

TAFE Futures

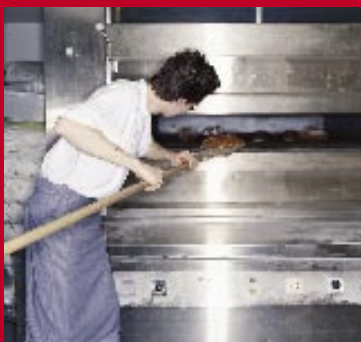
Working towards a principled future

KEY FINDINGS

www.tafefutures.org.au

DR PETER KELL

Chair, TAFE Futures Inquiry



KEY FINDINGS

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The TAFE Futures Inquiry was commissioned by the Australian Education Union in 2006. Dr Peter Kell was engaged by the AEU to conduct the Inquiry and compile a report. The Inquiry 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. Often, such reviews don't hear from the people who make TAFE run or from those who use TAFE and these people are usually left out of government consultations.

The TAFE Futures Inquiry has been an independent and open process, and an opportunity for people to make submissions from all perspectives on the future of TAFE. The Inquiry involved 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. The 102 submissions received by TAFE Futures have been posted on the Inquiry's website. The full TAFE Futures Report by Dr Peter Kell can be downloaded from www.tafefutures.org.au

This is an edited summary of the TAFE Futures Inquiry's findings.

The organisational rationale for TAFE

- TAFE is working well with students and employers, indicating high levels of satisfaction at the service provided.
- Two-thirds of employers want training done through TAFE.
- In many cases, TAFE leadership and management is identified as remote, autocratic and unaware of the specific issues relating to vocational education.
- There is a preoccupation with efficiency at expense of students and teachers.
- TAFE enjoys good support in the community, and people are passionate about their local TAFE. However, there is a broader uncertainty about the roles and status of TAFE, particularly at the macro level.
- TAFE works well when partnerships are strong but systems were found to often impede innovation.
- The federal government remains largely hostile to TAFE. It has continued to favour policy responses to skills shortages that marginalise TAFE, and it provides funding opportunities that favour private providers.

The relationship with learners in TAFE

- TAFE students are diverse in backgrounds, interests, needs and experiences and span the full spectrum of ages from school leavers to existing workers to mature-aged students.
- Students have high levels of expectations about the experience of learning in TAFE.
- Courses and services are being cut due to lack of funds.
- Significant re-thinking is required about some of the national directions for training packages and the application of aspects of competency-based training.
- The pressure of competition has led to the axing of student services as TAFE institutes have sought efficiencies.

- The funding formula used for TAFE does not recognise the costs associated with flexibility, which has limited choice.
- Students are attracted to TAFE to learn 'hands-on' practical skills, because they are "being treated like an adult" and there are "teachers who are willing to help you".
- Many students don't know what TAFE offers. There is a need to plan life-long learning with parents, family, partners and employers.

Access for all Australians to TAFE

- Student poverty is starkly confronting and influences the work of teachers in profound and moving ways. Students told the Inquiry of the difficulties in meeting the costs of education and the associated expenses of transport, food, accommodation and childcare.
- Fees and charges are a barrier to the participation of many in the community who need general education and training. Some form of direct assistance to students is needed to overcome these barriers.
- Fees and charges are not seen as being fair, rational or systematic, and exemptions are considered ad hoc and an ineffective way of promoting access.
- There are divergent views on fees, exemptions and the need for a type of FEE-HELP scheme in TAFE.

TAFE promotes life changing events for students

- Some students described TAFE as providing them the opportunity to develop a sense of well-being as well as achieving vocational outcomes.
- Core funding in access and equity programs is diminishing, leading to instability and uncertainty for students, teachers and industry partners.
- Discussions about 'mainstreaming' delivery are counterproductive in the context of Indigenous Australians.
- Mainstreaming other access and equity programs, unless handled sensitively, has the potential to consolidate barriers to participation and will perpetuate marginalisation.
- The dynamics of globalisation, with deregulated world markets and radical shifts in economic fortunes, means many of the so-called 'mainstream' will require special programs. Access programs need to be seen as part of a life-long learning continuum and a core part of TAFE.

