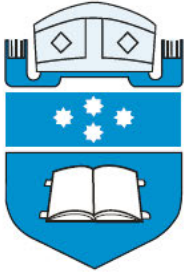


**INQUIRY INTO VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND
TRAINING IN NEW SOUTH WALES**

Organisation: Sydney Anglican Schools Corporation
Date received: 14/08/2015



SYDNEY ANGLICAN SCHOOLS CORPORATION

ABN 63 544 529 806

Level 1, 420 Forest Road, Hurstville NSW 2220 | PO Box 465, Hurstville BC NSW 1481
Tel: 02 8567 4000 | Fax: 02 9570 2220 | Web: www.sasc.nsw.edu.au

14 August 2015

The Director
General Purpose Standing Committee No. 6
Parliament House
Macquarie Street
Sydney NSW 2000

Dear Sir or Madam

RE: Sydney Anglican Schools Corporation Submission to Legislative Council Inquiry into vocational education and training in New South Wales by General Purpose Standing Committee No 6

Please find following this submission to the inquiry.

As the third largest owner and operator of schools in NSW after the government system and Catholic systemic schools, the Sydney Anglican Schools Corporation provides P-12 school education for more than 13,500 students throughout Sydney, the South Coast and in the Central West of NSW.

The Sydney Anglican Schools Corporation is also the most significant provider amongst independent schools of a School Based Apprenticeships program in New South Wales principally, located at Trades Norwest Anglican Senior College although with some further presence on the South Coast at the Shoalhaven Region Anglican Schools.

The Corporation is one of the few organisations if not the only one in NSW that is providing pathways that allow students to complete their secondary education while participating in a School Based Apprenticeship that results in a qualification at the Certificate III level.

We note that School Based Apprenticeships receive specific mention in the terms of reference of the inquiry, although this submission also covers numerous aspects of the inquiry terms with a focus on Trades Norwest Anglican Senior College, our Glenwood facility in Western Sydney.

To fully appreciate the importance of School Based Apprenticeships and the impact that the introduction of the Smart and Skilled reforms have had upon this service, we wish to extend an invitation to the Committee to visit our purpose built campus at Glenwood. More than \$17 million of public funding has been invested in the facilities at this site. Seeing the facilities in operation provides a comprehensive understanding of the unique nature of the courses and training offered by Trades Norwest.

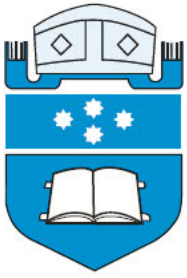
Since the NSW Government recognises the importance of Trade Training, particularly in the 'hard skills' areas, we would further value the opportunity of presenting to the Committee and being able to present the ground breaking program that our school, Trades Norwest, has developed.

We look forward to working with the Committee to improve the quality and availability of trade training for young people both in Western Sydney and throughout our network of schools in New South Wales.

For further information and discussion of this submission, please contact me directly or to the Principal of Trades Norwest Senior College, Mrs Gaynor Mackinnon .

Yours faithfully

Andrew Guile (Cr)
Corporate Affairs Manager
Sydney Anglican Schools Corporation



Submission to the General Purpose Standing Committee No 6 inquiry into and report on vocational education and training in New South Wales

Summary of submission

Sydney Anglican Schools Corporation has invested heavily in vocational education since 2007 with a focus on a unique program of School Based Apprenticeships that complements a 'No Exam' Higher School Certificate. This allows students to complete their school education while being engaged in trade training at Certificate III level rather than the standard Certificate II that other providers deliver.

The introduction of the Smart and Skilled funding model has seen a reduction in the number of smaller contract suppliers and a shift away from a student centred funding model toward a provider based funding model.

Our chief concern is to see that students are established on the right pathways toward successful learning and employment outcomes and the system of funding should reflect this. That is why the Corporation is committed to apprenticeships that have their origins in schools.

This innovative approach of combining apprenticeships that have their origins in schools while providing a suitable program that allows students to complete their Higher School Certificate is attracting high levels of support from both the students and their families. We believe that this is important in affecting the completion rates of students in both their trade training qualifications and their Higher School Certificate.

We are identifying a need for early intervention with students coming from traditional models of secondary schooling from either state schools or the non-government sector. By keeping school education, trade training and employment linked together in our programs, we are able to meet the specific learning and other development needs of students who in many cases are not adequately prepared for the post school environment.

