



SUBMISSION

Inquiry into the role of the Technical and Further Education system and its operation.

*House of Representatives Committees
House Standing Committee on Education and Employment*

**Submission lodged by:
Community and Public Sector Union/Civil Service Association of WA
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Introduction

The CPSU/CSA (Community and Public Sector Union/Civil Service Association) represents over 16,000 trade union members working in Western Australia's (WA) public sector. The issues raised by *the Inquiry into the role of Technical and Further Education system and its operation*, directly relate to our members. Specifically, we represent 765 members employed throughout our TAFE industrial coverage, which includes:

- Administration;
- Libraries;
- Student Support (Incorporating Disability and Aboriginal support);
- Human Resources;
- Information Technology;
- Finance;
- Technical Support; and
- Executive/portfolio functions.

Our members work in the following TAFE institutes and regional/town focus areas throughout WA:

- Polytechnic of Western Australia
- Central Institute of Technology
- Challenger Institute of Technology
- West Coast Institute of Training
- C Y O'Connor Institute
- South West Institute of Technology
- Great Southern Institute of Technology
- Goldfields Institute of Technology
- Durack Institute of Technology
- Pilbara Institute
- Kimberley Training Institute

Whilst referring to the committee's terms of reference, we will develop the following arguments throughout this submission, drawing inference from the national TAFE landscape, present the reality

of the impacts on TAFE as a result of WA state budget cuts, and ground our reasoning in the historical nature of TAFE through insights from our membership¹. We suggest:

- TAFE has been a leading quality provider of vocational education and training in WA for over 100 years, providing vital education to regional communities;
- TAFE continues to be pivotal to the development of the WA economy;
- TAFE must remain within the public sector and be adequately funded so that it can drive the growth of WA;
- TAFE provides equitable accessibility to learning/training for traditionally disadvantaged members of our WA society;
- TAFE uniquely provides WA women with support in both employment and opportunity; and
- TAFE is at a crisis point in WA, with constant under funding creating job losses and uncertainty for students and communities.

Background

TAFE in WA has traditionally delivered vocational training and provided skills to enable people of varied and diverse backgrounds and ages to obtain a qualification which will make them job ready. We suggest that TAFE in WA is the first choice for anyone seeking quality training which is respected throughout the community, and trusted by industry to deliver the skills their workforce needs. WA has always faced significant issues due to its vast geographical size and spread with respect to infrastructure and delivery of government services including health and education and their associated needs. Historically, WA, more so than the rest of the nation, has relied on Government to assist or be primarily responsible for the delivery of such services because of the distance and associated isolation of the State, and resulting costs making any other model of delivery unviable for the private sector. The current situation of TAFE in WA is thus reflective of these historical and geographical imperatives, with eleven autonomous Institutes spread across the state, yet focussed on major regional population centres. Each Institute, while being so focussed, still maintains a network of satellite campuses, located consistently where industry and community demand exists. The Perth Metropolitan Institutes each have between five and eight campuses, while regional Institutes have between two and six campuses. This extensive network of TAFE providers has been built up over a long period of time so as to respond to the developing population and

¹ See Appendix B

industry/economic needs of the areas they are situated in, and in doing so, they have become an essential and integral part of those metropolitan and regional areas and communities. They form the foundation of these communities, in a similar way to schools, hospitals, police stations and court houses. As TAFE has grown within these communities over time, this extensive state-wide TAFE network has become trusted and relied upon by industry and the community. People have confidence in the brand of TAFE as a quality public provider which everyone can access.

Four significant policy initiatives of the WA state government and socio-economic factors have had a devastating effect on Public Services in Western Australia, particularly in the area of workforce development and training:

1. The introduction of an FTE (Full Time Equivalent) ceiling across the Western Australian Public Service, making it impossible for government agencies to employ staff in any new positions, resulting in the stifling of many progressive initiatives required within the Department of Training and Workforce Development²
2. The National Partnership Agreement on Skills Reform (NPASR)³
3. Continuous year on year budget cuts across all state government departments – efficiency dividends⁴
4. Population growth⁵

In September 2012, the State Government announced an immediate lowering of the ceiling of full-time equivalent employees in the general Government sector. The directive, which aims to save \$150 million in 2012-13 by lowering the total number of public servants by about 1500 people, means agencies cannot recruit to fill existing vacancies unless they get approval from the Treasurer. In addition, the State Government has also capped public sector leave liabilities at June 30, 2012 levels, while announcing a 1.5 per cent reduction in agencies' 2012-13 procurement budgets for purchasing discretionary consumables, stationary, communication, travel, administration and consultants.

