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Our front and back covers this edition are two of
our new posters promoting the Stop TAFE Cuts
campaign. You can download all our posters from
our website www.stoptafecuts.com.au/resources or
send us an email to rscroggie@aeufederal.org.au and
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spread the word about the campaign!

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NATIONAL TAFE Day has been a day to remember. Whether members and supporters held their local event at TAFE or in the community, the stories and photos of the myriad events held around the country have been amazing. With little good news to share about TAFE in recent times I hope that whatever you did for National TAFE Day that it was positive and lifted the spirits of all involved.

At the national level we held a reception at Parliament House in Canberra on June 17 and invited politicians, other unions and stakeholders in public vocational education to join us. Pat Forward, AEU Federal TAFE Secretary reminded us that TAFE is the place trusted by Australians from diverse backgrounds, including equity areas, to do the heavy lifting in providing good quality, well supported training that sets students on the path to a better life. Andrew Dettmer, AMWU gave a rousing speech on the value TAFE provides for trade apprentices on their way to becoming qualified trades people and their commitment to working with the AEU.

A surprising, but much appreciated guest and speaker was the Hon Ian Macfarlane, MP, Minister for Industry, who admitted that his views did not match the AEU’s but nevertheless he strongly supports young people and apprentices gaining skills. He expressed concern that around 50% of apprentices did not complete their apprenticeship and was putting in strategies, he believed, would improve those outcomes.

The following morning the AEU, AMWU, Adult Learning Australia and the ACTU hosted a forum of six speakers to consider ‘Where to now for young people in Australia’ in light of the 2014 Federal Budget. The Hon Bill Shorten committed to standing up for young Australians who should have the same opportunities as their parents to gain employment and an affordable quality public education. Young Brennan Tillack spoke from the heart about his inability to get a job, the support and confidence he gained through Youth Connections, recently cut in the budget.

No matter if you were involved in a small or large National TAFE Day event I thank you for contributing to the positive conversation about TAFE.

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TAFE practice improves while VET policy falters

By Dr John Mitchell

As a researcher and analyst in the vocational education and training (VET) sector, over the last five years I have monitored two very different worlds within the sector, and the two worlds seem to be growing even further apart.

The good news is that one of those worlds — that of professional teaching practice in public or TAFE providers — continues to improve. The sad news is that the other world — that of VET policy making — continues to stumble and falter, particularly in the jurisdictions that promote the ill-informed view that TAFE professional practice is poor quality and needs a competitive market to shake it up.

Evidence of TAFE practice improving

As a researcher I have a long-standing interest in the world of VET teaching and management practice, particularly in public provider or TAFE organisations. For instance, I prepared a number of publications on outstanding VET teaching including ‘Innovation and Entrepreneurship in VET’ (2007) and ‘Advanced VET Practitioners’ (2009) in which TAFE teachers featured prominently. These publications showed that it takes around ten years to ‘master’ the foundations of VET practice; to acquire the breadth of experience, knowledge and insights needed to teach a variety of student cohorts and in many different settings from the classroom or workshop, to the salon, ward, kitchen or factory.

As a researcher I have a particular interest in identifying the leading edge of teaching practice and in highlighting those practices developed by practitioners to meet new or emerging challenges. Over the last few years, substantial new challenges for VET teaching practitioners have included their need to develop skills in relation to flexible learning, online learning, offshore learning, sustainability, core skills, assessment moderation and language, literacy and numeracy.

In the world of VET teaching practice, over the last five years I have continued to research how such professional practice has improved, despite increasing environmental complexities for TAFE organisations and despite the criticisms of TAFE by some governments and vested interests. In collecting qualitative evidence about leading practice, since 2009 I have prepared 57 case studies at 13 TAFE institutes in NSW, SA, QLD, WA and VIC. These publications include ‘Creating and Adding Value’, a set of case studies from the ten TAFE institutes in NSW is delighting commercial clients across the breadth of that state, and ‘Reinventing Service Delivery’, a set of case studies of five TAFE institutes in different states and different industries around Australia, revealing the high level of capability of TAFE staff to meet industry needs and government goals.

Providing evidence of innovative practice, these case studies focused on concrete, demonstrable outcomes for clients, and each of the case studies was validated by industry. The industry spokespeople interviewed were from local firms as well as prominent organisations including Telstra, Toyota, Optus, Qantas, Cochlear, BHP Billiton, BlueScope Steel, Sydney Water, Housing NSW, Energy Australia, Royal Australian Air Force, Royal Automotive Club WA, AirServices Australia, Ramsay Healthcare Group, Royal Perth Hospital, St John of God Health Care and the Pharmaceutical Society of Australia. These first class firms expressed their respect for TAFE services.

In collecting quantitative evidence about...
leading practice in VET, since 2009 I have conducted over 90 surveys in TAFE institutes around Australia that provide those institutes with extensive insights into the capabilities, motivations, aspirations, professional currency and learning preferences of their staff. It is humbling to witness the seriousness of purpose with which respondents to these surveys are willing to analyse their own practice and pinpoint where they need and want to improve.

A colleague, Anne Dening, presented at this year’s AVETRA conference about the PhD she is undertaking to examine the factors that led to improvements in practice at her previous TAFE institute, where these capability analysis tools were implemented twice, two years apart, in order to measure changes in practice.

Despite any public comments to the contrary, in the world of TAFE teaching practice, substantial documented evidence exists of capability development and improvement in recent years. Given the professional dedication of the vast majority of TAFE staff, that improvement is likely to be ongoing.

**Evidence of VET policy faltering**

The other world I have been drawn into over the last five years is the analysis of VET policy making, particularly the implementation from 2009 onwards of so-called VET reform based on pillars such as market design, student entitlement and contestable funding. In this world, I and others such as the AEU’s Pat Forward have analysed how these policies were experimental and not well thought through, producing negative and unintended consequences.

This critical analysis is provided in the publication consisting of 22 articles that I released in late 2012, *From unease to alarm: escalating concerns about the model of VET reform and cutbacks to TAFE*. First, that publication challenged the policy pillar of ‘market design’, the proposition that an effective market in VET can be invented and implemented by government officials, while still meeting industry skill needs. In Victoria the excessive enrolment in certificates in fitness training was an early indication of the inability of public servants to create an effective market. In Victoria and now in some other states, public servants have found themselves constantly tinkering with their funding mechanisms for these artificial VET markets, as opportunistic VET providers demonstrate their ability to drain these funding pools with great haste.

Next, the publication ‘From unease to alarm’ critiqued the policy pillar of ‘student entitlement’, of providing eligible students with access to a subsidised training place of their own choice, with an approved training organisation. The interviews in the publication showed that the student entitlement doesn’t fit with VET for at least four reasons: because the sector has spent the last twenty years ensuring it is industry-led, not driven by the individual; because student entitlement assumes that students are informed consumers, able to make sound decisions; because student entitlement assumes that all training providers can be trusted to provide clear information about their services; and because it assumes that students and providers will not collude to pervert quality requirements.

Ironically, the Federal Treasurer Joe Hockey now uses the concept of entitlement as a pejorative term, hence contaminating the policy pillar of student entitlement.

Finally, the publication ‘From unease to alarm’ examined the policy pillar of ‘contestable funding’, that is the opening up of more and more public funds for training, so that TAFE and private registered training providers competed for those public funds. However, public funds should only be open to the market if quality can be assured. As Jenny Lambert from the Australian Chamber of
Commerce and Industry said in her interview with me for Campus Review, “A contestable market requires TAFE to be more efficient and effective, more customer focused, but contestability only works if you have quality mechanism[s]. And the trouble, as we have found in Victoria, is moving to that contestable and demand driven uncapped market without the quality infrastructure properly in place.”

Lambert’s concern about the VET quality infrastructure not being in place is still relevant today. For instance, in April this year I tabled with this year’s federal parliamentary ‘Inquiry into the role of Technical and Further Education system and its operation’ four articles I prepared in early 2014 for Campus Review. The articles refer to damning evidence about poor quality teaching in the sector, contained in three new reports by the regulator, the Australian Skills Quality Authority (ASQA).

The ASQA reports also show the basket of difficult issues facing policy makers in VET. Many of these problems have existed for some years and have not been addressed properly, such as the vagueness in Training Packages about the ‘duration’ of VET courses, and some of these problems have been produced by the move to a ‘competitive market’, such as the proliferation of deceptive marketing practices, and low cost, poor quality courses, for example in the aged care and construction sectors. A summary of thirteen ‘hard basket’ issues for policy makers is provided in the fourth article in Campus Review.

**TAFE practice vital to the nation**

The three pillars of government policy making — market design, student entitlement and contestable funding — were based, in part, on a lazy assumption, a throwaway line, that the public provider TAFE was a problem and needed fixing. While every organisation including TAFE Institutes can become more efficient and effective, this simplistic assumption about TAFE overlooked the fact that the significant public value that resides in TAFE Institutes is mostly embodied in the capability of its staff, not in its buildings, history or reputation.

This article refers to both qualitative and quantitative evidence that shows that this staff capability is strong generally and outstanding in some quarters. Additionally, this professional capability in TAFE took many years to acquire, is vital to the nation and deserves recognition and support. It is not broken and it doesn’t need fixing.

Over the last few years it must have been tempting for policy makers to criticize TAFE in order to distract attention from the embarrassing evidence contained in national media exposes, Hansard records and public criticisms of policy by leading business organisations across Australia. That evidence points to widespread policy failure in VET, leading to the emergence of rogue providers and their exploitation of unsuspecting students and their fleecing of taxpayers’ money.

Despite these policy blunders and government budget blow-outs, TAFE teaching practice remains highly valued by industry and we know that the majority of TAFE teachers are determined to improve on their already impressive level of practice.

The state of TAFE in 2014

It has been a grim start to the year for TAFE, and TAFE teachers. The Coalition government is starting to put its stamp on the VET sector, and the TAFE system — and early signs are ominous.

By Pat Forward

The Federal budget saw some significant cuts to funding in the sector, and indications of the government’s intentions.

There were at least $1.5 billion of funding cuts in the VET sector, with signs that there will be further changes to funding over the next twelve months, including changes to arrangements in the National Agreement, and National Partnership Agreement.

The cessation of the Tools For Your Trade (TFYT) program represents a cut of $914.6 million over four years. TFYT was a payment of up to $5,500 paid directly to the apprentice to help with the expenses associated with starting an apprenticeship, such as purchasing tools, moving out of home or saving to buy a car. It will cease on 1 July, 2014.

