

**INQUIRY INTO VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND
TRAINING IN NEW SOUTH WALES**

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Community Services and Health Industry Skills Council

Submission to NSW Parliament Legislative Council General Purpose Standing Committee No 6.

Inquiry into Vocational Education and Training in New South Wales

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The Community Services and Health Industry Skills Council Submission:

NSW INQUIRY INTO VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING

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The Community Services and Health Industry Skills Council (CS&HISC) is the agency responsible for developing Vocational Education and Training (VET) qualifications and setting national standards for a broad range of job roles in the Community Services and Health industry. Over 80,000 publicly funded students are awarded a health or community services qualification each year. In addition to qualifications, CS&HISC provides advice, services and products to support the development of the overall community services and health workforce.

CS&HISC has a very strong interest in the role and performance of the NSW TAFE system. TAFE providers are the foundation of the VET system involved in the development of the Community Services and Health workforce. Australia's TAFE system and by inference NSW TAFE is widely recognised as a well-developed and world class provider of vocational training. TAFE's decentralised infrastructure employing a hub and spoke approach, its reach into regional, rural and remote communities, its number of students, trainees and apprentices ensures its essential role within NSW education system.

CS&HISC will address select parts of Terms of Reference as it relates to its key responsibilities.

Terms of Reference

That General Purpose Standing Committee No 6 inquire into and report on vocational education and training in New South Wales, and in particular:

1 The factors influencing student choice about entering the vocational education and training system including:

The affordability and accessibility of TAFE for students are affected by a number of factors:

- Fees
- Criteria for fee exemptions and VET FEE HELP
- Systems to support the recognition of prior learning
- Geographical reach of TAFE into regional, rural and remote areas
- Availability of child care for students who are parents of young children.

These factors are informed by state policy and vary according to local capacity and the facilities available in a particular locality.

In addition, the provision of work placements may also act to limit accessibility for students.

Currently, while there is funding to support the provision of clinical placements in higher education, VET work placements in health and community services are un-funded.

With increasing demand for services and an increase in the number of students requiring work placements, these difficulties are likely to get worse, particularly without a mechanism to better incentivise employers to participate in the delivery of quality work placements. The constraints on work placements at TAFE may act to reduce the attractiveness of TAFE to students,

Where reforms in VET funding result in an increase in fees as they undoubtedly have in NSW, there is concern that even with fee support mechanisms any increase in fees adds to the risk that certain groups will perceive training to be unaffordable, a perception that could lead to a reduction of enrolments for particular courses. This is especially the case for some courses in Community Services and Health where the base rate of remuneration is not that high.

The longer term implications of fee increases could be significant, with a decrease in overall student numbers may impact national efforts to supply the future required workforce. This is a particular concern for qualifications leading to occupations for which there is strong demand and for diploma and advanced diploma qualifications, which support the development of much needed leadership and management capability.

Motivation to study

One of the key motivations to study is knowing there will be a high probability of a job at the end of a period of study. The community services and health is expected to have an extremely high demand for new workers as the population ages, the NDIS rolls out gathers pace and increased regulation drive the need for more qualified staff

For health and community services there have been substantive increases in the numbers of workers employed. The largest increases have been in VET qualified roles. For example the number of 'Aged or Disabled Carers' (aged care workers and disability support workers) increased by 30,800 (39.8%) between 2006 and 2011.ⁱ

Similarly, in response to increased demand for child care services the number of child care workers has increased by 21,000 (35.4%) between 2006 and 2011.ⁱⁱ Overall employment in community services and health increased by 80% between 2000-2014 compared to an average of across all industries of 32%.

Government projections show that 'Health Care and Social Assistance' will continue to be the fastest growing industry in actual terms between November 2012 and November 2017. The

number of Aged and Disabled Carers in Australia is expected to increase by a further 31,300 (or 27.7%) from 2012 to 2017.

These increases and the prospects of a job may influence prospective students to undertake study in community services and health industry.

2 The role played by public and private vocational education providers and industry

Educational linkages with secondary and higher education

Public providers because of their established infrastructure outside metropolitan areas play a really important role in supporting students in rural areas who may not be able to access other educational providers. Further comments on this issue are provided later in the submission.

In relation to educational linkages there is a need for improved pathways from secondary school into VET, as well as between VET and Higher Education institutions. Currently the lack of connectedness between sub-systems within education and training can act as a barrier to progression. To address pathway related issues fully, industry, VET providers, universities, schools and government agencies will need to work together to find innovative ways to address any barriers to progressionⁱⁱⁱ (The proposed announcement by the Commonwealth that it may seek to take on the responsibility for VET could result in greater harmonisation between VET and higher education but the timelines for this are unclear.

