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**TAFE Directors Australia's response to the  
House of Representatives Standing Committee  
Inquiry into 'Combining school and work:  
supporting successful youth transitions'.**

**16 January 2009**

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# **TAFE Directors Australia’s response to the House of Representatives Standing Committee Inquiry into ‘Combining school and work: supporting successful youth transitions’.**

## **Introduction**

TAFE Directors Australia (TDA) welcomes the opportunity to provide a response to the House of Representatives Standing Committee inquiry into ‘Combining school and work: supporting successful youth transitions’.

TDA represents 59 TAFE institutes nationally that deliver 1.6 million student contact hours, the major delivery of accredited national training.

TDA recognises that the engagement of young people in skilling and development is a pressing national priority. The 2006 Census indicates that 71% of 19 year olds had attained Year 12 or equivalent<sup>1</sup>. Much more will be needed to lift the rate to the COAG target of 90% by 2020. Australia lags behind many other OECD countries in terms of levels of participation.

There has been a very appropriate and increased focus for some years now on the whole matter of transition, particularly driven by the emphasis on nationally structured training and meeting the needs of a changing employment market. The first Dusseldorp Skills Forum report “Reality and Risk” and their subsequent updates (“How Young People are Faring”) highlighted the need for this increased effort on successful transitions for young people, given the costs of failure to the individual and the country. These reports also demonstrate that rates of

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<sup>1</sup> “How Young People are Faring ‘08” Foundation for Young Australians (2008)

participation vary across social groups, regions and States and Territories<sup>2</sup>. The '08 report maintains that, "There is some evidence to suggest that countries which offer more extensive, well-structured programs of vocational education and training do better in promoting rates of schools completion".<sup>3</sup>

Within Australia State and Federal governments have also been looking at the Longitudinal Study of Australian Youth (LSAY) and other surveys of student post school outcomes in order to adjust the mix of programs and initiatives that strengthen students' transition prospects. Governments have put particular effort into supporting VET in schools programs and the quality and availability of careers advice in schools via the Careers Advice Australia initiative.

TDA supports greater flexibility and alternative arrangements that will support all students in the attainment of a year 12 certificate or equivalent vocational qualification including the combining of school and work and their transition from school directly to work or to further study and then work.

TDA believes that TAFE institutes have demonstrated that they can play a vital role in offering flexible programs, independently, or in collaboration with schools, Australian Technical Colleges and Trade Training Centres in Schools that can support successful youth transitions through provision of clear and recognised pathways into employment and further education and training.

The TDA response to this inquiry documents the variety of alternative models that are offered by TAFE institutes which support students in combining work and study in settings outside schools (response to terms of reference 2) and TAFE institutes working with schools to support successful youth transitions (response to terms of reference 5), especially those from disadvantaged backgrounds.

As the Trades Training Centres in Schools program moves into its next phase with higher cluster style resourcing preferred for infrastructure grants, it is appropriate that alternative models of collaboration between the sectors are documented. Indeed TDA believes that it is timely to research and evaluate the various models of schools to skills.

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<sup>2</sup> TAFE SA submission to TDA – "Young people in South Australia are generally less well qualified than their equivalents in other states. A disproportionate number of early school leavers in South Australia come from lower socio economic backgrounds and particular cultural groups and areas of the state"

<sup>3</sup> "How Young People are Faring '08", Foundation for Young Australians (2008)

## Background

In developing the TDA response to the inquiry, TDA invited members to respond to the terms of reference of the inquiry and to illustrate their perspectives through case studies. The TDA response has incorporated the views of members, from 6 State and Territories (Attachment 1). The case studies illustrate a variety of approaches taken by jurisdictions and individual TAFE institutes to supporting youth to engage with vocational skills and achieve successful transitions to employment or further study.

The TDA response also draws on an Occasional Paper published by TDA in 2008 – “Key Issues and Future Directions in Vocational Skills for Youth”, a collection of the papers and proceedings from the National Forum held in Hobart in April 2008. The Forum, which was a joint initiative of TDA and the Australian College of Educators, was attended by one hundred and twenty educators from every state and territory; Commonwealth and State/Territory education and training agencies, school curriculum authorities, school principals, TAFE Directors, universities, private providers and industry. The overview report from the Forum shows that there was a high degree of consensus that Australia needs to rethink many of its current approaches to the delivery of vocational skills to young people. The areas which were singled out were funding arrangements; pedagogy, especially in meeting industry standards and research into those models of vocational programs for young people for young people that retain their interest and provide them with authentic pathways to further study and work.

The following five recommendations arose from the Hobart Forum and were referred to the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations.

- (i) TDA and ACE seek a review of the current vocational education and training provision for young people, including Australian Technical Colleges
- (ii) TDA and ACE seek a review of the current funding arrangements
- (iii) TDA and ACE advocate stronger focus on teaching vocational learning for young people
- (iv) TDA and ACE encourage governments to include vocational skills development for young people in wide range of policy and infrastructure contexts, including workforce participation policy, employment policy, health policy, industry policy and infrastructure projects

- (v) TDA in collaboration with ACE seek Australian Government support to undertake further research into pedagogy and best practice in vocational programs for young people.<sup>4</sup>

The Executive of the TDA Board met with members of the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Education and Training 18 September 2008 and referred the TDA Occasional Paper, “Key Issues and Future Directions in Vocational Skills for Youth”, to the members for their consideration.

While there are differences in the approaches taken by TAFE institutes to providing vocational skills for young people, there are some key success factors that emerge from the case studies in this paper.

## **Key Success Factors for Upper Secondary Skilling**

- 1) To develop an environment that demonstrates to students and parents that vocational pathways have parity in outcome and esteem with parallel academic programs.
- 2) To have access to a strong pastoral care and personal concern and career counselling services.
- 3) To have a substantial general education program that is occupationally relevant but can lead to further study.
- 4) To adopt a view that basic literacy and numeracy are fundamental skills for further education
- 5) To be involved in a social partnership with employers, educationalists and the community.
- 6) To provide structured learning in real work settings
- 7) To attempt to maximise outcomes for students socially, occupationally and educationally with a set of extra curricula activities, and utilise sport and outdoor education as areas to promote social skills and teamwork.
- 8) To utilise applied and project based methodology.
- 9) To have a clear identity, which builds student self-esteem and a sense of pride, encompassing work based learning, respecting the unique needs of all students.
- 10) To focus on a student’s individual needs and interests
- 11) To attempt to maximise outcomes for students socially, occupationally and educationally with a set of extra curricula activities, and utilise sport and outdoor education as areas to promote social skills and teamwork and to monitor outcomes.
- 12) To provide a structured framework for skills development and pathways into work.

