

INQUIRY INTO VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING IN NEW SOUTH WALES

Response to question taken on notice during the hearing conducted on 12th October 2015 at Nowra TAFE.

I was asked to provide information regarding a facebook advertisement that offered a Cert 4 in Building and Construction without any classroom time viewed on 11/10/2015. The Facebook advertisement was from a company called Get Qualified Pty /Ltd. Facebook banners and flyers are not easily retrievable but the company's website carries similar claims to those mentioned by me at the hearing on 12/10/2015 including the 'no classroom time required' claim. This can be found at; http://enquire.ggaustralia.com.au/get-qualified-rpl-2/?qu=certificate%20iv%20training%20and%20assessment&m=b&p=1o2&gclid=CjwKEAiw1_KwBRDEz_WvncL4jGwSJAAEym0dHhiXG3iE15If9RXf6ZwCHrxslmtAO0sjMbfjp3CfhoCeGTw_wcB

Supplementary questions emailed to me on 21/10/2015

INQUIRY INTO VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING IN NEW SOUTH WALES

Supplementary questions on notice - Nowra Hearing – Monday 12 October 2015

Questions for Mr Keith Bourke, Teacher Consultant, TAFE NSW Illawarra

Institute

1. Please explain the concept of 'education' in contrast to 'training' and indicate:
 - a. Why is it, in your experience, important for the student and for society?
 - b. Does Smart and Skilled for a particular qualification provide funding for education that is not directly necessary to achieve training outcomes?
 - i. If not, please explain what the implications are for:
 1. TAFE, and
 2. private for-profit providers.
2. Please explain the work of a TAFE teacher consultant and the significance of that work to TAFE students and the community.
3. How many TAFE Consultants at the Illawarra Institute have lost their positions as a result of restructuring or other changes since 2011?
 - a. How many were there before the restructuring began?
 - b. Please explain the impacts on students and TAFE of this change.

Responses to Supplementary questions emailed to me on 21/10/2015

1. 'Education' and 'training' are not mutually exclusive activities and they are clearly overlapping concepts. The Macquarie Dictionary defines 'education' as 'the act of developing faculties and powers by teaching, instruction or training' while defining 'training' as 'the development in oneself or another of certain skills, habits and attitudes'. In my view these two terms have been used so broadly and inconsistently in contemporary debates regarding vocational education and training in NSW that any fundamental differences in definition are now less important than the political polarisation that has typically sought to contrast the relative values and merits of privatised 'training' organisations against the values and merits of public vocational 'education' and training institutions.

It seems, from a review of online articles that discuss the differences between 'training' and 'education' that a popular view within the business sector, is that 'training' pertains to practical skill development while 'education' pertains only to the acquisition of knowledge or theory, <http://www.corporatelearningnetwork.com/strategy-tactics/articles/the-difference-between-training-and-education-redirect/>. Similarly, some private training organisations have expressed the view that 'education' is about foundation skills such as those taught in schools whilst 'training' prepares people to perform work related activities.

<http://elearningindustry.com/education-and-training-what-is-the-difference>

In my view, such distinctions do not take into account current understandings of the nature of human learning.

All purposeful human behaviour requires intellectual processing as well as practical or performance skills. For example the behaviour of handwriting when closely reviewed, reveals a vast range of constituent competencies including substantial retained knowledge of the elements of written language as well as pattern recognition skills along with intricate and co-ordinated assembly of gross and fine motor functions and sensory/neurological monitoring. [http://www.islington.gov.uk/publicrecords/library/Education-and-skills/Information/Guidance/2012-2013/\(2012-11-20\)-Handwriting-guidance-final.pdf](http://www.islington.gov.uk/publicrecords/library/Education-and-skills/Information/Guidance/2012-2013/(2012-11-20)-Handwriting-guidance-final.pdf) Writing is usually considered to be a foundation skill but it is clearly central to many practical work related tasks.