Several other programmes have also been abolished, with total funding cuts amounting to at least $1 billion. These programs provided basic literacy and numeracy skills, mentoring, support and other services to upskill existing workers to “meet the needs of the modern workplace.”

These programmes have been replaced with the Trade Support Loans Programme which was allocated $439 million over four years. It is a HECS-style loan scheme of up to $20,000 per apprentice restricted to skills shortages or “in demand” areas.

A new Industry Skills Fund will “complement, not duplicate state programmes, by delivering the industry defined skills employees need to support industry to diversify, to become export orientated and boost productivity.” The government claims it will deliver 121,500 Training Places, and 74,300 support services, with businesses to make a co-contribution. It has been allocated $476 million over the next four years.

Fundings for the Australian Apprentice‌ships Incentives Programme has dropped from $898,681 in 2013/14 to $576,212 in the 2014/15 budget and then $443,627 in 2015/16, $423,698 2016/17 and $421,124 2017/18. This cut was made by the previous government.

The National Skills Standards Council has been abolished, but the funding remains in the forward estimates making it likely to be replaced with a coalition “industry leadership” body. The government has indicated that it will be taking a proposal to abolish the Australian Qualifications Framework Council to the next COAG, and legislation has already passed through parliament to abolish the Australian Workforce Productivity Agency.

In late June, Minister Macfarlane announced new draft standards for the VET sector at a jointly sponsored ACCI/ACPET conference, and while employers were quick to applaud the new standards, most commentators acknowledged they were a weakened version of those developed by the NSSC before the last election.

Meanwhile, cuts to TAFE funding and job losses continue in most states and territories as the reforms from the 2014 National Agreement continue to roll out.

In Victoria, the release of the 2013 TAFE Annual Reports reveal a $212.6 million reduction in government funding between 2012 and 2013, and 8 out 14 TAFEs, and 3 of the 4 Universities with TAFE divisions reported that they spent more than they earned in 2013. Several reported close to 50% reductions in government funding — on top of the $300 million cuts of the previous year. The situation is little better in South Australia, Queensland and NSW where reports of teacher redundancies and funding cuts reveal a sector in crisis.

The report from the Senate Inquiry into TAFE was delivered on 14 May 2014. The Australian Greens made some additional comments to the report which discussed the issue of competitive tendering and contestability, calling for an end to the current model, and a comprehensive public examination and review of the consequences of full competition on TAFE.

Coalition members of the Standing Committee on Education and Employment released a dissenting report which took issue with the allegedly “partisan” terms of references, and repeated the Coalition's belief that VET is the responsibility of the states and territories. The dissenting report reflects the narrow and limited view of VET in the Coalition government — “education with the purpose of equipping a person with the necessary skills to do a job.”

Recommendation 10 of the Inquiry Report — that there be full and immediate reinstatement of TAFE funding cuts by State Governments — is the strongest and most useful recommendation to emerge from the report. Recommendation 6 — the development of a National Workforce Development strategy and references to unacceptably high levels of casual employment will also be very useful in campaigning.

A House of Representatives Inquiry was announced in February. Submissions have now closed, but the Standing Committee on Education and Employment is conducting a survey open to past, present and prospective TAFE students.

There is a great deal of work ahead for the Stop TAFE Cuts campaign.

Pat Forward is AEU Federal TAFE Secretary
E DUCATION is primarily a social good. It is central to the formation of a civil public. Yet not everyone comes to education equally. Some come with the advantages that come with privilege, while others struggle because of insecure income, housing and family relations. The measure of a civilized society is how it assists people who, through circumstances beyond their individual control, need a hand up and additional support. Sadly, not everyone shares the belief in education as a social good and as a consequence erode the foundations of cohesive communities.

Since the Baillieu/Napthine government came to office in 2010 there has been a sustained dismantling of education opportunities and a concerted undermining of the social good that they deliver. Nowhere is this felt more strongly than in the outer suburbs of Melbourne, and in rural and regional Victoria. The impacts of the education policy approach taken by Baillieu and Napthine are particularly devastating for young people across the state.

These policies are not an illogical failure to understand the relationship between education and equity, but rather, are a conscious decision by this government to divest in social inclusion and social mobility and invest in marketising education.

Instead of education being seen as a social good, it is viewed as a private and positional good that individuals and their families should “invest in”. This ungenerous policy logic soon follows with sentiments such as, why should the rest of us “subsidise” something that provides personal benefits? If people cared about their children they would “invest” in them. And if we’re all busy investing in our own kids, how is it “fair” that we’re called on to “pay for” yours? How is that “sustainable”? This approach to education fosters exclusion and turns its back on the social goods that emerge through supporting people to participate in education.

One of the first public education announcements of the Baillieu government was the withdrawal of $48 million of funds from VCAL coordination. For those who are unfamiliar with this program, VCAL is the Victorian Certificate in Applied Learning. VCAL provides a year 11 and 12 education for 20% of young people across Victoria whose education needs would otherwise

The Commonwealth Government has decided that Australia’s young people should be either “learning” or “earning”. Yet the institutions in which they are expected to learn have been under constant attack by state governments. As the Victorian coalition government heads into an election in November, it is timely to look back on their history of cuts to education and the impacts these are having on young people and their families.
not be addressed or accommodated. VCAL is popular amongst young people in the outer suburbs of Melbourne. Allowing young people to gain a year 12 equivalent qualification through “applied” learning is an important tool of social inclusion.

Coordination funds in VCAL enabled schools and teachers to connect with employers and local community agencies to build a school experience that extended young peoples abilities whilst being engaged in socially beneficial activities. The teachers who did this work would connect with, for example, an aged care facility, and create opportunities for VCAL students to learn about aged care while participating in a public activity like building a new garden at the facility. Some students combine pre-apprenticeship courses with VCAL, while others do some VCE English.

The Coordination funding recognised the complexity and cost of this kind of delivery. It ensured that someone was responsible for making sure that young people were connected with school and involved in socially useful work and that they didn’t slip through the cracks.

On top of the withdrawal of VCAL coordination funding, the Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA) was redesigned to remove direct funding to those schools that accommodate and provide education to the economically disadvantaged. The redesign provided a marginal increase in the amount of money given directly to parents of disadvantaged young people and a removal of the funding that went to the schools who accommodated them. School services, such as subsidised excursions or breakfast clubs, provided to over 39,000 disadvantaged kids in Victoria were cut overnight. $400,000 was taken out of the budgets of Hampton Park and Cranbourne Secondary Colleges, two schools on the south eastern suburban fringes of Melbourne.

Reforming the EMA reinforced the individualist notion of parents as “consumers” and “purchasers of services” on behalf of their kids, at the expense of the social good that comes from schools like Hampton Park and Cranbourne Secondary being able to include and accommodate students who are not well economically resourced.

At the same time that the government was cutting $48 million out of VCAL and $19 million out of EMA, it increased funding to private schools from $87 million to $100 million per year. If you view education, as a social good, useful in developing a cohesive and skilled population, then these acts together are unconscionable. However, if education is a rational investment in your own human capital and that of your kids, then pitting private schooling over government schools is entirely logical.

However, VCAL and EMA “reform” was merely the warm up act for the Liberal governments education agenda. In early 2012, the Baillieu/Napthine Liberal government announced that they would cut $300 million per year from the state’s TAFE budgets. These cuts affected the provision of student support services and teacher assistance for those with additional needs. At the time, the premier was quoted by The Age as saying “nobody could support endless subsidies for any industry.” (The Age, June 16, 2012)

Just before losing office, the Brumby Labor Government had introduced “contestability” in Vocational Education and Training. “Contestability” is essentially a voucher system whereby individuals can take up their “entitlement” either at their local TAFE, private training organisation or Community Education centre. Hundreds of new private training companies entered the market and suddenly Victorians in poor suburbs were fielding attention from hawkers wanting to “talk to anyone in the house who doesn’t already have a Diploma.” The courses on offer are delivered in a fraction of the time, often with iPads or Coles Myer vouchers used as an incentive.

While Labor initiated the policy of contestability, the Liberal government has used it to cement social exclusion by removing any feature that might protect TAFE in the “open market”. When the inevitable budget blow-out occurred, the Liberal government then reduced the “subsidies” for each course, forcing TAFE fees to rise dramatically and courses to close. A recent auditor generals report found that seven of the 14 TAFEs in the state are operating in deficit. Many are selling up campuses to stay viable.

The impact on Adult and Community Education has been almost as devastating. The ACE sector, which is made up of neighbourhod houses, community colleges and community learning centres, gets its funding from the same bucket as TAFE, meaning that most of it became, “contestable” at the same time. In order to root out the roters and scammers, the level of compliance checks and regulations have skyrocketed. ACE organisations, who often only ran one or two accredited courses, found themselves drowning in paperwork and many have stopped offering courses. Some, like the state’s largest ACE provider, Morrison House in Mt Evelyn, have gone out of business, just down the road from the now closed Lilydale campus of Swinburne TAFE.

The Victorian government has created a narrative around cuts to public education that treats each one as a response to a funding crises, (TAFE cuts), the end of a start up program (VCAL) or a reshifting of priorities (EMA). We respond to each cut individually, by appealing to what we assume is a shared view of the value of education for all. However, everything the current government has said or done to education indicates a sustained attack on education as a tool for inclusion. We know it from their actions, but also from their words.

When they talk about “choice” they mean public funding in private hands. When they talk about “sustainable” they mean cut to the point that they’re willing to pay for. When they talk about “fairness” they mean every one for themselves. When they talk about “subsidising” they signal that they are exiting the provision of that sphere of education. When they talk about “investing” they’re talking about pushing the cost onto individuals with the state absolving itself of responsibility. Pay taxes and pay additional for your education too. Thousands of families across the state are struggling to understand why they no longer have access to education they could once rely on to get a lift up.

Ungenerous anti-social policies that use education to privilege a small group while systematically excluding others are a growing threat to the social cohesion of the outer suburbs and the vulnerable families who live in them. We will eventually discover that the only thing more expensive than investing in education, is not investing in it.

We will eventually discover that the only thing more expensive than investing in education, is not investing in it.
By Julie Tait

Osei arrived in Australia from Ghana in 2006 and was referred to the Teacher/Consultant (T/C) for Students who are Deaf and Hearing Impaired at South Western Sydney Institute by his father, who had been a past TAFE student when he first arrived from Ghana several years previously and knew that support was available for students with a disability at TAFE.