These key success factors are consistent with many of the features identified by the OECD Youth Transition Measures Report Card.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> “Key Issues and Future Directions in Vocational Skills for Youth” TDA (July 2008) Executive Summary

<sup>5</sup> “Getting Young People Work Ready: Positive Pathways to the Future”, National Industry Skills Committee (May 2007)

## **Terms of Reference of the House of Representatives Standing Committee Inquiry into ‘Combining school and work: supporting successful youth transitions’.**

The following comments from TDA are based on responses from its members are provided in relation to the five terms of reference for the Standing Committee’s inquiry.

### **1. Providing opportunities to recognise and accredit the employability and career development skills gained through students’ part time or casual work**

It is TDA’s view that students’ learning from part time or casual work in terms of both generic and vocational skills should be valued and recognised as part of the senior secondary curriculum. This requires changes in policy and practice.

TDA members believe that there are reasons to encourage employment whilst at school:

- Previous studies have proven that students engaging in vocational training and exposure to the workforce have better employability skills and are more likely to be employed after leaving school.
- The school based apprenticeship and traineeship (SBAT) program is giving increasing numbers of school students the opportunity to gain a qualification, commence training in their chosen career and earn money whilst having the on and off the job training count towards their senior studies. In turn this is taking pressure off their other school subjects decreasing their stress, increasing the likelihood of completion of the schooling as well as increasing their confidence, maturity and ability to cope in the workforce. However individuals undertaking a SBAT need to be supported and encouraged. <sup>6</sup>

TDA supports the provision of opportunities to validate and accredit employability and career development skills gained by students via their out of school employment, given the general

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<sup>6</sup> NSW respondent to TDA- “Generally the most successful school based apprentices and trainees are those whose employment is with business run by relatives, as they tend to be more supportive of the competing demands between school and work”.

enthusiasm from employers for better ways of evidencing and recognising the development of general employability skills in young people. Whilst there is greater effort within training packages to incorporate generic skills, employers seem to be often looking for something more overt to provide greater clarity about student skill development.

In this regard TDA would refer the Committee to two initiatives:

- the NSW School to Work program, particularly the program's use of logbooks / portfolios to collect evidence of generic skill development and
- the Victorian Registration and Qualifications Authority, in its design of a credit system is developing credit points for employability and other work experience so that skills students attain can be recognized and accredited.



## **2. Identifying more flexible, innovative and/or alternative approaches to attaining a senior secondary certificate which support students to combine work and study**

TAFE has a long history of involvement with young people and adults, and in re-engaging them in vocational education. TAFE institutes are in many cases fulfill the role of the registered training organisation in partnership with secondary schools.

In the European Union (EU), successful collaboration has been introduced between skilling institutes and schools through technical colleges. Close collaboration and co-location with skill institutes have been keys to their engagement success for youth and skills.

TDA calls for constructive and well designed innovative approaches to increase opportunities for young people to enter into traditional trades and higher order skills training. However, the evidence thus far is that TAFE-excluded solutions ignore EU experience, and do not work as well.

We clearly need to find better ways to engage young people in skills training.

TDA members have provided some significant examples of flexible/ innovative and alternative approaches to attaining a secondary certificate which supports students to combine work and study. The following case studies also shed further light on the various terms of reference of the House of Representatives Standing Committee inquiry into ‘Combining school and work: supporting successful youth transitions’.

### **Case study 1 Metropolitan Melbourne - Holmesglen Vocational College**

Established in 2007 with a first year enrolment of almost 200 students, Holmesglen Vocational College, in southeast Melbourne, has provided a highly successful and new model for upper secondary vocational education.

Embedded in Holmesglen Institute, the College gives students full access to the many vocational training programs and excellent facilities of a large TAFE Institute. At the same time, it also provides a distinct learning environment suited to the needs of its 16-18 year old students, many of whom have not thrived in

a traditional secondary school environment. The College offers these students a Year 11 and 12 program in the Victorian Certificate of Applied Learning (VCAL) at the Intermediate and Senior levels as an alternative to the Victorian Certificate of Education (VCE) which has a more “academic” focus.<sup>7</sup>

After two years of operation, the outcomes of the Vocational College program have been characterised by

- consistently high student satisfaction ratings –evidenced through external surveys- and very positive parent feedback.
- A high rate of almost 80% of students continuing on to further training in pre-apprenticeships, apprenticeships, certificate and diploma courses and employment.

### **The Program**

The overall structure of the VCAL (Intermediate) - Year 11 program is as follows:

- Literacy and Numeracy -200 hours
- Work Related Skills including work placements- 200 hours
- Personal Development -200 hours
- Industry Specific (Vocational) Skill-400 hours

During their first year, students are able to choose (usually 2 or 3) from over 20 different vocational areas - generally at the Certificate II level- before specializing in their preferred area in their second year. As only about 20% of students have experienced vocational training prior to coming to the College, giving them exposure to a range of vocational streams is designed to give them the capacity to make well informed choices about their future training and vocation. That said, it is possible for stronger students with a clearer idea of their vocational pathway to complete a full pre-apprenticeship (for example in Carpentry in 2008) in their first year. The following are the available industry specific (vocational) streams:

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<sup>7</sup> “Applied learning contextualises learning in a way which empowers and motivates students, while they develop key skills and knowledge for employment, further education and active participation in communities” – Victorian Certificate of Applied Learning (VCAL) Information Sheet.

Air conditioning	Hairdressing
Beauty Therapy	Hospitality
Bricklaying	Joinery
Business and Retail Studies	Multimedia
Carpentry	Painting and Decorating
Commercial Cookery	Plumbing
Community Services	Retail Baking
Electrotechnology	Roof Tiling
Engineering	Solid Plastering
Floor Finishing	Sport and Recreation
Food and Beverage	Wall and Ceiling Lining
Glass and Glazing	Wall and Floor Tiling

All courses have clear pathways with appropriate credit transfers into pre-apprenticeship, apprenticeship, certificate and diploma courses. Students may also choose to continue with a second VCAL Senior year, which enables them to complete a pre-apprenticeship and to continue to benefit from the broader program of Literacy and Numeracy, Work Related Skills and Personal development

### **Personal Development**

The Vocational College offers young people the opportunity to continue to enjoy many of the features of learning programs, often associated with schools, such as team oriented sports and activities, developing their life skills and the social networks of friends. These activities are an important part of the curriculum,

assisting students to develop further the very valuable traits of self awareness, self reliance, confidence and leadership skills

The Personal Development Skills program consists of a core of Life Skills training – including healthy living practices and lifestyle choices – and a broad choice of sporting and non-sporting activities. In addition, students have the opportunity to participate in camps and day excursions through Holmesglen's property at Eildon and at other off-campus venues.