Another clear example of the inaccuracy of the popular distinction between knowledge and skills can be drawn from a quick perusal of almost any unit of competency contained within the Australian Qualifications Framework <https://training.gov.au>. Exploring the example of the Unit of Competency for *SITHCCC203 - Produce Stocks Sauces and Soups*

<https://training.gov.au/Training/Details/SITHCCC203>

The following unit description is found: *'This unit describes the performance outcomes, **skills and knowledge** required to prepare various stocks, sauces and soups in a commercial kitchen or catering operation. It requires the ability to select and prepare ingredients, and to use relevant equipment and cookery methods.'*

Clearly, knowledge and skills are central to any purposeful human activity and any competent attempt to encourage others to learn requires well planned and co-ordinated activities designed carefully to prompt the development knowledge and skills. In my view, it is entirely incompetent for anyone involved in the vocational education and training industry to emphasise some elements of human learning over others. Thus I consider that it misleading to argue about the relative merits of 'Training' and 'Education' as this debate serves only as a distraction from the more important question of 'What are the essential elements of high quality vocational education and training?' .

Returning to the example of the Unit of competency SITHCCC203 - Produce Stocks Sauces and Soups;

A high quality VET provider may;

- Employ teachers who are also qualified and experienced chefs who also hold substantial qualifications in education and training.
- Aim to build interest, fascination and knowledge of the history, diversity and dishes associated with the preparation of stocks, soups and sauce within a variety of traditions and cultures and their uses in traditional, contemporary and popular cuisine.
- Competently Identify and assess barriers to learning for all individuals undertaking the unit and provide reasonable adjustments to enhance full participation
- Help learners to develop a strong understanding of the principles underlying safe, hygienic and practical safety procedures with regard to the activities involved in cookery
- Present a range of techniques and methods for the preparation of ingredients, discuss choice and quality of ingredients for the best results and provide opportunities for innovation, adaptation and creativity in the selection and treatment of ingredients.
- Introduce learners to a variety of current industry standard equipment and procedures thus preparing learners to work effectively in a range of environments and within the whole cookery industry
- Discuss and demonstrate the importance of accurate timing and measurement of ingredients and provide opportunities for practice and experimentation for learners to recognise and understand the impacts of inaccuracies.
- Encourage learner to taste, monitor, develop and experiment and innovate with many variations of stocks, sauces and soups and to integrate this learning into an overall understanding of these skills in commercial cookery settings
- Develop a detailed understanding of current and popular uses of stocks sauces and soups within the local commercial cookery industry through visits, tastings and discussions with industry partners
- Facilitate great workplace experiences sampling a range of different cookery workplaces providing sound integration of the knowledge and skills acquired in this unit.
- Discuss and check understandings of the reasons behind current health regulations and kitchen operation procedures for the storage of various perishable food items and practice the performance of all health and hygiene and cleaning procedures
- Assess competence in the unit using a range of validated techniques sampling knowledge and performance across each of the elements of competence contained in the unit
- Assess all employability skills listed in the unit of competency

Conversely a low quality VET provider may;

- Appoint a minimally certified trainer/assessor to conduct an 'assessment'.
- Observe or enquire about a learners ability to wash his/her hands
- Observe or enquire about the learner's ability to cut vegetables in a kitchen using a clean knife.
- Observe or enquire about the learner's ability to cook the ingredients into some forms of stock, sauce or soup
- Ask a colleague or supervisor if the learner is a good worker

In this example, both providers could conceivably assess the learner as 'competent' but it is very unlikely that the learner attending the low quality VET provider in this example will acquire any substantial knowledge or skills as a result of this experience. A learner attending the high quality provider in this example will be much more likely to experience a sense of connection to the cookery industry and enjoy much higher levels of motivation and interest in this industry. This learner will be able to adapt his/her skills and knowledge to changing workplace demands and changing industry trends. He/she will be able to work in many different businesses because he/she is equipped with the knowledge and skills required by the industry and not just with the narrow band of behaviours required by a single employer.