Teaching in TAFE

- The TAFE workforce is one of the most casualised in the economy and these high levels of casualisation are counterproductive in maintaining a quality and accessible provider.
- Wages in some areas are very low. In one area, TAFE teachers are earning \$20,000 less than a fourth year apprentice.
- TAFE teachers are overstretched. They are not only dealing with teaching but also widespread student poverty, counselling and welfare, marking, recruiting, and liaising across TAFE and with the community.

- With increased levels of sickness and tension in the workplace, there is a real cost to teachers of trying to do more with less.
- There is a critical shortage of teachers in some areas of the country.
- TAFE teachers are unfairly maligned for their work practices and this is very counterproductive. "It is sad that the work of many good people in TAFE is derided."
- TAFE teachers' commitment and professionalism towards their jobs is often unrecognised and derided.

The resources and funding of TAFE

- The federal government is hostile to TAFE. Its funding policies favour the private sector and its priorities are not directed to building or supporting TAFE.
- The squeeze on resources has eroded TAFE's commitment to access, equity and social justice. This is affecting areas such as basic English courses.
- Participants have to do more with less. Hours in courses are being cut down by as much as 50%. Teachers are having to work with outdated and obsolete equipment.
- Uncertainty about funding is eroding the capacity of TAFE to develop long-term partnerships with industry and the community.
- Fees are seen as a major deterrent to people accessing TAFE courses.
- There is a need to shift the balance of the way funds are allocated.
- The use of Annual Student Contact Hour (ASCH) as the only mechanism for allocating funding, is an impediment to innovation.

KEY FINDINGS

A PRINCIPLED FUTURE FOR TAFE



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 heard of the need for greater clarity around the role of TAFE and its relationships to government.

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.

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 and 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.

PRINCIPLED
FUTURE

KEY FINDINGS DIRECTIONS FOR THE FUTURE



Directions for the future

The principles outlined previously 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 predominant 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 the levels of 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 technology to keep pace with the best and latest training equipment.
- The creation of 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 renewal, 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.

DIRECTIONS
FOR THE
FUTURE

KEY FINDINGS

WAVES OF CHANGE IN TAFE

Waves of change in TAFE

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

Findings

A strong sense of ownership about “our TAFE” was conveyed to the Inquiry.

There is overwhelming support for the ideals of a publicly-funded, accessible, quality, and diverse education and training provider. Submissions to the Inquiry can be characterised by a passion and commitment for the work that TAFE does for the community and with industry.

However, TAFE’s social role is seen as being diminished by factors including a squeeze on resources and tight budgets. As a result, TAFE has been forced to shift its focus to commercial operations, while fees have eroded TAFE’s commitment to access, equity and social justice.

The link between TAFE and economic development has been underlined in regional and rural locations visited by the Inquiry. TAFE’s role is considered vital to the sustainability of local economies, by providing jobs and as a foundation for social and economic development.

TAFE’s success in various locations is attributed to its collaborative approach and absolute commitment to the communities in which it works. Networks that promote sharing are seen as a feature of TAFE when it works at its best and most effective. Most importantly, TAFE is the only provider of post-compulsory training in some parts of Australia. This includes substantial remote and distance delivery using the latest learning technologies in ‘virtual classrooms’. Without it, there would be with no options for training and education.

The performance of TAFE is viewed very differently at a local level than at a macro systems level. In several cases, submissions have strongly supported the efforts of a local TAFE and recognised the valuable work of teachers and the achievements of students.

The presence of private providers and the potential for competition to erode the status and position of TAFE is an overriding concern among stakeholders. Private providers are seen to “cherry pick” low cost and high yield courses, predominantly in entry-level subjects. The threat of competition has been heightened in recent years, according to the submissions, because the federal government is more ideologically aligned with private providers and hostile to TAFE.