### **Work Related Skills and Work Placement**

Practical placement (2 placements of 10 days) is a core component of the curriculum, providing students with industry-specific and relevant skills and knowledge in order to facilitate entry into the workforce. In many cases, specific experience with an employer leads to an apprenticeship or part-time work.

Students are given a thorough preparation for their placement with detailed studies in:

- Occupational Health and Safety
- Understanding the Workplace
- Employability Skills

The majority of students in the Vocational College also have part-time jobs outside the context of their formal studies. The experience gained in these positions contributes to the assessment of their work-related and employability skills.

### **Teachers, Students and Parents – A Learning Partnership**

Of fundamental importance at the Holmesglen Vocational College is the cooperative relationship between staff, students and parents which is seen as critical to individual student success. This relationship retains the very valuable relationship with which students and their parents are familiar in a school context but transfers it to a "transition to adult learning" environment. This approach provides support of many kinds for students in making the transition, while at the same time, enabling them to experience a degree of independence and encouragement to take responsibility for their learning program within and beyond the Vocational College.

Each student in the Vocational College belongs to a student group led by a Mentor Teacher. The Mentor Teacher is the primary point of contact for both students and parents with the Vocational College. The Mentor Teacher provides overall guidance and support to students in moving through the Vocational College Learning Program and beyond to further study or employment. Mentor teachers are supported by a full-time Vocational College Counsellor who provides individual career guidance and personal counselling to students.

It has been a consistently positive feature of student responses to the Holmesglen Vocational College that they value highly the more adult relationship with their teachers than many had experienced at school and the independence they are given in making choices about their program. Student satisfaction with this aspect of the program and an appreciation of the opportunity to have access to first rate vocational training facilities and personal development programs underpin the College's high success rate.

## **Case study 2 - Canberra Institute of Technology**

The CIT Vocational College was established as an entry point to vocational education and training that enables students to continue to improve their "essential skills". These essential skills include English language, literacy and numeracy skills, general secondary level education at Year 10 or Year 12 level and generic skills / employability skills. At the same time as students are building these skills, they can start to acquire vocational skills through accredited vocational courses.

- The CIT Vocational College achieves this by:
  - working closely with other CIT teaching centres to design programs so students can participate in achievable components of vocational courses;
  - curriculum design that is flexible;
  - reviewing nationally recognised training packages and incorporating elements into its general education courses. In this way, as students develop their general education skills, they also achieve nationally recognised units of competence;
  - using a combination of flexible delivery strategies to customise programs to suit different types of students. These flexible strategies include timetabling, full-time and part-time options, work, self access print resources, online resources, tutorial support, access to drop-in support and individual tutorials;
  - supporting students' basic skills, (language, literacy, numeracy, computing) while they are engaged in vocational programs and/or work.
- Students undertake a skills evaluation prior to enrolment and can progress through lower level preparatory courses to Year 12.
- Students have access to the full range of student support services available in a tertiary education institution and professional staff experienced in supporting students who are combining full or part time study and work. In addition the CIT Vocational College has employed dedicated youth workers and careers counsellors to support students in their learning and work.
- Year 12 students obtain the general educational benefits that having a Year 12 certificate provides as well as vocational skills that give them access to skilled jobs or further study. Approximately 40% of students who attain a Year 12 certificate also receive a UAI.

- Students, who have not been able to engage successfully with learning at school/ college, respond very well to a more applied, work focused approach. In response to this new approach CIT has had a significant increase of approximately 30% in our Year 12 enrolments.
- Barriers to further integrating work and learning in terms of student attainment of a senior secondary certificate include:
  - Boards of Study policies relating to course hours, student attendance requirements, minimum requirements for majors and minors, and the counting of learning achieved through other RTOs;
  - unfunded expectations that teachers can manage the relationships, complexities and logistics of work based learning complexities in addition to their other paid duties;
  - funding to case manage career advice for students and to support and manage work placements;
  - insurance arrangements whereby an education institution's insurance covers only unpaid work placements and employers are responsible for insurance coverage for employees.
- A Certificate II or III qualification, whether as a school based apprenticeship or traineeship or not, is one alternative that facilitates further integration of work and learning. Schools seeking to offer Certificate II or III qualifications should be encouraged to do so in partnership with TAFE institutes or other RTOs.
- Young people should be given a choice as whether they attain a senior secondary certificate or an equivalent vocational qualification at the Certificate II or III level.

### **Case Study 3 with a special focus on indigenous students - Charles Darwin University, Alice Springs**

Charles Darwin University (CDU) and Centralian Senior Secondary College (CSSC) are co-located on a single campus in Alice Springs, Northern Territory. Through various organisational incarnations, the two organisations have a formal, shared history dating from 1993 that continues to develop. Both organisations are characterised by having somewhere between 30 to 40% of their enrolments identifying as Aboriginal or Torres Straits Islanders. In other words, Indigenous education and training are mainstream business.

CSSC caters for about 550 students in years ten through twelve. CDU, as a dual sector University, delivers programs from a wide range of Vocational Education and Training (VET) packages for about 4000 students as well as higher education programs for about 250 students based in Central Australia. The University furnished some 62 000 hours of training to just over 500 CSSC students during 2008. This reflects the longer term strategic decisions about the use of shared facilities and an increasingly flexible approach to timetabling on the part of both parties.

CDU also provides VET training for the other two senior secondary providers in Alice Springs. Our Lady of the Sacred Heart College is a Catholic P-12 College with a senior secondary campus that adjoins the CDU campus and has a large number of students who participate in VET units that assist in achieving the Northern Territory Certificate of Education (NTCE) while gaining technical and employment skills. The independent day/boarding school, St Philips College, caters for students in years seven to twelve. CDU provides some delivery and auspicing of a limited number of VET programs that are tailored to meet the College's stated goals of producing well rounded students who are active in supporting their community. These focus mainly in the service industries with Tourism and Hospitality being the largest.

CSSC provides an intensive counselling/advisory service commencing when students are in year nine that ensures that students are exposed to the wide variety of options open to them that can lead to employment, further study and/or higher education. This includes close liaison with other organisations and programs that are active in the area such as Group Training NT, the Commonwealth Funded Local Community Partnership (YouthTrax), the NT Chamber of Commerce and Industry, the Aboriginal Employment Service and many other interested groups including the Clontarf Australian Football Academy.

One of the major issues facing training and education providers is the sheer number of specific programs and groups that are involved in the area of school to work transition. Many staff who are involved feel that their time is equally spent between coordination activities with the plethora of initiatives (often characterised by being of a 'pilot' nature or on relatively short term funding) and actually working with the students/parents/employers who are the intended beneficiaries of the services provided.