- I. If the NSW government is serious about providing benefit to the people of NSW by equipping learners with the skills and knowledge needed to drive new industries, new innovations and sustainable economic growth then inquiry should focus upon the quality of learning that is being produced by all vocational educational and training organisations. It is not intelligent or adaptive to simply contrast the costs and benefits of public and private models or to fabricate false dichotomies between 'education' and 'training'. Quality learning experiences produce vibrant, adaptive, informed and versatile workers who are equipped to provide great benefits to NSW Industry. I suggest that VET providers should be evaluated upon their ability to deliver quality learning as this will provide the most reliable measure of their value to the people and industries of NSW.
- II. In my understanding, Smart and Skilled provides identical funding to all registered training organisations for identical qualifications without any regard or review into the quality of the education or training being provided. Smart and Skilled funding is determined by the completion of units of competency by individual learners. Smart and Skilled makes no reference to any aspect of the learning or educational process that leads to completions.
- III. The implications of the Smart and Skilled funding regime for TAFE have been devastating. TAFE has consistently provided high quality, highly regarded industry led training that met the expectations of over 90% of all learners and employers. Due to the massive reductions in course funding that arose from the Smart and Skilled reforms course offering have reduced dramatically and course durations have been slashed. Most significantly, TAFE can no longer viably offer a range of pathway and pre-apprenticeship courses that provided an essential ramp into vocational education for thousands of people who face educational disadvantage or other barriers. TAFE traditionally filled the gaps in post school education and provided competent oversight of gaps and inequalities in the provision of educational opportunity within NSW communities. Since the imposition of Smart and Skilled, the VET sector has become uncoordinated as TAFE's and private RTO's have no choice but to align their activities with the limited and questionable priorities of the Smart and Skilled 'skills list'.

I am not in a position to adequately assess the implications of the Smart and Skilled funding regime on private RTO's.

2) TAFE teacher consultant for students with disabilities are employed to ensure that TAFE NSW complies with its obligations under the NSW Anti-Discrimination Act (2011) and the NSW Disability Standards for Education (2005) by providing educational access and educational opportunities for people with disabilities on the same basis as for others. In effect this means that teacher consultants in TAFE aim to understand and adjust for any barriers to learning that arise for people with disabilities who are undertaking vocational education and training in TAFE NSW. This role extends from the time any person originally considers study at TAFE NSW, throughout their involvement in courses and programs and often into subsequent employment and higher education. The role of teacher consultant includes the development of partnerships and commercial relationships with community organisations, businesses and peak bodies and often includes the

establishment of joint ventures and employment generation programs in partnership with disability organisations. Teacher consultants assess, adjust, modify, review, monitor, mentor, encourage, reshape, extend and make flexible almost every aspect of the learning experience. Teacher consultants also directly teach students with disabilities and they also provide expert advice and education to all other TAFE NSW staff regarding their particular areas of expertise. TAFE Teacher consultants greatly improve the quality of learning experience of thousands of students with a disability and this leads to vastly improved completion rates.

3) TAFE Illawarra had the equivalent of nine teacher consultant positions in 2011.

a) In February 2014 a review was announced into the section of TAFE Illawarra that controls these nine positions. Although that review has not been finalised, it has been vaguely suggested by one manager that the financial position of the Institute under the Smart and Skilled reforms may result in five or six of these positions being deleted.

b) Illawarra Institute currently employs;

- 1 specialist teacher consultant for vision
- 1 specialist teacher consultant for hearing
- 2 specialist teacher consultants for physical disability
- 2 specialist teacher consultants for Intellectual disability
- 1.5 specialist teacher consultants for Psychiatric disability (Mental health)
- 1.5 specialist teacher consultants for neurological disability (Including learning disabilities)

Any reduction to teacher consultant positions would lead to the complete loss of the Illawarra Institute's ability to respond appropriately its obligations under legislation and to respond appropriately and ethically to the needs of students with disabilities either within one of these specialty areas or within some part of the vast geographical region covered by the Institute.

Other information is response to questions from members;

Responsiveness to economic and social need:

TAFE is not just a training organisation. It is devious and misleading to compare it to private Registered Training organisations operating in NSW. TAFE is also a community builder and job creator.

My area of responsibility extends from Nowra to Eden. This region has experienced alarmingly high unemployment, 6.2% generally and 13.7% youth, and this hasn't changed significantly for over a decade. Unemployment figures alone however don't tell the whole story because this region's economic strength is also compromised by the fact that the South coast tends to offer poor quality, insecure and discontinuous employment and very limited higher education options for young people. This leads to many young people leaving the area post school. The region also has lots of people on lower and fixed incomes.

(<http://lmip.gov.au/default.aspx?LMIP/EmploymentProjections>).

