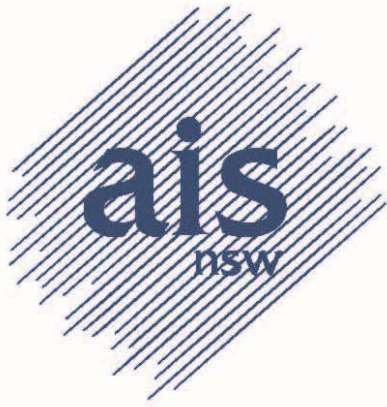


**Submission
No 229**

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

Organisation: Association of Independent Schools of NSW (AIS NSW)
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Submission from the Association of Independent Schools of NSW

to the Legislative Council inquiry into vocational education and training in
New South Wales

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Legislative Council Inquiry into vocational education and training in New South Wales

Submission from the Association of Independent Schools of New South Wales (AISNSW) Ltd

This submission has been prepared by the Association of Independent Schools of NSW (AISNSW) and reflects the views of the Association as a result of its involvement with vocational education and training in New South Wales independent schools.

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The AIS will be pleased to elaborate on any aspects of this submission as required.

Yours sincerely,

Dr Geoff Newcombe
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Introduction

AISNSW is the peak state body representing the independent schools sector in New South Wales. The Association represents more than 450 schools enrolling approximately 180,000 students, accounting for nearly 16 per cent of NSW school enrolments.

Independent schools are a diverse group of non-government schools serving a range of different communities. Many independent schools provide a religious or values-based education. Others promote a particular educational philosophy or interpretation of mainstream education. Independent schools include:

- Schools affiliated with Christian denominations, such as Anglican, Catholic, Greek Orthodox, Lutheran, Presbyterian, Seventh-day Adventist and Uniting Church schools
- Non-denominational Christian schools
- Islamic schools
- Jewish schools
- Montessori schools
- Rudolf Steiner schools
- Community schools
- Schools that specialise in meeting the needs of students with disabilities or those with behavioural or other issues that require special educational assistance.

Independent schools represented by AISNSW are not-for-profit institutions founded by religious or other groups in the community and are registered with the regulatory authority, the NSW Board of Studies, Teaching and Educational Standards (BOSTES). Most independent schools are established and governed independently on an individual school basis. However, some independent schools with common aims and educational philosophies are governed and administered as systems, for example the Sydney Anglican Schools Corporation and Seventh-day Adventist systems.

AISNSW provides a wide range of services to independent schools throughout NSW to support their provision of education. AISNSW services are supported by wide consultation with stakeholders, and include advice on matters relating to school governance, professional development of school board members and school staff, curriculum development and delivery, student services, as well as government regulations and policy.

It is important to note that, contrary to popular (and outdated) perceptions, 47 per cent of independent schools in NSW have enrolments of fewer than 200 students, and 64 per cent serve lower socio-economic communities with an SES score of 104 or less. The independent schools sector is the fastest growing of the three school sectors and most of the enrolment increase is being seen in low fee schools serving mid and lower socio economic communities. The enrolment of students with a disability and Aboriginal students in independent schools has for some years been growing at a faster rate than overall enrolments in the sector.

Overview of this Submission

The Association of Independent Schools of New South Wales (AISNSW) thanks the Committee for the opportunity to provide comments on the inquiry into vocational education and training in NSW.

In 2014 3,900 independent sector students were enrolled in at least one vocational education and training (VET) qualification, this is equivalent to 16.3 per cent of students enrolled in Years 11 and 12 in independent schools in NSW. The majority of VET students, across 75 independent schools, accessed VET courses through the AISNSW Registered Training Organisation (AISNSW RTO). Other students accessed one or more VET courses through other registered training organisations, predominantly TAFE-delivered VET for school students. Externally delivered VET (VET delivered outside of school) comprised one third of course enrolments.

The overwhelming majority of independent schools with students enrolled in a VET course serve mid to lower socio-economic communities.

This submission addresses the factors influencing school student choice about entering vocational education and training in New South Wales including:

- 1. Benefits to school students undertaking VET courses**
- 2. Choice of course, course location**
- 3. Barriers to participation**

The submission identifies the key barriers to participation as the cost to schools of:

- i. Providing VET delivery in schools**
- ii. Facilitating TAFE-delivered VET.**

These issues are described in more detail in the following pages, together with a case study of St Philip's Christian College (Newcastle) on page 9, which notes the impacts on school financial resources of the delivery of vocational education and training to students.