Students have a generic choice between one of two major academic pathways when they enrol at CSSC. However, it should be noted from the outset that there is opportunity for considerable movement between the two pathways and that there are elements of both used by a large number of students in order to construct an educational and training experience that is relevant to them.

The first is the Gateways/Work Ready program which has a major focus upon explicitly preparing students for employment. This might include work placements, direct employment, school-based apprenticeships or movement into an apprenticeship. The latter two are often completed through CDU so there is an easy physical and experiential movement between the two providers. Nearly 80 students have participated in the Gateways program in 2008 with 18 of those also achieving an NTCE.

Developing a timetable that is responsive to both community-based work related activities and more standard academic pursuits is at the core of the success of the Gateways/Work Ready program. In a very general sense, year twelve students are at school a minimum of two days per week, year eleven

students are at school a minimum of three days a week and year ten students cover their core subjects in four days a week leaving one day per week for work related activities. Students who do not have a formal work obligation such as a school-based apprenticeship or part time employment are offered opportunities for a variety of work placements to assist in making career and study choices, however, they must be enrolled in a VET subject to access these work placements.

About one third of students moving into year twelve have opted to take the Certificate One Retail and Vocational Studies A through CDU which requires them to undertake work placement. Many of these students have never been in paid employment. The intended outcomes include an ability to then apply for part time paid employment and to gain 'real world' experiences to assist in making decisions about future study options.

During 2008, some 90 students were enrolled in the NTCE program at year twelve level. About 50 of these students will use their NTCE results to apply for a university or VET course, 25 students have either gained employment or are seeking a full time apprenticeship/traineeship and 15 are planning to return for further study in 2009. Many of those returning have made a purposeful decision to extend their NTCE studies over a number of years due to sporting/employment obligations. Those who are employed, often work more than 20 hours per week and are considered to be self-supporting. 4 students who have high support needs will return to a work placement program in 2009.

The balance between work and study is a major issue facing students in Alice Springs. CSSC counsellors estimate that 95% of the non-Indigenous students are in some sort of paid employment. This appears to be related to the ease of finding casual employment in the Alice Springs job market and the students wanting to maintain a lifestyle that includes mobile telephones and automobiles. By the time these students reach senior secondary years, they have had a variety of jobs, understand the employment conditions quite well and make purposeful decisions about how their experiences influence their studies. Indigenous students appear to be less confident about initially seeking employment and often have greater sporting commitments.

One of the fascinating interactions between education, employment and income support is the now ubiquitous experience of a 'gap year' for students who intend to undertake full time tertiary studies. Of the 48 CSSC who intend to proceed to full time study, only four will proceed directly. Effectively, over 90% of students will take a gap year that revolves around undertaking paid employment. This will be used to save for relocation and living expenses as most will have to leave Alice Springs to study and to meet the minimum requirements for access to the Youth Allowance. The gap year also allows for a broadening of life skill and experiences and a break between intense periods of study.

Possibly the most intriguing part of the work of CDU and CSSC has been the development of a series of pathways that allows students to move relatively seamlessly between the Gateways and NTCE programs



and CDU studies. Many students change their pathway based upon their experiences at both school and at work. This allows for a 'try before you buy' attitude that allows students, parents and employers to make informed decisions without suffering major loss of time and investment. This comes about through a combination of factors that includes a community that values employment and study, educational institutions that are truly committed to providing a full range of options to students and are willing to be creative with funding sources and access to staff and facilities.

#### **Case study 4 - Tasmania Tomorrow - Changing Directions**

On 1 January 2009 the implementation of significant changes to post-compulsory education in Tasmania came into effect.

Under these changes three new organisations have been created from the preceding institutions of TAFE Tasmania, and the state's senior secondary Colleges. The changes are designed to develop flexible, innovative and alternative approaches to attaining a senior secondary certificate which supports students to combine work and study. In this regard the Tasmania Polytechnic is a significant case study.

The Tasmanian Polytechnic – will focus on practical applied learning with a vocational pathway, supported by academic Tasmanian Certificate of Education (TCE) courses, for both Year 11 and 12, and mature-age students seeking employment, career change, and/or university articulation;

Polytechnic education provides students with the opportunity to gain a nationally recognized qualification and a Tasmanian Certificate of Education (TCE). It has strong ties with industry and provides courses in a wide variety of fields that leads to and enhances employment.

When students completing Year 10 (who are generally older than their peers on the mainland) apply for a full-time TCE study program at the Polytechnic, they will be assisted to choose from a wide range of courses they need for program completion. Study time will be a balance between classroom activities, hands on training in a laboratory or workshop, or work placement to develop the skills they'll need in the workplace.

#### **Case study 5 Inner Metropolitan Perth - Swan Institute of TAFE**

The Ertech Construction Academy is a joint project between Swan TAFE and Ertech Pty Ltd that is designed to overcome chronic skills shortages in the civil construction Industry. The academy is located in the growth suburb of New Haven in the Perth Southern Suburbs and provides training and employment pathways for school based students.

The first cohort commenced in February 2008 and consists of a mix group of Indigenous and non-indigenous students from Southern River College and Clontarf, with each student undergoing an interview and screening process to determine suitability. Participants undertake training in the Certificate 1 in Resource and Infrastructure Operations which provides opportunity to learn civil construction skills utilising plant and equipment as they develop a "residential cul-de-sac". Swan TAFE and Ertech trainers deliver the training in collaboration to ensure that the training is engaging, industry specific and AQTF compliant.

The first intake of student resulted in an above average completion rate with Ertech employing the highest achievers of this project and providing higher level training through their apprenticeship and traineeship programs. It is however anticipated that all graduates will be attractive employees for other Civil Construction employers. This project is an excellent example of Industry working with training providers to achieve the mutual goals of skills acquisition, employment and economic growth. Ertech have identified the need to invest in the future of their industry and Swan TAFE has been responsive by working alongside Ertech to develop an academy which provides an engaging training environment that reflects the real world of civil construction while equipping participants with excellent work readiness skills.

#### **Case study 6 Inner Metropolitan Sydney- TAFE NSW-Sydney Institute, St George College**

Commencing in 2008, the St George College Trade School incorporated the existing TVET and Toyota T3 programs with new offerings for school based participants in electrotechnology, automotive and nursing. The new programs embed the Higher School Certificate program with off the job vocational training and work experience to give students vocational units of competence and work skills as part of their HSC. Students are enrolled as either school based apprentices or school based trainees. The Trade School also has 274 TVET students completing vocational subjects as part of their HSC.