Osei had attended the residential State School for the Deaf in the Ghanaian capital city, Accra. Osei was fluent in American Sign Language as this was the language of instruction at his school. He was also fluent in Ghanaian Sign Language. Both these languages are as different from Australian Sign Language (Auslan) as spoken French is to English. After an interview with the T/C, Osei was enrolled in an Access Course where he was able to meet other students who were deaf, learn Auslan, learn to work with interpreters in an educational setting and to improve his written English skills. Osei arrived in Australia on a Monday, met with the T/C on the Tuesday and started classes on the Wednesday. Clearly Osei is a highly motivated young man.

Osei made great progress in the remainder of that semester and then followed his Access Course by a “taster course” in Light Automotive, which included units of panel beating, spray-painting, welding and mechanics as well as a work placement. The teaching section recommended Osei for an interview with Custom Coaches, a company based in Western Sydney that manufacture and build quality buses for the Australian bus and coach industry. Osei was successful in gaining this apprenticeship in a highly competitive field of applicants. He was then enrolled in Certificate III Engineering Fabrication Trade and was approved for Disabled Australian Apprentice Wage Scheme (DAAWS) funding. The T/C provided Osei with support from a highly qualified and experienced Teacher of the Deaf so he could continue to improve his English skills and assist him in accessing course materials. TAFE had an ongoing relationship with Custom Coaches, which ensured that Osei was well supported and mentored in his workplace. Custom Coaches suggested that Osei could benefit from completing a Certificate III in Warehousing and Logistics. He then articulated to Certificate IV.

Close working relationships between the T/C, the teaching section and the employer enabled the provision of customised support for Osei, which was a key factor in Osei’s success.

Since completing his studies at TAFE, Osei has been able to take his portable qualifications to other employers. He has recently returned to Ghana and married his long-term partner. They have settled in South Western Sydney and are looking forward to purchasing their own home.

If Osei came to the door of TAFE today like he did nearly eight years ago, this story would be very different. TAFE no longer offers the Access Course that was crucial to allow Osei to develop the required skills for engaging in vocational study in Australia. Taster courses too are very rare, if even non-existent, for young people who may not have clear career goals or paths. The access and support that Osei received through his studies at TAFE will not be possible under Smart & Skilled funding. Sign Language Interpreters in TAFE are paid a wage recognising their qualifications, skills & experience. The cost to support Osei with interpreters, and a qualified disability teacher over the 3 years of his Certificate III Engineering Fabrication Trade apprenticeship was approximately $70,000. During this time Osei was working as an apprentice and contributing to society by pay his taxes.

Under Smart & Skilled funding, due to start in NSW in 2015, $1775 would be allocated to support a student with a disability for the 3-year duration of that particular Certificate III Engineering Fabrication Trade course. $1775 would pay for interpreting for 3.3 days. For the remaining 32.7 days, a student like Osei

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Snapshot of TAFE success

Kwebana Tutu (Osei) Gyimah completed his Certificate III Engineering Fabrication Trade apprenticeship at South Western Sydney Institute in 2011 and was nominated as Apprentice of the Year because he demonstrated that he was a great ambassador for his trade.

Education and training is one of the most important investments a country can make in its people and its future and is critical to reducing inequality and discrimination.
would not have access to his course. He would not have access to any Learner Support. Effectively he would not be able to complete his course. If he could not complete his course, this apprentice would not be able to continue with his employment. If unable to continue with employment, this tax-paying citizen — one who Joe Hockey would describe as a “lifter”, would need to access a disability support pension for the remainder of his working life at an unindexed cost exceeding $2 million and become one who Joe Hockey would then describe as a “leaner”.

The Federal Government has indicated that they want more “lifters”, and less “leaners”. TAFE does more to assist disadvantaged people, in particular people with disabilities than any other organisation to become “lifters”. With nearly 30 years of working with people with disability I have seen over and over the difference TAFE makes. Osei is but one fine example. If you care about equity and a fair go for people then you have to care about TAFE.

Education & training is one of the most important investments a country can make in its people and its future and is critical to reducing inequality and discrimination. Education and training gives people critical skills and tools to help them better provide for themselves and their families. It helps people work better and can create opportunities for sustainable and viable economic growth now and into the future.

The impact of investment in education & training for people with disabilities is profound: education results in raising income, improving health, and reducing the cycle of poverty. Education & training is one of the most effective ways to break the cycle of discrimination and poverty that people with disabilities and their families often face.

Julie Tait is a sign language interpreter, teacher of the deaf and disability consultant.
MOST commentators, myself included, predicted that these reforms would undermine the TAFE sector and, with it, the whole VET system.

After the passage of a couple of years, I think we can say, on the available evidence, “we told you so” (although this would be furiously disputed by the government).

Now, I’m relatively agnostic as to the efficacy, or otherwise, of a market orientation in VET provision: in policy terms, it doesn’t matter what institution is delivering a qualification — public or private, TAFE or university, domiciled in a particular jurisdiction or some other — so long as it represents value in terms of both cost and quality.

So I don’t come from the perspective of denigrating training provision by private registered training organisations (RTOs) nor seek to insulate TAFE from competition from RTOs. RTOs can and do add useful diversity, innovation and choice to the overall system.

It follows that governments should be equally agnostic but that appears not always to be the case.

TAFE, as the public provider network, underpins the whole VET system (which is widely acknowledged by industry) and contributes to the public good in numerous tangible and intangible ways that private RTOs do not, to which some governments appear largely or entirely blind.

Present moves to contestability of public VET funding do present fundamental challenges for the public TAFE sector which need to be recognised and addressed in appropriate ways. In Victoria, which is the most advanced of the jurisdictions along the path of contestability and with its radical outlier model, the TAFE system is wobbling mightily, with declining overall enrolments, mounting financial losses and incipient signs of market failure.

One TAFE leader has expressed doubts that TAFE can survive in Victoria.

Publicly provided TAFE will survive, for the time being at least, but in a greatly diminished form. We can see already that many of the TAFEs have become “residualised”, with underutilised assets and need special assistance to cover declining revenues. This runs counter,
of course, to the logic of “marketisation” and it runs counter to Australia’s economic and social interests.

While this path is most evident in Victoria, similar pressures are now emerging in other jurisdictions, notably South Australia, where there have recently been substantial TAFE cuts and churn in VET funding, to address budget blow outs. This is notable precisely because the South Australian government, having observed the dislocation attending VET funding reform in Victoria, publicly pronounced that it was adopting a framework to avoid this sort of dislocation.

In a fundamental sense, by simply “being in place”, TAFEs offer the opportunity of broad, accessible and quality vocational education and training — and increasingly other forms of education — to meet community needs (such as for qualified workers in the community sector, including health and aged care), individual needs (for example, for upskilling, reskilling and further education) and business needs (in workforce and business development).

The reach of TAFE, through its network of over 400 campuses and centres throughout Australia, and the capacity of TAFE in its provision of economically and socially valuable qualifications through this network, cannot be currently matched by the private provider network. And it will not be matched by the private provider network without substantial public subsidy.

TAFE providers deliver across all fields of education, unlike private RTOs, which tend to be small scale, with a limited range of offerings.

By virtue of its geographical reach and scope of offerings, for a couple of generations TAFE has been the heavy engine of skills formation in this country, providing services for the skilling, upskilling, reskilling and, increasingly, educating of Australians.

 Millions of Australians have acquired skills and qualifications through the TAFE system, generally contributing to Australia’s economic development, providing employment skills for individuals and enhancing life opportunities.

In 2012, there were over 1.2 million students enrolled in the TAFE system — 65% of total VET enrolments. An impressive proportion — but down from 75%, almost entirely on the back of changes in Victoria, where enrolments in TAFE have fallen from 66% to just 40%. As contestability is progressively introduced throughout Australia, we can expect national TAFE enrolments to decline quite precipitously.

If we’re agnostic about the character of a provider delivering AQF qualifications, does this matter? Is not the flight from TAFE the natural consequence of the market — students voting with their feet? Has there been a sharp rise in VET participation in Victoria?

In the past, TAFEs have been instruments of public policy, in a way that private RTOs have not been and, I would suggest, never will be. TAFEs have also been described as “bulwarks against market failure” (AWPA).

TAFEs contribute to meeting the education and needs of communities and to the maintenance of the economic, social and cultural fabric of their host communities in a multitude of ways.

If we take Victoria — not to pick on Victoria but because its “marketisation” model has now been operating for several years and is unarguably the most radical — what we are now seeing is an actual form of market failure which will see TAFE unable to continue to make this contribution.

Victorian Government policy is that there is essentially no distinction between the public providers — TAFEs — and private providers: indeed, it has gone so far as to assert that TAFEs have no community service obligations (although it has asserted that as a condition of public funding, all RTOs have to serve community interests).

With the withdrawal of substantial dedicated funding to TAFE...
of the order of $300 million a year — and the imposition of “commercial obligations”, TAFEs have responded in a market fashion: they have closed a number of campuses and scaled back others, cut marginal courses and retrenched thousands of staff.

A case in point is the closure of the former Lilydale campus of Swinburne University, announced in 2012, which provided both VET and higher education in purpose built facilities to several thousand students. The former campus site sits at the gateway to the Yarra Valley and the Gippsland region, which has generally poor levels of education attainments. The region contains low socio economic pockets, a significant population of young Indigenous people, high levels of student disengagement and low levels of tertiary and vocational education. The availability of tertiary and vocational education at Lilydale has acted as a positive incentive for many disadvantaged people to continue their education.

Intensive efforts to attract other education providers to the site have failed and the site is now on the general market and may well be lost to training and education altogether (without government intervention and funding, at least). The Lilydale campus had a relatively comprehensive range of training and education offerings and there is no sign at all that the hole created by its closure is being filled or, indeed, that it can be filled.

This scenario is being played out across the State and there are signs of similar failures beginning to emerge in other jurisdictions.

It is not as if the private provider sector is well placed to fill holes in provision created by the withdrawal of TAFE from both certain activities and localities. In many cases, private providers simply lack the relevant capacity. In addition, the vagaries of the funding system are not conducive to long term planning and investment, as governments chop and change to contain costs. Most private providers need to game the system to address constant funding changes and maintain the viability of their own operations.

The chair of one Victorian regional TAFE observed that:

We are removing courses that aren’t profitable, but there are some courses you have to do for the benefit of the community. If we were a private provider you’d say ‘Oh, get rid of that because we can’t make a dollar out of it’. But there are some things we have to do because of our ‘embeddedness’ in the regional community, and there’s a pain factor in that. That’s part of what we do. You can’t make a quid everywhere; there are some things you have to do to fit the community.

In the face of inexorable financial pressures, evidenced by the fact half of Victoria’s TAFEs recorded significant operating deficits in 2013 — a big turnaround from just a couple of years ago — how much longer can TAFEs afford such public-spirited benevolence?

