELP loans schemes. However, TAFE fees are unlikely to be wound back, even in the face of considerable opposition by teacher unions. There might need to be a new position that recognises the reality of the experiences and needs of students and apprentices and removes barriers to participation and completion.

In the context of the evidence presented by students, this Inquiry sees this as a matter of urgency. Submissions tendered by Professor Bruce Chapman (Bruce Chapman Submission 54a and b) propose a scheme similar to FEE-HELP and this needs to be considered as an option for the future. In the Chapman submission the concerns about an income contingent loan scheme are cogently rebutted.

Accepting the need for FEE-HELP-type options for TAFE students may be difficult but several points might need to be considered by the union movement and teacher unions:

- TAFE students should have the same entitlements as university students for access to courses.
- The ALP policy has foreshadowed HECS for TAFE, albeit for Associate Degrees only.
- If FEE-HELP is extended to private VET providers, TAFE will be severely disadvantaged.

Actions on fees and charges

The Inquiry proposes that a national forum be established to work on several issues and questions:

- The need for transparent and rational fee structures in TAFE.
- Pricing controls on VET/TAFE courses and arbitration procedures on disputes over fees and charges.
- The viability and potential disadvantages and gains of FEE-HELP in TAFE.

The forum could be conducted on a without-prejudice basis however the key focus of this forum should be improving the rights of students to access TAFE. This issue needs to be considered in the context of Principle 4, mentioned earlier, that:

No Australian student should be refused access to TAFE because they cannot afford course fees or the costs associated with their training.

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Promoting access through a comprehensive village model of the campus

There have been many achievements as a result of the NTRA but one of the areas in which there are major deficiencies is that of student services. The pressures of competition have led to the axing of services to students as TAFE institutes sought efficiencies. These are seen as optional extras by many systems, yet the most effective programs have good levels of services that integrate with the students' learning experience.

One of the advantages of TAFE over private providers is the comprehensive nature of services. Yet in many instances these have been eroded or are uncertain. Access by students to quality counselling, welfare and nursing services will become increasingly necessary in the future TAFE institute. The needs of disengaged young learners as well as older learners mean that aspects of wellness will assume new priorities for students (as well as some staff).

These support services will have to develop the type of seamless and integrated approach that makes these services indistinguishable from what is often considered the sharp end of delivery.

Much of the struggle around the question of how to attract students to TAFE rather than university, lies in the students' experiences. Too often TAFE is perceived as simply a provider of training, whereas many people want a broader range that includes social and cultural opportunities. One of the challenges for TAFE is to more clearly define a TAFE student's experience and an engagement with TAFE beyond simply 'doing the course'. These might be seen as a range of lifestyle opportunities and unnecessary luxuries but many of these services clustered around and in campuses exist in other countries.

Actions on student services

When people were asked to visualise the TAFE of the future they spoke about a very different experience that included several things:

- Food outlets with a variety of nutritious and quality food at affordable prices.
- Childcare facilities with short term and long daycare options.
- Bus services, owned and managed by TAFE, with routes and services to meet student needs.
- Accommodation that is safe, secure and reasonably priced and directed towards the specific needs of students.
- High quality sporting, recreational and fitness facilities for students and the community.
- Retail outlets on campus.
- Cinema and entertainment facilities.

While much of the future learning might be distributed off campus, many staff and students visualise a 'learning environment within a village' concept. In this way services for students also promote engagement and interaction with the community. This approach would prevent what people referred to as the 'dead down-time' on TAFE campuses and the 'empty campus syndrome'.

The TAFE Futures Inquiry was impressed with the services offered by the TAFE students unions. In particular the Canberra Institute of Technology Students Union is an excellent model and delivers significant benefits to the TAFE institute, the students and the community. It illustrates that students' organisations can operate services within a business paradigm and also fulfil an essential social services and support role for students. Enhancing the role of these organisations and building a national network is a critical part of developing the new TAFE of the future.

Actions on student services and student organisations

- Commission a report into student services for the future to be conducted by a representative student body.
- Develop discussion on the TAFE campus of the future linking student groups and infrastructure specialists.
- A network of student unions be established and funded by government to manage some of the student services.

TAFE should develop the notion of a 'TAFE student experience' that consists of a holistic and comprehensive response to students needs, including services that meet learning needs as well as social, health and cultural needs of students.

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Wave 4: A renewed professionalism for teaching in TAFE

Teaching in TAFE is not a homogenous occupation. The Inquiry has been impressed by the diversity of teaching modes, settings and experiences undertaken by TAFE teachers. There is a strong culture of innovation and creativity and there is an energy and enthusiasm for teaching in TAFE that has impressed the Inquiry. The TAFE Futures Report has identified the shifts in the work of teachers in some details and it quite apparent that the vast majority of teachers are responding to the challenge of change.

TAFE teachers have been unfairly maligned regarding their work practices and this is very counterproductive. The federal Minister for Vocational and Technical Education has made some particularly damaging criticisms.

This is not helpful because there is strong evidence that teachers are negotiating practical local arrangements, often in an informal way. These arrangements are contributing to overload and work intensification but they are motivated by a sense of commitment and professionalism about getting the job done. This is often unrecognised and it is sad that the work of many good people in TAFE is derided.

Managers have argued to the TAFE Futures Inquiry that awards are a limitation and that barriers exist in the way in which the caps on teaching hours operate. At the same time, the Inquiry has seen examples of local arrangements where caps on teaching hours are disregarded and local arrangements have developed a series of options that satisfies teachers and managers. These local arrangements are not a license for the deregulation of conditions but have enabled people to work effectively, safely and productively and meet the needs of the students and employers.

The tensions around notions of flexibility and the protection of working conditions appeared to the Inquiry to be overemphasised, but they need to be resolved. There were many examples that might provide a template for some future actions in the industrial front.