Several state TAFE systems are 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, the notions of renewal and revival are strongly linked to creating an organisational presence at a statewide 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. In many ways, these restructures are evidence of the dynamic nature of TAFE. However, in many cases participants are critical of the restructures.

Securing a profile as the ‘trainer of choice’ or ‘preferred provider’ is the biggest challenge for TAFE in the face of competition, shrinking budgets and contradictory directions.

One way to achieve this is to change student perceptions of TAFE in general and about trades in particular and to correct an erroneous view that “we send kids down the mines” (Inquiry log 8 p1) There is also a need for better school counselling services and for TAFE to maintain strong links with schools, to promote the careers available through TAFE.

WAVES OF
CHANGE

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 TAFE/schools and TAFE/universities.

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 helped to drive social and economic change. This is most evident in regional Australia where the links with local government in these areas have been numerous and highly effective.

WAVE 1

IN A FUTURE TAFE...

- TAFE is funded to develop an enhanced role in economic and social planning with a view to improving the co-ordination between economic planning and training.
- TAFE is funded to develop a research capacity for planning and innovation.
- TAFE incorporates more participatory organisational structures to assist the planning process and to effectively link planning to delivery of services. In a rigorous collaborative planning process schools, industry, universities, community groups, and state and local government must all be involved.
- TAFE managers are trained and given the support to develop collaborative organisational cultures and engagement with the community.



KEY FINDINGS

WAVES OF CHANGE IN TAFE

WAVE 2

A renewed relationship with learners in TAFE

Findings

TAFE students are diverse in backgrounds, interests, needs and experiences and span the full spectrum of ages from school leavers to existing workers to mature aged students. As a result of this diversity, there is a higher expectation about the experience of learning in TAFE and there are increasingly higher levels of motivation.

Teachers told the Inquiry of a new generation of students where “young people have really changed. They are well motivated and want to be here” (Inquiry log 19 p4). Students are interested in achieving their career and learning goals and take pride in their achievements.

The Inquiry also heard from many students who spoke of TAFE as facilitating not only training and education but also as the catalyst for a “life-changing process”.

On the other hand, student poverty is starkly confronting and influences the work of teachers in profound and moving ways. Students related the difficulties of making ends meet to stay in training or education. They spoke of problems not only in meeting the costs of education but also the associated costs of transport, food, accommodation and child-care.

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

New learning technologies enable students to have more control over their learning processes. Many of the sites visited indicated how students are using advanced technology and managing their own learning.

A major shift is required in the way in which TAFE supports self-directed learning. This is needed because the nature of learning and knowledge is rapidly changing. Students could be advised on developing what the TAFE Futures Inquiry proposes as, TAFE Life-long Learning Plans (TAFE 3LPs). These are plans for education and training that can include courses and programs in TAFE, in schools and related pathways.

THE TRADE OFF

Apprentices told the Inquiry of the worries of supporting themselves on \$6.40 per hour and how difficult it was to exist on wages of \$500 a fortnight while meeting the expenses of travelling distances of more than 200 kilometres to TAFE by car. Most say they are forced to live with their parents and that the combined effects of low wages, lack of independence and travel made aspects of their apprenticeship unappealing. One teacher related how an apprentice said he was “too ashamed to tell me how little he earned” (Inquiry log 22 p5).

WAVE 2

IN A FUTURE TAFE...

