



Submission to the Federal Government Inquiry into TAFE

*What is the role of TAFE in the development of skills in the Australian economy?*

TAFE is able to provide industry relevant skills that are constantly reflecting the changing nature of the Australian and global economies. TAFE is able to deliver this service at a cost that cannot be matched by private enterprise training organisations without compromising quality of education or lowering of skills standards that have become expected of Australian workers.

*What is the role of TAFE in the development of opportunities for Australians to improve themselves and increase their life and employment prospects?*

Anyone who considers they have 'completed' their education having reached a certain level in high school or a qualification/degree from university is at odds with the reality of the constantly changing world in which we currently find ourselves. The speed and advances in technology coupled with the rapid growth of previously unknown industries and markets is challenging and unless the community is engaged in constant skills upgrading and lifelong learning Australians will find themselves missing out on the opportunities that arise from a well-educated, skilled population. Information can be transformed into knowledge which if then linked with life experience can encourage informed debate and critical thinking amongst the community at large. This is essential for a well-balanced, confident workforce leading to innovation, participation and an increase in productivity and overall job and general life/living satisfaction. TAFE is **uniquely** able to provide the link between lifelong learning and skills upgrading throughout the community, at all levels and to a wide range of groups and individuals who may not be able to participate in traditional 'formal' education programs (at an affordable price?).

*What is the role of TAFE in the delivery of services and programs to support regions, communities and disadvantaged individuals to access training and skills and through them a pathway to employment?*

*The provision of programs specifically tailored to suit regional and remote communities is critical to the health, welfare and wellbeing of people who, due to their location have limited access to similar services that exist in large city/urban environments. The needs of these people can be varied and the resources necessary to successfully engage a wide range of individuals from diverse backgrounds and education levels are expensive to supply and maintain in the short term. In the long term the benefits to the local community gained from the ongoing engagement of members in quality education*

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*programs such as currently provided by regional TAFEs is a worthwhile investment in community building and provides bonuses that are far reaching in relation to the initial inputs required.*

*What is the role of TAFE in the operation of a competitive training market?*

*TAFE has been able to provide one of the few viable alternatives in adult training to Universities on the one hand and trade based apprenticeships on the other. It has been well placed to provide 'hands on' high level training in a supportive, friendly, relaxed environment. The provision of quality education delivered in a variety of methods/styles to suite a range of students needs at an affordable price is difficult to achieve without substantial funding support. Unlike the traditional formal academic style of university delivery TAFE has specialised in education based on practical participation closely linked with industry requirements for skills and knowledge. This had ensured a competitive training market whilst providing students with a realistic, affordable, honest alternative to the traditional university education. TAFE can also be a stepping stone in a student's progression from the most basic trade level training right through to a full year's credit for a University degree after completion of Certificate and Diploma level courses. For some students who have been out of the education system for some time, continuity of a familiar learning environment is paramount and can be the difference between successfully completing a diploma or simply completing a few units and then leaving the system to get back into the 'real' world.*

*What is the role of TAFE in those jurisdictions in which State Governments have announced funding decisions which may impact on their operation and viability?*

*As funding for Vocational Education Training in South Australia (per publicly funded hour) has dropped from 1997 - 2004 – 2009 by -26.4% and further from 2004 to 2009 by -19.5%<sup>1</sup> it is obvious that the standard of delivery, resources and staffing for TAFE training will also decline. As part of the TAFE system in South Australia, working in delivery of Environmental Management, Monitoring and Technology Diploma level units I have personally found that the drop in numbers of administration and support staff at a local/regional level has had devastating effects on the productivity of our campus (Urrbrae) and has placed both staff and students under increased pressure. This coupled with reductions in funding across the board (which has a direct effect on resources available for lecturers and students) places everyone involved in the process at risk of not being able to improve their skills and knowledge in their chosen field of study. There are no alternative education organisations currently delivering the units that are included in the diploma and certificate IV courses available from the Urrbrae TAFE campus. Declining funding for the TAFE sector then is severely compromising the capacity of TAFE SA and in particular the Urrbrae campus to continue to provide the unique opportunity it does at present for anyone wishing to enhance their existing skills in Conservation and Land Management as well as Environmental Monitoring and*

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<sup>1</sup> TAFE Funding and the Education targets –  
CEET Faculty of Education Monash University Vic 3800 November 2011

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*Technology. There is evidence to support that the environmental management and sustainability of natural resource use and management is a critical employment avenue for people looking toward addressing the impact of human induced global warming and climate change. The current situation would appear to be in conflict with government policy of working towards a 'cleaner, greener country (Australia).*