

Legislative Council – NSW Government

Inquiry into Vocational Education and Training in NSW

September 2015

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| Date: <i>23/9/15</i> |
| Resolved to publish Yes / No |

I wish to thank members of the Legislative Council Committee for this opportunity to address the inquiry into Vocational Education and Training in NSW. I also wish to acknowledge the Gadigal people of the Eora Nation and to pay my respects to the aboriginal people past and present.

I am here today as an active member of the TAFE Community Alliance which has made a 20 page submission to the Inquiry which raises various points of advocacy and concern in relation to the Terms of Reference of the Inquiry.

In addition I wish to draw the Inquiry's attention to various background reports relating to VET / TAFE which provide a foundation to better understand the VET sector and its development in NSW.

I refer members to the following publications:

- Spanners, Easels and Microchips 1883 – 1983
- Sweet Road to Progress 1884 – 1949 Joan Cobb The History of State Technical Education in NSW to 1949, Sydney NSW Department of Education and Training
- United Nations Declaration of Human Rights 1948 articles 23, 26, 27 in relation to work, technical education and participation in the cultural and scientific life of the community
- From Tech to TAFE 1949 – 1997 Gillian Goozee
- TAFE Restructuring 1989 - Brian Scott
- TAFE Commission Act 1990
- The Ever Changing World of TAFE NSW – Australian College of Education Monograph No 32 March 1998 - Kevin Heys
- Inquiry into Public Education – Tony Vinson 2002
- NSW TAFE Statement of Owner Expectations Aug 2013
- Many other inquiries and documents have been published at a national and international level to provide insight and direction for the ongoing development of the supply of labor for economic and social purposes.

The questions arise of what do we want VET to look like and what do we want VET to do???

VET / TAFE traditionally was known as a working persons Institute which focused on practical and applied scientific knowledge and the Arts. Its genesis came from the Mechanics Institutes and Schools of Arts.

The system has evolved into Technical Education, TAFE and now VET and Skill and Training Organizations. The purpose is to increase the knowledge skills and attributes of workers and potential workers to improve the capabilities and capacities of individuals and organizations.

The Motivation and Motto has been to improve the foundation and functionality of the "head, hands and hearts"

The Domains of Knowledge Skill and attributes have been developed in the fields of STEM and HASS ie the Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics along with the Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences.

Qualifications and courses have been developed and graded in accordance with the AQF 1- 10 – Certificates I-IV, Diplomas, Degrees and Higher Degrees.

The purpose is to improve the capabilities / ^{capacities} capabilities of individuals / organizations in their work and the working of commercial, public and social enterprises given the 1st, 2nd and 3rd sectors of the economy.

The outcomes expected are to improve the bottom line measures in terms of economics / finance; education; environmental; equity; personal, social and sustainability measures.

The Challenge facing the VET / TAFE system is how do we better manage the impacts of the digital age; disruptive technologies and distributional inequities borne out of emerging VET Business and market practices. How do we ensure inclusive participation in VET and in turn positive, productive, sustainable prosperity for people and the public at large.

TCA has canvassed widely in recent years to understand what are Societies Expectations of TAFE?

Various concerns have been raised relating to competition and free enterprise; funding conflicts between for profit and public providers; economic and social capital developments; varied quality of provision.

People want VET / TAFE to help build and ensure relevant skills for productive economic and communities; support for emerging industries; support environmental sustainability; to help address youth employment; up skill mature age workers; address social disadvantage; support for special needs and ability students; meet the needs of migrants and refugees; ensure relevant support of Aboriginal students and their communities; ensure gender equity accessibility and affordability programs.

This means that the system needs to be professionally staffed and supported with relevant link to industries and communities in the context of on going adult education, technologies and quality improvement.

Further insight may be gained by looking at interstate shifts and development in the provision of VET / TAFE; Demographic studies; Labour market reviews in relation to skills for the future and International labour market considerations.

Kevin Heys