- **Student learning becomes the central operational rationale of TAFE.**
- **TAFE systems and practices are focused on supporting self-directed adult learners.**
- **TAFE Life-long Learning Plans (3LPs) are introduced to help students to develop their own learning lives and as a first step in elevating TAFE to a provider of first choice. Facilitating TAFE 3LPs should not be a bureaucratic exercise but an organic process to assist people to plan their own learning lives.**
- **TAFE 3LPs are a life-long continuum of general education, skills development and employment advice and should involve schools, universities and the workplace.**
- **TAFE 3LPs are developed for potential TAFE students who are still at school or in a job.**
- **TAFE students are able to access services and advice from qualified people to assist them to develop their TAFE 3LPs, in consultation with their families, employers and others.**
- **Counselling and vocational advice is available and properly funded throughout the Australian TAFE network to help students develop TAFE 3LPs.**

WAVE 3

A renewed commitment to access for all to TAFE

Findings

TAFE has a long and commendable history of providing second chance education. The legacy of the 1974 Report on Technical and Further Education in Australia by Myer Kangan is deep and enduring. 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 their educational objectives, economic goals and to gain a sense of control 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 students, migrant and community groups, people with disabilities, those living in rural and remote areas and prisoners as having made enduring contributions to individuals' lives and the future of their communities.

This commitment to access and equity is TAFE's community obligation, according to submissions to the Inquiry, and is strongly supported. The TAFE Futures Inquiry proposes continued enhancement of this role.

Indigenous Australians have high levels of participation in TAFE, which has provided opportunities for individuals and communities that schools and universities have not been able to create.

The challenge is to increase the number of students who complete a qualification and to develop programs that contribute to the health, social, economic and cultural well-being of Indigenous Australians. An 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.

Discussions about mainstreaming delivery for Indigenous students are counterproductive. Communities have stressed the need for Indigenous students to be recognised as Indigenous students, and for general education and literacy to be considered as integral to skills and employment training.

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There is also a need to customise delivery to meet the needs of the communities and account for their educational capabilities. This means Indigenous communities will often require extra resources, in terms of hours and support, which should be included in program delivery budgets.

The cost of studying is the biggest barrier to participation and retention of all TAFE students, the Inquiry has found. Students are struggling to afford the cost of accommodation, transport and other living costs and this can be considered part of the reason for the high drop-out rate of apprentices.

Fees and charges for TAFE courses, considered moderate by some, present an enormous challenge to many people battling financial hardship and those seeking to make life transitions 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 personally and financially risky for students who have to make sacrifices and changes to their lives and defer income while they are studying. Not only does the stress of studying place a strain on relationships with employers, family and friends, the costs and sacrificed income can be financially disastrous for individuals and their families.

KEY FINDINGS

WAVES OF CHANGE IN TAFE

The Inquiry explored various ideal models for TAFE campuses. When people were asked to visualise the TAFE of the future they spoke of a 'village' experience that included:

- 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.

The Inquiry also saw the provision of student services and the presence of student associations as positive developments that need to be supported by government. In this way services for students also promote engagement and interaction with the community.

Finally, TAFE's scope for further expansion in global markets is significant. Many institutes currently offer programs in other countries and international students are studying at institutes in Australia. However, TAFE's global growth is hindered by restrictions on visas and the number of international students transferring to universities. Also, developing partnerships with other international public sector organisations, that have similar aims to TAFE, is important, particularly in working with less developed nations in the Asia Pacific region.

WAVE 3

IN A FUTURE TAFE...

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students

- Curriculum and language resources, appropriate to the needs of Indigenous people, are developed. Many of the training packages are inadequate for Indigenous settings and learners.
- The number of Indigenous TAFE teachers is increased and their training recognises their geographic, social and cultural obligations.
- A repository of significant developments in Indigenous education is created to help disperse information about important initiatives.
- A lead institute, to champion the development of culturally-appropriate materials and teacher training is established. 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, which are both recognised specialist centres for Indigenous and Torres Strait Islander education, may be appropriate lead institutions.

Students' services and student organisations

- A report is commissioned into student services for the future and conducted by a representative student body.
- A discussion, that links student groups and infrastructure specialists is facilitated to create a vision of the TAFE campus of the future.

- A network of student unions is established and funded by government to manage some student services.
- Further development of the TAFE 'village' concept is carried out.

