

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

**Name:** Name suppressed

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Partially Confidential

## **LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL SUBMISSION**

### **Vocational education and training in New South Wales (Inquiry)**

This submission addresses a number of issues concerning the delivery of Vocation Education and Training (VET) in the TAFENSW system.

Areas covered by my observations include implementation of the Smart & Skilled program, funding allocation, EBS Systems and the structure of training packages.

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#### **SMART & SKILLED**

It would appear that the Smart & Skilled funding model does not provide an adequate funding stream for TAFENSW infrastructure and management.

While the essential funding model for implementation of the Smart & Skilled program provides for the delivery of modestly-resourced training programs, the teaching sections do not receive an adequate proportion of the allocated funds and consequently the educational outcomes do not meet established standards.

Teaching sections would ordinarily be expecting to apportion no more than 30% of allocated funding to general administration. Under the current model, the TAFENSW Illawarra Institute regularly redirects well over 40% of allocated teaching funding to management and administration.

The consequent budgetary constraint on teaching:

- decreases the available teaching resources;
- necessitates the doubling of class sizes, for example classes which were previously held to 16 students now have as many as 30 students - in effect, students receive half of the available 1:1 teaching time that previous students had access to;
- reduces program delivery hours, for example Diploma courses that ran for 20 hours per week for 2 semesters now run for 15 hours per week over 2 semesters, Certificate IV classes that ran for 20 hours a week over 2 semesters now run for 15 hours a week over 1 semester; and
- lowers the quality of the program delivered to students.

Such a dispersal of funding appears to indicate a priority being placed on management of services over the delivery of educational programmes. Over time the reputation and authority of the qualification will be eroded as the public confidence in the certification system deteriorates.

## **LEARNING MANAGEMENT AND BUSINESS REFORM - LMBR/EBS SYSTEMS**

Concurrent with the introduction of the Smart & Skilled program, TAFENSW introduced a new student management, enrolment and records system, the EBS. This system has been plagued with problems:

- At the time of writing numerous classes have still not been formally enrolled. In many instances this involves students who have been attending classes since their commencement of studies in January 2015.
- There is a continuing increase in demands on head teachers and their sections. When administrative services are unable to resolve data entry issues in EBS, the task is devolved to the Head Teacher and the section. Due to inefficiencies with the software capacity the work undertaken by Head Teachers in maintaining students records often occurs at a granular level and is extremely time-consuming. Consequently, hours which should be allocated to lesson planning, preparation and assessment tasks are being consumed by repetitive and time consuming administrative tasks.
- The program does not allow for subject units to be revisited in the context of an alternate discipline or field of study. For example:
  - A student completing the Occupational Health & Safety Unit whilst undertaking administrative studies will have the Unit recorded by the EBS as completed, and there are no further requirements to revisit the training when the student is undertaking other subjects with different or increased workplace hazards, such as a child care or a building site where safety issues are considerably greater and far more complex than in a regular office. For the intention of such Units to be realised, the delivery must be contextualised for the specific course of study.

- This inflexibility will in time have a serious negative impact on program delivery and create more hurdles for students and staff alike in attempting to ensure programs deliver a high level of relevant knowledge and practice for specific industry and circumstances.
- This approach to unit delivery across different disciplines threatens the capacity of programs to be delivered in a holistic manner, which allows programs to place learning and the learner in context with industry and blend complimentary aspects of industrial practice.
- These problems appear to strongly support the NSW Auditor General's finding in December 2014 that the LMBR/EBS system has been poorly conceived in its commissioning and was not fit for implementation.  
(<http://www.audit.nsw.gov.au/news/learning-management-and-business-reform-lmbr-program>)

## **TRAINING PACKAGES**

Under the current Australian Training system, numerous training packages have no requirement for prerequisite knowledge or skills for entry into advanced or higher levels of qualification. Candidates with no previous study or relevant industrial experience in a particular subject can enrol at Diploma or even Advanced Diploma levels, resulting in classes with an impractically wide range of skill-levels. Students well versed in the fundamental knowledge and procedures of a given discipline have their learning opportunities held back while students who are entirely unfamiliar with the subject are brought up to speed.

Such arrangements also create an extremely difficult environment for teachers trying to deliver a program that can offer a worthwhile level of rigour and discipline whilst trying to accommodate such a range of student capabilities. Often requiring students to seek learner support, extra tutorial support and/or find themselves unable to achieve benchmark performance

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I hope these observations can be of value to the inquiry and that through this examination, TAFENSW and the VET program can continue to make their essential contribution to ensuring the availability of real opportunity and effective pathways to productive futures for the people of New South Wales and the broader Australian community.

As a TAFENSW employee I feel the need to request partial confidentiality in regard to my submission as there is reason to expect reprisals from management in response to criticism from staff.

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