

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

You have asked me to comment on these questions:

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:

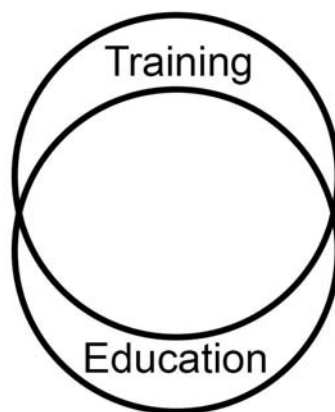
1. TAFE, and

2. private for-profit providers.

a. Education VS Training, and importance of 'education' for student and society.

The long-term and ongoing debate about the difference between education and training never seems to be quite resolved. I would however make the following comments:

1. I do not think there is much difference between the terms. In general Australian parlance they are used interchangeably. For example, I could say "I am trained as a social worker" or "I am educated as a social worker" with equal accuracy.
2. However there are some differences of inference between the two words. 'Training' can be used to describe teaching someone how to do a task or activity (skills and knowledge), while 'education' implies something broader. For example, I am 'trained' to use the new photocopier or the new EBS4/SALM system, whereas an articulate and knowledgeable person might be called 'well-educated'. So I visualize the relationship thus:



3. Sometimes stressing the difference is used as a form of elitism to differentiate between vocational and higher education, and perhaps this has contributed to a devaluation of the VET sector.

Some people would say that Universities educate and RTO's train.

I disagree with that position. At TAFE we “train” people in specific skills (eg arc welding, bread-baking, blow-waves or personal care of older people), but also ‘educate’ them to integrate these skills and ‘soft skills’ such as communication and problem-solving into the coherent whole which enables someone to excel in their craft, run a welding business or mechanics shop, be a professional health worker or manage a salon.

4. ‘Education’ and ‘training’ are not just about the individual’s employment, but also about nurturing the capacity for growth and for contribution to the wider society. Without this process being well-supported and well-structured, there are greater risks for both the individual and their society. For some people this involves extending their already significant abilities and earning capacity, which will have a flow-on effect for the family members, business owners etc around them. Perhaps more significant though is the development of many of the people we work with for whom the TAFE experience means slowly but steadily learning to read as adults, or to move from long-term unemployment to being able to apply for entry-level work. The flow-on effect then is potentially multiplied in terms of not just increased income for the person, their family and local business, but also potential social savings in terms of Centrelink benefits, health costs and legal costs. Education/training is not a failsafe mechanism for avoiding unemployment, substance misuse, criminal activity etc – but is definitely a strong protective factor.
5. In a sense, we may ‘train’ to Training Packages, but we at TAFE ‘educate’ more holistically through our strong relationships with local industry, well-educated and extensively experienced staff and our supports such as the libraries, language literacy and numeracy assistance, professionally trained careers counselors and so on. (That may sound like a sales pitch, but I truly believe that this infrastructure is integral to the successful provision of high quality services to learners).

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

In my experience this year, Smart and Skilled does not adequately fund education within a TAFE context. Consistently, my colleagues report around 30% reduction in face-to-face contact with students, either since S&S began or in preparation for its implementation. This is resulting in reduced completions, because students are not able to be adequately supported. I have outlined in my previous submissions the limitations of online delivery and the high support needs of some of our students, so will not repeat them here.

I would say that, for TAFE with its infrastructure, S&S not only does not provide funding for education more broadly than Training Packages, but in fact does not provide adequate funding for even achieving the training packages.

There is currently an across-the-board movement for more specific assessment criteria in all Training Packages, which means more extensive and comprehensive assessments are required. This trend is making the gap between funding and required funding even greater.

I observe staff working unsustainable hours, and feeling unacceptable and unhealthy long-term pressure, to maintain the quality we believe is required.