Senior school students can start an apprenticeship or traineeship and their training will contribute to the HSC. This is a great opportunity for students who will be able to:

- Combine paid part-time work, training and school
- Receive their HSC
- Attend off the job training at St George Trade School
- Have a minimum of 100 days of paid employment.

Apprentices will complete the equivalent of the first year of a Certificate III trade course and continue their training once they graduate from school. Trainees will be able to complete their Certificate II and III AQF qualifications while still at school.

## **School participation**

Students from over 50 schools attend St George Trade School. Schools cover a wide geographical area with many students attending from St George area schools. Nursing and Automotive being specialist offerings at St George Trade School attract students from outside the St George area such as the Sutherland Shire and inner city. Both government and non government school students participate.

## **Employer participation**

**Nursing** Ramsey Health: 8 SBTs with St George Private Hospital; 1 SBT Hurstville Community Private Hospital

**Electrotechnology** Electro-group and placed with host employers ( Freedom Electrical; ACC Technologies; Metrolec)

**Automotive** Toyota dealerships in Sydney metropolitan area; also 1 Ford and 1 Holden dealership

**Property Services** Space Commercial Industrial Property, Ultimo

**Panel beating** Golbert Restorations, Arncliffe

TDA respondents suggest that a greater flexibility in the NSW model of senior secondary schooling would allow for even better balancing of the interplay between workplace employment (and learning) and school studies.

## **Comment**

TDA believes that the case studies illustrate more flexible approaches to attaining a senior secondary certificate that have been addressed by some states with apparent success. These jurisdictions recognise the value of the workplace as a learning resource rather than as a drain on students' school time.

### **3. Support that might be required to assist young people combining work and study to stay engaged**

TDA supports the response to this term of reference articulated by Canberra Institute of Technology:

*“Young people should be involved in a process that enables them to be supported, tracked and monitored to ensure that they remain on an appropriate learning pathway, one which is focused on protecting their interests.*

*The responsibility for this could lie with the school or other independent pathway planning/youth advisory service with whom these young people would be registered and should continue until the student reaches the age of 18.*

*Funding is required to provide this support and coordination. Where students are no longer at school, the funding that was allocated to the student’s school could be transferred to another provider to assist ensuring that these students do not fall through any gaps.*

*The income support system for young people needs to ensure that financial barriers to the successful participation of students from low socio economic backgrounds are removed. Where student work loads are high because of their need to fund their living expenses, this can have a negative impact on educational attainment”.*

In addition to issues of income support TDA members are of the view that there are other impediments to young people combining work and study - the limited operating hours of the school timetable; the lack of reliable public transport; and the limited use of guided self paced learning materials have generally prevented young people wishing to engage in work from accessing school education outside the usual times. Where a student’s hours at work increase there is likely to be concern expressed by the school and encouragement to reduce or restrict work hours.

Consequently TDA believes that for students to be appropriately supported these issues need to be addressed in a co-ordinated manner

#### **4. The potential impact on education attainment (including the prospects for post-compulsory qualifications and workforce productivity)**

In broad terms TDA supports the position taken by the National Industry Skills Committee, “The evidence is that increased exposure to the workplace improves the chances of young people finding employment and making better career choices as well as improving their work readiness”.<sup>8</sup>

However TDA supports the commissioning of work on assessing how student’s experience of workplaces through their part-time work can be more effectively linked to their personal development learning outcomes. In addition work should be commissioned on the specific impact of combined work and study on student attainment. TDA believes that for some students workplace contact will add greatly to their post school employment prospects and may assist in post school study.

Combinations of part-time work/study are being particularly tested in the context of school-based traineeships and apprenticeships. Where students see their workplace as offering more benefits (short term or otherwise) than their school work, they may make the choice to leave school and concentrate on work opportunities (impacting on Year 12 completions). However, as much of the research shows, employment thus gained is usually insecure and poorly paid, unless it is within the context of a contract of training.

TDA members argue that the models of school based apprenticeships and traineeships that are most successful are flexible and based on strong relationships between the employers, schools and a registered training organisation.

Transition programs conducted in schools by TAFE institutes, as illustrated on pages 20-27 do achieve positive outcomes for educational attainment and workforce productivity.

TDA strongly supports students having better access to pathways information. A Victorian respondent indicated that under the current Skills Reform Training Guarantee students under 20

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<sup>8</sup> “Getting Young People Work Ready: Positive Pathways to the Future” (May 2007)

years need to understand that they have options available until they are 20 that will not necessarily exist beyond that point.

## **5. The effectiveness of school-based pathways and their impact on successful transitions including opportunities for improvement (particularly) in relation to pathways to employment**

The whole area of mapping and promoting vocational pathways (in a wide variety of ways) for school students remains a long way from where it could be. The Riverina Institute is particularly concerned by the recent DEEWR study on attitudes and perceptions around VET (2008). This shows that many young people remain very unaware of the value of VET, to the extent that TAFE study is seen by them as not being conducive to enhanced career prospects. However, there is ample evidence of the work being done in TAFE Institutes to provide enhanced transition prospects, particularly where there is a level of disadvantage. The examples below provide support for this view.

### **Case study 7 Transition Programs within Regional NSW - TAFE NSW Riverina Institute**

- An initiative supporting year 9/10 indigenous students in Wagga has been a successful intervention, particularly as it offered alternate learning experiences that encouraged student retention. The MATES program (Mount Austin TAFE Experiences) gave students the opportunity to develop skills in either Automotive Spray Painting or Beauty Therapy, and it provided a glimpse into the further world of vocational education at a time when many indigenous students would normally be exiting the school system.
- Stage 5 (years 9 and 10) school VET programs have grown in popularity, particularly for students in small communities. These programs have received increased funding for 2009 and the NSW Board of Studies has expanded the access rules enabling more students to pursue studies that can be credited against their higher school certificate. By exploring VET programs earlier in their school career students can make better decisions about staying on at school and which learning pathway is right for them.
- Another facet of VET programs to address possible disadvantage has been the introduction in the Riverina region of VET programs for schools conducted on a block basis in school holiday times. These opportunities allow students from smaller centres with very limited course choices to

access additional VET programs on a block basis at various locations and have them credited against their school record.

