

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

Organisation: Tocal College Advisory Council

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Tocal College Advisory Council

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Submission from Tocal College Advisory Council Inquiry into Vocational Education and Training NSW

The Tocal College Advisory Council provides strategic advice for the operation of Tocal College by NSW Department of Primary Industries. The College is made up of representatives of rural industries including NSW Farmers, CWA NSW, Tocal Ex-students and leading producers.

The Council is pleased to make a short submission to this inquiry. The information will be provided in the same order as the Terms of Reference. The Submission is based primarily about students undertaking agricultural studies at VET level following high school.

1. Factors affecting student choice

A career in agriculture is not strongly promoted by schools in general and the image of agriculture has unfortunately suffered due to structural changes in the sector, droughts and other challenges the sector has faced. Given this, Tocal College works hard to promote its courses to the school sector and has fortunately remained fully enrolled while some other similar agricultural courses have declined.

The College has also obtained strong support from industry, which provides scholarships for students. NSW DPI has strongly supported the Primary Industries Education Foundation Australia which aims to enhance learning about food and fibre production in Australian schools. It is also working with Career Harvest Inc. to enhance promotion of agricultural studies to schools.

The barriers to participation include family members who try to talk a potential student out of studying agriculture, a negative perception by careers advisors of careers in agriculture and at times cost and distance for students who have limited resources.

2. Role played by public and private vocational education providers in industry

Tocal College has worked closely with the school sector in promoting its courses. In recent times it has also worked closely with the Narrabri AGCAP Committee who have strongly supported school based traineeships for agriculture. A pilot School Based Traineeship in Agriculture is underway in Northern NSW between Department of Education and Tocal College.

The College has also worked with other organisations such as Hay Inc. in supporting young people for a career in agriculture. The Hay Inc. initiative is also supported by Australian Wool Innovation.

3. Affordable and accessible training

The costs of travel, accommodation and fees influence the ability of young people undertaking studies.

The College provides residential accommodation which enables students to undertake studies in agriculture regardless as to where they come from

4. Industry participation in VET

The College enjoys strong participation from industry in its programs. The Tocal College Advisory Council is active in this area and the structure enables sub-committees to be formed to pursue and plan certain courses. For example, at present the Advisory Council has set up a sub-committee to review and guide farm chemical training within the College.

5. Smart and Skilled reforms

The College notes some short comings of the Smart and Skilled reforms to date but believes NSW Government has done the best job of any government in the country in funding VET programs. While there are short comings, it is very much ahead of what has occurred in any other states. The Council therefore believes the Smart and Skilled program, with further refinements, could serve the State well.

Margo Duncan

Margo Duncan
Chair
18 August 2015

To:
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