It is my opinion that if you expect TAFE campuses to provide the community cohesion and social capital roles they perform, especially in regional areas, then separate provision needs to be made for some of our infrastructure. No other RTO provides the breadth and variety of qualifications that TAFE does, and we need the infrastructure to meet this community commitment, but the current system disadvantages TAFE in that we need to pay for infrastructure out of our S&S revenue that other RTOs do not require. I acknowledge that this may be more expensive in the short term, but will contain many social and economic costs in the longer term. If you lose this essential community role for TAFE, it will take decades to repair the damage.

Staff of other RTO's who I have spoken to informally have expressed feeling pressured and facing many demands from the complex payment system. Beyond that, I do not feel I can comment on the experiences of other RTO's.

In summary, I believe the inadequate funding provided on the IPART model has a greater negative impact on TAFE Institutes than on other RTOs.

2. How many teachers in your section have lost their positions as a result of restructuring or other changes since 2011? Please specify permanent full time equivalent positions and/or part time casual staff:

a. How many were there before the restructuring began?

b. Please explain the impacts on students and TAFE of this change.

As you know TAFE has a highly casualised workforce, and consequently 'lost positions' is a limited measure that only gives an incomplete understanding of workforce change. However here are some figures that may answer your question:

	2014	2015
Number of full time staff	1 Head Teacher 3 Full Time Teachers	1 Head Teacher 3 Full Time Teachers
Number of Part Time Casual staff	30 + Part Time staff	10 Part Time staff, with fewer work hours each
Normal teaching hours by FT staff	2520	2520
Teaching hours taught by PT staff	4503.5	2621 (predicted)
This means that the reduction in staff is equivalent to 6.25 FT teachers. We have also had a 25% reduction in clerical assistance hours.		

Our Nowra/Ulladulla Community Services section has been particularly dependant on part time casual staff for the entire period of its existence. This is a common pattern across Illawarra Institute. Consequently, our section has not at this stage lost FT positions as a direct result of S&S. However, all our PT staff are working on significantly reduced hours. Some examples are:

- A teacher who has contributed to the section for almost 30 years has no hours and has had to seek other sources of income
- Two teachers who had reduced their hours at their other place of work to meet their TAFE commitments now have only intermittent hours at TAFE, and cannot regain the hours they 'dropped' at their other job.

As more and more staff need to seek their income elsewhere, they are becoming less available to TAFE. So when work does become available, the team has been so far reduced that it is hard to find staff. Ironically, reduced staff hours have not meant a more competitive pool of people, but a much smaller pool to draw from. The impact has been a significant and rapid reduction in our available skill pool. It is not as yet too late to reverse this, but it is very challenging and distressing for all concerned.

The impact on Full Time Teachers and Head Teachers has been a year on incredible strain and pressure as they try to maintain standards of delivery and assessment.

Another impact on staff can be seen in the Enterprise Bargaining negotiations – is there any other organisation which (especially having put its staff through the EBS4 introduction) would ask teachers to accept an up-to-2.5% pay increase for a 14% workload increase? Or admin and support staff to accept a proposal which involves a re-classification which is projected to involve annual pay reductions of up to \$25 000? This of course leads to a sense of discouragement and feeling undervalued.

The **direct impact on students** includes:

- Being exposed to fewer views, ideas and experiences as they are taught by a smaller pool of people
- Fewer available supports – from the unpaid hours previously provided by a larger group of teachers
- Reduced completions due to reduced support.
- I envisage in the longer term the capacity to deliver a wide range of innovative programs will be greatly diminished. This year, for example, our section has delivered seven (7) different qualifications instead of the 20 provided in 2014. Thus the changes are restricting individual choice and workforce development in a high-growth industry in a regional area.
- Being unable to enrol into courses that will enhance their lives because of fee increases
- Anger/frustration about the complexity of fee structure

The community around us is hearing the message from the media that 'TAFE is closing'. Our community is concerned about opportunities being lost for their children and for people needing retraining after recent job closures, as well as lack of skilling opportunities for the local workforce.