

Inquiry into Community Safety in Regional and Rural Communities – 24 February 2025

Supplementary questions

QUESTION 1:

How does the TAFE NSW early school leavers initiative work? Does this initiative operate at all TAFE campuses? Does it operate for students accessing TAFE courses online?

- a. What proportion of the young people identified for this program are Aboriginal?**
- b. What qualifications do students complete in this program? Are there any supports to help students enter the workforce?**
- c. How do students access scholarships and support services associated with the initiative?**

ANSWER:

The Educational Pathways Program (EPP) is managed by the NSW Department of Education to support alternative learning pathways for students in their final years of secondary education. TAFE NSW's Early School Leavers program is one of eight initiatives under the broader EPP. The program aims to help early school leavers under the age of 17 transition from school to study at TAFE NSW through wraparound services such as:

- Personalised student support: Regular check-ins with a dedicated Student Support Officer to monitor progress and provide guidance.
- Financial assistance: Scholarships to assist with day-to-day study needs including the purchase of necessary equipment (e.g. laptops, PPE, tools).
- Academic skill-building: Tutorial courses to support literacy and numeracy development.
- Specialist support services: Access to career counselling, Aboriginal or disability student support services to ensure every student has the help they need to succeed.

The Early School Leaver initiative can be accessed by students from the 182 eligible EPP schools at any TAFE NSW campus. Eligible EPP schools are determined by the NSW Department of Education. There are currently students at more than 60 TAFE NSW campuses accessing the initiative. An early school leaver is eligible to access the support under the EPP initiative, via their online enrolment, if the school they last studied at (and left) was an approved EPP school.

(a)

In 2025, there are currently 189 students who are eligible and have 'opted in' to access early school leaver support. Of these, 23% identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander.

(b)

The Early School Leaver EPP initiative is not aligned with specific qualifications. It provides wrap-around support to eligible students, who opt in, whilst undertaking training and assessment in their chosen qualification.

(c)

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Students in the Early School Leaver EPP initiative are supported through regular check-ins with a dedicated Student Support Officer to discuss identified barriers and available support options.

QUESTION 2:

Does TAFE NSW deliver any programs that specifically target young people in the youth justice system (similar to the Queensland Government's [Transition 2 Success](#) program)

ANSWER:

TAFE NSW delivers programs to students enrolled in Youth Justice Centre schools via the VET in Secondary Schools EVET program. These programs support young people in the Youth Justice Centres to work towards their Higher School Certificate via the NSW Education Standards Authority (NESA) approved delivery, while equipping them with practical skills that can help them transition back into the community, provide a pathway to further study and/or secure employment.

The 2024 calendar year saw more than 150 students across five Youth Justice Centres enrolled in a range of NESA-endorsed programs including Construction, Primary Industries, Animal Care, Hospitality, Fitness and Information Technology. Skill set programs are developed in consultation with each Youth Justice School based on the vocational needs of the students, enabling students to build towards full qualification outcomes.

Additional initiatives with the NSW Department of Education focus on skills needed in regional and rural industries, including training in sheep shearing and fence construction. The shearing program, recently rolled out at Riverina Youth Justice Centre in Wagga Wagga, provides hands-on training in preparing shearing equipment, handling sheep, shearing and crutching, and wool pressing. This program is delivered by the TAFE NSW Primary Industries Centre and is funded by the NSW Department of Education. Additionally, accredited training in farm fencing was conducted at Cobham Youth Justice Centre, where participants learned to install, maintain, and repair fences.

QUESTION 3:

How is TAFE NSW ensuring that its course offerings are aligned to the needs of regional areas and communities, particularly those with high rates of youth crime?

ANSWER:

TAFE NSW is enhancing its community engagement approach through initiatives like TAFE Connects, an annual program designed to better understand and respond to local community needs.

TAFE Connects aligns with the NSW VET Review Interim Report recommendations and includes statewide digital engagement open to all NSW communities, and in-person workshops at select locations.

This initiative empowers communities to share insights on how TAFE NSW can improve training, support services, and facilities to better meet local needs.

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Community feedback gathered through TAFE Connects is integrated into strategic planning via the Training Portfolio Strategy and Education Delivery Plan, influencing course offerings and delivery methods.

TAFE NSW is committed to aligning its training to support the diverse learning needs of its students, together with the evolving needs of the state's local and regional industries and communities. Through the current annual education planning cycle, TAFE NSW adapts and aligns course offerings and delivery approaches to ensure delivery remains responsive to current, emerging and future skill needs of NSW.

QUESTION 4:

How can TAFE NSW's programs be better integrated with other government initiatives aimed at reducing youth crime?

ANSWER:

The NSW Government's Submission to the Committee on Law and Safety highlights that whole-of-government place-based approaches to service delivery have the potential to address underlying issues and drivers of crime. TAFE NSW's programs, providing opportunities for skill development to support job readiness, can be integrated with other initiatives from a whole-of-government perspective to assist communities with high youth crime rates.

In addition, TAFE NSW offers a range of courses designed to equip individuals with the skills to support vulnerable community members, including at-risk youth. These programs focus on developing knowledge in areas such as community services, youth work, and family intervention, preparing graduates to make meaningful contributions in their communities.