

# TAFE Futures: Snap



The TAFE Futures Inquiry into the future of the public TAFE system held consultation meetings and invited submissions from around Australia in May to August of this year. There are over a hundred submissions now posted on the TAFE Futures website [www.tafefutures.org.au](http://www.tafefutures.org.au). A final report will be released later this year. In the meantime, here are some comments, drawn from the consultations or written submissions, that provide a taste of the variety of stakeholders who participated and the range of issues raised.

## The Identity, Status and Role of TAFE

"TAFE is recognised internationally and nationally with great strengths but this is never recognized ... in much of the contemporary policy discourse nor the national media." —Senior TAFE Manager

"Part of TAFE's contemporary dilemma can be summarised as questions about TAFE's identity. Is TAFE a business? What are its social obligations? Should it be ... driven by industry needs?"

—Professor Peter Kell

"TAFE plays a substantial support role for less advantaged members of our community: new arrivals in Australia, those with literacy and numeracy difficulties, those with significant disabilities and Aboriginal people can all find specific programs and substantial support ... [This] role seems to carry little status ... [and] adds significant costs to the TAFE budget. These costs are not borne by TAFE's so-called competitors." —Dave O'Donnell, Senior Counsellor, Riverina Institute

"The majority of all Worldskills Australia competition participants are TAFE students or have a close relationship with TAFE institutes and staff ... TAFE is the national glue for the success of WSA competitions at the regional, national and international level."

—Mark Callaghan, Acting CEO Worldskills Australia

## Students

"I really feel good with what I have achieved. I didn't think I could do it ... but I am so right where I am now."

—TAFE Student

"Students spoke of difficulties in meeting the costs of education but also the associated costs of transport, food, accommodation and child care ..."

—Professor Peter Kell

"You can come here at my age and my mum is here doing Year 10 as well."

—TAFE Student

## Employers

"TAFE teachers and trainers need time to gain familiarity with the training environment in industry if the system is going to move and ... build a learning exchange."

—Local Chamber of Commerce Representative

"The most telling criticism came from those who were consulted in industry who said constant restructures made it hard 'to make and sustain long term organizational contact to develop partnerships'."

—Professor Peter Kell

"We have a successful business including three stores in retail fabric. We credit this achievement, to many factors, primarily through skills attained by completing TAFE courses in the fashion department ... 90 per cent of my staff are also TAFE certified ... and have the knowledge and skills to satisfy customer needs."

—Barb English, Welcome Back Fabric Barn, Inverell

## Communities and TAFE

"TAFE keeps opportunity alive in this town."

—Mayor of Rural Town

"Many community organisations, business and educational institutions were enthusiastically engaged in the process of supporting TAFE ... against the moronic bluster of some federal politicians."

—Keith Bourke, Nowra TAFE

"Indigenous leaders argued that 'TAFE needs to see what the community's needs were rather than what the institute's need are'. In remote communities this might include a situation 'where people might never get jobs ...'"

—Professor Peter Kell

"Shoalhaven Women's Health Centre has had first hand experience of the need for TAFE. Most women who utilise the services and programs at SWHC are on low or fixed incomes, and many are geographically isolated, and traumatised by issues such as domestic violence and sexual assault. TAFE has always been an avenue ... for these women, many of whom have gone on to find satisfactory employment which has allowed them to go on to lead fulfilling and productive lives."

—Sharon Millett, Co-ordinator Shoalhaven Women's Health Centre

"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."

—School VET Co-ordinator

"From a local government perspective, TAFE is a vital service provider for many employment and economic development initiatives, and partner with businesses, community groups and local government. TAFE provides an excellent quality service within the limited resources and infrastructure available ... It is considered that the continuation of this service is vital for the economic and social future of our Shire."

—Kelly Dal Broi, Economic Development Officer, Berrigan Shire Council



# shots and Voices



## Skills Shortages

"The AMWU believes that Australian governments and industry must recommit themselves to the national training system and discontinue the encouragement they give to enterprises to pursue a narrow enterprise focus geared to short term skills development that impedes the growth of the skills base of the country ..."

—Ian Curry, National Projects Officer, AMWU

"If they [government] are keen on addressing skills shortages they have to put in. They have to maintain funding."

—Employer

## TAFE Resources

"The Tasmanian Government highly values TAFE and the role it plays in this state ... I am hopeful that we can secure changes to the funding and accountability arrangements imposed in recent Australian Government/state funding agreements so that funding is freed up to better produce outcomes for clients."

—Michael Stevens, Deputy Secretary (Post-Compulsory Education and Training), Department of Education, Tasmania

"The discussion [at the forum] ... highlighted the need for investment in the infrastructure, particularly information technology infrastructure if we are to continue to meet the needs of the information age."

—Kathy Nicholson, New England Branch NSW TAFETA

## Fees

"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."

—TAFE Teacher

"I, along with many teachers teaching in various general and vocational areas at Nepean TAFE College, share the view that increasing TAFE course fees in an era of skills shortages, unemployment, inflation, petrol and food price increases will have an adverse impact on our clientele in the future."

—Lalsh Nand, Nepean TAFE College

## VET Curriculum and Pedagogy

"[There is] the serious issue of maintaining TAFE's commitment to language and literacy provision in the face of increasing pressure for profit and 'high profile' technical courses."

—Frank Doherty, TAFE Council Delegate, QTU

"TAFE was blamed for the inadequacies of training packages that were developed and endorsed by industry."

—Professor Peter Kell

"Employers only want narrow skills sets; on top of that we need to develop transportable skills and a commitment to further learning."

—TAFE Teacher

"[At the Lismore forum] managers from regional sugar mills and engineering concerns spoke highly of the quality of apprenticeship training, but bemoaned the loss of pre-apprenticeship courses. They stated that this had resulted in 'drying up the pool of potential apprentices' and ... was 'contributing directly to skills shortages'."

—Mark Jewell, Far North Coast NSW TAFETA Branch

"We support the use of 'competency-based' training ... However ... many competencies are poorly

written, confusing in content, duplicate other competencies at the same level in whole or in part. Some competencies require far too much 'interpretation' by teaching staff. There are numerous separate competencies that cover common ground but are written for different packages."

—Canberra Institute of Technology Student Association Student Council

## TAFE Teachers

"Opportunities to reflect on change are limited and, although there is professional development, in most systems opportunities are limited by an absence of replacement staff or by inappropriate programs."

—Professor Peter Kell

"There are not better people out there, we can't just go and hire a lot more so we are focusing on leadership development."

—TAFE System Manager

"The national moves to standardise teacher qualifications in VET to the TAA Certificate IV ... have led ... to a 'lowest common denominator' approach. This qualification is no substitute for a rigorous tertiary qualification in a teaching discipline. It ... will in the longer term lead to the erosion of quality educational provision."

—Jill Finch & Leslie Stein, NSW Adult Literacy Numeracy Council

"One of the greatest challenges facing the future of TAFE is the casualisation of the teaching workforce."

—The Greens NSW ❖