Wherever employment is scarce, employment for the most disadvantaged is often unattainable, hence TAFE Illawarra has undertaken to promote and support several social enterprise initiatives designed to create employment where traditional job markets have failed.

Flexibility and innovation.

TAFE pioneered RPL (recognition of prior learning), online delivery, video-conferenced classes, blended delivery, workplace based delivery, individualised course delivery, rural and remote distance education, training solutions for specific industries, tailored packages and gap training for small and large businesses, skills development for many Australian Disability Enterprises and Disability Employment Services amongst many others. TAFE invented flexibility in VET and has provided flexible training for decades. TAFE has done this without taking dangerous 'tick and flick' shortcuts. TAFE offers courses and programs in hundreds of industry specialties, it provides specialist teachers and accessible technology to embrace learners who have a vast range of ages, abilities, cultures, languages and it takes these into some of the most remote and isolated communities in the country.

Teachers cost too much,

TAFE teachers are not overpaid as some suggest. TAFE teachers earn about the same as most other teachers in NSW in both the private and the public sectors. TAFE teachers generally have industry qualifications as well as university teaching qualifications and substantial industry experience. This is a higher qualification standard than required by school teachers. It is utterly dishonest and misleading to compare TAFE teachers wages with the wages of the minimally qualified 'trainers' – who work for most private RTO's These 'trainers' should earn less than teachers because they do much less, they know much less and they produce much less. TAFE doesn't only employ full time teachers as about 70% of TAFE staff are not full time or permanent employees. TAFE has always employed educational assistants who are paid much less than teachers to do work that does not require the expertise of a fully qualified teacher. These employees are paid about the same as the 'trainers' that are often employed by private RTO's.

TAFE costs too much

TAFE NSW maintains full time public access for every person in NSW to 130 accessible multi-purpose campuses across the state. It has hundreds of industry quality workshops, aging but good Information technology, and brilliant library resources as well as the best counselling and support services within the entire post school education sector.

TAFE offers courses and programs in hundreds of industry specialties, it provides specialist teachers and accessible technology to include learners who have a vast range of ages, abilities, cultures,

languages and into some of the most remote and isolated communities in the country. This does cost money.

TAFE funding has been declining in NSW for over 16 years prior to the introduction of the cuts imposed by this government. In 1999 each TAFE student had 28% more money spent on then than in 2011 – TAFE has generally maintained its enrolment numbers despite this relentless erosion of its funding base. Source: Australian Workforce and Productivity Agency, Future Focus : 2013 National Workforce Development Strategy That continued until the devastating impacts of Smart and Skilled reduced enrolment in all of VET by an estimated 83,000 students. <http://www.smh.com.au/nsw/nsw-state-budget-2015-tafe-reforms-hit-students-hard-20150622-ghudqj.html>

Regardless of the overall cost of TAFE in NSW it is very clear that TAFE returns much more than that investment. <https://ministers.education.gov.au/birmingham/tafe-directors-australia-national-conference>

Recent experiences of highly privatised VET systems have shown strikingly lower returns on investment. Victoria recently spent 19.6 million on 3500 private RTO qualifications that yielded no completions whatsoever and presumable no economic benefits to anyone involved. In fact, the subsequent Victorian government has now announced that it will be spending 30 million auditing and weeding out all of the dodgy RTO's that are still operating under that states failed privatised training regime.

(Source <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2015-04-22/private-training-college-graduates-stripped-of-qualifications/6412318>) and <http://www.theage.com.au/victoria/stop-the-rorts-30-million-crackdown-looms-for-vocational-sectors-dodgy-training-providers-20150919-gjqbuk.html>

ONLINE is better

TAFE NSW offers lots of online courses, OTEN offers comprehensive, innovative distance education solutions and many TAFE institutes also offer online and distance education offerings. Online delivery is very helpful with many knowledge based courses and TAFE NSW has embraced this mode enthusiastically. TAFE NSW however takes a serious approach to skills development and skills assessment and there are many courses that are compromised when they are hastily or cheaply shovelled into an online delivery mode. Is it acceptable for instance for a hairdresser to learn almost all of his skills online? Should counselling, personal care skills or aged care training require more than a brief work placement component with 'actual people', is it safe for welding courses be conducted where students just 'play along' with Youtube videos using their own equipment in their own garages? Online delivery does offer some cost savings and some convenience, but serious consideration is needed to assess the areas where it is helpful and where it is deleterious to quality.