There is a university focus to many aspects of school education. This can be seen in the current priority given to STEM strategies. However, there also needs to be an intentional inclusion of the two thirds of students who will follow either a trade or other career pathway. Our experience of offering these services from a school perspective is that there are distinct advantages of keeping both school education and trade training together.

The cost of providing particularly the 'hard skills' training is expensive to deliver at any scale. Any further reform of the Smart and Skilled funding model should dedicate a component of funding to School Based Apprenticeships to support effective pathways for young people to participate in trade training.

Further reform of Smart and Skilled as the flagship policy for Vocational Education in New South Wales is required to ensure that organisations like Trades Norwest Anglican Senior College is adequately supported to deliver education, training and employment outcomes that in turn support our state's economy and the quality of our broader community.

A more detailed response to the terms of reference follows as well as the Trades Norwest Anglican Senior College Annual report for 2014. This was a transition year for the College with enrolments increasing for both 2015 and for 2016.

Responses to Terms of Reference

Vocational education and student choice

Terms of reference:

- (a) *the factors influencing student choice about entering the vocational education and training system including:*
 - (i) *motivation to study*
 - (ii) *choice of course, course location and method of study*
 - (iii) *barriers to participation, including students in the non-government education and home schooling sectors*

Key issues

Many students attending Trades Norwest Anglican Senior College have found that the traditional approaches of local secondary schools are not meeting their learning needs. This often results in poor academic results along with negative impacts on a student's self-esteem. Such problems can be compounded by the student's family educational background and other demographic factors.

Unless students find a suitable learning environment and a pathway towards successful educational and employment outcomes, then the future consequences are that they may not be contributing to the state's economy to their potential and may instead be a drain on it.

Parents want to see young people complete their schooling and are often concerned if they 'leave' school prior to gaining a Higher School Certificate. Many families also appreciate the safety of a learning environment that is more focussed on the learning needs of the student as opposed to just concentrating on reaching outcomes.

Evidence

Students presenting for enrolment at Trades Norwest Anglican Senior College are often disengaged from learning and have deficits in literacy and numeracy, learning disabilities and other social attributes that affect their motivation for learning and their performance at school. A new environment for learning and a different way of delivering programs has assisted more than 450 students who have completed their schooling, gained a Certificate III qualification in a trade and are supported into employment.

Case studies

Trades Norwest Anglican Senior College offers a program of Higher School Certificate study that complements and supports Trade Training courses. Following is the basic structure of the course:

Apprentice	indentured to an employer for the length of their training leading to a Certificate III qualification
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Trainee signed up with an employer for the length of their training leading to a Certificate II qualification

School based apprentices at Trades Norwest work 2 days per week, attend school 2 days per week and attend training one day per week in term time during Year 11 and Year 12.

Once they finish Year 12 they work full time, attending training one day per week in term time.

Our students have made a decision to pursue a trade career in their chosen area and then followed it through by enrolling in the College, to give themselves every chance to be the best tradesperson possible.

- Apprentices/trainees will be studying part time for the Higher School Certificate, gaining valuable literacy, numeracy, technology and business skills within a trade-based environment.
- Students are assessed regularly on their employability skills and their work readiness.

Higher School Certificate / School Based Apprenticeship program

Educational Need:	Covered by the Subject
Literacy	> English Studies
Numeracy	> General Maths 1
Technology	> Computing Applications
Work Readiness	> Work Studies > Industry Based Learning
Business skills and understanding	> VET Business Studies

Year 11 and Year 12 students work on a common program in a combined group with the program facilitator. The program is project-based and has a trades focus, with a new project each term over the 2 year period.

With the Trades Norwest Program of study students will qualify for a Higher School Certificate, with no Higher School Certificate examinations. All programs and learning projects are college developed and assessed.

Recommendations

- That the NSW Government policy recognise the educational and employment benefits of trade training at Certificate III level that has its origins in schools.
- That the NSW Government make provision and recognise service providers who create programs that address the core educational needs of young people to lift apprenticeship completion rates.

Vocational education and private providers

Terms of reference:

- (b) *the role played by public and private vocational education providers and industry in:*
 - (i) *educational linkages with secondary and higher education*
 - (ii) *the development of skills in the New South Wales economy*
 - (iii) *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,*
 - (iv) *the delivery of services and programs particularly to regional, rural and remote communities*

Key issues

If programs of learning and training are targeted towards the individual needs of students then the distinctions between school based and post school learning become arbitrary.