- From time to time local schools approach TAFE campuses with requests for assistance for students regarded as 'at risk' of leaving school early or of making a less than satisfactory transition from school. By way of example the National Environment Centre (one of the Campuses of TAFE NSW Riverina Institute) was asked if a program could be developed based around generic farm skills. Students, primarily indigenous, attended on a one day per week basis and major changes were seen in their attitudes towards further work and training.
- A specialised Shearing School for school students was conducted at the famous Tubbo Station nearing Darlington Point in the Riverina region for students interested in a career in the wool industry. This program supported students from a wide region by offering a specific intensive program not otherwise available in their own location. Programs such as this, often under the banner of the NSW DET Taste of TAFE initiative, provide students with valuable skills and knowledge as they approach the key decision period around minimum school leaving age.
- Another example of targeted transition programs comes from the Finley area of NSW where selected students in year 10, who had a very negative attitude to their schooling, were offered the opportunity to participate in a unique Automotive studies program. These students undertook competencies from the Certificate I in Automotive plus they developed literacy, numeracy and job hunting skills. Another key ingredient of the program was a collaboration with the local car club. This program, based around strong linkages with industry and community, resulted in significant shifts in attitude and retention.
- For other students the concern is not about leaving school early but about maximising their pathway opportunities from school to TAFE study and on to advanced standing within a tertiary program. The Riverina Institute puts a great deal of effort into negotiating and promoting articulation opportunities with regional university partners. These arrangements maximise credit transfer and often they are based around a model of integrated TAFE and University delivery that reduces both time and cost and gives students the best of both worlds.



## **Case study 8 Regional WA – Great Southern Region of Western Australia**

### **Background:**

Great Southern TAFE is located in the Great Southern region of Western Australia, and delivers 850,000 SCH across a region of 40,000 sq km.

The College has developed strong relationships with government and non-government schools in the region, and in 2008 delivered 142,000 SCH to schools of which 47% was delivered under auspice.

Point 5 in the terms of reference of the Inquiry - *the effectiveness of school-based training pathways and their impact on successful transitions, including opportunities for improvement (particularly in relation to pathways to employment for disadvantaged young people)* - is of particular relevance to Great Southern TAFE, a regional RTO concerned with ensuring young people make effective transitions into the regional workforce.

There is a body of evidence that confirms that students in regional Australia have lower progression rates to university, and that qualification levels for the regional workforce continue to lag that for the metropolitan regions.

Through consultations with industry and education stakeholders Great Southern TAFE has identified that for the Great Southern, in common with much of regional Western Australia:

- Skills shortages are forecast in the para professions;
- Progression of regional students to university has been falling; and
- The drift of young people from the regions is creating a social imbalance.

The College further found that there was a strong perception in school and industry that VET delivery to school students should be held at the Certificate I/II level; and consequently the student cohort referred to VET in schools programs were either students intending to take up apprenticeships, or students who were struggling with traditional classroom based delivery.

This submission outlines a specific strategy developed to improve the workforce competitiveness of regional school leavers and to improve their educational attainment.

### **Strategy:**

Great Southern TAFE has invested in a delivery methodology to ensure students can remain at school in Years 11 and 12, and complete higher level VET qualifications. This program has been badged as **TAFELink** and is a strategy to:

- increase participation in VET higher level qualifications by students at regional high schools;
- Speed up entry to industry for young people who enter year 11 having already settled on a vocational pathway;
- Provide an alternative university entry pathway aligned to the economic & personal circumstances of many young people in regional WA;
- Deliver financial benefits to students by ensuring credit transfer arrangements between Great Southern TAFE and universities are clearly documented; and
- Complement the W.A. State Government policy to ensure that young people remain in education or training

The student cohort undertaking this program is one that previously would have not been considered for school based VET programs – these are students who have embarked on a matriculation pathway, but at the end of semester one in Year 11 have come to the conclusion that this pathway is unlikely to provide them with the results needed to secure a university place.

Under this program Great Southern TAFE and senior high schools negotiate the development of a student release pattern to accommodate students attending TAFE to study for a certificate III/IV whilst continuing their enrolment at school. In Western Australia up to 50% of the Western Australian Certificate of Secondary Graduation can comprise VET subjects. The outcome for the student is senior secondary graduation with a VET certificate IV.

Advantages of combining senior secondary graduation with a VET higher level qualification include:

- Direct articulation into VET Diploma from school as pre-requisite competencies have been completed;
- A VET certificate IV with secondary graduation meets the Minimum Entry Requirement for many universities;
- Possession of both a higher level VET qualification and senior secondary graduation improves both labour force competitiveness and productivity in the workplace; and
- Students continue to benefit from the social and pastoral aspects of attendance at school.

### **Outcomes:**

Although only in its second year of delivery, this has been an extremely well received program. Both Murdoch and Notre Dame Universities have confirmed that they will accept enrolments from students

graduating through this pathway. Edith Cowan University will accept this pathway as meeting entrance into the University Preparation Course; and Curtin University is considering endorsing this pathway as an equity strategy to increase enrolments of regional students in undergraduate qualifications.

Four high schools in the Great Southern region are now engaged in the TAFELink program. Students are enrolled in higher level qualifications in Information Technology, Financial Services, and Multimedia. In 2009 it is planned to broaden the scope of qualifications to include certificate III/IV qualifications in Conservation & Land Management, allied health, and children's services.

There has also been a significant level of interest in adopting this program in other non-metropolitan regions of Western Australia, and over the past 12 months Great Southern TAFE has been invited to conduct workshops on this model of delivery to staff of RTOs and schools in six regions.

## **Case study 9 Metropolitan Sydney – TAFE NSW Western Sydney Institute**

### **Case Study (i)**

#### **TAFE NSW – Western Sydney Institute Aboriginal Mentoring Program for Richmond and Windsor High School Students**

##### **Delivery**

This initiative was developed in response to the NSW Department of Education and Training's Aboriginal Education and Training Policy and the NSW Government's Aboriginal Affairs Plan 2003-2012: *Two Ways Together*.

Western Sydney Institute's Aboriginal Education and Training Unit customised, and conducted, the accredited TAFE course *Mentoring in the Community* Statement of Attainment for 28 students in years 9 and 10 from Richmond and Windsor High School. All students were Aboriginal and they provided support to other younger Aboriginal students in years 7 to 9. The course provides articulation and accreditation for those students wishing to study the NSW Board of Studies Higher School Certificate subject entitled: "Aboriginal Studies" which they can select in years 11 and 12 at high school.

##### **Course Outline**

This course in Mentoring was designed as part of the mainstream school program. Mentoring experience was gained by matching students with younger Aboriginal "kids at risk" of leaving school early.

The content included theory and practical components. Assessment was conducted through activities displaying skills learned.

The following factors contributed to the success of the program:

- partnerships between TAFE NSW – Western Sydney Institute, Schools and Aboriginal community groups
- customisation of course content for high school students
- assessment through demonstration and discussion at the time of delivery rather than ongoing theory practices
- course delivery modified to meet participants' individual needs
- recognition leading to accreditation in Aboriginal Studies for the Higher School Certificate
- strong career development components
- teacher chosen with specific skills to work with Aboriginal participants (previous experience and trained in Aboriginal Cultural Education Programs (ACEP))
- on school placement of mentors with “at risk” younger students
- duty of care provided at the school placement
- students and staff involved in evaluations on course completion.