1. Benefits to school students undertaking VET courses

In a 2015 VET Provision Survey of 62 independent schools more than 80 per cent of schools responded that the practical nature of VET was the strongest influencing factor for students choosing a VET course. This data is corroborated by AISNSW RTO quality indicator data from over 550 VET students in the independent sector surveyed in 2014. The survey showed overwhelming support for the practical aspects of their VET course as students particularly value the acquisition of new skills. School leavers also benefit from the skills for living resulting from their participation in VET courses, irrespective of whether they pursue a career in a related vocation.

The quality and value of VET courses undertaken while a student is at school directly assists many young people to make a successful transition from school to work, further education or training.

The benefits of school students undertaking VET courses include:

- the opportunity for students to test or develop their interest in a particular vocational course or industry sector
- pathways to tertiary study, including both university and further vocational education
- credits towards completion of the academic components of VET qualifications, particularly through school-based apprenticeships and traineeships
- pathways to post-school work opportunities.

Many parents in independent schools, as in other school sectors, have an expectation that their children will attain a high ATAR score and attend university. While the profile of students undertaking a VET course is varied, many count their VET course achievements toward university admission. In 2014, independent school students were listed in the top 10 achievers list for the Entertainment, Hospitality and Retail Examinations.

Promotion of the tangible benefits of VET for school students, to parents, school communities and employers is an area for ongoing development.

2. Choice of course and course location

While survey data has shown that interest in gaining a subsequent VET qualification is a motivating factor for a decision to choose a VET course while at school, the decision on the choice of course also depends on three other significant factors: availability of the course, course location and cost.

Schools are only able to offer VET courses if they have access to sufficient resources to address the significant costs of implementation. The delivery of VET courses at school is often the preferred option as it results in lower costs to the school and to students. External courses, primarily delivered through TAFE, are associated with significantly higher costs. (This issue is explored in further detail in Section 3, below.)

The highest numbers of enrolments in VET for school students are in the Hospitality Industry Curriculum Framework Course. In the independent sector this accounts for 46 per cent of VET enrolments and is predominantly delivered at school. Hospitality courses are highly valued as this is a skills shortage industry and many students find part-time work or move into an apprenticeship post-school.

The Commonwealth Trade Skill Centre funding provided significant capital cost for the building of industry-standard commercial kitchens at some schools and the availability of a number these facilities has increased enrolments. However, ongoing costs associated with the delivery of Hospitality (and other courses) are significant for course providers and are still largely borne by individual schools.

Other VET courses delivered by independent schools include Construction Pathways, Live Production and Services, Business Services, Financial Services, Information, Media and Digital Technology, Early Childhood, Electrotechnology Tourism, Agriculture and Horticulture.

Where VET is not able to be delivered directly by a school, the school will typically facilitate TAFE-delivered VET or VET delivered by another RTO. Schools value this opportunity to broaden the choice of VET courses available to students, with majority the of these courses being in skills shortage areas such as Automotive, Children's Services, Hospitality and Community Services. The costs of externally-delivered VET courses impact on both students and schools:

- The location of an externally-delivered course provider often restricts the choice of a VET course. Limited travel options as well as the cost of travel can be a barrier to student participation.
- Courses delivered by TAFE Institutes or other RTOs, to independent school students, are charged to the school and have a high cost. This issue will be explored further in the next section of the submission.

Case Study: St Philips Christian College (Newcastle)

Motivation to study - why VET?

Vocational Education and Training at St Philips Christian College (SPCC), Newcastle is promoted to some students as early as Year 9. The gifted and talented program recognises individual students with vocational aptitude and where eligible, provides opportunity for acceleration. The College offers transition programs for Year 10 students to assist both students and their parents with subject selection for the HSC. The VET Coordinator is present at all transition meetings and is able to direct students to the appropriate vocational courses available to suit student needs, interest and vocational pathway. SPCC utilises a number of RTOs to widen the variety of vocational courses available for selection on the basis that student success is increased when engaged in courses that suit individual interests and relevant potential post-school pathways. The College engages in a collaborative curriculum planning process to ensure the vocational education and training courses are not only available to students with special needs, but assist their successful transition from school to work, by careful selection of courses and units of competency to suit individual student requirements.

Active collaboration with industry

The College actively engages with industry to ensure their support in the planning and delivery of vocational education and training. The delivery of Live Production and Hospitality courses occur in facilities designed in collaboration with industry. Both courses are delivered in collaboration with industry, with each enterprise operating as a commercial concern – going beyond just a simulated environment. Recent Trade Skills Centre funding made this possible and in July students were able to host a conference for 470 people in the Live Productions Theatre and catered by the Hospitality students. These courses provide students the opportunity to see the direct link between their training and work/ post school possibilities.