The National Aerospace Training Centre of Excellence (NATCE) is an excellent example. NATCE is the ground crew technical training centre for the Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF) and training is often conducted in simulated operational conditions. TAFE conducts the training at the Wagga Wagga base and training must conform to the conditions under which military operations are conducted. This means that there needs to be an around-the-clock training presence as well as a training routine that fits in with the cycle of intakes determined by the military. This is a locally negotiated agreement conducted with several parties including NSW TAFE, RAAF and the NSW Teachers Federation. The locally-based agreement operates under the umbrella of the award and enables specific adjustments around such things as developing a guaranteed amount of hours for casual teachers as well as providing 24-hour staffing at short notice.

The NATCE enjoys strong and direct support from the Australian Government in providing significant resources to this training. The level of resources and financing has also ensured that training is effective and efficient and there is high morale amongst staff and students.

The combination of strong leadership by government, in securing adequate resources, and the capacity of management and unions to develop a deal within these flexibilities is commendable. Examples such as this suggest that the following style of arrangements might emerge that consists of:

Actions on TAFE teachers' working environments

- A core of award conditions with options to accommodate local arrangements.
- Open and satisfactory negotiation with employers and unions.
- Guaranteed training capabilities and services, as well as the availability of staff and expanded hours of operations.
- Guaranteed resources and funding for teachers and trainers, including professional support by employers and industry partners.

Achieving agreement and resolution of working conditions (including salaries), flexibility and resources could be one of the biggest opportunities for enhancing the effectiveness of TAFE.

These are also profound challenges regarding the TAFE teaching workforce and these need urgent attention at a national and a state level.

These include concerns about the demography of the teaching workforce and the recruitment of a new generation of TAFE teachers. There is an assumption that the baby boomer generation of teachers will retire soon, and in some cases, early, leaving a gap that cannot be filled. This concern assumes that all staff have appropriate levels of superannuation savings, but it is a questionable assumption in a workforce that is feminised, and where superannuation savings are lower because of the high levels of casualisation. It should be noted that the baby boomers often have simultaneous responsibilities for children and the aged and this often makes retirement on fixed incomes unviable.

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It might just be that the teaching workforce of the future might be the same one, only it might be older. The obsession with a youthful teaching workforce contradicts the status and prestige that has traditionally been associated with the position of the master craftsman. There is an assumption that older teachers are resistant to change and an impediment in a culture of change and innovation. This assumption is false and does not recognise the role that employers have in appropriately preparing TAFE teachers for change.

There are several suggestions that have been considered by the TAFE Futures Inquiry. These include:

- Re-employing retired teachers on a reasonable sessional basis.
- Using joint employment arrangements with industry partners.
- Mentoring casually employed teachers into permanent positions.
- Creating cadetship positions in areas of shortage for TAFE graduates.

However, the ability to retain and attract TAFE teaching staff will depend on the attractiveness of TAFE teaching in terms of remuneration and career options. The TAFE Futures Inquiry has been presented with evidence that, in some key areas, TAFE teaching salaries, relative to industry, are uncompetitive. This needs to be addressed to ensure that salaries and working conditions remain competitive.

TAFE is not seen as an attractive option since there are limited career options and advancements into promotional positions.

The development of career structures introduces dilemmas about creating hierarchies and additional layers of management, neither of which are seen as positive things. On the contrary, the emphasis should be on positions that deliver specific outcomes and enable teachers to work on selected options. The emphasis should be on developing career options for emerging specialist functions that characterise the diverse work of TAFE teaching. This assists a career structure that underpins innovation and change rather than a ranking structure. This could mean that specialist functions such as learning design, workplace delivery, and online learning could be incorporated into highly regarded promotional positions.

The following initiatives could be developed:

Actions on TAFE teachers' careers

- Teaching-only career paths for those wishing advancement but not wanting an administrative career. Expertise and capabilities would need to be recognised both in salaries, working conditions and job titles. Options for specialisation, in areas such as curriculum, technologies and workplace delivery, might be considered as the basis for promotion.
- Administrative, management and educational leadership career paths for those with TAFE teaching experience. Staff undertaking a management career track need to be supported by appropriate training in educational management as well as recognition in salary, working conditions and job titles.

TAFE careers are often seen as a continuous employment with TAFE. One option that needs to be considered is opportunities for staff to interrupt their employment with TAFE to enable them to undertake other jobs on a temporary basis. Staff might retain rights of employment and rejoin TAFE after an agreed period. This might enable staff to remain connected to industry, enjoying the benefits of a period in the workforce where earning might be higher than TAFE, as well as the option to rejoin TAFE at some later stage.

Branding TAFE as an 'employer of choice' requires a shift in thinking from seeing TAFE teachers as process workers within a narrow production model to professionals with a commitment to a life-long vocation of teaching. This shift would help to establish reasonable working conditions that are consistent with the status of professionals.

Continued over-reliance on casualisation is counterproductive in maintaining a quality and accessible provider. Casualisation has the capacity to erode and undermine the capacity of the system overall and there is evidence that this is already happening. The failure of TAFE to maintain a critical mass of staff and deliver in key areas is one of the major criticisms of industry and this needs to be addressed. All TAFE systems should seek and commit to reduce levels of casualisation by an agreed percentage per annum as a minimum contribution to the future of the system.

The new funding arrangements, suggested by TAFE Futures, establish benchmarks on casualisation and permanency, based on real need and not just the views of TAFE management's budget flexibility.

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One issue associated with careers in TAFE is the qualifications of TAFE teachers. The need for an abbreviated qualification, to provide a basic foundation qualification for industry trainers working in VET, casual staff and other short-term trainers, is recognised. However, there is growing concern that the TAA is too cumbersome, expensive and a disincentive for casual staff. While the Certificate IV has been seen as the entry level standard in VET, some systems, such as Victoria, now require a Degree/Graduate Diploma level qualification after an initial period of service (teaching qualifications have been required in NSW).

There are challenges for staff in achieving qualifications, including release and time off and the expense. There are also concerns that the Certificate IV level qualification cannot prepare teachers for the complexities of teaching in contemporary TAFE. As TAFE continues to span delivery and provision in schools and universities, as well as in international settings, it is likely that a reliance on Certificate IV will be unsustainable.