Thin markets

This is a case study illustrating some of the obstacles facing mature learners in regional and rural areas since the introduction of funding cuts that coincided with the introduction of Smart and Skilled reforms. The content is real but the names and places have been changed to suppress the identities of those involved.

Marion is a 44 year old and a small business owner. Until recently Marion owned and operated two fashion boutiques in two adjacent regional towns. Marion is a very capable and intelligent business owner but business conditions in retail have been subdued in recent years in her locations and Marion has not drawn any substantially salary from her businesses for a few years. Sadly, in 2014, Marion suffered a cerebral haemorrhage that affected her vision, movement and fine motor skills.

Marion regained her ability to walk quite quickly but she was judged to be medically unfit to drive as a result of her vision impairment. Marion was a 'non-compensable' rehabilitation patient thus private rehabilitation services were not affordable. Marion's home region has very rudimentary access to government funded rehabilitation services with only a visiting practitioners attending as required. The Commonwealth Rehabilitation Service provided Marion with some help just following her illness but this service closed soon afterwards.

After a period of remarkable personal recovery in the months following her illness, Marion needed to learn to write again and to use a keyboard in order to return to the workforce. TAFE provided a small Adult Basic Education course at a small campus at a local High School. This was a course that was strongly attended as lots of people in this region needed language literacy and numeracy training. In 2013 the NSW State Government competitively tendered out the Skills for Education and Employment program (SEE) that had partially funded the TAFE program and a private provider won the tender for Marion's region. Accordingly the TAFE program became financially unviable under the reduced funding that was available through the Smart and Skilled model and it was shelved. The private operator ran this program episodically out of a shared shopfront but failed to attract many participants and this provider soon closed its operation in this region. A reputable charity took over the SEE program in this region but this also closed this operation within 12 months or so.

Despite the discontinuous provision of service, Marion diligently attended whatever was available to her because practice in writing and keyboarding was very important for her recovery. Marion now has nothing at all to attend, she doesn't have a lot of power to influence her regions very thin 'training market' and although she has made representations to her local member of parliament, no positive response has been received. Similar stories surround each of the fifteen people who used to attend the TAFE program in Marion's region.

Although there is some possibility that TAFE may now access some funding to re-establish some basic education program in this region, Marion's confidence is damaged, some work opportunities have been lost and the continuity of Marion's recovery is broken. It is now increasingly likely that Marion will remain unemployed in the long term.

This is one small illustration of how TAFE does much more than training and how funding models that value cheapness over quality have weakened the social and economic vitality of regional communities in NSW.

15% Disability loading.

The disability loadings that are available under the Smart and Skilled reforms are inflexible and insufficient. Students with disabilities in VET have very diverse needs and this system fails to accommodate their needs.

Case examples

- 1) Dean – a student with ASD (Autism Spectrum Disorder) is a brilliant information technology student and games designer who now owns a successful software writing business. While qualifying for his Cert 4 in IT Dean found social contact and compliance with deadlines almost impossible. A close understanding of Dean's particular disability allowed teachers to individualise Dean's program to some extent and to loosen up his deadlines. Dean completed with great marks in two years rather than the normal 1 year but this could only be offered with substantial 'one to one' assistance. Dean's completion cost TAFE about 300% more than other students.
- 2) Jenny is deaf, she requires the services of an Auslan interpreter while attending TAFE so that she can participate in her Cert 4 human services course. Jenny learns very well and displays excellent employability skills however learning takes about twice as long than for others and Jenny also needs some help to revise and clarify her understandings and to complete assignments. Jenny needs her interpreter with her when she attends revision sessions as well. Jenny's completion cost TAFE about 500% more than other students.

Although it is true that some students who attend TAFE and receive the 15% loading only require minimal support, it should be noted that even when the loadings are aggregated for an entire class group, the aggregated amount is insufficient to provide adequate support to most students with disabilities who are attending class based programs and totally inadequate to provide any sort of individually tailored or even flexibly delivered program for students with more complex needs.

Keith Bourke 22/10/2015