

Submission to the Inquiry into the role of the technical and further education (TAFE) system and its operation

I wish to make a submission to the Senate Inquiry into the Role of Technical and Further Education (TAFE) System and its Operation.

I wish to preface my comments as someone who has had the pleasure and privilege to work in TAFE NSW between 1975 and retired on the 4 July 2013. I consider myself as a Kangan Kid taking on the principles of Technical and Further Education from the 1970, which developed TAFE into an organization of further education opening up opportunities and capabilities of several millions students over the years. It added to it traditional Technical skills and qualifications of the post World War II years to a more post-modern and most modern economic and social organisation.

I am concerned that development of the VET sector and narrowing skill focus has diminished the capability and scope of TAFE and its contribution to the post School Adult education and training organisation.

a. The Role played by TAFE in: as a the established publically accountable provider of Vocational and Technical and Technical and Further Education is critical to the economic, social, cultural and community development in Australia and Australia's capacity to be and active contributor to the global economy and societies at large

i) Educational linkages with secondary and higher education: are of critical importance to enable pathways and transition to technical and further education to be provided to the majority of young people and second chance students who have missed out on their initial educational opportunities due to lack of support or due to reality of disadvantaged life circumstances. In addition many young people clearly wish to take up opportunities to pursue technical and employment skill development opportunities whilst they are still at School. TAFE is of critical importance to provide supplementary expertise to enable young people to pursue technical and circuit breaker education and training to enable youth to connect and reconnect with the high school and subsequent educational pathways especially given the raising of the school leaving age to 17 years in most states in Australia.

ii) The development of skills in the Australian economy: is of critical importance given the development of the Post Industrial Economy and Society. The economy has changed enormously in the past 30 years. The economy has shifted to the Tertiary service and skill requirement sector. It has shifted in employment numbers and proportions away from the Primary and Manufacturing industries largely due to technological change. The growth in the communication, community service requirements, cultural and creative industries, environmental and financial services all in a digital global interconnected exchange requires educational and re educational adaptable knowledge, attributes and skill development

iii) The development of opportunities for Australians to improve themselves and increase their life, education and employment prospects: TAFE as an accessible quality public education provider is of critical importance to the formation and reformation of Australia's Human Capital and Resource stock and potential. The TAFE system has a very substantial record and capability in the provision of reasonable opportunities for individuals and organizations to engage in processes of continuous improvement, which enables the realization of potential development for individuals and enterprises.

iv) 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: Australia is a very rich nation which has over 40% of its population coming from multicultural backgrounds. It also has a very rich and diverse Indigenous mix of Australia's first people. Our cultural mix and resettlement requires that we provide inclusive and active programs to support regions, communities and pathways to education programs for the good of social cohesion and economic opportunity for all of our people. This in turn

provides strength and returns to Australia in relation to the Global economy, scientific, social, environmental and democratic development.

b. The effect of a competitive training market on TAFE: has been overwhelming in several state jurisdictions. The notion of open competition is a destructive ideology when left unchecked by governing agencies. It fails to recognize the value of collaboration, continuity, capacity building, public capability and consolidation advantages which emerge from ensuring publically accountability. A well resourced TAFE need to ensure ongoing TAFE (knowledge, skills and attributes) in a good measure for the Australian economy and society. Competition and innovation have parts to play in skills development and TAFE system ... however this needs to a managed and monitored process to ensure that the overall balance between public and private provision is well maintained in a dynamic and sustainable manner and mix.

c. What public funding is adequate to ensure TAFEs remain in a strong and sustainable position to carry out their aims: TAFE funding needs to be provided in ample portions. TAFE is a collaborative and in part a counter economic cycle contributor to the human capital development and over all contributor to the economic and social development of Australia in a global context. Funding of TAFE needs to recognize that individual students contribute substantial financial and in-kind resources, which provide great capabilities and returns to the Australian Economy and Society. The returns need to be seen as returns on investment to commercial, public and social enterprises and in turn to the global economy. We need to keep the balance of commercial, public and third sector developments in a supportive and dynamic balance.

d) What factors affect the affordability and accessibility of TAFE to students and businesses: Many student languish in situations of multiple disadvantage and need additional support to engage and sustain their participation in TAFE and the VET sectors. Many small business owners are dependent on TAFE providing a skilled workforce and new skills to enable their businesses to be established, survive and thrive in changing economic, regulatory, digital and environmental and socially changing times. Funding contributions need to be carefully considered and provided.

e) Different mechanisms used by state and governments to allocate funding: TAFE needs to have a wide range of resources to enable reasonable adjustment to be equitably provided as part of a social and economic contract which keeps Australia at the fore front of world social, environmental and economic development. Some scope needs to be provided to ensure that TAFE and VET development is done in a manner which ensures some consistency and comparability of provision across and between state jurisdictions and which also allows to the ability to meet diverse needs and circumstances. This requires accountable and developmental support to ensure the over all integrity of the VET and TAFE quality of provision.

f) The application and effect of additional charges to TAFE students: TAFE and VET reach across the widest cross section of society and educational areas. The impact of current trends towards the user pays increasing amounts will render TAFE and VET beyond the reach and range of many of the 25% of high need members of our society. The economic situation is becoming increasingly divided in a digital age. The result is an increase in mental health and disadvantage due to digital and financial divide and the decrease in the social equity provisions, which ensure a more inclusive society and economy.

Other:

VET and TAFE research capabilities need to be increased to ensure that evidence based information is provided to ensure optimum development of the TAFE and VET capability in relation to policy and practice. Effective Research capability and ongoing developments need grow to ensure that Australia continues to be at the forefront of the knowledge, skills and

attribute development. Australia needs to keep investing in a balanced manner to ensure the efficiency, effectiveness and efficacious capabilities for all.

TAFE needs to be seen and developed in the context of the whole Education industry and recognized being suitably integrated with Schools and University education. It needs to be recognized for its great contributions to practical and applied learning and skill development making critical contributions to the wider range of industries, the economy, individuals, communities and society .

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