It is likely that Western Australia will adopt the NPASR reforms in 2014. Nationally, TAFE's have borne the brunt of the devastating effects of these reforms. For example, media reports on the

² http://www.publicsector.wa.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/workforce_report_-_june_quarter_2012.pdf

³ Currently falls within the federal financial framework

⁴ [http://www.parliament.wa.gov.au/publications/tabledpapers.nsf/displaypaper/3815428c9430e9f94cae068a48257ac5000a65c5/\\$file/5428.pdf](http://www.parliament.wa.gov.au/publications/tabledpapers.nsf/displaypaper/3815428c9430e9f94cae068a48257ac5000a65c5/$file/5428.pdf)

⁵ <http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/Products/3235.0~2011~Main+Features~Western+Australia?OpenDocument>

impact of these reforms have highlighted the extent of damage caused by the reforms in Victoria, New South Wales and Queensland⁶. Cuts totalling \$300 million, in the Victorian TAFE system have resulted in thousands of TAFE staff losing their jobs, a significant number of courses not being offered any longer, course costs increasing severely, as well as a significant number of TAFE campuses, particularly in regional areas being closed. There has to date, been no communication with stakeholders from the WA State Government around the TAFE reforms being proposed here. This Union is still seeking to engage in such consultation with the Department of Training and Workforce Development, but it is a less than encouraging process.

In the 2009-10 financial year the State Government enforced a 3% cutback upon government agencies, with a further 2% announced in 2012-13. In addition to this, a further 1.5% was announced on the 26th September 2012. Further, in each subsequent year the public sector funding cuts will increase by 1%. In 2015-16 each government agency will be required to find 6.5% of efficiency savings. Only the Departments of Education and Health have been partially exempt from the 2012-2013 budget cuts, with a 1% cut imposed upon them. However, Education and Training are somewhat separated under the current WA state government. As a result the Department of Training and Workforce Development, including TAFE, will be required to find 6.5% savings during 2015-16.

The budgetary constraints placed upon the Department of Training and Workforce Development are set against a backdrop of significant and increasing population growth, as WA continues to record the fastest growth rate of all states and territories with 3.4% for the year ending 30th September 2012⁷. At June 2011, the estimated resident population of WA was 2.35 million people. WA's population increased by 451,100 people, or 24%, from June 2001. This was the fastest growth of all states and territories. Over three-quarters (78%) of the state's population resided in Greater Perth in 2011. In the ten years to 2011, the population in Greater Perth increased by 380,100 people to reach 1.83 million. Over the same period, the rest of WA increased by 71,000 people to reach 520,100. Greater Perth has a lower proportion of its population aged less than 15 years and a higher proportion aged 15 to 34 years as compared to the rest of the state. This is indicative of young adults moving to the capital city for employment or education purposes. The rest of WA has a higher proportion of its population aged 35 to 64 years compared to Greater Perth. This may be reflective of the employment opportunities generated by the mining boom in regional WA. The difference between the age distribution for Greater Perth and the rest of WA is evident for both sexes, and is most apparent for people aged 20 to 24 years. For this age group, females comprise 3.8% of the

⁶ See Appendix A

⁷ <http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/mf/3101.0>

population in Greater Perth compared with 2.9% in the rest of WA, while males comprise 4.1% in Greater Perth compared with 3.3% in the rest of the state. The total population aged 20 to 24 years in Greater Perth is more than four times greater than that of the rest of the state. WA has a median age (the age at which half the population is older and half is younger) of 36.3 years at June 2011. At June 2011, there were 450,900 people aged 0 to 14 years, accounting for almost one-fifth of the state's population. Within Greater Perth, children accounted for 19% of the population, compared to 21% in the rest of WA. Just over two-thirds of WA's population (or 1.62 million people) are aged between 15 and 64 years. At June 2011, the sex ratio (the number of males per 100 females) in WA was 101.2, with 1.18 million males and 1.17 million females. WA's sex ratio has gradually increased from 100.2 in 2001. In 2011, WA had the second highest ratio of males per 100 females of all the states and territories, behind the Northern Territory (110.6).