## **Outcomes**

Twenty eight students completed the program in 2008. Each student mentored at least one Aboriginal younger student identified as being “at risk” of leaving school early.

## **Case Study (ii)**

### **TAFE NSW – Western Sydney Institute TAFE LINK for At Risk Early School Leavers in the Hawkesbury**

#### **Delivery**

This initiative was developed in response to the high numbers of local Hawkesbury High School students who were identified as being “at risk” of leaving school early by their School Counsellors and Home School Liaison Officers ( HSLOs). A partnership was developed to combine school based programs with TAFE Outreach programs for identified “kids at risk”. Students attended school for three to four days a week and TAFE for one to two days a week for one term.

#### **Course Outline**

This accredited TAFE NSW Outreach Access course was designed to complement the mainstream school program. The Outreach modules included Education and Employment Options, Employability Skills, Work-placements, TAFE Tasters in vocational courses such as Agriculture, Animal Care,

Horticulture, Information Technology and Business. The modules offered varied depending on the student's needs and interests.

The following factors contributed to the success of the program:

- partnerships between TAFE NSW, Schools and community support groups
- customisation of course content for high school students
- assessment through demonstration and discussion at the time of delivery rather than ongoing theory practices
- course delivery modified to meet participants' individual needs
- strong career development components
- vocational TAFE tasters to interest students in practical career based programs
- teachers chosen with specific skills to work with youth at risk with special learning needs
- students and staff involved in evaluations on course completion

### **Outcomes**

Annually 20 students complete the program. The course is offered each year.

### **Case Study (iii)**

#### **TAFE NSW – Western Sydney Institute - TAFE delivered School based apprenticeships and traineeships**

The **TAFE NSW – Western Sydney Institute** delivers training for both school based apprentices and trainees. These provide students with the opportunity to attain a nationally recognised Vocational Education and Training (VET) qualification as well as their NSW Higher School Certificate. These programs enable students to gain valuable work skills and experience through part-time paid work.

The Institute enrolled 159 school based apprentices and trainees in 2008 in a wide range of industry areas including Hairdressing, Metal Fabrication, Meat Retailing, Horticulture, Automotive, Plumbing, Carpentry and Joinery, Electrical Trades, Beauty Therapy, Commercial Cookery and Animal Studies.

The Institute has a 'can do' attitude. If an employer signs up a school based apprentice or trainee the Institute provides the off-the-job training and pursues all avenues to ensure that the training contributes towards units of the student's Higher School Certificate.

The Institute delivers courses to a local school in a pattern to fit the school's timetabling – two hours by two hours per week instead of a four hour block. This enables more students to access TAFE NSW training in the Industry Curriculum Framework courses which are those developed by the NSW Board of Studies specifically for school students in a range of industry areas. Work placement is a mandatory component of these courses.

#### **Case Study (iv)**

##### **TAFE NSW – Western Sydney Institute - Open Training and Education Network - TAFE delivered School based apprenticeships and traineeships**

The Open Training and Education Network (OTEN) is the specialist distance education provider for TAFE NSW.

OTEN is providing a flexible model of delivery to enable a high school student in a country region to undertake a school based traineeship while completing a work placement in his local region.

A student of Deniliquin High School commenced Year 11 in 2008 and is undertaking a school based traineeship to complete a Certificate II in Information Technology delivered through the Open Training and Education Network. He will continue through 2009.

The student is working with a local computer store in Deniliquin. This work placement enables the student to gain hands-on experience and apply the skills he has learnt through his course. The student's work placement commitment consists of a total of 120 days over a two year period, working one afternoon per week during term, five days in each school vacation period and 10 days on completion of his Higher School Certificate.

#### **Case Studies (v & vi)**

##### **TAFE NSW – Western Sydney Institute - Open Training and Education Network (OTEN) - Outreach Youth Equity Programs**

The **Outreach Youth Equity** section of the Open Training and Education Network has developed a successful model of delivery that is helping to meet the educational needs of young people who have not been able to engage in mainstream education.

Elements of the Open Training and Education Network's flexible distance delivery model include:

- small modules
- self paced, individual learning that encourages ownership
- portable, able to be studied at home, able to be continued at any place at any time

- appropriate, engaging materials.

Liaising closely with community providers the Open Training and Education Network has developed partnerships with clearly defined roles. The Open Training and Education Network provides:

- assessment
- educational case management by youth friendly teachers
- distance education materials
- learning pathway plan.

Community and Youth Services may provide:

- holistic case management
- suitable venue
- mentoring.

### **Case Study (v)**

**Eagles RAPS, Doonside**, (a youth group committed to the prevention of youth suicide) case manages a large cohort of youth at risk, young people aged from 15 to 18 years, who have disengaged from education and who have not completed their NSW School Certificate (year 10). Outreach at the Open Training and Education Network enrolls and delivers a Certificate 1 in Access to Work and Training, which consists of employability skills units and specific vocational units in areas such as Business Administration, Information Technology and Aged Care. These units are nationally recognised and provide pathways into vocational courses at Certificate level I, II and III.

### **Case Study (vi)**

**Babes with Babes** is a young mothers group from the NSW Central Coast. The majority of participants left school before completing their NSW School Certificate (year 10). These young mothers are supported through co-enrolment with the TAFE NSW - Hunter Institute. They enrol at the Open Training and Education Network in the Certificate 1 in Access to Work and Training. While some students choose to articulate into the Certificate II in General and Vocational Education (TAFE NSW equivalent year 10), others having experienced successful completions in vocational units, articulate directly into Certificate II level vocational courses and receive recognition of prior learning for work completed.

## **Case Study (vii)**

### **TAFE NSW Western Sydney Institute - TAFE Taster School Programs**

In 2008 Western Sydney Institute conducted “TAFE Taster” programs for a number of high schools in the Western Sydney region. This was a joint initiative of the TAFE NSW Western Sydney Institute, the Nirimba Business Centre (a division of the Blacktown Regional Economic and Employment Development (BREED) taskforce) and Western Sydney High Schools.

Eight different programs were offered in skill shortage areas including Carpentry, Hairdressing and Hospitality. Places were limited and 240 students participated overall.

The programs were designed to ensure participants were able to gain hands-on experience in a trade area during the week long intensive programs.

All students who participated in TAFE Taster programs received a certificate of attendance and some also received additional competencies.