Administrative Demands and Cost of VET

Regular training package changes and increased compliance requirements place pressure on the financial resources of the school. There are also significant costs involved with committing time for extensive industry engagement, and with adequately funding and maintaining resources and materials to ensure high quality course delivery. The school would be unable to meet the regulatory and delivery costs without funding support from the Government, provided to the school through AISNSW.

3. Barriers to participation in VET

i. Cost of delivery of VET in schools

The NSW Skills Board provides annual funding to AISNSW to support VET delivered in schools. This funding is critical in addressing concerns raised by schools in the 2015 AIS VET Provision Survey:

- VET teachers in schools face additional demands beyond those of their non-VET colleagues in meeting compliance demands both of Board of Studies Teaching and Educational Standards NSW (BOSTES) and RTO/ASQA requirements.
- Schools require significant funding support to provide high quality teacher professional development and associated teacher release, as the maintenance of industry currency is of critical importance to enable the delivery of up-to-date, relevant courses.
- Time spent in administration of VET courses needs to be recognised as a significant cost to schools – a cost not associated with non-VET courses.
- There are significant additional costs associated with teacher training. The Standards for RTOs 2015 require the Trainer and Assessor to hold the vocational competencies at least to the level being delivered and assessed and hold *Certificate IV in Training and Assessment*. The training of teachers new to delivery in VET is expensive. The total cost of training per teacher varies between \$5,000 and \$11,000. This includes training cost, accommodation, travel and teacher release. The recruitment, training and retraining of VET staff is a significant concern for schools.

The continuous improvement of training packages requires updates to teacher qualifications and teaching and assessment resources and these generate additional expenses for schools.

- The provision of high quality facilities, equipment and resources to support excellence in VET in schools is associated with significant capital and recurrent costs.

Recommendation 1

The current funding arrangements to AISNSW to support and expand VET delivery in schools is maintained.

ii. Cost of TAFE-delivered VET

The consistent issue for independent schools and parents of students accessing TAFE-delivered VET (TVET) is course costs. Examples of per student current costs of a one year, 120hr TVET course at Sydney Institute are listed below;

- Automotive – Mechanical Ultimo TAFE - \$2,657
- Business Services – St George and Ultimo TAFE - \$2,074
- Hairdressing - Petersham, Ultimo and Sutherland TAFE - \$1,730
- Community – Children’s Services – Sutherland TAFE - \$1,939

Many students undertake a two year pattern of study, 240hr course, to be able to count the course towards an ATAR. Examples of current costs of a two year, 240hr TVET course at Sydney Institute are listed below;

- Automotive - Mechanical – St George and Sutherland TAFE – \$3,973
- Hospitality Food and Beverage – Ultimo TAFE – \$3,429
- Construction Pathways – Sutherland - \$1,963

Independent schools are invoiced for course costs near the end of each study year. The ability of schools to absorb this cost in part or in full depends upon the nature of the school. The majority of schools accessing TAFE-delivered VET are low fee paying schools and it is not always within the school budget to absorb the cost.

The NSW Skills Board provides annual funding to AISNSW to support student access to TAFE-delivered VET by independent school students. The annual funding provides critical financial support that would otherwise be unavailable and is used as a subsidy to support the cost of a TVET course and also the cost of VET courses delivered by other RTOs. Where schools are unable to absorb course costs, even with a subsidy, outstanding course costs are typically borne by parents.

Schools have commented that TVET is extremely expensive and significant numbers of students chose not to take up courses offered at TAFE due to the high cost.

In 2016, TAFE NSW is moving to a new pricing model for TVET. This pricing model reflects the Smart and Skilled VET reform. The price of a TVET course will consist of a base qualification price which is the Smart and Skilled price (indexed for 2016 delivery) with location loadings, an additional service charge and incidental expenses. While AISNSW welcomes the transparency of the new model it will in some instances increase the cost of a full qualification significantly. For example, the minimum cost of a Certificate II in Construction Pathways (based on 2015 prices) will be \$4,360, which is an increase of \$2,397.

Recommendation 2

The current funding arrangements to AISNSW to support externally delivered VET is increased to reflect increased course costs.

Recommendation 3

The annual funding round is changed to a three year agreement to provide a greater degree of certainty and planning for schools.

Conclusion

AISNSW and the independent schools sector recognise the high value of providing vocational education and training for students while they are at school. AISNSW is committed to continuing to support students in the independent sector to access important VET courses in ways that do not place undue financial burden on either school or families.

The importance of maintaining financial support is particularly significant given that the overwhelming majority of independent school students enrolled in VET come from mid to low socioeconomic communities and that many schools would be unable to continue to offer VET without this support.