

Dr John Kaye to ask Katherine Nicholson, NSW Teachers Federation

1. Can you provide any information about workloads of teachers in the North Coast Institute?

and how they have changed?

a. Can you also provide information about stress levels, morale and sick leave or early retirement?

1. The workload of teachers and of administrative officers has significantly increased as a result of the introduction of EBS and Smart and Skilled. Workload has been a frequent item of discussion at Institute Consultative Committee meetings, including the most recent on 1 September 2015. NCI are offering EAPS services and are aware many staff have worked well beyond timetabled hours. The TEA Band-Aid fix for EBS required many extra hours.

a.) Stress has increased significantly. The following is a quote from minutes from the Institute Consultative Committee of 2 June 2015.

“Kathy Nicholson asked what NCTAFE was doing in regard to stress and psychological safety and noted that EBS had a huge impact, and has created competing priorities and expectations on staff. She was concerned that this was positioning teachers to be unprofessional.

Kayley Riddle advised that managers were able to gain resources through EAP Manager Assist and they were provided with support and resourcing. Additional support was provided by regular Safety & Welfare communications and through the Business Partner. Kayley noted we were aware of an increase in the use of EAPs.”
Kayley Riddle is the Director of People and Culture for NCI

2. Is there an environment of intimidation against staff who speak out against decisions made by management or the government? Has the level of intimidation increased?

The culture is not a healthy one. Group think infects the organisation at the executive level.

People who speak out find themselves the subject of investigations under the Code of Conduct and suffer disciplinary action. NCI employs consultant ‘investigators’ at the expense of the NSW taxpayer to investigate whether their employees have breached the Code of Conduct.

3. Has the NCI or any other Institute in which you organise used 'spill and fill' as part of their change management?

Yes NCI has used ‘spill and fill’.

a. Can you explain 'spill and fill'?

“Spill and Fill” is also commonly referred to as a “pool assessment”. Once an Institute has finalised the engagement and consultation process a change management plan is arrived

at. If the number is over 6 then it must be signed off by the Minister and the Managing Director. If it is under this number of employees affected it is deemed to not constitute significant change and the process occurs in the institute. If in the proposed organisational model, the number of positions arrived at is less than the number of existing employees, a pool assessment occurs and all the employees impacted have to compete for the fewer existing jobs. When the recruitment result is known unsuccessful applicants are declared excess and proceed to redundancy. The whole process causes significant pain and angst to all involved. Some of my members refused to compete with people who they have considered colleagues and worked alongside for over twenty years. The NSW Teachers Federation has repeatedly suggested that expressions of interest for voluntary redundancy be called up front so that the process allows people to put their hand up if they want to go. The NSW Teachers Federation would also like to see positions available in other institutes available for members who are in danger of deletion. It seems ridiculous that one Institute may be deleting Business Teacher positions while another is recruiting them.

The process of recruitment in a spill and fill completely lacks accountability or any transparency. Even though lip service is paid to merit selection in practice the outcome is always predictable and nepotism prevails. There is no review or independent evaluation of the process.

b. Can you provide examples?

The most recent example in NCI concerns the three teachers of Horticulture from Wollongbar who had to compete for one position. There are five simultaneous reviews occurring in NCI. One of these, the CLEAR review, has impacted on nearly 200 people.

c. Please describe the impact on staff morale both before, during and after the process on those involved and on other staff.

Before the process commences anxiety is high and rumours abound. Staff are seriously impacted during this process. Very often the stress results in sick leave. People are completely cynical about the outcomes as though know that management prerogative will prevail. At the commencement people react differently, some are angry and aggressive, some just cry, some are defensive and some retreat into themselves. As an organiser I often find I am spending my time on active listening and referrals to counselling services. Some people are so disgusted that they just want the process to be over and done with as quickly as possible.

c. Please describe the impact on the Institute(s) as a whole and on TAFE.

The damage to the organisation itself does not seem to be counted. Firstly, the work that the deleted people did still has to be done by someone and secondly deleted staff return to their communities disgruntled and unhappy with TAFE. Many people have given their whole professional working lives to TAFE and to be treated so dismissively at the end of their careers leaves them sad and distressed. It is deeply concerning to me that we are cutting enormous capability from the organisation. The people who have been cut have extraordinary industry networks, know their communities intimately and have the capacity to grow and develop skills in regions. No knowledge transfer processes are occurring to even capture the capability.