The whole training system — and, with it, entire communities — will be weakened to the extent that TAFE institutes, in order to sustain their overall operations, are forced down the path of “rationalisation” by dropping activities they undertake for the “benefit of the community”.

This is particularly relevant to regional communities. A campus contraction or closure, through a withdrawal of CSO or other funding, has cascading negative effects through a community:

- It reduces education and training opportunities across-the-board.
- It results in direct job losses.
- It reduces regional economic activity, results in other job losses and undermines viability for at least some businesses.
- It can lead to population loss, as people are forced to relocate to pursue education or employment opportunities (which is actually occurring in regional communities in Gippsland).

In the past, TAFEs have been instruments of public policy, in a way that private RTOs have not been and, I would suggest, never will be. TAFEs have also been described as “bulwarks against market failure” (AWPA).

Each effect obviously weakens the sustainability of a community.

I would make the observation that there is every likelihood that the Victorian Government will moderate its approach — wisely, it has already to some extent toughened up eligibility for funding to weed out obvious carpetbaggers — when some of these negative impacts are more evident.

But you have to ask the question as to why governments would implement measures that will see — are seeing — the substantial dismantling of the public provider system only to have to seek at some later stage to replicate it in some form, at considerable cost to the budget and following who knows what economic and social costs?

In its recent submission to the House of Representatives inquiry into TAFE, the LH Martin Institute advocated a number of corrective measures:

- In the competitive market being created by policy makers, proposals to introduce a new Vocational Qualifications System, setting a higher bar for training provider registration, are appropriate.
- It is appropriate that Commonwealth Supported Places in higher education be extended to non-university higher education providers (as now proposed by the government).
- TAFE is disadvantaged in the international sector by onerous visa requirements and the extension of the streamlined arrangements that apply to universities should be extended to the TAFE sector.
- Most importantly, funding of TAFE must be sufficient to enable TAFE to operate efficiently as a comprehensive, accessible provider. There is merit in a review of VET funding, specifically encompassing a “TAFE base funding review”, to establish the minimum funding required to sustain TAFE in its role as a comprehensive service provider.
- Consideration needs to be given to the efficacy of current national arrangements. The current National Partnership Agreement has failed to create the clarity, certainty and consistency necessary for effective national arrangements and a new agreement needs to focus on establishing such arrangements.

To conclude, as a direct result of public policy, TAFE institutes are being forced down the path of “rationalisation” by dropping activities they undertake — or used to — for the benefit of businesses, individuals and the community.

Under current settings, many TAFEs risk becoming residualised, needing “special assistance” to cover declining revenues. This runs counter to the logic of “marketisation” and it runs counter to Australia’s economic and social interests.

The capability and reach of the VET system is being rundown and what is now a diverse and polychromatic system will be reduced to a disturbingly homogenous and monochromatic system.

Brendan Sheehan is a Senior Fellow of the LH Martin Institute
By Rob Long and Phil Chadwick

Many members of the AEU nationally have experienced the impact of these cuts. However this article will focus on the reports from TAFE teachers across NSW on how the privatisation of TAFE funds and shaving of hours is impacting on the quality of education for our apprentices and trade courses.

In NSW the state government’s “reform” agenda – “Smart and Skilled” – is planned to be implemented on January 1, 2015. NSW TAFE management facing large budget cuts in this contestable funding environment have begun to implement “savings” strategies which have resulted in cuts to quality education and reduced face to face teaching for our apprentices. Historically, a typical NSW apprentice on day release attended formal training at a TAFE college for 8 hours a day, for 36 weeks per year, for 3 years – a total of 864 hours.

Just south of Sydney, the Illawarra Institute of TAFE has cut electrical trade apprentices’ course from 36 weeks per year down to 30 weeks. The local community and industry has been deeply concerned that a high risk trade certificate such as this is facing cuts, with further cuts pending in 2015. One employer has removed their apprentices from the Illawarra Institute’s Wollongong College and moved them to the southern Sydney college at Gymea TAFE, which at this point in time continues to deliver a 36 week annual program.

Further examples of TAFE Institutes cutting apprentices’ formal training away from work have emerged as TAFE management prepares for the 2015 staged implementation of the NSW Government’s Smart and Skilled policy.

In the Hunter, metal fabrication students are seeing their teaching day reduced from eight to seven hours.

In Western Sydney the Mount Druitt college plumbing section is losing 18 weeks of face-to-face teaching over their three-year TAFE certificate.

It is believed that shortly at North Sydney Institute, face to face attendance times across all trades will be dramatically reduced to meet strict budget targets. Some of the more outrageous examples include:

- Certificate III in Commercial Cookery from 720 hours in 2013 to 432 hours in 2014, with plans to reduce this to 324 hours in 2015. This represents an overall reduction of 45% of course duration.
- Certificate III in Retail Baking from 864 hours in 2013 to 378 hours in 2014, with plans to reduce to 324 hours in 2015. This represents an overall reduction of 62% of course duration.
- Courses in Horticulture have recently been cut dramatically and will be cut further by around 25% in 2015.

In the 1950s and 60s the trade union movement successfully campaigned for apprentices to receive off the job education to supplement their trade training at work. “The days are for Tech, the nights are for love” campaign focused on the impact on apprentices and their families of working long hours during the day and then attending Technical College for 2 nights a week. Unions won the right for apprentices to access paid release, providing them the opportunity to learn, away from the day-to-day pressures of work.

Over an extended period TAFE NSW has shaved and rescheduled teaching and education hours in many courses. However, apprentices’ paid time to learn away from work have remained a critical element of the NSW apprenticeship system.

The content of a trade course is set by an Industry Skills Council (ISC) training package, not TAFE. There has been no reduction in the content of the training packages. To achieve student competency with reduced face-to-face hours the favoured strategy is the use of mixed mode delivery involving online delivery using platforms such as Moodle. This mode of delivery effectively strips away an apprentice’s day release hours as the apprentice is expected to go to work, with study to be done in their own time. This is a fundamental change to the apprentice teaching and learning system as well as apprentice industrial conditions.

Our Union will continue the campaign to stop the cuts to an apprentice’s time to learn away from work. A planned round table meeting with other trade unions is planned for later in 2014.

Rob Long is a TAFE Organiser and Phil Chadwick is the President of TAFE TA.
Budget deregulation proposals designed to privatisethe higher education

By Stephen Darwin

The budget proposes a range of measures for higher education including the:

- Complete deregulation of student fees, with the only limit being the already high and unregulated level of international student fees
- Immediate reduction of funding for government funded places of on average 20% across disciplines, forcing immediate substantial fee rises that will potentially double and triple the costs of some degrees
- Opening up of all funded uncapped places to private providers and extending their reach to sub-degree programs, with the simultaneous halving of the budget for the higher education quality regulator (TESQA)
- Dramatically increasing the HECS repayment for former, current and future students by moving interest payments beyond the CPI to the government bond rate and lowering the repayment threshold.

Ironically, these proposals will also allow students studying higher education in TAFE to access long overdue HECS support. However, this support will similarly lumber TAFE higher education students with the same massive debt burdens facing all students. Moreover, these changes are also likely to provide significant new government funding for private VET providers looking to expand their operations into higher education. Already we have seen the predatory private VET provider Vocation move to buy current private higher education providers in anticipation of this prospect. This will have the effect of building the capacity of for-profit private providers to aggressively target TAFE programs.

So what will all this mean if these proposals mean are agreed to by the Senate? Most immediately, the universities with the longest history of public investment (that is, the Group of Eight universities) will double most course fees for students. They will also abandon areas where a profit can not be readily made, or where students are daunted by the cost-benefit ratio of future employment earning versus course fees. The cuts to government funding of places will slowly force other universities to climb toward these fees. The reputational advantage of the Group of Eight will most likely encourage them to go higher on fees in the medium term, possibly producing Australia’s first $100,000 public university degree.

Over time, it is likely governments will further exploit the deferred nature of the HECS system to further reduce government investment in universities. This is likely as the logic of a university education as a private rather than a public good (initially established in the Dawkins ‘reforms’ of the late 1980s) has become central. Should these proposals succeed, students will for the first time pay in excess of 50% of the cost of their study. This ‘private good’ creates an irresistible logic for this to be tagged up further as governments abandon funding on universities. From this, public universities will progressively become essentially private institutions with a primarily economic rather than social motive. Further, as funding further recedes, governments will not be able to exercise any real regulatory influence over what universities do or don’t do. In addition, outer suburban and regional universities in this scenario will become more vulnerable to financial failure and potential takeover by private interests.

Sadly, some of the other likely outcomes will be all too familiar to those in TAFE. It is likely that private providers will quickly move into sub-degree and some degree qualifications, cherry picking low-cost, high-volume programs that have traditionally cross-subsidised other university programs. It is likely increasingly desperate universities will form new partnerships with these providers, perhaps to deliver first year programs at a lower cost (i.e. using underpaid casual teaching staff). This will threaten existing articulation arrangements between TAFE and universities, as commercial rather than educational imperatives will drive future pathways.

The outcomes of this radical deregulation are potentially catastrophic for the Australian higher education system. Students are likely to pay more for the same or a lesser quality of higher education, particularly as government will no doubt continue to reduce its support. The ability of private providers to quickly establish as low-cost, low-conditions higher education providers threatens the quality of education just as it has in the VET sector. The prospects of huge debts will undoubtedly make potential students seriously consider the value of higher education as an option, as has been the case in the UK where a similar model was introduced two years ago.

The proposals for higher education are a tragic mirror image of the failed policies that have undermined the TAFE system in recent times. Incredibly, they even go one step further by lumbering higher education students with potential massive debts that will accumulate regardless of circumstance. As the fight continues for public vocational education in TAFE, now the battle for properly funded public universities and a fight against market-based deregulation begins in earnest. There is now a shared battle against the same destructive and discredited policies in both sectors.

Stephen Darwin is the ACT Division Secretary of the NTEU
The demise of the automotive industry in Australia isn’t specific to us — a preliminary Productivity Commission report about the auto industry shows that across the board, “production capacity” for vehicles exceeds demand. There is a global shift from production in countries like the UK and Belgium to those with lower labour costs like China, Mexico and Thailand.

The AMWU’s Dave Smith said the Commission’s report “may have been interesting reading — if the government hadn’t chased the car industry out of the country before the report designed to inform the decision had even been finished”. The Commission is holding hearings this month ahead of submission of its final report in March.

It’s not just the manufacturing industry that’s changed since 1966. Gone are the days when you left or finished school, settled into a career, and retired at 65 with a handshake from the boss and a gold watch. According to the ABS, thirty four per cent of people aged 55 and over are still participating in the labour force, compared with twenty five per cent in the 1980s. For people working in their 40s and 50s, redundancy doesn’t necessarily mean retirement — it might mean starting over.