Much of the debate around qualifications is conducted without a consideration of a broader more holistic role of TAFE teaching as a profession. TAFE teachers need to be involved in the development of codes of practice, ethics, quality standards and responsibilities to students, acknowledging their autonomous status.

The delivery of teacher training programs introduces questions about how TAFE, universities and others might develop courses for teachers to meet these diverse needs and enhance access for TAFE teachers. One response might be to develop a national consortium approach to improve opportunities for teachers to train and retrain. This discussion needs to be conducted with the context of the developments of continued professionalism of TAFE teachers.

The status of TAFE teaching as a profession

The Inquiry has been impressed by TAFE teachers' work and commitments and received positive reports from industry and community verifying these impressions. However the Inquiry also detected, and was informed of, a significant proportion of the workforce with low morale and disillusionment about working in TAFE.

This disillusionment was often attributed to a perpetual cycle of change that is often ill-conceived, badly implemented and under-resourced. Many have been embittered through dissatisfaction with management, working conditions and cutbacks. Many are uncertain and confused about their work and the changes in industry and find it difficult to re-engage with their industry.

One factor that contributed to low morale was the status of TAFE teaching. There was a sense that TAFE teaching was not recognised as a professional activity and that the role and status of TAFE teachers was not considered important. In contrast with the schools sector, a low priority was placed on developing the culture and practices of a profession. Opportunities to reflect on the professional challenges of TAFE teaching and be involved in networks with colleagues were seen as important. Opportunities to reflect on change and develop new practices were also seen as important. Professional development opportunities were viewed as significant in developing a professional identity. These need to be promoted and owned and controlled by the TAFE teaching workforce.

There was strong support for initiatives that promoted the status of TAFE teaching as a profession.

How might this work in the future?

Unlike schools sector teachers, TAFE teachers do not have a professional institute or academy where activities of interest to TAFE teachers are conducted. Some initiatives have been developed, such as the state government-funded Victorian TAFE Development Centre that performs some of the role of a professional association. The TAFE Futures Inquiry proposes that something like this could be created at a national level. The initiative of this would be from the TAFE teaching profession and would have an independent identity.

This should not be seen as a registering authority, as the employment responsibility in Australia continues to lie with the states and territories, but as an institute to enable professional activities to be conducted by and for TAFE teachers.

It would be of greater benefit if this was funded and conducted in the same way as the Carrick Institute for Higher Education operates with grants schemes, fellowships and other professional activities. It could be funded by the federal government along the same lines as the Victorian TAFE Development Centre. It is proposed that the professional body would be called the Australian Institute of TAFE.

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The Australian Institute of TAFE

This would be a collaborative enterprise managed by teachers specifically for teachers with the objective of developing activities that promote improved practice, reflection and exchange. The institute would promote professional practice across the TAFE system and include areas such as management and leadership as well as technology and teaching in trades. The institute may include several academies.

An initial six academies may include:

- Learning in TAFE
- Technical and trades teaching
- TAFE and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities
- Leadership and management in TAFE
- TAFE students and student services
- Technology, infrastructure, resources and financing TAFE.

The academies could be sponsored by a state organisation on behalf of the Australian Institute of TAFE. State governments may wish to sponsor one academy and act as a lead agent on behalf the Australian Institute of TAFE. The final details about membership and activities would be developed by a representative group of teachers in TAFE. The key principle should be that the Institute would be run and managed by TAFE teachers and TAFE workers.

The activities of the Australian Institute of TAFE may include:

- grants schemes for innovations
- fellowships scheme for TAFE practitioners
- professional development opportunities
- forums
- newsletters
- an annual conference
- developing professional portfolios
- peer review and mentoring
- self assessment.

This would be a key initiative in developing a professional identity and promote a culture of innovation, change and collaborative practices in TAFE and would be a major platform for developing dialogues and activities on a national level.

Wave 5: A renewed resource and funding strategy for TAFE

The TAFE Futures Inquiry has not conducted sophisticated modelling about the financing and funding of TAFE but it has been able to explore where change is needed and where resources need to be created and make some suggestions for change. The discussion here is to open some new dialogues on some familiar issues.

Issues around the resources and financing of TAFE are related to several key questions:

- How can resources be created to produce and sustain partnerships?
- How can resources be shifted to assist students' participation and successful outcomes?
- How can resources be created to maintain a professional TAFE workforce?
- How can the infrastructure and technology be improved and maintained to meet contemporary standards?

The reliance on ASCH as the principle form of distributing funding within the TAFE systems has been identified as an impediment to supporting a culture of innovation and change. Centrally determined profile funding has also been identified as reducing the capacity of TAFE institutes to develop partnerships. TAFE Futures proposes that a portion of funding is made available for allocation through a different methodology that encourages community and industry partnerships and has the involvement of key stakeholders. As suggested earlier, a regional planning body coordinated by TAFE would be involved in developing a plan and allocating resources to this plan. It is suggested that a progressive approach be taken to releasing portions of funding to be allocated through local planning conducted by the TAFE institutes.

The funding cycle has been criticised for thwarting long-term planning and long-term partnerships. Industry has been critical of the funding cycles and suggested that the 'stop-start' nature of annual funding cycles do not make a good foundation for change. In order to better meet the needs of all stakeholders and provide greater certainty for planning, the funding cycles need to be extended beyond an annual cycle. The ideal funding cycle could be a three-year horizon. This three-year period does not exclude adjustments and fine-tuning if there are variations. An extended cycle would also encourage 'buy-in' and ownership and promote the development of collaboration that is systematic and prolonged rather than ad hoc.

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How might this work in the future?