Many learners need to see the practical application of concepts and skills in literacy and numeracy applied to their area of interest to remain on task and motivated.

The demand for this dual approach whereby the Higher School Certificate is completed alongside trade training as part of a school based apprenticeship is also in demand in regional areas where there is educational and other disadvantage.

Not all private providers should be characterised as profit making entities since organisations such as Sydney Anglican Schools Corporation retain the status of a not-for-profit charity.

Very few private training organisations invest in the 'hard skill' courses like Carpentry, Electro technology and Automotive which means a lack of diversity in approaches to training.

Evidence

Trades Norwest Anglican Senior College has always had a high rate of students successfully transition to an apprenticeship and employment. A focus on literacy, numeracy and workplace mentoring provides the foundation for a successful transition from school to work. A close association with industry and extensive experience in the workplace ensures that students are work ready and achieve employment outcomes. The College has a long association with organisations such as Master Plumbers, Motor Traders Association, Master Builders and Master Painters to ensure students receive quality training.

Many families and young people from a variety of social and cultural backgrounds who would not otherwise have completed their secondary education and secured employment have been supported by the College through to graduation and employment.

Trades Norwest Anglican Senior College is one of the few remaining trade training specialist schools of its type not to have closed or to have been subsumed into other programs. It has continued to attract students by offering Certificate III employment ready qualifications to some of the most educationally disadvantaged students from Western Sydney.

Case studies

In 2007, the Corporation was successful in opening the Australian Technical College Western Sydney which eventually became the Anglican Technical College Western Sydney and is today known as Trades Norwest Anglican Senior College. It is located at 1000 Old Windsor Road, Glenwood across the road from the Norwest Business Park.

The College currently provides Certificate III level training in Electro-technology, Carpentry, and has facilitated training in Automotive and Early Childhood education – all courses in skills demand. Carpentry and Electro technology courses are delivered through our Techwest Sydney RTO which is co-located with the College and is an integral part of the service delivery. More than 400 students have graduated to a full time apprenticeship and have attained their Higher School Certificate to provide flexible pathways for career development into the future.

Trades Norwest Anglican Senior College has a current enrolment of 50 students in Years 11 and 12 who are undertaking School Based Apprenticeships while completing their secondary schooling. The College is now forced under Smart and Skilled to use other private training companies to deliver trade training at an increased cost to the College.

Trades Norwest Anglican Senior College and the Techwest Sydney RTO are part of Sydney Anglican Schools Corporation which owns and operates 19 schools in the Sydney metropolitan, Illawarra and Central West of New South Wales. These schools provide affordable Christian education for more than 13,500 boys and girls from pre-kinder through to Year 12 with more than 1800 staff. As such, the Corporation is the second largest provider of non-government education in NSW.

Trades Norwest Anglican Senior College through its associated RTO Techwest Sydney continues to train students toward Certificate III even when a student has left or completed their schooling. The ongoing and supportive relationship between the staff of the College and students are, we believe, a key factor in students having a high rate of completion of their apprenticeships.

This is where our approach is quite unique and also successful because we are a school for school based apprentices as well as being a TAFE for full time apprentices. We don't just fit in one category and so we cannot necessarily answer State Training Services questions so that they can apply the funding model/s appropriately.

The Corporation is seeking to extend the Trades Norwest approach to regional students who wish to pursue a trade career. Through our South Coast Trades Skills Centre, Shoalhaven Anglican School offers an alternative model to traditional schooling. Year 11 and Year 12 students can focus on a vocational education pathway in a senior School environment. Students will complete the Higher School Certificate and can also complete the first year of an Apprenticeship/Traineeship.

In 2013, Macquarie Anglican Grammar School in Dubbo became a part of Sydney Anglican Schools Corporation. This school has purpose built facilities for trade training provided under the previous Federal Government Policy for Australian Technical Colleges. The agreement with the Commonwealth for the operation of this Centre is that Students will be working towards Certificate III qualifications.

Recommendations

- That NSW Government policy recognise the benefits of better integrating post school trade training with Higher School Certificate studies to allow more students who do not want to pursue academic pathways the opportunity to complete their secondary schooling while undertaking trade training.
- That the NSW Government allows the training entitlement funding to follow the student rather than the organisation providing service.
- That the NSW Government considers schools with Trade Training Centre facilities being resourced on a regional basis to offer School Based Apprenticeships programs alongside traditional programs.