Fees and charges

- A national forum is established to consider:
 - › the need for transparent and rational fee structures
 - › pricing controls on VET/TAFE courses and arbitration procedures for disputes over fees and charges
 - › the viability and potential disadvantages and gains of FEE-HELP in TAFE
- The forum may be conducted on a without-prejudice basis but its key focus ought to be on improving the rights of students to access TAFE.

Skilled migration and language programs

- Recognition of skilled migrant qualifications and skills is expedited at the local level with processes that are rigorous and verifiable. Applicants' vocational skills are assessed promptly and with minimum bureaucratic delays. TAFE creates the resources to boost the capacity for recognition of prior learning in co-operation with employers.
- Opportunities to enable skilled migrants to access employment placements, to enable them to have direct experience of Australian vocational English, become a priority and are appropriately funded.

- **The restrictions on English language entitlement, introduced by the Howard government, is lifted. English classes are free of charge and access to these classes is maximised, particularly for women. TAFE establishes a priority in developing and conducting English programs as a part of its access and equity programs.**
- **A national policy of English for adults in the community and in the workplace becomes a priority for future governments.**

Global initiatives

- **A national TAFE agency is created to negotiate and manage international projects and international student matters.**
- **TAFE Institutes are encouraged to develop memorandums of understanding with international public VET providers.**
- **Agreements with international providers are used to help promote exchanges between staff as well as students' participation in courses and exchanges.**

WAVE 4

A renewed professionalism for teaching in TAFE

Findings

Teaching in TAFE is not a homogeneous 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. While the nature of teaching is changing and teachers are responding well to the challenges of this change, there are issues regarding the TAFE teaching workforce that need urgent attention at both national and state level.

A squeeze on resources has profoundly influenced the work of teachers. The application of business models and the continued quest for efficiencies has changed the nature of their work, the resources available and TAFE career opportunities. A combination of diminishing resources, contradictory objectives and multiple accountabilities are the key issues strongly criticised by teachers.

Continued over-reliance on casualisation is counterproductive in maintaining a quality and accessible training provider. Casualisation has the capacity to erode and undermine the viability of the system overall and there is evidence that this is happening already. The failure of TAFE to maintain a critical mass of staff and deliver in key areas is one of the major criticisms of industry.

Teachers have spoken of reduced support to teaching areas and teaching support, and of the increasing difficulty of achieving in-service delivery or professional development without significant input from staff. In other findings:

- There are limited opportunities for teachers to reflect on change, their teaching practices and student learning.
- Teachers are frustrated by the failure of systems, such as learning platforms, email and timetables, to cater for the changing nature of teaching.
- There are multiple demands on TAFE teachers in addition to their traditional teaching roles including increased responsibilities in counselling and welfare, liaising and brokering with partner organisations and other TAFE Institutes, marketing, and recruiting students.
- Flexible and workplace delivery by teachers means that travel and fatigue are becoming a constant feature of their work, particularly in remote and rural areas.
- Flexible and workplace delivery has shifted the emphasis from teaching to assessment in some cases.
- Administration and processing of documentation has increased, as many of the TAFE systems have adopted flatter management structures and removed administrative positions.
- Auditing for processes, such as the AQTF, is seen as consuming unnecessary time and expense and has degenerated to meaningless "tick and flick". There is an environment of "constant checking and re-checking", which is undermining trust between management and teachers.

KEY FINDINGS

WAVES OF CHANGE IN TAFE

At the same time teachers and others are enthusiastic about the opportunities for innovation and the value of working in TAFE. They are frustrated that the management models used to drive change are not inclusive and, in many ways, work against meaningful change.

Managers argued to the TAFE Futures Inquiry that awards are the 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 where caps on teaching hours are disregarded and local arrangements have developed a series of options that satisfy 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. These examples might provide a template for some future actions in the industrial front.

There are concerns about the age profile of the teaching workforce and how a new generation of TAFE teachers might be recruited. There is an assumption that the baby boomer generation of teachers will retire soon, leaving a gap that cannot be filled.