The funding allocation mechanism and the workings of user choice and contestable funding have not built in the capacity to fund services for students. Current funding models have caused an erosion of student services at the same time as there has been a growth in the administrative overheads. Future funding models need to respond to the need for better student services and more transparency about where the funding goes. As the TAFE system is required to develop a more student-oriented approach to its operations, there will need to be greater accountability of how resources are directed to meet the learning needs of students as to fund other services. Funding the proposed TAFE 3LP process can be seen as another useful way to identify students' needs. This is not indicating support for implementing vouchers or learning accounts, but a planning tool that is focused on the needs of the students and integrating these needs into planning processes. The problems with vouchers and learning accounts are that the needs of the students and the resources are artificially limited and that the links between programs and their funding are often out of sync. More cooperative, coordinated responses, that are needs-based, are required.

The focus on new funding models should be an integrated and needs-based approach where the overall objectives of partners are met. There is significant evidence that there

is the capability and good will to undertake this new approach from the consultations conducted by the TAFE Futures Inquiry.

In addition, funding needs to be built into providing teacher development and professional development to ensure the highest standards of teaching are maintained. This may be included as a levy or a percentage.

The current use of profile has been identified in this TAFE Futures Inquiry as effectively rationing resources and promoting a commercial fee paying option. This process is inequitable and needs to be addressed urgently.

These may seem extravagant and costly in comparison to existing models but evidence already exists of the failure of existing financing models, making a compelling case for radical change.

There needs to be a change from a mentality that promotes low cost delivery to one where the quality and dimensions of delivery are valued along with economic considerations. The current use of ASCH has promoted 'a race to the bottom' mentality and this will not assist TAFE to address the challenges of the future.

Most importantly, the TAFE Futures Inquiry has been confronted with information that students require support and assistance to meet the financial challenges of studies. Those most vulnerable include apprentices in traditional trade areas who are struggling with the demands of travel, accommodation and study costs on low wages. Some recognition of these stresses needs to be incorporated in the funding models to ensure students are supported without unduly creating additional costs for their employers. Additional allowances for travel, accommodation and course costs are important in lifting the retention rate and maintaining an apprenticeship as a viable form of employment. Allowances for travel, and in some cases additional support for students, need to be considered.

Actions on resources and finances in TAFE

- Increasing proportions of funding to be allocated by local planning processes.
- Local planning for allocating funds to be conducted by committees or task forces consisting of local stakeholders.
- The cycle of funding to be increased to three years.
- Levies built into funding models to fund the planning of students' learning, student services, teachers' development and teaching support.
- Infrastructure funding that enables TAFE to partner with industry and receive infrastructure funds from the Commonwealth. At present TAFE is excluded from this.

The financing and resources in TAFE also needs to make a shift from seeing infrastructure and resources as 'bricks and mortar' to seeing an integrated approach to student services. This would see an emphasis on such things as:

- Management systems that promote opportunities for self-directed adult learners.
- Information systems that build knowledge capacity in TAFE through well-funded libraries and virtual collections.
- Learning platforms for students that are common and maximise opportunities for students to network.

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TAFE Australia? Toward a national system

In the course of the consultations, many people in TAFE lamented the fact that there was not a better coordination of TAFE on a national level. Many spoke of the notion of TAFE Australia as a highly prestigious and transportable brand.

The quest for a national VET system is made more difficult by the absence of a national TAFE network. Perhaps the first steps to a TAFE Australia might be exploring the opportunities for developing a broader Australian TAFE network.

The federal government priorities are not at present directed to building or supporting the public provider TAFE and perhaps these opportunities need to await a future government with a mandate to develop a national network.

One of the options is for the state governments who are responsible for TAFE to develop some initiatives without the federal government. Although this is not a preferred option it would assist build a momentum for co-operation and collaboration.

One possibility emerging from the TAFE Futures Inquiry is the proposed Australian TAFE Institute. There is the potential for this to be developed as a co-operative program by the states. Some states could take responsibility for various parts of this.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR AN AUSTRALIAN TAFE NETWORK

- **Coordinating international projects and a marketing centre for TAFE Australia.**
- **Developing forums and networks for teachers across the country.**
- **Developing curriculum that could be used across systems.**
- **Assisting employment, training and recruitment of Indigenous staff.**
- **Developing common administrative systems.**

One of the key issues to emerge from the TAFE Futures Inquiry was the absence of a lobby group to profile and champion TAFE. While there are many professional associations such as TAFE Directors Australia, AusTAFE and the Australian Education Union, there was a concern that there was not a single voice that supported the role and status of the public provider.

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Current research on partnerships in VET and TAFE: opportunities for the future of TAFE

Prepared by Gillian Vogl and Peter Kell for the TAFE Futures Inquiry

This final section in the TAFE Future Inquiry is a short summary of contemporary research concerning partnerships in vocational education and training. The objective of this short paper is to provide a more extended discussion on how partnerships and collaborations with industry, schools, universities and schools might be put into practice

The VET environment, described in the TAFE Futures Inquiry, is now situated within a competitive training market. According to Callan and Ashworth, there has been a rise in niche training markets, enterprise-specific training and the introduction of fees for particular courses. Training organisations have also been faced with cuts in government funding and they are progressively being encouraged to develop training agreements with industries (Callan and Ashworth 2004 p11).

In their research on industry and VET training partnerships, Callan and Ashworth (2004 6) explored a number of questions. These included:

1. "What is the nature of the training partnerships?"
2. What is the training model being used, including the extent to which training models vary in their levels of flexibility, customisation, administrative arrangements, and the formality of the training relationship?"
3. What are the people skills being required by VET providers to build and maintain these partnerships?"
4. What are partners learning and needing to improve?"
5. What are some practical guidelines that VET and other professionals can use in setting-up and managing successful industry-provider training partnerships?"

This research involved a survey of training providers and interviews with 52 providers and their industry partners (Callan and Ashworth 2004 p6). Callan and Ashworth (2004 p59) found that, essentially, the industries were very happy with their partnerships with the training providers, although the training providers that they approached were those who were or had participated in successful partnerships.

Callan and Ashworth (2004 p12) state that it is not only the training provider but also the industry partner who is operating in a much more competitive environment. Australian companies that have partnered with training providers report that these partnerships have improved their skills base. This is very important in an environment where companies face a shortage of skilled staff in particular areas.