In terms of existing pathways from school into employment it is recognised that high school students can complete certain VET qualifications as part of VET in Schools. For example, students can complete qualifications in Children's Services and Children's Services (Outside Hours Care). This provides students aged 16 and over with the qualification they need for a career in childcare, however:

- there are concerns about the quality of some of the courses being delivered by schools;
- schools often lack the strong industry partnerships required to deliver work placements, and
- the sector is generally reluctant to employ 16 year olds.

There is a need to work with industry to address these issues and explore ways of improving the training pathways from school into careers in childcare and other sectors.

CS&HISC believes that there is a need to provide high school students with a clear understanding of the capability requirements and career opportunities within the Community Services and Health industry. This strategy could:

- better support students to make informed decisions about their future career;
- be combined with strategies to improve the aspirations and core skills for work, and
- increase participation in further study and employment in the Community Services and Health industry.

The development of skills in the New South Wales economy

The community services and health industry is one of the fastest growing employers in NSW. Increasingly the skills required to support the New South Wales economy will reflect those needed in our industry. As industry adapts to a new funding and service delivery environment, there is evidence of increased demand for specific skills and changing roles. Industry stakeholders have identified the following key trends:

- increased scope of support worker roles
- emerging demand for care coordination roles
- continuing demand for workers to develop existing and acquire new skills (in some cases leading to the development of new more advanced or specialised roles)
- increased demand for skills in business leadership, management and administration greater emphasis on technological knowledge and skills.
- **Support workers** in aged care and disability, particularly in a home and community context, are increasingly expected to have a complex mix of diverse skills. These evolving roles **require an increasingly broad range of competencies**, including generic foundation skills as well as more complex and service specific skills.
- The move to consumer-directed funding models is driving demand for workers skilled in **care-coordination, case management and service** brokering. This might involve expanding the scope of existing care and support workers or creating new roles.
- The changes in service delivery have also heightened the need for service providers to have effective business and administrative capabilities. **Strong business management and leadership skills** supported by effective administrative processes are essential to affect organisational change.

The development of opportunities for unemployed people, particularly migrants and persons in the mature workers' category, to improve themselves and increase their life, education and employment prospects

It is recognised that poor Foundation Skills can be a barrier to finding and maintaining employment. It is expected that to meet increased demand for health and community services the workforce will need to increase by 177,800 workers between 2012 and 2017 (Industry projections to Nov 2017, Department of Employment 2013). Meeting this increased demand for workers is likely to involve employing more workers from a broader range of educational, cultural and employment backgrounds. The NSW TAFE system must focus more on identifying Foundation Skills deficits and providing the appropriate support to address these issues.

The delivery of services and programs particularly to regional, rural and remote communities

Difficulties recruiting and retaining health and community services workers in rural and remote areas are well documented. These difficulties relate to the nature of rural and remote services which differ from those in metropolitan areas.

In terms of specific occupational shortages, it can be reasoned that national shortages are likely to be even more acute in rural and remote areas. Due to their location, services in more rural and remote environments may also experience difficulties recruiting to occupations not in shortage elsewhere.

In addition, there is likely to be a greater need for preventative primary care roles with a broad skill base and the ability to refer, when appropriate, to more specialist staff and services. This will include workers in lower paid roles with lower qualification requirements.

Training in regional, rural, remote and disadvantaged communities needs to target specific training needs of those from, and/ or planning to work in, these communities. Regional, rural and remote TAFE providers have the local knowledge and networks required to design and deliver health and community services education and training programs that address the need to:

- Develop more generalists i.e. workers with a broader range of competencies and the ability to refer to specialists as required
- Increase local capacity to 'grow your own' workforce, as students originating from rural and remote communities are more likely to return to work in these communities
- Utilise information technology to support distance-based social and professional relationships and activities
- Develop a workforce best equipped to meet the health and support needs of the local community that may include a high proportion of those who are socially disadvantaged.