There have been numerous studies done on the psychology of retrenchment, and how it affects workers and their families. A study conducted by Francis Lobo and Glen Watkins into late career unemployment found that it “[strikes] in an unpleasant way at the heart of family life”. Anyone who has been made redundant, like Sue Mandley, will tell you, “career change can often be a difficult thing, both emotionally and financially”.

Skilling The Bay’s Priority Actions Report doesn’t refer to retrenched workers much, but the second phase will be targeted at examining how best to assist them. Proposals for this part of the project will be submitted in March.

One vital thing for workers will be easing the transition away from their work ‘community’. It’s something that doesn’t immediately spring to mind when thinking of redundancy – you’re more likely to think of the effect on family, finances and career trajectory (or a sudden lack thereof). But what about work mates? The bond forged with people through days, months, years of working side by side?

In 2008, academics at Flinders University Fiona Verity and Gwyn Jolley conducted a study focussing on retrenched workers at a South Australian manufacturing plant, specifically, on the effect of the loss of “work-based ‘community’”. Their recommendation was that this aspect of retrenchment should be given more
attention, saying that many of the workers they interviewed “identified a rupturing of valued social connections that had, for some, not re-formed beyond common employment”. Acknowledgement of this will hopefully inform relevant aspects of the support plan for workers now facing retrenchment in Geelong.

When speaking to AEU Organiser for the region, Rose Crowe, it becomes clear that many parties don’t share the optimism presented by Skilling The Bay or the State Government, when it comes to the opportunities for affected workers. “A lot of these people are really highly skilled in their particular area, and they earn some great salaries because of the skills they’ve developed…. But these are not necessarily transferable skills”.

Statistics available on the City of Greater Geelong’s website show that from 2011 to 2012 there was a slight decline in the number of people under age 25 enrolling in apprenticeships and traineeships, but a marked increase (more than 14 per cent) in those above that age. It’s safe to say the numbers for older students are going to keep climbing as people finish work. So what is needed to help these workers through retraining and the search for work?

For her part, Mandley hopes that in addition to adequate support for workers in transition in the male-dominated traditional manufacturing sector, women aren’t forgotten. “Their options for study have been reduced by the cuts to funding and the subsequent cuts to courses. Many women return to study after child rearing to gain further skills and their options are much less given the cost of the study and the variety of study options open to them.”

Phil Wight confirms that, while Newcomb students are welcome and encouraged to explore every option available to them in the Tertiary Taster, “the students tend to pick along gender lines”. He says that there are students breaking from the traditional gender roles (“I’ve had girls doing plumbing and carpentry, I’ve had boys doing fashion and hairdressing and makeup”) but that predominantly girls will still choose to move into hospitality, beauty and health streams, and boys into blue-collar trades.

It seems that, overall, there’s a consensus here — there’s a lot of work to do. Let’s just hope that those in power recognise that, like a car, one component is only as good as what surrounds it.

March will be a big month for Geelong: the shockwaves from Alcoa’s closure announcement (and a loss of around 500 more local jobs) on February 18 will surely still be being felt; the Productivity Commission’s final report on the automotive industry will be submitted to the Government; and Skilling The Bay will make its Phase 2 submissions for supporting retrenched workers. It’s also when thousands of people in Geelong and across the country will be easing into university or TAFE.

One thing’s for sure: Geelong’s future won’t look like the kitschy movie that attracted immigrants here in the 1960s. It’ll rely on jobs, companies, whole industries, that may not even exist yet. And it’s going to take a lot of work, from the community as a whole. They’ve got a long road ahead — but you know what they say.

We are Geelong. ☀

You can read part one of Saving the Bay on our website at http://www.aeufederal.org.au/Publications/TATT/Atmn14p8-10.pdf

Bec Wood is a Melbourne-based writer and student

*Darryn Lyons was contacted for comment but had not responded by the submission date.
NOT only has Joe Hockey proposed cutting funding for public schools, the deregulation of university fees, a retrospective interest rate increase on HELP (formally HECS) loans but he wants to massively reduce spending on the training of, and support for, skilled apprentices. One of the biggest changes to TAFE funding is the replacement of the ‘Tools for your Trade’ payment with student loans up to the value of $20,000 over four years. This change will save the budget $914.6 million over four years but it means that at the same time the Budget is geared to wiping government debt, it is imposing debt on young apprentices. A number of programs that were critical in providing skills to workers have also been cut. These include programs that focused on up skilling, mentoring and basic literacy and numeracy. TAFE fees have also been deregulated which could see students charged far more for their education.

Depressing as the proposed changes listed above are, the key word is that they are only proposals. While the Abbott government won a comfortable majority of lower house seats at the 2013 election they have an uncomfortable minority of seats in the Senate. To pass a proposed Bill into law they need a majority (39) of the 76 Senators to support it and the Liberal-National Coalition only have 33. Put simply, unless the Government can persuade six non-government Senators that cutting investment in skills development is a good idea it won’t happen.

So, what arguments can the TAFE sector use to ensure that the cross bench senators oppose Mr Hockey’s plans?

The first argument is the simplest, we are already underfunding our investment in the skilled workforce we need. We have just come through a mining boom where a shortage of workers with engineering and construction skills meant that the mining industry had to poach its workforce from the manufacturing and agriculture sectors. If we had more trained workers, and the capacity to retrain workers more quickly, the miners’ gain need not have led to the manufacturers’ pain.

The second argument is that if we are serious about boosting productivity growth then investing in training and retraining is, by far, the best investment we can make. But rather than invest in the workforce of tomorrow, too many politicians and industry groups work instead to make political mountains out of policy molehills such as unfair dismissal laws. While there is no doubt that debates about the ‘fairness’ of industrial relations laws will never be resolved, there is also no doubt that, in terms of the big issues facing Australia in the next 20 years, such IR battles are third order issues compared to investment in training and infrastructure.

Third, at a time when the government says it is committed to ensure that young people are ‘earning or learning’ it is absurd that they would seek to cut funding to the TAFE sector by 13 per cent. As youth unemployment continues to rise the demand on the education sector will also expand.

The end of UNIVERSAL

Joe Hockey has made much of his desire to ‘end the age of entitlement’ but a close look at his budget suggests that his real objective is to end the age of universal education.
If the objective of government policy is to equip young people with the skills that they, and the economy, need then the TAFE sector needs to be well funded to fulfil that objective.

The alternative to adequately funding our vocational education sector is to simply use TAFE and private education providers as somewhere to park young people to keep them out of the official unemployment statistics. While such an approach may help to conceal the poor macroeconomic performance of this government in the short term, it will actually result in much worse macroeconomic consequences in the long term.

Fourth, the TAFE sector plays an essential role in creating opportunities for people to build a new life for themselves, their family and their community. Having abandoned the idea that governments have a responsibility to protect those who fall through the cracks, Joe Hockey has instead emphasised the role of government in providing a ‘hand up, not a hand out’. Yet despite this rhetoric about providing opportunities, the reality is that cuts to the TAFE sector and student support are actually taking opportunities away.

Joe Hockey’s first budget has been widely criticised for being unfair. It is. But its failings run much deeper than the inequities it creates. From an economic point of view the budget is deeply confused as the case for spending cuts is built on the premise that the long term matters more than the short term, many of their biggest cuts will actually harm the economy in the long run.

Rapid population growth means that the Australian economy is growing much faster than other developed economies. At the same time rapid technological growth is driving a high rate of structural change within our economy. These two sources of growth mean our ability to train, and retrain, our workforce is more important than ever.

Despite our current challenges, Australia is, per capita, one of the richest countries in the world. Our governments oversee low levels of tax, low levels of debt and a high rate of productivity growth. Our economic advantages flow primarily from the education and ingenuity of our workforce, and, as the mining boom ends, our future prosperity relies more than ever on the quality of our workforce.

It is easy to save money but it is hard to invest wisely. A cash constrained teenager can save money by not putting oil in their car or getting it looked at by a mechanic when it starts to make grinding sounds. Joe Hockey can obviously save money by spending less money training the workforce of tomorrow, but the notion that he should be applauded for such a short sighted decision is absurd.

Australia needs to spend more money on its rapidly growing workforce, not less. While there is little chance of Joe Hockey admitting how wrong he is, hopefully the Senate has got a longer term view than the Treasurer.

Richard Denniss is the Executive Director of The Australia Institute
FIGHTING FOR THE ARTS

funding cuts target TAFE Arts courses

The Australian TAFE sector is in crisis. The quality and very survival of this once thriving vocational education provider is now under threat due to severe funding cuts across the board. Around the country TAFE students are witnessing the effects of these cuts.

In Victoria the situation is particularly dire, with the government already reducing funding to TAFE institutes by more than $300 million. We now face the same threats to TAFE in South Australia. Already campuses have been closed, or in government speak ‘merged’ or ‘amalgamated’. Additionally, courses that are not considered ‘necessary’, or financially lucrative to the economy are the target of further cuts - courses such as the Arts.

When I asked my fellow students at Adelaide College of the Arts (AC Arts) how funding cuts have affected them, the majority had grievances about the recent loss of the AC Arts library. Others complained of cuts directed towards their courses specifically, and the quality of the education they were receiving. Others still had personal financial concerns and were upset that the government has decided to reduce the government funding allowed for the arts under the Skills for All funding scheme.

"Skills for All would suggest that this funding would allow one and all to have access to education regardless of economic status. Saying that the Arts would not be covered is discrimination — it will make TAFE inaccessible, unfair and not an option for many." (Tatiana, student, Bachelor of Visual Art and Design)

Adelaide College of the Arts has gone through a number of changes over the years. The institution wasn’t always part of TAFE. The college as it currently stands was created in 2001 through the amalgamation of the Centre for Performing Arts and the North Adelaide School of Arts. The building where AC Arts currently resides was purpose built, with world-class facilities and equipment to enable students to gain practical, vocational skills and industry experience in their chosen area of the creative arts.

Courses studied by students at AC Arts include: Film and TV, Music and Sound Production, Stage Management, Scenery and Set Construction, Costume, Acting, Dance, Professional Writing, Visual Arts, Craft and Design.

"Adelaide College of the Arts is the jewel in the crown of South Australia’s TAFE system." (Pat Forward, Federal TAFE Secretary, AEU)

AC Arts is the only TAFE institution in South Australia to offer courses at Degree level. The college produces highly skilled graduates who find employment in a variety of different areas. The nature of studio studies means that you spend long hours collaborating on practical projects and assisting each other in the creative process. Having all areas of the creative arts in one building also allows for cross-disciplinary communication and collaboration, which prepares students for work in the creative industries, where a multitude of different arts practitioners come together and share their various skills and ideas.