There are three sets of interconnected factors that determine the success of training partnerships. These include firstly, the characteristics of the training environment (size, reputation and degree of formality of the partnership); secondly, the training model itself; and thirdly, finding the right people with the right skills (Callan and Ashworth 2004 p22).

In their survey of training providers, Callan and Ashworth (2004 p27) found a wide range of training partnerships operating. Some examples of these partnerships were: "Developing a working farm and research facility within an existing mixed fruit orchard; establishing a facility for heavy duty automotive training; training of hospitality trainees on the job; delivery of workplace based training in the food processing industry through a strong partnership of 8–9 years; training and education to a major cohort of entry-level trainees from a Commonwealth department; integrated training to a major hotel/resort establishment and research into the training needs of students".

Callan and Ashworth (2004 p29) found that geographical closeness to the industry was important. The advantage of this proximity meant that the provider was easily accessible, could deliver on-site and could attend meetings on-site. In one small regional town, the provider was less than half a kilometre from the industry. This proximity helped to facilitate a very active relationship that extended to sharing sporting activities at weekends. Frequently, industries chose a local provider as a sign of commitment to the communities in which they operated. They felt that by choosing a local provider, they were indicating to employees their long-term commitment to the region.

A number of providers believed that their partnerships had helped to change industries' attitudes towards providers and had led to the development of opportunities in other industries. Most partnerships developed as a result of industry needs or provider advertising and lasted around between one and three years (Callan and Ashworth 2004 p38).

Students and staff benefited enormously through these partnerships by gaining access to the latest equipment, employment and staff development opportunities, more varied work and access to multi-skilling. In addition, the provider gained increased recognition and standing in the marketplace, increased credibility and status in the region, improved relationships with the industry and enhanced status for working with a large multinational organisation. Furthermore, the partnership allowed the provider to deliver particular types of industry training that had previously been under threat and also, the opportunity to employ more casual and permanent staff in more specialised areas (Callan and Ashworth 2004 p38).

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Industries stated that the partnerships were helping them to meet national and local training needs for their industries. They believed that on the whole, the training institutions were providing high quality and relevant training that was flexible and cost sensitive. They were so satisfied that most of the industries were looking for other ways to partner with the providers (Callan and Ashworth 2004 p55).

Industries, did however, suggests areas for improvement. One of these was the inconsistent approach adopted by some training institutions, particularly large TAFE providers. While particular departments within these institutions were focused on engaging with the industry partner, other departments were less interested in meeting the needs of the industry. Many of the TAFE providers who were interviewed talked about problems due to the bureaucratic nature of their institutions which resulted in a gap between the way in which they were structured and the organisational cultures of various businesses (Callan and Ashworth 2004 p 47). Employers stated that training providers needed to be aware that businesses operate in a highly dynamic environment and providers needed to keep up with this constantly changing environment (Callan and Ashworth 2004 p58). While there was a need to meet these requirements, TAFE providers were also aware that they were funded by government grants, which meant that they also had to meet government priorities that often involved lots of paper work and high levels of accountability (Callan and Ashworth 2004 p47).

Callan and Ashworth (2004 p58) found that there were still negative stereotypes about large training providers who are often seen as unable to provide training that is relevant and flexible. It was believed that some TAFE trainers did not have a good understanding of commercial demands due to the fact that they had been out of commercial types of workplaces for many years. Employers also wanted their training partners to be more up-to-date with industry practices and developments.

Partnerships were often made more difficult as a result of issues across state boundaries due to different regulations between different state agencies. Another issue for TAFE providers was that state awards often did not allow for the flexibility that industry partners required and also some industries needed trainers to be available throughout most of the year, including periods when TAFE staff traditionally took their leave. Providers also had problems accessing specialised trainers. While TAFE institutes budget around \$360 per day for guest trainers, outside consultants sometimes expected up to \$2,000 for the day (Callan and Ashworth 2004 p47).

Both employers and training providers identified a number of areas that needed improvement:

- There was a need to develop more consistency of service and product delivery. Providers needed to continually make sure that industry needs were being met.

- There was a continued need to develop the capacities of staff in the training organisations so that staff were able to tell the difference between favourable and unfavourable opportunities, gain higher levels of business planning and the ability to manage teams more effectively. More staff, who were pro-actively engaged in marketing and business development and able to liaise and negotiate successful outcomes, were needed across the training institutions.
- There was a need to reduce costs and scrutinise 'financial hotspots' which may make these partnerships less profitable.
- There was a need to implement more flexibility into training organisations, including a broad array of staffing arrangements, models of delivery and flexible cost structures. Close attention needed to be paid to the 'just-in-time' philosophy of modern day industries, which meant courses often needed to be delivered on short notice.
- Senior managers employed within training institutions needed to be more aware of industry requirements and be more supportive of culture changes that need to take place to ensure that training institutions are relevant to the needs of industry.

Callan and Ashworth (2004 p60) provide some guidelines for training providers to make them more enticing as partners for industries:

1. There needs to be an awareness of the competitive environment in which businesses are situated as they try to build training and skills into their workplaces. Training needs to take into account the operational needs of businesses, particularly, small workplaces where training may be a big cause of disruption to productivity.

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2. Industry can at times be resistant to embarking on a larger-scale training partnerships as a result of a lack of confidence in training staff, technology and due to the commitment needed to manage training in addition, to the day-to-day demands already placed on employees. An important strategy is to involve organisations in 'stereotype questioning' activities which allow them the insight to challenge pre-existing perceptions which they may hold with regard to public providers.

3. As many elements as possible of flexibility and customisation needed to be built into the training, taking into account budget constraints. If the partnership is longer term, then a more seamless delivery of the training is needed. This will allow for a wide range of choices, "including joint appointments, training workplace assessors, shared information technology and administrative systems for the management of the training, and a range of on- and off-the-job options for the delivery of the training".