## **Case Study (viii)**

### **TAFE NSW – Western Sydney Institute – Try-A-Trade Skills to Schools Roadshow**

In 2008, a “Try-a-Trade Skills to Schools Roadshow” was provided for 431 high school students in years 9 -12 from a range of high schools in the Western Sydney region. The Roadshow was hosted by Kingswood High School over two days. TAFE NSW staff provided support to enable students to obtain practical hands-on experience in a range of trade areas on school grounds.

## **Case Study 10 – TAFE SA**

TAFE SA delivers a range of programs for young people to increase and enhance learning and future pathways including those into employment. Ongoing programs delivered include Learn to Earn, Vocational Preparation, Apprentice and Traineeship programs and Alternative Learning Options Program (ALOP). Ongoing partnerships with the provision of VET in schools also contribute to increased outcomes for school students to gain employment or venture into further study including the uptake of apprenticeships. TAFE SA continues to provide students with learning support, counselling and information services to enable young people to be well informed about learning, training choices and pathways they can access following their studies. These complimentary services become vital in assisting young people to recognise the collective benefits of study and work.

The following snap shot of initiatives were targeted to respond to the unique study needs of young people in South Australia:



- Manufacturing, Engineering and Transport established pathways in partnership with key stakeholders to encourage young students to undertake skill training. This resulted in increased apprentice enrolments and VET in Secondary School relationships with Southern Futures.
- Learn to Earn successfully reconnects very disengaged young people and homeless into learning or earning.
- Vocational Preparation has 90% success rate in providing pathways into employment or further study for its learners based on an internal survey conducted on exited students in December 2006.
- Justice Studies and the South Australia Police (SAPOL) commenced a review TAFE SA pre-vocational law enforcement training due to the significant shortage of appropriately qualified applicants for entry to policing in South Australia.

In addition TAFE SA has been trialling an industry-led program that works with disadvantaged youth creating opportunities for workplace learning on the job and increasing young people's confidence and self-esteem. This has involved a partnership with The Smith Family and the Department of Education and Children's Services (DECS) / independent schools in the southern metropolitan area, in the areas of manufacturing / engineering and community services

The "Learn to Earn" program has demonstrated how TAFE SA implements strategies for delivering equity among under-represented groups. TAFE SA has invested in the provision of equity in learning to this group by creating a youth friendly environment and a student-centred hands-on approach to learning through task-based projects.

The Dreams to Reality Hospitality project reported successful outcomes for 2007 which involved partnering of South Australia Works, TAFE SA, Save the Children and Hyatt Regency Adelaide. Eleven out of work and disadvantaged teens were involved in the program and were provided with a 2-week intensive introduction to knowledge and skills required to be a chef, including cooking techniques, nutrition, kitchen hygiene and occupational health and safety at the Hospitality program at Adelaide City Campus.

Training was complemented by on-the-job work experience at the Hyatt Regency Adelaide hotel. Participants completed their training program by using their new skills in a real life scenario at the Save the Children Gala Dinner last month with 300 plus guests in attendance.

Dreams to Reality program resulted in 11 students completing the program and receiving parchments, 9 students had apprenticeship offers, 1 student has been offered a kitchen hand position and 1 student has returned to school to continue their secondary education.

The "Kickstart" program enables TAFE SA to link with several schools, industry partners, parents and young people in the Southern districts to provide key vocational skills development. Skills areas included advanced manufacturing, building and construction, retail, health and hospitality. It places learners at the centre of a model for engaged and motivated learning, the program supports disengaged youth to re-engage with school, TAFE or work through individualised and mentoring programs.

The GetSET 50 Program at Port Augusta has been created in response to One Steel and other local industries need for an emerging workforce. Cooperation between industry, TAFE SA, employment agencies, Department of Further Education, Employment, Science and Technology (DFEEST), Northern Regional Development Board, Career Employment Group, Centrelink and the Australian Technical College (ATC) – Spencer Gulf and Outback has also contributed to the development of the 11 week program. This program has targeted young people between 16 and 19 years who have been disconnected from the education and employment systems.

The program outcomes have produced 29 successful graduates in 2007, 12 of whom are Indigenous and 2 female. The industry groups involved provided 24 Australian School Based Apprenticeships (ASBAs) positions into which the suited participants will be employed. All of the ASBAs will be in the identified skill shortage areas with the majority being in metal trades. As a component of the ASBAs, the participants will also be enrolled in the ATC to continue studying toward their SACE certificate.

### **Comment**

The case studies illustrate TAFE/school collaboration in supporting school based pathways to improve successful transitions for young people into employment or further study.

It should be noted that some TAFE institutes issued a warning about attempting to engage students too early in their schooling in VET programs that have no credibility with employers. "Our experience suggests that the most effective school based programs are those that are tripartite, entry level and have clear articulation into higher level qualifications. The three important parties are the students, employers and RTO with the program being driven by a common goal of transition to employment. Ideally, the acquisition of higher level skills takes place through an employment based training pathway upon completion (Swan TAFE)".

## Conclusion

TDA is of the view that school based pathways could be improved in the following ways:

- enabling and supporting alternative and more flexible approaches to education and engagement of young people in vocational skills;
- facilitating communication, information-sharing and transitions between sectors (schools, youth services CIT, other RTOs) which would greatly improve pathways for young people;
- utilising the valuable learning opportunity that paid and unpaid work provides;
- funding arrangements that support collaborative and flexible approaches between different sectors and providers.
- ensuring that financial barriers don't prevent some young people from accessing the full range of options.
- providing better and earlier career information and planning;
- more practical choices for school students so more students start their apprenticeships at school as well as continuing their general education which is valuable for its own sake;
- incentives for completion of courses by young people; subsidised travel and help with equipment/tools;
- greater use of flexible and technology-based learning options for older students to equip them better for the world of work and further study, and to allow for flexible attendance patterns so that vocational and work based learning can be integrated into secondary education and certified more seamlessly;
- a promotional campaign focusing on parents which promotes the benefit of vocational education pathways for students.

# Attachment 1

## **TAFE Directors Australia's response to the House of Representatives Standing Committee Inquiry into 'Combining school and work: supporting successful youth transitions'**

TAFE Directors Australia (TDA) incorporated contributions from the following TDA members:

- Canberra Institute of Technology, ACT
- Charles Darwin University, NT
- Chisholm Institute of TAFE, Victoria
- Great Southern TAFE, WA
- Holmesglen Institute of TAFE, Victoria
- TAFE NSW – Riverina
- TAFE NSW – Sydney Institute
- TAFE NSW – Western Sydney Institute
- TAFE SA
- TAFE Tasmania
- Swan TAFE