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, teaching salaries relative to industry are uncompetitive, which needs to be addressed. The development of career structures introduces dilemmas about the creation of hierarchies and extra layers of management, none of which are seen as positive moves.

One issue associated with careers in TAFE is the qualifications of TAFE teachers. While the Certificate IV has been seen as the entry level standard in VET, there is growing concern that the Training and Assessment Certificate (TAA) is too cumbersome, expensive and a disincentive for casual staff. Several challenges emerge for staff concerning release and time-off and the expense in attaining these qualifications. There are also concerns that the Certificate IV level qualifications cannot prepare teachers for the complexities of teaching in contemporary TAFE.

The perceived status of TAFE teaching is contributing to low morale. There is a sense that TAFE teaching is not recognised as a professional activity and that the role of teachers is not considered important. There is strong support for initiatives that would promote the status of TAFE teaching as a profession.

WAVE 4

IN A FUTURE TAFE...

Protecting working conditions in a flexible environment

- A core of award conditions is negotiated, with some options to accommodate local arrangements.
- There is open and satisfactory negotiation between employers and unions.
- The levels of training capabilities and services are guaranteed along with the availability of staff and expanded hours of operations.
- The levels of resources and funding, including professional support by employers and industry partners is guaranteed to teachers and trainers.
- Career options are developed to take account of the 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. Specialist functions, such as learning design, workplace delivery and online learning, are incorporated into highly regarded promotional positions.
- All TAFE systems commit to reduce levels of casualisation by an agreed amount per year to help improve the future of the system.

Addressing staff shortages

- Retired teachers are re-employed on a reasonable sessional basis.
- Some teachers are employed jointly with industry partners.
- Casually employed teachers are provided with professional development to enable a transfer into a permanent position.

- Cadetship positions are created for TAFE graduates in areas of shortage.
- Teaching-only career paths are considered for those seeking advancement but not wanting an administrative career. Expertise and capabilities is recognised in salaries, working conditions and job titles. Options for specialisation in areas such as curriculum, technologies and workplace delivery are considered a basis for promotion.
- Career paths in administrative, management and educational leadership are available to those with TAFE teaching experience. Staff undertaking a management career track are given appropriate training in education management as well as recognition in salary, working conditions and job titles.
- Staff are able to temporarily 'interrupt' their employment with TAFE to enable them to undertake other jobs. Rights of employment may be retained when staff rejoin TAFE after an agreed period. This enables staff to remain connected to industry and enjoy the benefits of perhaps earning a higher salary.

An Australian Institute of TAFE

- A new national body, the Australian Institute of TAFE is created, with a role similar to the Victorian TAFE Development Centre. Initiated by the teaching profession, it is independent and is not a registering authority. The Institute is a collaborative enterprise, managed by teachers specifically for teachers to develop activities that promote improved practice, reflection

and exchange. Areas covered include management and leadership as well as technology and teaching in trades.

- The Australian Institute of TAFE includes an initial six academies:
 - › 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 of the Australian Institute of TAFE are sponsored by state organisations, such as state governments. Teacher unions also consider a role in developing an academy.
- The activities of the Australian Institute of TAFE 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
- The Institute is a key initiative in developing a professional identity and promoting a culture of innovation, change and collaborative practices in TAFE. It is a major platform for developing national discussions and activities.



KEY FINDINGS

WAVES OF CHANGE IN TAFE

WAVE 5

A renewed resource and funding strategy for TAFE

Findings

Government funding to VET has proportionately fallen, according to evidence presented to the Inquiry, and Commonwealth funding has shifted away from funding delivery to funding apprentice initiatives, employer incentives and the Australian Technical Colleges. Analysis of expenditure-per-student also indicates a large fall of 18% in the resources for VET students.