4. Due to the time involved in setting up partnerships, many industries prefer long-term partnerships.

5. There needs to be an acceptance that there will be a 'break-even' outcome, however as the relationships become stronger, it is likely that, financial benefits will come about from a current project or future projects between partnership and industry.

6. Most partnerships occur locally and then, once they are established, the training or knowledge developed can be used to focus on more global outcomes.

7. There is a need to attract and develop staff who have special capacities for initiating and negotiating the initial phases of training partnerships. This involves skills in communication, the ability to build trust, and a commitment to the vision that motivates industries to want this type of larger-scale training. The ability to recruit others who will work with project managers or partnership managers and, who, in time, have the ability to replace them is also important. A nucleus of individuals needs to be assembled who can be responsible for the successful management of the partnership and the achievement of its training outcomes. There also needs to be a steering committee that consists of these people who, with others, perceive the leadership of the partnership to be a shared responsibility. It will be this group that will communicate the vision and outcomes of the training. It is the responsibility of this group to make sure

appropriate people and resources are made available, that those delivering are aware of their responsibilities and what the industry expectations are, and that they are able to adequately resolve any conflicts that emerge during the partnership.

8. The training provider needs to make sure that right from early on in the project they have senior management commitment to the partnership, particularly, through the demonstration of evidence of the financial and non-financial returns to the training organisation and the industry partner through their investment in training.

9. A learning environment needs to be created wherein individuals feel encouraged both to seek and provide frequent feedback and review. Successful training partnerships frequently evaluate how well the partnership is meeting the needs of the industry.

10. Constant assessment justifies to employers the value of return on their investment in this training partnership. In most cases staff will voluntarily be involved in training partnerships because of their "interest in industry, their strong communication skills and their natural entrepreneurial spirit. At the same time, their skill deficits are most likely to involve the management of the legal and contractual arrangements behind partnerships, risk analysis and marketing".

11. It needs to be assumed that over time the quality of the relationship which occurs between the training provider and the industry partner will become more important than the financial cost of the training. Trust is an integral element to a successful training partnership, with many training partnerships emerging from "personal relationships between teachers and their friends in industry".

While it is very important to tailor courses to meet the needs of industry, Farrell and Wyse (2003 p9) claim that work-related education

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is characterised by tensions between the need for specific skills on the one hand and yet portability and generic skills on the other hand. Farell and Wyse's project (2003 p8) was partly focused around the tensions to customise training to meet local needs in local regional communities and yet the transferability of skills needed to account for the modern day multi-skilled and mobile workforce. They focused on four research questions:

1. "Who are the stakeholders and what do they want?"
2. How and to what extent are training packages customised at local sites to meet the needs of stakeholders?
3. To what extent are providers packaging competency standards to allow for cross-industry qualifications?
4. Does the customising of training packages preserve portability and provide the opportunity to gain higher levels of skills and qualifications?"

In contemporary society, employees are not only expected to train throughout their lives but are also expected to manage their own training. It has been argued that learning is the new form of a labour. Farell and Wyse (2003 p10) argue that knowledge and skills matter more now than ever but what knowledge and which skills and who for? The authors conducted interviews with employers, registered training organisations, and area consultative committees in regional areas across Australia (Farell and Wyse 2003 p5).

While customising training to meet the needs of industries was important, teachers spoke also about the need for training that provided transferable skills (Farell and Wyse 2003 p30). The predicament for providers was how to simultaneously meet the specific needs of local company's while also providing individuals with improved employment chances. Providers believed it was essential to maintain the high quality of the qualifications they offered while still making sure that they met the needs of specific employers. Most of the

current and ex-students interviewed by Farell and Wise (2003 p51), who were now employed, believed that their training had been appropriate to the work that they were doing. Employers essentially viewed their needs as being met and were not concerned about transferability of skills, but did believe that some skills could be used across different sites and industries, although they were also concerned about sector specific skills (Farell and Wyse 2003 pp51–52).

Another problem, which was mentioned with regard to training needs, was the need for providers to be active in trying to ascertain and respond to future skills shortages. For example, one of the area consultative committees mentioned that there may be the potential for the growth of aquaculture in the regional area in which these consultants were based. Participants stated that as a result of a lack of funds, local TAFE institutes often did not have the capacity to be pro-active in identifying future training needs and could only just respond to needs which were already apparent. However, this forward thinking and the need to identify future trends was essential for TAFE to be viewed positively in the eyes of clients (Farell and Wyse 2003 p33).

Skills shortages in particular regions needed to be responded to in a way that was appropriate to the region but also in a way that responded to the need of students. Students needed to develop a breadth of skills to improve their employment opportunities in regional areas where there was high unemployment (Farell and Wyse 2003 p41). Providers believed that a very important part of their jobs was to encourage students to take on further training.

Frequently, participants spoke about difficulties related to funding. These difficulties included:

1. "The cost of developing resources designed to meet the needs of students in their region,
2. The additional costs in providing appropriate services to disadvantaged groups, such as seasonal workers,
3. The lack of money available to attract qualified and experienced staff to remote and regional areas,
4. The difficulties in providing a range of training opportunities when the student numbers are small,
5. The costs associated with allowing staff to attend professional development programs when there are the additional costs associated with distance,
6. Travel costs for staff travelling to worksites as distances in regional areas are often large,
7. Lack of money to be pro-active in developing programs for emerging skill areas where there is not an established student demand."

Often the money was not available to customise the training to meet the needs of local communities.

In terms of partnerships, Farell and Wyse (2003 pp33–34) found also that it was essential that collaboration occurred in ways that responded to the needs of all stakeholders. This was particularly important in communities where there was not a shared Western philosophy towards

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education and learning. The most successful model was the use of a local broker who had already built up trust in the community and was aware of the specifics of that community. In addition, partnerships, once they were formed, usually existed as a result of the commitment and pro-activeness of a few individuals and clients, rather than as a result of the institutions themselves. To improve sustainability and durability of these partnerships, succession plans needed to be put into place.