Vocational education and the cost of delivery

Terms of reference:

- (c) *factors affecting the cost of delivery of affordable and accessible vocational education and training, including the influence of the co-contribution funding model on student behaviour and completion rates*

Key issues

Both the provision of facilities for trade training and the financing of programs for those facilities are costly for service providers. These costs are exacerbated for providers who prioritise the delivery of 'hard skill' courses such as Carpentry, Electro technology, Plumbing or Automotive.

Students in independent schools who wish to add TVET courses to their program through TAFE face substantial fees for many courses that schools add to their other private tuition costs. While there is some subsidy provided by many independent schools provided through reducing Commonwealth payments, there are few if any savings for schools when individual students take alternate programs outside of the standard program since most of the costs are fixed and tuition fees for the final years of schooling do not cover the cost of smaller class sizes for Higher School Certificate subjects.

Evidence

The withdrawal of Australian Government funding from Australian Technical Colleges in 2008 saw most of these operations either discontinue or change the focus of their delivery to Certificate II qualifications that did not meet the requirements of employers.

Notwithstanding the funding challenges that affordable fee independent schools face in delivering these programs, there seems to be a constant demand for these types of programs with enrolments in Western Sydney continuing even amongst funding uncertainty in both our Anglican and other local Catholic Colleges.

Case studies

Trades Norwest Anglican Senior College is one of the few remaining trade training specialist schools of its type not to have closed or to have been subsumed into other programs. It has continued to attract students by offering Certificate III employment ready qualifications to some of the most educationally disadvantaged students from Western Sydney.

Governments have already delivered more than \$17M in funding for the establishment of this purpose built training facility.

Trades Norwest Anglican Senior College has not sought to follow the policy direction that supports the lesser Certificate II level training in Trade Training Centres. Evidence suggests that these facilities are significantly underutilised due to the cost of running VET programs and students are not recognised as being 'work ready' by employers.

Prior to the introduction of Smart and Skilled, Trades Norwest Anglican Senior College also provided training services to some TTCs that do not have adequate resources.

Other Corporation schools have also benefited from the provision of facilities under the Trade Training Centers policy including Thomas Hassall Anglican College at West Hoxton, Wollondilly Anglican College at Tahmoor and Shoalhaven Region Anglican Schools at Bomaderry and Milton on the NSW South Coast.

Sydney Anglican Schools Corporation schools offer TVET options to students that are principally offered by local TAFEs. Several schools have established Trade Training Centres to offer on campus courses to students. The capacity for our schools, which are mostly affordable fee schools in outlying areas of Sydney and beyond, to fully utilize these publically funded facilities remains a challenge due to the costs associated with small class sizes required for these courses.

Since the Trades Norwest Anglican Senior College and Techwest Sydney RTO was unsuccessful in their application for training contracts, this School Based Apprenticeships program in both Western Sydney and on the South Coast are now further under pressure to demonstrate a financially sustainable approach to delivering School Based Apprenticeships.

<i>Recommendation</i>

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• That the NSW Government implements a sector blind approach to the funding of TVET courses for secondary school students. |
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Competitive training market outcomes

Terms of reference:

- (d) *the effects of a competitive training market on student access to education, training, skills and pathways to employment, including opportunities and pathways to further education and employment for the most vulnerable in our community including those suffering a disability or severe disadvantage*

Key issues

The talk about competitive training markets and the experience of their introduction in other states has given some encouragement to the non-government sector to participate in trade training instead of leaving it purely to TAFE.

The reality of the introduction of competition to the NSW trade training market is that the competitive position of TAFE has been protected to the detriment of smaller capacity, higher quality providers of training.

For students to leave their secondary schooling at the end of Year 10 and move directly to an apprenticeship involving TAFE study is the traditional pathway that for many years now has demonstrated poor rates of completion – often below 50%. School Based Apprenticeships that allow the completion of the Higher School Certificate while attaining a trade qualification and employment also open up pathways for future development later in a career.

Evidence

The roll out of Smart and Skilled contracts saw around one third of providers who were previously recipients of User Choice funding removed from the list of contracted providers.