"With the costume course at AC Arts we get practical on the job experience. We work on the productions that are in the building, we get experience with dressing maintenance, the practicality of supervising costuming etc. You don’t get that kind of experience studying elsewhere. That’s because we’re in this building and because of the way this course has been designed." (Emma, 2nd year student, Diploma of Costume for Performance)

If we are serious about supporting the arts scene in South Australia, shouldn’t we be maintaining funding and services of the institutions where many artists’ creative careers begin and flourish? Isn’t South Australia after all supposed to be the Festival State? Can you imagine South Australia without the Fringe, SALA, WomADelaide or the Adelaide Festival of Arts? A state renowned for its public arts festivals needs a high quality and accessible public arts training institution.

"The Arts in Australia, especially SA contribute significantly to the economy, bringing $5 via tourism. Educating and producing individuals with internationally recognised Art skills is essential to maintaining Australia’s position as a culturally Arts rich country." (R McEwan, student, Bachelor of Visual Art and Design)

Remy, a recent graduate from the Diploma of Costume for Performance shared with me the benefits she gained from her course:

"TAFE’s given me the skills to be able to run my own business and without it I wouldn’t know half as much as I do now. It’s the best costume course in Australia and I’m glad I did it.”

TAFE has a proud history of making education accessible for people from lower socio-economic backgrounds, or students who are affected by other...
forms of disadvantage such as physical or mental disabilities, or learning difficulties. AC Arts enables otherwise marginalised individuals to not only participate, but to excel. AC Arts makes it possible for a range of different people to experience an affordable arts education in a safe, friendly learning environment. The people who attend AC Arts vary in age from school leavers to mature age students, looking to retrain in a different field or build on the skills they already possess. Each student brings their own life experience to the college and AC Arts is a richer place for it.

I myself suffer from a mental illness, and have found the environment at AC Arts incredibly supportive and accommodating of my individual needs. Other students have similar challenges or hardships, and have shared with me their positive experiences at AC Arts.

"[I have been] long term unemployed (over 10 years) due to a disability. TAFE has enabled me to begin retraining and given me some hope for a brighter future." (Anonymous student, Bachelor of Visual Art and Design)

Unfortunately, education is now run like a business. The success of an institution is being measured by the quantity of students passing through its doors, rather than by the quality of the education being provided. The fact that TAFE has become a statutory corporation and no longer a government agency, with a board of directors rather than a Chief Executive and Minister, shows just how much of a business TAFE has become. TAFE makes decisions based on commercial viability and business strategy. In the future if courses are not commercially sustainable, they will not be offered anymore. This corporatisation of TAFE runs in direct conflict with TAFE’s real purpose — to prepare students to set up their own business or sustainable working career.

TAFE is supposed to provide affordable, high quality vocational education to all Australians, regardless of their personal economic status. TAFE should also serve to build the community and give people of all ages the opportunity to get an education, and offer a second chance to those who have been marginalised and previously excluded or unable to get an education. In addition, TAFE should nurture all vocations, including the arts and acknowledge the intrinsic value these vocations offer to society. This value is two-fold; it is both social and economic. Education does contribute to the commercial sector because it is providing the training for future employment.

The pressure to run TAFE like a business is felt not only by the administration staff, but also by the lecturers, which then has a flow on effect to the students. “We [TAFE lecturers] like to think of ourselves as good teachers and forever improving. We don’t get acknowledged for that. We only get acknowledged for the outcome of pumping people through.” (Sculpture Lecturer, AC Arts)

AC Arts students are passionate about their education and are not willing to put up with unwanted and ill-warranted changes without a fight. Bottom-line thinking, which dominates the distribution of funding to the TAFE education sector, does not gel with quality training in the creative arts and certainly does not sit well with the students.

Studying at AC Arts has been extremely rewarding for me personally because it has allowed me to further my education in the Visual Arts, despite an ongoing and often fluctuating struggle with an anxiety disorder. I consider the staff and students at AC Arts to be my second family, and the building to be my home away from home. Without AC Arts I don’t know where I’d be. TAFE has given me hope for the future and helped me appreciate the present. But I know, from talking with other students that it’s not just me who feels this way. To put it simply, we love AC Arts and would hate to see such a quality TAFE Arts institution disappear, like others have already around the country. The recent closure of the Hornsby TAFE Art School in Northern Sydney is a warning of what could happen to TAFE Arts education in South Australia if we don’t take care of Adelaide College of the Arts.

To conclude, I will leave you with a quote from a great man in history:

When Winston Churchill was asked to cut arts funding in favour of the war effort, he simply replied “then what are we fighting for?”

What we are fighting for is the right to a quality education in whatever vocation we choose. What we are fighting for is the right to a brighter future.

Miriam Amery-Gale is a student at the Adelaide College of the Arts.
Education plays a fundamental role in enabling development and allowing countries to break free from poverty. The Australian Volunteers for International Development program is committed to improving education in developing countries across Asia, the Pacific and Africa by providing over 70 volunteer education opportunities each year.

Volunteers work in a variety of roles from teacher trainer through to curriculum development advisor, all with the goal of helping communities improve education to lift themselves out of poverty. Assignments vary from 1 - 18 months in duration, and are open for applications on the 1st of each month, closing on the 21st of each month.

The program provides return flights, insurances, living and accommodation allowances, training and in-country support.

To find out more about teaching overseas as an Australian Volunteer, and to see all current opportunities, visit:

www.volunteering.austraining.com.au
OMRADES, yet again I stand before you as an employee of this wonderful organisation, despite having had, as did Dame Nellie Melba, a number of retirement functions. Fortunately for you and unlike Nellie, I do not intend to sing.

Last year, as an element of my pending retirement, I was honoured to have named after me an award to be presented to a member who has displayed commitment and leadership within the Union above and beyond that which we would see as normal.

Last year I was proud to present this award to a workplace representative who constantly and consistently has worked and displayed a commitment above that which we would normally expect (but we certainly appreciate) to the members in his workplace and the Branch: Warren McDonough.

This year I am again greatly impressed by the level of commitment, the time, the effort and selflessness of the winner of this award.

Many of you will never have heard of this person, Michelle Purdy, despite the fact that she has long been an active member of the Union and has represented this Branch at the Federal level for some years and is now a national leader of this Union at the Federal level having been elected to the position of national president of the TAFE Division of the AEU. In gaining this position, she was encouraged by her federal colleagues to seek this position. This speaks volumes about the esteem in which she is held by her colleagues. Since gaining that position she has impressed with, not just the work she does, but also the way she operates.

When you consider that Michelle continues to work full-time, you cannot help but be impressed by the additional time and effort Michelle puts in on behalf of her Union and of course its members.

Michelle operates in a quiet and unassuming way, never seeking the limelight and yet always prepared to provide assistance and support for members. In working for her colleagues in both TAFE and our aboriginal members, she operates in an inclusive way, assisting and supporting members and encouraging their involvement in the Union.

Michelle is on the Union’s Federal Executive, chairs the national TAFE Division Executive, has been our Branch representative on the Union’s Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Education Committee since 2002 and has represented our Union internationally.

Michelle wears her union membership on her sleeve with pride, passion and enthusiasm. She recruits new members, she knows who every new employee at the campus is and she talks the union conversation with them. She distributes AEU information and attends every workplace meeting at her TAFE Burnie campus. This woman is a powerhouse and has gone above and beyond while working full-time as an Aboriginal VET Officer and representing her proud indigenous community and her union – the AEU.

Michelle, you are a most worthy winner of this Award and of the recognition it provides for the work you do for the TAFE Division, for the Branch, for the Union and for its members. For what you have done and do and achieve, we are truly grateful. Congratulations!
**Australia**

**TAFE Mergers**

With most TAFEs in Victoria struggling financially, several mergers have been announced in the last few months. In Gippsland the two regional TAFEs have been forced to merge under the banner of Federation Training. The merged entity has 12 months to ‘improve’ its operations and commence to return a ‘profit’ on the education and training it provides. Should the new Federation Training prove successful as a new merged entity it will then be ‘taken over’ by Federation University (a dual sector university). Bendigo TAFE (another regional TAFE) will officially commence to merge with a large metropolitan TAFE (Kangan) on July 1, 2014; following the development of a ‘satisfactory’ business plan approved by the Victorian government then the full merger will continue. Rumours still persist about other mergers of TAFEs in regional areas.

**Enterprise Bargaining**

The AEU has successfully initiated a “majority support” campaign to commence bargaining in TAFE institutes across Victoria. At the beginning of 2014 only three TAFE institutes had issued representational rights to employees to commence enterprise bargaining, at the time of writing this report there are only three TAFEs currently not in formal negotiations with the AEU.

One TAFE has reached an “in principle” position with the AEU in relation to a new agreement, the “in principle” position essentially ‘rolls over’ the current terms and conditions with a 2.5% salary increase each year of the agreement which will expire in 2016.

Currently there is only one TAFE (NMIT) where protected action is occurring to support the negotiations for a new agreement.

**TAFE4ALL**

The TAFE4ALL campaign continues to grow and develop our supporter base as we build actions leading up to the election in November 2014. In preparing for the election later in the year the AEU has trained AEU TAFE representatives in a broad range of areas to assist in the development and running of localised TAFE campaigns to add to the continued push to have the Victorian Training Guarantee policy scrapped and replaced with a policy that supports and promotes our public TAFEs in Victoria.

Greg Barclay is the Victorian member of the National TAFE Council Executive

**RECENT claims made in the media**

by the Minister for Education and the Queensland Premier that user fees for TAFE students aren’t increasing are disingenuous. The institutes have been forced to reassert their user charges in the face of decreasing and disappearing subsidies. The LNP government has been phasing in its changes to the subsidies over the last 12 months. It culminated on July 1, with a price list for course subsidies that virtually ignore qualifications at Certificate 4 and above.

Of the 300 subsidised courses on the 2014-15 VET Investment Plan — Queensland Training Subsidies List there are only 28 Diploma or Advanced Diploma courses identified for government funding. At the Certificate IV level there are 36 qualifications funded. Of the Cert IV courses just under one third are limited to existing workers in industry only. At the diploma and above level one sixth of the qualifications are limited to existing workers.

Whilst Diploma level courses such as Nursing are still subsidised, there are huge gaps in the occupations funded. For instance there are no engineering qualifications at Diploma and above on the list. In terms of cost this means the training provider needs to increase fees to students massively.