As the two research projects above demonstrate, partnerships have become critically important to the successful continuation of the VET system. Social partnerships related to vocational education and training are part of a much wider array of social partnerships. Various types of partnerships in vocational education and training have been put in place across Australia, essentially as a response to restructuring and the development of school-to-work programs for young people. These schemes are mostly government programs with a focus on getting communities to play a more pro-active role in helping to determine the way in which training is provided to young people (Seddon and Billet 2004 p11). The federal government policy that the concepts of partnerships came from was the Enterprise and Careers Education Foundation (ECECF) with a particular emphasis on school-to-work transition (Seddon and Billet 2004 pp11–12).

According to Seddon and Billet (2004 p13) the main challenge in social partnerships is to produce a sustainable community that is able to offer opportunities to prospective students and learners, particularly, in areas with high unemployment. How a partnership is situated and placed in relation to a number of different interests is very important in determining both the

purpose and outcomes of a partnership. Partnerships are based on collaborative goals. However, they are often made difficult as a result of the present environment in which they operate, which is characterised by competitive individualism. The bodies that need to come together to represent the interests of the students involved, are at times the same bodies that are encouraged to compete against one another for funds (Seddon and Billet 2004 pp20-21).

As with Farrell and Wyse (2003), Buchanan is also concerned with the importance of TAFE taking the initiative to identify future training needs. In a paper titled, 'From skills shortages to decent work: the role of better skill ecosystems', John Buchanan (2006 p5) argues that present skills shortages in Australia will only be solved if there is a better relationships between workforce development and business organisational development. This main focus of his paper is to answer the question:

"What should be the key features of a new Australian approach to linking the development of the workforce to the development of the workplaces in which they work?" (Buchanan 2006 p7)

Buchanan (2006 p7) states that this question cannot be answered without considering the following question:

How can Australia maintain strong labour productivity growth and simultaneously create decent work for all?

Buchanan (2006 p8) states that VET's present concern with workforce development in improved ecosystems is not "so much about getting the workforce more 'developed'—rather it is about how it is developed".

At present, there is an inadequate balance between development and deployment of labour. This particularly results from two problems. Firstly, despite a rise in education levels, many individuals are not using their higher order skills in the workplace. Secondly, an increasingly competitive workplace and the maximisation of shareholder value have led to a change in the extent people are fully deployed, once

hired. This leads to too little time for people to use work time to upgrade their skills or to find the time at work for the "transmission and rounding out of their skills". At present the way in which labour is deployed is weakening its development. These dynamics have led to both skills shortages and a lack of balance between work and life (Buchanan 2006 pp11–12).

"A skill ecosystem can be defined as clusters of high, intermediate and low-level competencies in a particular region or industry, which are shaped by interlocking networks of firms, markets and institutions" (Finegold 1999, Keep and Mayhew 1999, cited Buchanan 2006 p14). Buchanan (2006 p17) claims that present institutional structures focusing on skills and technical education are still tied up with past needs and thus engaging with the present days realities of skills ecosystems is not easy. In the past, there was a focus on trade training and support for those, particularly the unemployed, who needed technical and further education to improve their labour market opportunities. Today, there is a fixation with 'user choice', 'contestability' and 'training market'. The funding model that drives these elements, essentially provides resources according to outcomes including, average student contact hours (ASCH) and the number of new apprentices employed. This focus has not kept up with the changing nature of work and skills and thus results in both an increased number of workers with wasted skills and increased pockets of skills shortages.

The United States has a long history of community-based programs aimed at increasing the employment opportunities of job seekers. Some of the best programs draw on groups of employers to become part of workforce development networks (Osterman 1988, cited Buchanan 2006 p20). Presently, the importance of linking methods of workforce and economic development at a regional level has become clearer. Buchanan (2006 pp20–21) states that previous initiatives offer important lessons for parties interested in forming these networks so as to provide greater links between employment

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and learning. Previous initiatives provide insights on the dynamics of multi-employer collaboration and co-ordination with those interested in education and training. One of these initiatives was the 'regional workforce development collaboratives' in California. In March 2001, an array of community-based organisations and government agencies worked with a number of agencies to develop demonstration projects, aimed at enhancing both workforce and economic development. Chapple (cited Buchanan 2006 p21) provides very good hints that arose from these projects for those who are interested in creating closer links between employment and training. She provides the following lessons:

Lesson 1 *"Economic development is not an unambiguous notion: two paradigms informed the various projects"*

One group of projects was essentially concerned with enhancing economic activity in the regions through making businesses more competitive. The other was less focused on business and more focused on the potential for community members to participate in the economy. The strategies informed governance both from within the training system and through trying to change it from the outside.

Lesson 2 *"Collaboration is important, difficult to achieve and takes at least two different forms"*

Collaboration is not easy, takes time and is expensive. There are various forms of collaboration. Some are exploratory and focus on determining differences and then developing shared concerns, while others involve a formal process of joint decision making. There are important differences between collaborations that are essentially based on mediators vigorously brokering networks and those that are focused more on inclusive arrangements where both responsibility and actions were shared.

Lesson 3 *"Achieving simultaneous improvements in workforce and economic development is difficult."*

None of the projects that were evaluated were able to simultaneously achieve workforce and economic development. However, Chapple (cite Buchanan 2006 p22) states that this is not inevitable, as other projects, such as 'Project QUEST in San Antonio' and the 'Bay Area Video Coalition in San Francisco', have shown that achieving both is possible.

Lesson 4 *"If better links between workforce and economic development are to be achieved, greater attention needs to be devoted to directly managing four contradictions or tensions"*

Chapple (cited Buchanan 2006 p22) talks about four main factors that limited the success of the projects in California. These are summarised in the following questions:

- "Who is connected: primarily businesses or business and other relevant experts?"
- On what basis are the connections built: networks of production, common output, common occupations or shared skill sets?
- What is the spatial setting of connection: region or locality?
- What is the time horizon for action: short-term or long-term?"