Recommendation

- That the NSW Government review the intended policy outcomes for vocational education as well as criteria for funding and ensure that there is no preference for either TAFE or the non-government sector.

Industry participation and employment opportunities

Terms of reference:

- (e) *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*

Key issues

Industry partnerships are crucial to ensure that the direction and content of training reflects the standards and scope that employers rely upon from apprentices.

Cooperation with industry is best initiated at the Director level to ensure that industry has a presence throughout the operation of the organisation.

Direct involvement by groups such as the Master Builders and Master Plumbers in trade training and the cooperation with these industry groups with organisations like Sydney Anglican Schools Corporation reflects a market requirement for up to date and quality course content that is oriented to employment outcomes. The perception in the marketplace is that TAFE has sometimes lacked this close industry involvement and that this has been reflected in aspects of their training.

Evidence

Originally established as an Australian Technical College in 2007, Trades Norwest Anglican Senior College has benefited from the strong relationships laid down initially at the governance level and which continue on the School Council that exercises oversight over the operations of the College.

The structure of Trades Norwest Anglican Senior College brings industry representatives together with education and training experts to deliver outcomes that benefit both employers and the future careers of students.

Case studies

The guiding principles of industry partnerships have strongly influenced the methods of operating Trades Norwest. This has resulted in key benefits for employers. Apprentices are:

focused on their trade –

- Part time at work (i.e. 2 days per week – can be negotiated – in term time only)
- Full time at work during school holidays – at least 9 weeks of the year full time
- Available for full time work for the whole of December (your busiest time!)
- At trade training 1 day per week during term time only

and focused on getting an Higher School Certificate but not having the unwanted stress of Higher School Certificate exams –

- At school 2 days per week during term time to complete Higher School Certificate – no Higher School Certificate exams – flexible school based assessment and no homework
- Learning through projects focused on trades skills - literacy, numeracy, technology and business admin

Some of the key functions of Trades Norwest Anglican Senior College include supporting students in their learning, training students to the end of their Certificate III in Carpentry or Electrotechnology, mentoring students during their apprenticeship as well as working with the Apprenticeship Board in setting up the training plan.

Employers can choose the 2 days per week that their apprentice is on site with them so that they are best able to plan their work program, as long as it is not the day for their trade training at College/TAFE. The Trades Norwest flexible Higher School Certificate program does not require all students to be at work on the same day.

There are benefits to employers to having school based apprentices:

- Starting an apprentice while having the backup of a school pastoral care program
- Government financial incentives for taking up a school based apprentice
- School and TAFE are at the same location for Carpentry, Electro technology, Automotive and Child care
- Apprentices continue to gain better skills in literacy and numeracy
- School based apprentices are more likely to complete their trade

Australian Business Apprenticeship Centre

The College works closely with the Australian Business Apprenticeship Centre which supports students with:

- Arranging sign-up for apprenticeships to meet the requirements of State Training
- Mentoring of student apprentices
- Liaising with apprentices and their employers
- Providing information and processing applications for government incentives for employers and apprentices
- Advice on appropriate training packages for new apprentices

<i>Recommendation</i>

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • That the NSW Government require the demonstration of industry endorsement and cooperation for successful applications for Smart and Skilled contracts. |
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Smart and skilled reforms

Terms of reference:

- (f) *the Smart and Skilled reforms, including:*
- (i) *alternatives to the Smart and Skilled contestable training market and other funding policies*
 - (ii) *the effects of the Smart and Skilled roll out on School Based Apprenticeships*

Key issues

The introduction of the Smart and Skilled reforms has reduced the options for students seeking appropriate trade training courses.

Smart and Skilled has arbitrarily cut out small and specialised trainers such as those organisations providing School Based Apprenticeships.

The application process for Smart and Skilled failed to appreciate or understand the nature of School Based Apprenticeships.

State Training Services has provided no viable solutions for the organisations whose principal offering is School Based Apprenticeships in combination with the completion of secondary school.

Evidence

Smart and Skilled application process was unfair to specialised providers

There are areas that we consider have caused our application to be viewed unfairly. To demonstrate this, below is the substance of an appeal made to State Training Services which was subsequently rejected.

1. Student Eligibility

Eligibility for Smart and Skilled
Student personal eligibility
To be eligible for any subsidised Smart and Skilled training a student must be:

- an Australian citizen, permanent resident or humanitarian visa holder, or New Zealand citizen, and
- aged 15 years or older, and
- no longer at school, and
- living or working in NSW.