Diminished resourcing and the squeeze on budgets are universally recognised as the major impediment to TAFE performing its role and mission. There is also strong evidence that the growth-through-efficiency policy and subsequent approaches by the federal government have shifted funds from delivery. There has been a growth of a 'user-pays' system, with increasing fees and charges. Shrinking funding has also led to shifts in the training profile that limits opportunities for students and the community.

The Inquiry heard that the effect of the growth-through-efficiency strategy is having to do "more with less" or "more with nothing". The consequences for teaching resources and infrastructure are considerable. Reduced budgets have affected teachers' workloads, with hours being cut, and decreases of as much as 50% of nominal hours in courses have been mentioned by some teachers. Continued cost cutting is seen as an ongoing feature of contemporary TAFE, unless significant funding levels are restored.

Current funding models encourage a mentality that promotes low cost delivery over one where the quality and dimensions of delivery are valued alongside economic considerations. The funding models are condemned by many for failing to acknowledge the diversity of learning needs in TAFE. The reliance on ASCH as the

principle form of funding distribution 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. The current use of profile funding effectively rations resources and promotes a commercial fee-paying option. This process is inequitable and needs to be addressed urgently.

The funding cycle has been criticised as thwarting long-term planning and the sustainability of long-term partnerships. Industry has also been critical, suggesting that the 'stop-start' features of annual funding cycles do not make a good foundation for change.

The importance of infrastructure in maintaining TAFE's capability to provide a contemporary training environment is obvious. But there are major questions about how capital grants and infrastructure funds can be reorganised to meet the competing needs of 'bricks and mortar' assets as well as new learning technologies. The funding allocation mechanism and the workings of user-choice and contestable funding has not built-in the capacity to fund services for students. The funding models currently applied have seen an erosion of student services. At the same time, there has been a growth in the administrative overheads.

Most importantly, there is evidence that students need support and assistance to meet the financial challenges of studying. Those most vulnerable include apprentices in traditional trade areas who are finding the demands of travel, accommodation and study costs difficult on low wages.

There is significant evidence, from the consultations conducted by the TAFE Futures Inquiry, that there is the capability and goodwill for an integrated and needs-based approach to funding where the objectives of all stakeholders are met.

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

Many TAFE stakeholders have called for better coordination of TAFE at a national level. They point out that TAFE Australia is a highly prestigious and transportable brand and that the quest for a national VET system is made more difficult by the absence of a national TAFE network.

WAVE 5

IN A FUTURE TAFE...

- Funding models use an integrated and needs-based approach where the overall objectives of partners are met.
- Increasing proportions of funding are allocated by local planning processes, conducted by committees consisting of local stakeholders.
- Funding models respond to the need for better student services and improved transparency. As the TAFE system is required to develop a more student-oriented approach to its operations, there is a requirement for greater accountability to show how resources are directed to meeting the learning needs of students as well as other services.
- The TAFE 3LPs initiative is adequately funded. The TAFE 3LPs help identify students' needs and, as such, are a valuable system planning tool.
- The cycle of funding is increased to three years.
- Levies are built into funding models to finance the planning of students' learning, student services, teachers' development and teaching support.
- A recognition of the financial challenges faced by students is incorporated in funding models to ensure students are supported, without creating undue additional costs for their employers. Allowances for travel, accommodation, course costs and other student needs are important to lift the student retention rate and maintain apprenticeships as a viable form of employment.
- The veto on TAFE partnering with industry to receive infrastructure funds from the Commonwealth, is removed.
 - › financing and resources in TAFE shift from a 'bricks and mortar' focus to a more integrated approach to student needs including:
 - › 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
 - › common learning platforms for students that maximise opportunities for student networking
- An Australian TAFE Network is created to:
 - › co-ordinate international projects and marketing strategies for TAFE Australia
 - › develop forums and networks for teachers across the country
 - › develop curriculum that can be used across systems
 - › assist in the employment, training and recruitment of Indigenous staff
 - › develop common administrative systems. ■