Being aware of these issues is extremely important for a successful outcome. Business people often want to do things alone, within already established networks at regional level, and within a short time frame. This approach is frequently inadequate in solving deep-seated skill and business development problems. The best outcomes are achieved through collaboration between employers and other experts (eg educators), on skill sets, at a local labour market level, over quite an extensive time frame.

Lesson 5 *"The priority for a new approach to policy is to ensure that the building of new capacity is built into established flows of funding"*

Most of the projects that Chapple (cited Buchanan 2006 p23) evaluated did not have secure funding. They thus needed to be integrated into already existing funding streams. Chapple (cited Buchanan 2006 p22) states that:

- Funding should be available for initiatives that are a catalyst for long run system change and not just for program delivery.
- Don't fund projects, fund leveraging.
- Avoid narrow performance targets based on output.
- Get beyond the mechanistic approach to program design and be more organic.
- Support capacity to adapt to uneven development of employment and skill formation arrangements.

In order to obtain better co-ordination between employment and learning, alterations are needed to the collaborative behaviour of employers so that they, as a group, coordinate with others, especially educators. The way they can achieve this can be summed up in two main points:

"The ability of employers to become more self-reliant in obtaining the labour they need requires greater acceptance of joint responsibility for skill development and use. At the very least it requires better coordination of their efforts to acquire, develop and use the labour they need. This takes considerable time and resources to nurture. In particular, it requires the development of an effective set of intermediary organisations to broker better connections.

Educators and other stakeholders have a vital role to play. They must be neither masters nor servants in any new approach to linking employment and learning" (Buchanan 2006 p23).

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Buchanan sees that TAFE needs to transform itself into a site for change, involving new semi-autonomous sections that are not involved in the current philosophy of ASCH. This would mean that TAFE would play an important role in economic and social development, without being tied to current funding models (Buchanan 2006 p30).

Buchanan (2006 p30) states that one of the most fundamental issues that TAFE faces is not just more and improved education, but also input into the nature of the jobs created. This goes beyond skills formation and into industry development. Funds allocated for education and training could be matched by agencies responsible for various sectors, such as, state development, health, community/human services, local government, tourism, sports and recreation. By putting in place methods such as this, the workforces will be developed in a way that is much more closely aligned with strategies for industry development.

Buchanan (2006 p31) claims that the notion of decent work should play a very integral role in future policy on employment and learning. Both the social and financial resources are needed to achieve success. There is much need to develop organisational and analytical capabilities. Initiatives need to be implemented that deal with new realities, the greatest concern being the capacity to change how skills are being developed and implemented. Day-to-day work processes need to involve an active engagement with the development and use of skills. It is not only outcomes, but skill formation capacity that needs to be resourced. To avoid what Buchanan

(2006 p31) refers to as welfare dependency, employers need to match public funding for skill ecosystems.

Education and training needs to be considered in a way that focuses on how workers can be more adequately developed and deployed within and between workplaces. According to Buchanan, VET needs to focus on how the workforce is developed, providing a key challenge for future policy research. Most importantly, this involves an awareness of how trust relations can be developed and nurtured between employers and learning systems as it is only through this type of collaboration that today's skills problems will be solved (Buchanan 2006 p32).

Another important aspect of the VET system is encouraging life-long learning, which as discussed previously, is imperative to the successful life chances of most individuals in today's environment. Part of the achievement of this life-long learning involves the effective cross-sectoral delivery of education. In research carried out by Wheelahan (2000 pxii), some of the barriers to achieving this cross sectoral education were, a lack of a cohesive national life-long learning policy, two systems funded and accountable to different levels of government, different cultures in each of these sectors and some mistrust between the two sectors.

Wheelahan (2000 p48) states that if Australia is going to create its vision of life-long learning, then a seamless path needs to be developed between various educational sectors. It is not sufficient to leave this sector crossing to the responsibility and motivation of students when staff themselves, are often

not always fully aware of the relationships between, and full functions of, both of these sectors. While there are a number of students who currently move between these sectors, there are no studies that bring to light the reasons for those who don't move between the sectors. Creating the infrastructure for life-long learning should be a priority.

Understanding how each system operates and then understanding how to move between the two entails both time and commitment. This often erodes time that teachers and other staff have for the development of programs (Wheelahan 2000 p49). Wheelahan found that when staff from different sectors come in contact with one another, close and successful partnerships were formed. Often what teachers found is that regardless of the different sectors in which they worked, they shared more commonalities than differences. Policies developed to create this successful collaboration need to focus on how to support students seamlessly through these sectors, so that it is not only those who already have the cultural capital who can gain access to this type of life-long learning.

This selection of research provides a rationale for different institutional arrangements and situates VET delivery with a collaborative partnership model that challenges the assumption and logic of competition as a way of integrating skills needs and training. The papers summarised here also identify the changes and adjustments to the way in which providers operate in order to configure partnerships and collaborations and the need for long-term thinking, good leaderships and strategies for broadening involvement. The research cited here also identifies the importance of partnerships as a foundation for building sustainable and productive communities, based on strong social interaction. Most importantly these partnerships are seen as enabling people access life-long learning in new ways. This literature provides an important foundation for the institutional arrangements that are needed for the new TAFE of the future.

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Terms of reference for the TAFE Futures Inquiry

What are the desirable futures for the public TAFE system in the context of its history and contemporary pressures? Specifically:

1. What is vocational education and training, what is TAFE's role in it and how does this fit into the Australian education system?
2. What are the expectations of the stakeholders of the VET system and how is TAFE currently meeting these? What impact has recent government policy had on the VET system, and what strategies could be developed for the future to strengthen TAFE's role?
3. What are the trends in VET funding, how have they affected TAFE and what models could be adopted for improved delivery of funding to TAFE?
4. What are the outstanding features of VET curriculum and pedagogy, and what are examples of good practice in TAFE?
5. What effect have recent government policies had on learning and teaching in TAFE, and what alternative scenarios could realise a TAFE system which best serves its students, the community, industry and the TAFE workforce?

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