4. Can you provide information on the way in which the learning pathway has been disrupted by the Smart and Skilled process?

Firstly, many entry level qualifications at Cert 1 and Cert 2 levels have been removed from profiles, removing the stepping stones for people engaging with vocational education with low level skills.

This has resulted in many part time night programs no longer being offered. For example in the bush people often came to TAFE at night to complete units in welding.

The voucher/entitlement system limitations also have prevented people gaining parallel qualifications for example aged care and enrolled nursing. The removal of centralised curriculum centres (Training Educational Services) in NSW has eroded the course and industry specific quality assurance provisions that previously informed TAFE qualifications. An example of this is the Tertiary Preparation Certificate which previously used a state based approach to assessment verification, curriculum and learner resource development. The officers who undertook the roles had linkages with universities, NSW Police, Department of Defence etc. to ensure the quality of graduates met requirements and to provide pathways for these students. Now this work has to be done intra and inter institute and with severely reduced budget is cursory at best.

I am also very concerned that the work TAFE did for many years, firstly through the Helping Young People at Risk funding source and then through recurrent funding on working with marginalised and alienated young people is now at a standstill. In the New England after years of experience TAFE identified that working in partnership with schools via coenrolments with those students most at risk of attrition from school was an effective method for keeping young people at school, connecting them with work or connecting them with vocational education. Smart and Skilled will not allow coenrolments.

5. Can you comment on the number and hours of Part Time casual employees at NCI?

My comments on this matter are only anecdotal but a number of my part time casual teacher members have lost some or all of their work at North Coast Institute of TAFE. In the section at Inverell where I was previously head teacher some casuals have lost all of their work and others are on severely reduced hours.

a. If it has decreased can you comment on the impacts on educational outcomes and the work of other teachers and staff members?

Part time casual TAFE teachers have always undertaken far more work than they are paid for and have contributed to the teaching team in many ways, through course coordination, through resource development and through student engagement and mentoring. This work now either does not get done or has to be done hurriedly because of hugely increased workloads for the remaining staff.

6. Can you explain what you see as the main differences between a private provider and TAFE in terms of objectives and outcomes for students? Is there a difference between the for-profit and not-for-profit providers?

Private providers who are 'for profit' firstly have to deliver profits for their shareholders. This means that the needs of the company will always come before the needs of the

student. Although many private providers have glossy promotional material about meeting student needs, their primary reason for existing is to produce profit.

Firstly the objectives of TAFE are enshrined in legislation the 1990 TAFE ACT and are as follows:

TECHNICAL AND FURTHER EDUCATION COMMISSION ACT 1990 - SECT 6

6 Objectives

- (1) In exercising its functions, the [TAFE Commission](#) must:
- (a) ensure that it provides [technical and further education](#) services to meet the needs of individuals and the skill needs of the workforce and, in particular, ensure that it provides basic and pre-vocational education as well as vocational education and training, and
 - (b) provide adults and young persons with a range of [technical and further education](#) services that recognise the changing nature of the working environment and the need for new skills and re-training, and
 - (c) provide, through formal arrangements and after consultation, [technical and further education](#) services that are relevant to the needs of industry, business, students and other client groups, and
 - (d) provide students with the maximum opportunity for progression by the linking or other articulation of courses and programs provided by the [TAFE Commission](#) and between those courses and programs and those provided by other education and training providers, and
 - (e) provide educationally or vocationally disadvantaged groups (such as women, Aborigines, persons of non-English speaking background, persons with disabilities and persons in rural areas) with access to [technical and further education](#) services, including a range of appropriate specialised services, and
 - (f) consult with relevant agencies to promote the effective and efficient use of resources and co-operation between [TAFE establishments](#) and other educational institutions

TAFE has always delivered on NSW social policy objectives as identified in the NSW State Plan. For example increasing the skill level of Aboriginal people. TAFE has also had a significant and important role in community engagement and community development. TAFE has also been proactive in anticipating emerging industry sectors. TAFE colleges are educational communities where there is a collaborative focus on delivering successful outcomes for all.

The 'not for profit' sector has to some extent been corrupted by being forced into the same competitive market model. They do not have the resources to adopt the aggressive marketing techniques or employ marketing experts and their objectives are generally either faith or community based. Some of them are also Job Service Providers and there is an inherent conflict of interest in delivering job services but also referring to educational services.