Any student registered as a NSW apprentice or new entrant trainee will also be eligible for subsidised Smart and Skilled training.

The definition of student eligibility for Smart and Skilled did not make it absolutely clear that school based apprentices were covered under Smart and Skilled funding, since one of the introductory dot points states '**no longer at school**'. Although there is a statement that 'any student registered as a NSW apprentice' would be eligible, it is not clear that this statement overrides the dot point that a student who is still at school will be considered eligible, i.e. students in School Based Apprenticeships.

Our Principal attended the information sessions conducted by State Training Services requesting on numerous occasions details about the funding for school based apprentices and was told that the information about school based apprentices would be available later.

Since the impression left with us was that Smart and Skilled only applied to students who have left school, we understood that school based apprentices would be funded outside the Smart and Skilled program. There was no indication in any responses at Information Sessions that the funding for school based apprentices would be part of a Smart and Skilled contract.

Hence, in responding to the questions in the application, our RTO constrained our responses to deal only with our training of students who have left school. In this respect I considered that we have been treated unfairly in the process.

2. Operating as a fee-for-service provider

TechWest Sydney would be happy to operate as a fee-for-service provider. The RTO meets requirements for ASQA registration and we consider that we offer a high quality program that is very attractive to students and parents and industry.

However, our apprentices in Carpentry and Electro technology are employed under a Modern Award which requires all employers to cover the all the costs of training for their apprentices.

Therefore it is not possible for our RTO to charge a full fee-for-service cost to apprentices when they are able to access subsidised training at a provider with a Smart and Skilled contract. Employers would be very, very reluctant and ill-advised to pay the full cost of training for an apprentice when they can get that training at a subsidised rate, even if the full-fee product was of outstanding quality.

So the option to operate our RTO as a full fee-for-service provider, even though we consider we have an outstanding product and would be willing to operate in this way, is not an option available to our organisation. This puts us at a significant disadvantage without a Smart and Skilled contract.

Hence, in responding to the questions in the application, our RTO constrained our responses to deal only with our training of students who have left school. In this respect it is considered that we have been treated unfairly in the process.

3. Lack of context for data on the RTO and associated Senior College – management and staff experience

Our students are a niche target area of the education market. They come to our senior college specifically to continue studying for a Higher School Certificate and to start in a trade career.

The application process did not allow for explanation of the integral relationship of the College and the RTO. In fact the question on the number of full-time and part-time staff involved in training specifically excluded those training school based apprentices. Considering that our main area of training is in the area of school based apprentices, this meant that our full-time employed staff only appear as part-time, and would perhaps indicate to you that we did not have sufficient staffing when that is not the actual situation.

The one-size-fits-all approach of the application process meant that we did not have the opportunity to indicate our special place in the training environment, and the impact we are making in changing the lives of young people.

The College is in a growth phase and is expanding its program to offer a directed program for indigenous students from remote Australian communities. The continuity of provision of training to complete their trade qualification at the same site as the Higher School Certificate program is an essential part of accommodating the learning requirements for these indigenous students.

The lack of a Smart and Skilled contract for school based apprentices jeopardises the effectiveness of this program.

Hence, in responding to the questions in the application, our RTO constrained our responses to deal only with our training of students who have left school. In this respect it is considered that we have been treated unfairly in the process.

4. Diversity of Income Sources

Since we completed the application without acknowledging the resources of the senior college, we did not include the income derived from State Funding for school students and Commonwealth funding for school students. The College and the RTO are part of the Sydney Anglican Schools Corporation group of schools, and so have the financial backing of an organisation that operates 19 schools in NSW and is in a financially stable and successful position. It should also be noted that the Sydney Anglican Schools Corporation and TechWest Sydney are not for profit registered Charities.

Hence, in responding to the questions in the application, our RTO constrained our responses to deal only with our training of students who have left school. In this respect it is considered that we have been treated unfairly in the process.

5. Student Support

All our students are enrolled in the college Trades Norwest Anglican Senior College and as a secondary school we have a strong pastoral support program and staff who have student support as the core of how they approach all aspects of education, including the trade education of our students. All staff, including trade trainers, have a support aspect to their roles and this is included in their statement of duties and was a criterion for their employment. It is nonsensical that a College for senior secondary students did not receive an assessment of A for student support.