**Studying music, graphic design, film and TV, interior design will incur costs in the tens of thousands.**

An extraordinary state of affairs given that the new TAFE Queensland website states that employment for graphic and web designers and illustrators alone is expected to grow by 6,900 in the next three years.

TAFE institutes have been fighting the cost pressures by reducing staffing outlay with over 900 redundancies offered in the 2013/14 Financial Year. Of these over 300 have been teaching staff. The funding model will be fully contestable as of July 1 so the impact will increase.

Until the current government, the entitlement of Queenslanders was to equity and accessibility in training, targeting community need. A full range of qualifications across the breadth of the economy were funded. Today the entitlement is to a single business priority qualification up to Certificate 3 with access to a loan scheme to defray the burgeoning cost of higher qualifications.

You don’t want to be middle aged and trying to re-enter the workforce or change careers in Queensland.

David Terauds is the Queensland member of the National TAFE Council Executive

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**Western Australia**

TAFE in WA has had its funding reduced again across the board with each college taking a pro rata share of the cuts in relation to their size this financial year. The announcements in the state budget for training will impact at the end of the year and flow into next year as the current fee caps on courses will be lifted and the second round of fee increases will be rolled out in January 2015. Given the slowdown in the economy and the possible changes to welfare and other matters proposed in the federal budget these items combined may have a major impact on TAFE in WA. Already some mature aged apprentices are asking about the effects of the loss of the apprentice tool and training allowance and do not want to take out a loan to continue in training. This may be a further blow to the shortage of skilled workers in WA.

The current freeze on employment is having some minor impacts on delivery and services as staff that retire or resign are not to be replaced. If the staff member in question is required to ensure a course continues to run it takes approximately 6-7 weeks to gain permission to advertise and then the internal processes of interview and selection are on top of that. This may put a course at risk.

Earlier this year colleges had indicated that were in advance of where enrolments were at this time last year (before the fee increases) in reality they are actually behind where they were last year. This is going to have to be closely monitored in relation to the impact on courses and employment of staff.

All of this continued pressure on staff in relation to ongoing employment and job security caused the Union to conduct a workplace stress survey at a TAFE College. Whilst still analysing the results the Union is concerned by a number of outcomes including the very high number of lecturers who have visited the doctor in the last 12 months because of workplace stress issues.

Gary Hedger is the WA member of the National TAFE Council Executive

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**Tasmania**

At the present time TassTAFE, like many TAFEs across Australia, is participating in JMA Analytics workforce capability program — the “CAT” survey as it is commonly called. It is hoped that one of the areas highlighted will be the need for professional development and how TasTAFE may fund staff to participate in activities that will enhance their competency and currency.

TassTAFE, although funding is guaranteed for 2014, is looking at its performance in meeting its targets for 2014. It has been identified that there is a 5-10% reduction in activity, commercial,
THE ACT braces for a frosty winter and the chilling effect of the Commonwealth Government budget and reforms. By contrast the ACT Government’s June budget looks steady with necessary efforts to keep the Territory afloat. Jobs and training are essential if the Territory is to survive yet another down turn.

For Canberra Institute of Technology tightening times are with us but tougher times are predicted ahead. Further budget cuts and reforms to funding are creating uncertainty, but the detail is yet to come. It is hard to prepare when the future is so unclear.

The Enterprise Agreement for Teaching Staff is progressing with TAFE Council now recommending the CIT Offer to members. Proposed changes to teacher levels and classifications have caused great consternation. Many are concerned that the recognition and contribution of experienced teachers will not be as clear as in the previous EA. If or when implemented, the new Teacher Level 2, will provide a leadership position with either a teaching or management focus, depending on the needs of the teaching area. The number of these new positions to be created is unknown. TAFE Council and members will need to be actively involved in the implementation of these new arrangements to ensure the roles are relevant, the workload is reasonable and the transition arrangements fair.

The ACT Government continues to pursue the development of a new campus in Tuggeranong, the southern part of the ACT, allocating an undisclosed amount of funds in the current budget. Despite impacting on existing campuses the notion of a new campus is not opposed. Members look forward to being involved in the consultation process and working to ensure the new campus meets future requirements.

All members have been encouraged to join the Stop TAFE Cuts campaign and keep the conversations going about the value of TAFE and that it is too good to lose.

Karen Noble is the ACT member of the National TAFE Council Executive

THE NSW Government has announced their response to the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal’s recommendations on pricing vocational education and training in this state. Although IPART made final recommendations in November last year, it was not until two days after the Federal Budget in June that the NSW government publically accepted the majority of the recommendations.

IPART has recommended that under the Smart and Skilled contestable funding model, all RTOs charge the same price to deliver courses on the ‘entitlement’ skills list. Students will pay between 25% and 40% of the cost of a first qualification with the cost of subsequent qualifications increasing to between 30%-45% of the set price. Students studying Diplomas, Advanced Diplomas and some Cert IV’s will be eligible for VET FEEHelp. Students with a disability, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and students from geographically isolated areas will attract a loading of between 10% and 15%, whether enrolled at TAFE or a private RTO.

The NSW government is now set to receive tenders for delivery of courses and skills sets from eligible providers. It is hoped that TAFE will have a clear indication of which courses they can offer in time for them to advise current and future students of their study options and costs for 2015.

The AEU NSW is calling on the government to delay the introduction of Smart and Skilled. The StopTAFEcuts campaign has continued to attract supporters around the state. Activists have worked closely with other Unions, community and industry organisations, and employers, to attract media and community attention to our campaign. It has been pleasing to see Stop TAFE Cuts t-shirts being worn at a variety of union and community rallies and marches. Labor Party, Greens and Independent MPs and candidates have increasingly spoken of the need for adequate, reliable government funding for TAFE and the important role TAFE plays within the community. Local Members of Parliament have been lobbied and will continue to be visited by activists leading up to the 2015 state election.

Maxine Sharkey is the NSW member of the National TAFE Council Executive

THE 2014 Federal Budget will see a further $145 million removed from South Australian VET over the next 4 years with a direct effect of $37.5 million lost to TAFE. The closure of programmes like Workplace English Language and Literacy (WELL) will have an immediate impact on TAFE SA funding base as it is the major provider of this training in SA.

National TAFE Day on June 18 was highlighted in SA with rally held at the newly opened Co-Op Coffee Shop adjacent to the Adelaide City TAFE campus. The occasion saw AEU members, students and community members come together to celebrate the excellent work that TAFE has done and continues to do in providing opportunities to individuals to develop and grow to achieve productive lives. The rally was supported by Greens MP Tammy Franks MLC who addressed the rally on the significant role TAFE has played in the lives of many South Australians. She was followed by Miriam, a student who spoke about her learning journey in TAFE and the wonderful support that TAFE staff had provided to her achieve success.

National TAFE Day finished on a high note with the Greens speaking to a motion in the South Australian Parliament that called for greater support for a well-funded public TAFE sector, both at federal and the state levels.

In speaking Tammy Franks MLC said “This motion is being moved by Greens Members of Parliament across the states in solidarity with National TAFE Day, and to highlight the importance of a strong public TAFE sector. We are also taking this opportunity to highlight the major issues facing TAFE in SA. In particular we want to highlight that since the passage of the TAFE Bills in 2012 we have seen a slow degradation of what used to be a robust and publicly owned TAFE system.”

June 19, 2014 will see the last of the 400 plus staff leave TAFE SA with separation packages valued at $25.4 million in 2013/14 financial year, but more than the statistics is the wealth of knowledge and the loss of long time comrades. They will be sorely missed.

Tony Sutherland is the SA member of the National TAFE Council Executive

apprentices/trainees and prevocational across the board for 2014. Activity in TasTAFE has been on a downward trend over the past few years. The downturn in business can be attributed to the economic mess that Tasmania finds itself in, as well as a large number of apprentices commencing having completed much of their training at Colleges of Trade Training Centres.

The result of TasTAFE identifying the lower demand is that a number of Admin staff will not have their contracts renewed. Most Tasmanians are waiting with baited breath for the new State Government’s first budget, due in August. The AEU fears that jobs across TasTAFE will be under threat, especially with the Government indicating that 1500 public sector jobs are to go over the next four years.

Rex Calvert is the AEU Tasmanian TAFE Division President

SOUTH AUSTRALIA

NEW SOUTH WALES

ACT
Very Near the Line
Author: Donald Naismith

AS A teacher in the Diploma of Community Development I am often reflecting on the increasing dominance of neo-liberal policy in Australia. To understand the steady reversal of social justice gains by previous Australian governments it is useful to take a historical perspective. Thus my interest was initially piqued to read about education reform under Britain’s Thatcher government. However I was not prepared for the self-serving style and lack of critical reflection by the author of “very near the line”, Donald Naismith. Chronicling his role as a senior bureaucrat his support for Thatcherite marketization of the public education system in Britain is without remorse. Unashamedly against British teacher unions he calls them “narrow-minded”, “instinctively antagonistic” and in spite of their militancy received pay settlements due only to workers with greater “industrial muscle”.

I was not surprised to hear that the policy response to deal with ‘declining standards’ under a comprehensive — as opposed to his preferred select entry (read class reproductive) — system was to implement a standardized testing system. Based on the same faulty premise of our own NAPLAN, that it would give parents clearer choices and taxpayers greater accountability, it was only in hindsight that Naismith recognized that such a system inevitably distorts teaching practices. Yet rather than take any responsibility for his dogged desire to ‘get my own way’ on testing, he simply blames teachers for the “degree to which professionalism would allow itself to be prostituted for the sake of statistical advantage” (p37).

As Naismith oversaw the reorganization of the British public education system more along the lines of a private, select entry market, he likens himself to a maverick pushing boundaries, having once been accused of going ‘very near the line’. For me he appears to be a privately educated Tory elitist, who now has retired in France, having very much crossed the line of social decency and human rights. I would only recommend this book to teachers interested in knowing a little of the minds of bureaucrats intent on dismantling our public education system with free market ideology.

The Editor’s Companion, Ed.2
Author: Janet Mackenzie
Cambridge University Press Melbourne 2011

HAVE you ever received an official communication and had to resist the impulse to take out your red pen, correct the missive and to send it back whence it came? I have. Perhaps if more business writers had access to this book, we might have less mangled language.

The Editor’s Companion is not just a guide to editing principles but a tutorial for students with an accompanying website as well as information for making a living as a freelance editor. What is particularly relevant is that it just does not rely on hard copy but on the requirements for editing online material.