TAFE's ability to respond to the needs of remote, regional and disadvantaged communities and skills shortages in the local health and community services workforce is supported by providers being part of the local community. Geographical mapping of providers of community services and health education and training programs indicates that 50% of TAFE institutes in Australia have their major campuses in regional and rural locations, with further campuses in smaller communities and a range of outreach centres, TAFE providers also operate mobile and e-learning facilities to aid regional and remote student participation.^{iv}

The opportunities for education and training this provides to students from regional, remote and very remote areas is reflected in publicly funded enrolment data. For example, in 2012 almost half of all public enrolments in Health and Community Services qualifications at TAFE institutes in Australia were students from either regional (inner or outer regional) (40%) or remote and very remote (4%) areas.^v

VET is accessed by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders and individuals of lower socio-economic status. While there is always more to be done to attract and retain students from disadvantaged backgrounds, VET sector enrolment data compares favourably to equivalent data for the university sector. For example, of the publicly funded enrolments at TAFE institutes in 2012, 5% were students who reported to be Indigenous,^{vi} a higher proportion than the 1% of university students in 2012 that identified as Indigenous.^{vii} Similarly, enrolment and student data for 2012 also indicate a higher proportion (21%)^{viii} of TAFE enrolments were students from a

postcode area of low educational and occupational status than the proportion of university students (16%).^{ix}

TAFE institutes employ a range of strategies to support regions, communities and disadvantaged individuals including:

- **Programs targeted at specific population groups**, for example - a Certificate IV in Aboriginal Torres Strait Islander Primary Health Care (Practice) was developed and delivered by TAFE NSW – Western Institute in partnership with Greater Western Area Health Service. The program successfully met a local need for a training pathway for members of the Aboriginal community to gain employment within the health sector, as well as the need for workers with an in depth understanding of the cultural context and health care needs of the local community.^x
- **Provision of training online** – i.e. the wide range of programs offered through Open Training and Education Network (OTEN), which offers greater flexibility for students through online provision of appropriate learning and training content for a wide range of programs; supporting students to work their training around their other commitments.
- **Pre-vocational courses**, for example the TAFE equivalent of Year 10 (CGE) and Year 12 (TEPC) are fundamental to better equipping early school leavers with the skills that they need for employment. As well as providing disillusioned young people with a second chance in education, these courses can also be used to address workforce shortages by offering lower entry requirements for subjects relevant to local shortages.

Opportunities to enhance TAFE's contribution to supporting regions, communities and disadvantaged individuals

As previously mentioned, TAFE providers need adequate support to build understanding of local, regional and national workforce requirements, that best enables them to model course provision on local skills and workforce needs in order to provide the appropriate regional remote and disadvantaged communities.

It should be noted that the costs of providing TAFE services in regional Australia are higher than in metropolitan centres, due to the additional costs associated with maintenance of dispersed campuses, staff travel between campuses, high proportions of student fee exemptions and concessions and limited scope to offset costs with international student fees or service revenue streams.^{xi xii} Regional loadings that recognise these additional costs help ensure that TAFE institutes in regional and remote areas are sustainable. Better mechanisms for calculating the additional costs associated with regional and remote provision and for allocating the appropriate Government funding are required.

The level of industry participation in the vocational education and training sector, including the provision of sustainable employment opportunities for graduates, including Competency Based Training and the application of training packages to workforce requirements,.

Effective industry engagement is critical in the development and review of training if training packages are going to be current, relevant and most importantly directly representative of a job outcome. We believe that the area of training package development that most requires this involvement is job analysis to define job roles. This involves identifying the skills and knowledge for a given role; any differences between jurisdictions; any commonalities across different roles and any the additional requirements as they relate to professional development and career pathways.

CS&HISC communicates regularly with stakeholders, including approximately 385 peak bodies. Currently 16,000 individuals and organisations receive our bulletins and newsletters. CS&HISC acknowledges the challenge of balancing the needs of various stakeholders and securing authoritative and representative input from industry, particularly from small and medium-sized organisations or from regional, rural and remote locations. Many do not have the time and resources to participate directly and often rely on their peak bodies and associations to adequately represent them in consultations. Experience tells us that industry involvement needs to be facilitated by an objective and independent party to ensure that:

- disagreements between industry representatives are effectively managed and resolved
- jurisdictional differences are teased out
- each party is heard, which requires effective facilitation of group discussions
- industry feedback is validated, and areas where there is clear consensus prioritised
- employer needs are considered alongside RTO expertise
- information about changes to training packages is communicated to all relevant stakeholders.

Summary

In summary, the Community Services and Health industry is projected to experience strong employment growth over the next decade. The industry is likely to experience significant difficulties recruiting the number of appropriately skilled workers required to meet the demands of an ageing population and growing community expectations in all aspects of care.

As a significant provider of national VET qualifications, TAFE has an important role to play in training the workers required. TAFE's unique decentralised, hub and spoke infrastructure; its reach into regional, rural and remote areas; low course entry barriers and its close relationship to industry and employers, are key to ensuring a reliable supply of workers to our industry.

A sizable proportion of TAFE graduates come from backgrounds of higher social disadvantage. For these individuals, TAFE facilitates access into work and provides opportunities to develop a career. In this way TAFE has a role in promoting personal wellbeing as well as contributing to local, regional and national productivity.

References

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