Hence, in responding to the questions in the application, our RTO constrained our responses to deal only with our training of students who have left school. In this respect I considered that we have been treated unfairly in the process.

Summary

The RTO TechWest Sydney operates to train school based apprentices in the senior secondary college Trades Norwest Anglican Senior College. These two entities operate on the same site and operate as an integrated organisation. The application process was unfair because it did not allow the RTO to provide information on the nature of operations of the RTO and the College and was not clear that the application was adequately taking into account data around the training of school based apprentices.

Case studies

Trades Norwest Anglican Senior College has a unique program that offers an alternative Higher School Certificate pathway that allows students to gain that qualification while having a focus on their trade training through that program. These students are often disengaged from learning and the unique approach to senior education at our college brings them back into the learning environment and enables them to gain qualifications so that they can become contributing members of society and not a burden on the taxpayer as unemployed and disaffected young people.

Since we are dealing with young people at a vulnerable stage of development, the opportunity to combine Higher School Certificate study and trade training at the same location and within the same organisation is a major factor in parents deciding to choose the College for the education of their young people rather than continuing with their original schooling option.

The RTO TechWest Sydney was specifically established several years ago to provide on-site training for students in Year 11 and 12 at the College who are embarking on an apprenticeship in Carpentry or Electro technology, and to continue that training when they graduate from Year 12 into a full-time apprenticeship. The ability to deliver training to Certificate III level was also part of an agreement with the Commonwealth government to provide funding for the establishment of the College.

Students being trained by the RTO TechWest Sydney are enrolled through Trades Norwest Anglican Senior College, so the operation of TechWest Sydney is an integral part of the College operation.

Just as Trades Norwest was able to relaunch in 2015 with a refined approach to delivering a Higher School Certificate and a trade qualification, the introduction of Smart and Skilled where smaller providers such as ourselves have been excluded from contracts with State Training Services, we find ourselves needing to outsource training at an inflated cost to provide what we were previously able to deliver.

There are very few schools and training providers who are able to offer the extent of experience and investment in School Based Apprenticeships as Sydney Anglican Schools Corporation through our investment in Trades Norwest which was formerly known as the Anglican Technical College Western Sydney.

With the introduction of the Smart and Skilled policy, there was at the same time a reduction in the number of service providers that were eligible for funding. This had the effect of favouring the larger suppliers of training rather than those who had targeted programs that were more individually focussed on student needs.

The reduction also had the effect of reducing competition as smaller providers like Trades Norwest have been forced to strike agreements with TAFE and other larger training organisations. For Trades Norwest, this has come at an increased cost to provide training and a reduced flexibility to structure that training according to the specific needs of students.

Then there is the issue of needing several subcontract arrangements since not every course that the College offers is matched by the same subcontractors. Finding Electro technology trainers has proved challenging.

In working to procure training services for our students that we could previously provide, we spoke to a company that had initially had their school based apprentice funding capped. Although they had then received notification that they were no longer capped for training school based apprentices. The company indicated that while they had capacity to train school based apprentices, they had not even tried to market that area of their training. This was a company that was obviously focussed on adult education and the School Based Apprenticeships are just an add-on service for them.

Another private RTO indicated they had been given an unlimited cap on Smart and Skilled funding for school based apprenticeship training in Certificate III in Carpentry. On learning this it became difficult for us to understand how this could occur since the provision of school based apprenticeship training especially in Carpentry at Certificate III level has been the foundation of operations for our College and our RTO TechWest Sydney.

On coming across this type of information, we appealed to State Training Services on the basis that it would be of enormous assistance to the operation of our College and for the students and families associated with our College if we were able to be provided with access to Smart and Skilled funding at least for our school based apprentices in Carpentry and Electro technology. The students who engage in training with our College all (about 98%) start with us as school based apprentices.

Since our students start with us as school students, the option of travelling to another location is not always possible for them, and so it is vitally important that we are able to access funding to continue to provide that training here on our site with our outstanding facilities and trainers.

Recommendations

- That the NSW Government prioritises a dedicated funding allocation for apprenticeships that have their origins in schools.
- That State Training Services consult with stakeholders on the Smart and Skilled Contracts application process.
- That the NSW Government considers further funding reform that is dedicated to student training entitlements as opposed to contracts awarded to specific organisations.