As Mackenzie writes, “there are many books on web design, but most devote only a few pages to the text component and none at all to the editorial role.” As TAFE lecturers, we are increasingly being asked to put material online and given access to web designers. Yet how frequently does anyone consider the editing function and how frequently does online work reflect that?

Writing for the screen requires a different set of skills and according to the author, not all text is suitable due to the way we interact with a screen.

The Editor’s Companion has many good tips and hints and may not be for those for whom writing is merely functional and yet perhaps it should be.

A good editor can write in various registers and styles, has good cognitive skills, is an effective reader, has attention to detail, can take pages of information and data and turn it into something readable and is a formidable problem solver. Will this book make you a good editor? Probably not, but it can certainly improve your writing and if you are a communications lecturer, it will be a valuable professional tool.

Teaching Early Years: Curriculum, Pedagogy and Assessment.
Edited by Donna Pendergast and Susanne Garvis.
Allen & Unwin

IT was a pleasure to review the book Teaching Early Years, Curriculum, Pedagogy and Assessment. I found this book informative, easy to read and very user friendly.

The book is clearly set out with chapters that give an introduction, theories, examples, questions to answer for independent learning or in a classroom context and a long list of references at the end of each chapter. This gives the students an opportunity to read and research more within the topic they are covering.

The initial chapter begins with the context of early years learning that discusses the early years in Australia, the importance, the nature and the nurture of early learning. It then goes onto to discuss the curriculum practices for the early years, looking at all the curriculum areas clearly separated into individual chapters.

Other chapters include Pedagogical practice for the early years, Assessment practices for the early years and Imperatives for the early years. There is a good section on gender which uses case studies to debunk popular myths by presenting research into the context of gender in the early years, and the gendered experience of children in a variety of contexts.

This is a great starter book for people beginning to explore early childhood pedagogical practice.
Real Marketing – The People, The Choices
Pearson
FROM the ACCC to the triple P’s, Real Marketing The People, The Choices is an educational resource about real life marketing and branding. This is a resource that showcases real life marketing scenarios as well as in-depth insights into people who have held prominent marketing positions in major Australian and international companies. It discusses tangible marketing problems and potential options for solving them.

The resource includes integral marketing information including, understanding the marketing environment; information and research; consumer and organisational behaviour; creating, managing and pricing products, marketing communications; distribution, logistics and retailing; service and strategic marketing and marketing ethics and regulations.

There are quick references in every chapter as well as what you are expected to learn after each chapter. The appropriate and comprehensive use of figures, tables and marketing metrics assist the learner in understanding key points, marketing models, theories and processes. There are many good examples of marketing-in-action, which clearly demonstrate how real world marketing really matters. Each chapter also contains a chapter review, a chapter summary, questions, mini-projects and an outline of the key information learned within that chapter.

The resource’s supporting website offers online support and is designed to enhance learning. Here the learner will find simulations of interactive decision-making and allow the learner to put marketing theory into practice. It also contains useful information on market research and marketing plans designed to help the learner succeed in marketing.

Real Marketing The People, The Choices is a very comprehensive and well-considered resource ideal to supplement certificate level learning and pertinent for the learner to develop vocational marketing skills.

Reviewed by Luise Grice
Luise Grice is a teacher with Business, Arts and IT at Illawarra TAFE, Nowra Campus NSW. Luise has completed an honours degree in media arts and has qualifications and experience in marketing, project management and communications. Her work for major Australian companies such as ANZ Bank, National Parks and Wildlife and TAFE NSW has provided her with an understanding of marketing practices and processes.

Men Learning Through Life
Golding, B., Mark, R. & Foley, A. (eds)
NIACE, Leicester, 2014

This book deals with men’s involvement in lifelong learning in a range of international contexts and illustrates the benefits of increased male participation in learning to promote personal and community wellbeing. Part One is a critical background to men’s learning in different settings and Part Two presents examples of policies and action designed to increase men’s engagement with learning. This book focuses on improving attitudes to learning from a young age so that a perceived aversion to learning by some males is addressed.

The book suggests that some men are trapped in a stereotype which only values learning specific to vocational outcomes. For some older males this can mean they are poorly prepared for changes beyond paid work.

The focus is on learning in the broadest sense rather than education or training as a market based activity — an area where men have historically been disadvantaged ahead of women. While many women have struggled for opportunities in paid work, they can be better resourced to adapt in non-paid work roles where gender socialisation can limit men’s capacity.

This research suggests that increasing the ability of males to take control of their own learning will bring significant gains to society, as will improving men’s understanding of the effectiveness of communities of practice.

The final chapter identifies good policy and practice around men’s learning and suggests ways forward to improve outcomes for men and the communities in which they live.

A useful book providing a theoretical background plus practical suggestions to enhance learning options for males outside of formal settings.

Reviewed by Matt Bennett
Matt Bennett is Manager Assets & Infrastructure Planning at TAFE NSW Riverina Institute and is interested in how gender can shape attitudes to learning and teaching in the VET environment.

How to Organise and Operate a Small Business in Australia
Author: John English,
11th edition, Allen & Unwin

This text presents as a valuable “go to” guidebook for anyone considering becoming a business owner. No matter what the economic climate, there is the perception that most small businesses fall within the first few years and this perception could cause many to hesitate to launch their ideas into a reality. The Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) defines a small business as an actively trading business with up to 19 employees and micro businesses are small businesses with up to four employees. Small businesses make a significant contribution to the Australian economy, but there are several reasons why small businesses don’t survive past the first three years. A lack of experience, poor location, poor financial control, ineffective strategic management and improper cash flow planning are the main reasons. This book considers those issues throughout, but offers sound and practical advice to those embarking on establishing a small business.

There is a comprehensive guide to online businesses — with marketing, the use of social media, website tips and mobile information. There is a chapter devoted to explaining the nuances of the online commercial world with easy to understand and follow information and strategies.

Chapter 4 provides an introduction to an IDEAS system that the reader can use to identify business opportunities with genuine commercial potential. For those that are already in business, there is advice that provides explanations of a number of strategies for refining the operations and maximising profits. The practical firsthand experience of the author is an excellent source of reference. English has both the formal and informal qualifications; training and experience that makes this book a credible resource for the small business owner/operator.

The self-evaluation exercises throughout probe the reader’s capability, capacity, skills and knowledge and provides comprehensive evaluation and explanation to the reader.

Topics covered include government support agencies and chapters that include developing a marketing plan, an operating plan and a financial plan. A good index is helpful in providing instant ready access to require information.

Reviewed by Sue Mandley
Sue Mandley is an AEU Professional Officer, a casual teacher at TAFE, has her own consultancy business and is a user of social media.

She curates information on TAFE in Victoria http://www.scoop.it/t/tafe-in-victoria blogs and tweets too. @susiemandley is her twitter name.
QUALIFICATION UTILISATION: Will that qualification result in a job?

Vocational education and training (VET) is all about providing students with the skills needed for work. Because of this, it is often expected, even desired that studying a specific qualification will lead to a job in that specific occupation. But is this the case? Or does their study result in employment in different areas?

Each year graduates are asked to rate their training in Australia’s VET system through the Student Outcomes Survey. Information from the survey shows the match between a graduate’s intended occupation of training and their destination occupation varies by:
- Industry
- Qualification
- Employment status before training.

Licensed and regulated industries have stronger matches

Occupations with strict licensing requirements or regulations, such as trades, have the strongest matches. For example, the Aeroskills training package has the highest match at 89.3%.

The same is true for apprentices and trainees who have higher matches than other graduates. This reflects their highly integrated employment and training arrangements.

Not surprisingly, people who complete training in these highly regulated areas end up employed in their intended occupation within six months.

Some qualifications develop a generalist set of skills

On the other hand, qualifications in areas such as business services, tourism or hospitality where there are not as many strict licensing requirements, tend to have a much lower match.

These qualifications tend to develop a more generalist set of skills, which allows people to work across different jobs. For example, only a quarter of business services graduates end up employed in their intended occupation. Despite this, the majority of graduates who are not employed in their intended occupation still find their training useful in their current job.

What other factors make a difference?

Apart from type of industry, there are other factors that have an affect, such as qualification level and employment status before training.

Overall certificate III and IV qualifications have higher matches compared to certificate I and II, and diplomas and above, although there are some exceptions. This may be because many trade qualifications are delivered at this level, and as we already discovered, trades have stronger matches.

Only half of graduates that study at a diploma or higher level land a job in their chosen occupation, or in a position with the same or higher skill level. Other research by Karmel (2008), has suggested this may be due to diploma graduates competing with bachelor graduates for the same jobs.

Across most industries, existing workers who start training have a higher match between intended and destination occupation than people new to the industry. Younger new entrants to the workforce have particularly high matches for trade occupations. This is not surprising as many of these younger graduates may be apprentices or trainees. In comparison, older new entrants have stronger matches for the community services and health.

Arts and media graduates show lowest matches

Overwhelmingly, the graduates of the Screen and Media, Music, and Visual Arts, Craft and Design training packages have the lowest matches – fewer than 13% who undertook their training for employment-related reasons are employed in their intended occupation.

In addition, over 50% of these graduates find that their training is of little or no relevance to their current job. This most likely reflects a lack of jobs in the labour market in these occupations, with graduates being employed in unrelated areas.

What does this mean for graduates?

When we look at the results for the whole VET sector, the results are far more positive. 78% of people who complete a VET qualification are employed within six months. And while they may not be employed in their intended occupation, four out of five graduates still find their qualification useful to their current job.

Overall, less than a quarter of all graduates are employed at a lower skill level than their intended job and some even find themselves employed at a higher level.

The key messages for people considering starting a VET qualification is to ensure they are aware of, and meet industry requirements before they start training. Alternatively, if the industry they’re looking at doesn’t have requirements, it’s important to choose a qualification that maximises employment opportunities.

There are also key messages for policy makers. Qualifications are designed to predict the future skills needs of industry. The learning is that qualifications, and teaching practice need to consider general education strategies and employability skills as key components, as students’ move from study to work is not a linear journey. Selecting ‘priority’ qualifications for entitlement systems is also not a simple task of just aligning qualifications with growing jobs.

For more information:
What has been happening to vocational education and training diplomas and advanced diplomas? www.ncver.edu.au/publications/2090.html
TIMOR-LESTE: A trainer assists a woman during a literacy workshop in the Neran community. Union Aid Abroad-APHEDA supported literacy programs have helped more than 3,000 rural Timorese women to become literate and numerate since 2001.

CAMBODIA: Beer promotion workers picket the Cambrew brewery. The workers and their union, the Cambodian Food and Service Workers’ Federation, are fighting multinational companies for unpaid entitlements and a living wage.

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