7. TAFE management has provided teachers with a proposal for enterprise bargaining.
a. TAFE management has suggested that the proposal is necessary to stay competitive in a market environment. How have your members NCI and other institutes at which you organise responded to this proposition?

Members are dismayed by the proposal. This includes Institute Managers.

b. Can you explain how members have responded to this document and in particular to the proposal to

i. increase face-to-face teaching hours

Members are gobsmacked and head teachers are concerned as they are having difficulty finding programs for teachers already. If this proposal was implemented many more full time teachers would be likely to lose their jobs.

ii. reduce the hours for preparation and other related duties?

The removal of related duties for part time casual TAFE teachers who teach more than 10 hours per week is insulting. NCI in particular relies on part time casual TAFE teachers more than any other institute. NCI management are aware that these teachers already deliver beyond the call of duty. For the last six years we have had regular discussion at Institute Consultative Committee level about related duties and in fact NCI has created a part time casual TAFE teacher forum after listening to the concerns of the union. I was a witness in 2004 at the NSW Industrial Relations Commission to gain this recognition of the extra work part time casual TAFE teachers undertake on a daily basis. Removing this acknowledgement would impact on teacher morale but would also impact on students as part time casual TAFE teachers would be forced to seek alternative sources of income and reduce the time available for preparation.

iii. introduce a lower paid grade of 'instructors'

TAFE teachers are under no illusions regarding this proposal. Part time casual TAFE teachers would quickly be replaced with cheaper 'trainers'. The quality of vocational education in NSW would be the first casualty and students would be the recipients. It is exactly the opposite direction to where we should be heading as a smart society. In the school and university sectors there is huge investment and concern with the quality of teaching.

8. 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

I once worked as a 'trainer' in a telecommunications call centre. The job involved me sitting with the new employee for a couple of days wearing dual head sets and explaining how to take and respond to calls. The details appeared on a computer screen and knowing which buttons to press and where to read the script to respond were key to being able to do the job. So I would monitor the worker and then observe them once they went solo.

The worker did not get an overview of how the company functioned, from accounts, to customer service and sales or how the computer functioned or even how to problem solve if the computer crashed. Training delivers minimum skills just in time for an employee to be able to function.

It does not include critical thinking, creative thinking, entrepreneurship, technical skills or bringing your brain to work. To compete in the 21st Century we need education.

Education responds to the whole person, places the learning in a wide context and exposes the learner to a diverse range of experiences. Education is not limited or linear and is a lifelong process. Education is not a 'product'. It is a dynamic social good. Education provides knowledge and skills but also deepens student values and challenges belief systems. Education recognises that learning styles are individual so teaching repertoires need to be able to tailor learning to the individual. Education creates citizens who can participate in their community, their industry and in the democracy in a critically engaged manner. The knowledge, skills and attitudes acquired are transferable to other sectors. The education investment is therefore never lost.

My brother received an 'education' as an electrical apprentice on the NSW Railways. He was able to adapt that knowledge as a merchant seaman electrical officer. He was able to apply that knowledge and extend it when he identified he could repair computers and created his own business which employed others. If he had simply been 'trained' in the specific context of the NSW railways or in 'skill sets' determined by his employer he would not have possessed the capability to respond to the new contexts he found himself in.

b. Does Smart and Skilled for a particular qualification provide funding for education that is not directly necessary to achieve training outcomes?

Funding under Smart and Skilled is very limited. Firstly TAFE Institutes need to be able to survive paying bills for electricity, libraries, counsellors, managers, operational costs and the funding for learning under Smart and Skilled is by necessity diverted to keep the organisation afloat.

The fact that the money follows the student and comes in periodic payments also makes financial planning problematic. Disability, regional and Aboriginal deliver limited extra funding and Community Service Obligation funding augments sparingly. Smart and Skilled provides subsidies for some literacy, language and numeracy qualifications.

i. If not, please explain what the implications are for
1. TAFE, and

For TAFE in my experience many students need support to make their educational journey successful. Firstly adult students often come with low levels of confidence and little understanding of how to respond to learning. They need support. In Inverell a learning centre accommodated the needs of students across a range of industry qualifications and also catered to distance university students. There is no educational vehicle now to fund such a centre. Many young students benefitted from mentoring; there is no capacity to provide this. The implications for TAFE are that the student is likely to have poorer outcomes and fewer completions.

2. private for-profit providers

I can't comment on this from any knowledge or experience but I would imagine private providers don't have the organisational overheads that TAFE provides which enrich our students learning experience.