



OPENING STATEMENT TO COMMITTEE MEMBERS 18 September 2015

Passmores College, founded in 1982, is a small Christian not-for-profit institution based in Newcastle NSW offering one year face to face courses dedicated to work-ready training. Student numbers in recent years have ranged from 35 to 50 students with a graduate completion rate annually in excess of 90% and the graduate employment rate in excess of 95%. This has been the case for the 31 years from 1983 to 2014 inclusive.

Comments relating to the Terms of Reference:

- 1 (a) The major deterrent influencing students not to enter the vocational education system is the subliminal 'message' delivered by most school educators that those not proposing to enter university are in some way 'second class citizens'.
- 1 (b) Passmores is in the process of partnering with two universities and has informal links with a number of schools. The offering of Distances Courses is being considered. **Other than this I do not believe I can comment with authority on items (i) to (iv).**
- 1 (c) The main factor affecting the cost of delivery of training is the grouping of large with small providers as one overall entity. The result is that many of the new mandatory procedures have a disproportionately high impact on small providers who generally have higher completion rates than large providers.
- 1 (d) As Passmores has a limited capability to offer courses to students suffering a disability or disadvantage I do not believe I can comment with authority on this matter.
- 1 (e) The level of industry participation now required is unrealistic and not supported by industry. **I would appreciate the opportunity to expand on this matter.**
- 1 (f) As the Smart and Skilled reforms appear to have no effect on our institution I do not believe I can comment with authority on this matter.
- 1 (g) Whilst accreditation and VET Fee Help are Federal matters I believe the extensive problems in these areas has a marked effect on NSW providers and am hopeful these could be included in the Terms of Reference as 'other related matters'.

I met with Senator Birmingham on 26 March 2015 with a proposal to save the government several hundred thousand dollars annually. It was difficult for the Senator as planned new directives, albeit only partially effective, were due to be released a few days later on 1 April 2015. **The existing audit procedures should be reviewed by Chartered Accountants who are the trained experts in this field.** The result would be the savings stated above and control over unethical providers who jointly have benefitted to the extent of approximately one billion dollars over the last five years.

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