The remainder of this submission relates specially to the Education and Employment Committees terms of reference for the inquiry into TAFE system:

1. the development of skills in the Australian Economy;
2. the development of opportunities for Australians to improve themselves and increase their life and employment prospects;
3. the delivery of services and programs to support regions, communities and disadvantaged individuals to access training and skills and through them a pathway to employment;
4. the operation of a competitive training market; and
5. those jurisdictions in which State Governments have announced funding decisions which may impact on their operation and viability.

Terms of Reference

1. The development of skills in the Australian economy

We firmly believe skills in any modern and complex economy, like that of WA, need to be formally taught by qualified professionals. CPSU/CSA members provide the pivotal supportive functions which underpin the ability of TAFE to deliver skills and impart knowledge. TAFE should be appropriately funded to ensure it is able to continue providing a unique public service to all Western Australians, and develop the skills required for the future of WA.

The time honoured method of apprenticeship for the learning of a trade has for many years included a formal learning and assessment component, which TAFE or the old Technical Schools have historically provided. Indeed, it would be difficult to imagine skills being developed in WA without

the TAFE system. TAFE has maintained strong links with industry throughout WA so as to offer the courses it demands for its workforce needs. Being part of Government, TAFE has always been geared and structured to meet the workforce planning objectives of the economy. This long established system of government working in tandem with industry has been the hallmark of TAFE historically. However, over the past five years, this functional and proven system has been under considerable threat, with the States skilled migration occupation list 2012 – 2013 reflective of the increased demand for the skills TAFE can readily supply to the workforce⁸.

Skills in the WA economy can take many forms, not only the traditional trades like carpentry, hairdressing, metal fabrication, hospitality or plumbing. TAFE has always and continues to provide courses which fully encompass the huge diversity of skills needed in the modern Australian economy. This diversity offered by TAFE includes:

- the manual trades;
- human services;
- languages;
- health and welfare
- business and economics;
- information technology;
- engineering and mining; and
- visual and creative arts.

TAFE is uniquely able to provide a meaningful learning pathway for individuals interested in almost any field of human endeavour. The long established tradition of teaching skills through the TAFE system is also a recognised and established career path for experts and long term industry practitioners to pass on their accumulated knowledge and unique experience to those beginning a career in their field. This makes TAFE a repository of society's collective intellectual capital in skills and vocations, in a way very different from the way of academic institutions such as Universities. Further, TAFEs provide a consistently lower costing alternative to University whilst still striving to provide an equivalent level of academic rigour and quality delivery.

Threats to the TAFE system in WA are traceable back to 2006-2007, when the mining and resources boom reached one of its critical points of growth, and shortages in many skill areas were identified. Skilled workers were attracted to the lucrative positions offered in the key mining centres of the state, in turn causing a drain on those available skills in the rest of the state, including in Perth. A lack

⁸ <http://www.migration.wa.gov.au/skilledmigration/Pages/Occupationsindemand.aspx>

of skilled labour, coupled with pent up demand in the economy, generally saw a virtual explosion of cost of living pressures. The effects of this boom cycle are still present across WA today. The Global Financial Crisis of late 2008 caused further anxiety to world markets and the local economy. It is arguable that this anxiety caused some knee-jerk reactions in government policy at all levels. The WA Government changed in late 2008, virtually coinciding with the beginning of the Global Financial Crisis.

2. The development of opportunities for Australians to improve themselves and increase their life and employment prospects

We firmly believe that the opportunity for those in WA to improve themselves and increase their life and employment prospects is embedded within the role TAFE plays in WA. Specifically, people face significant and particular challenges in accessing decent work opportunities, including:

- a lack of work experience in first-time job seekers;
- inability to compete with skilled workers;
- insecurity of employment exacerbated by institutional barriers, labour demand, cheap labour and the casualisation of work;
- inequality in the workplace; and
- weak organisation and a lack of voice⁹

Rather, than being passive providers of skills and knowledge in WA, TAFE, if adequately funded and resourced, underpins the foundations of a knowledge and skills based economy and is best placed to address the challenges above.

TAFE currently provides multiple chances for people to elevate themselves in life, redirect their life path, or begin the journey to higher education later in life. This can be characterised as TAFE providing the main means in WA society today for a second chance in life, regardless of one's previous history or experience. TAFE is often the only realistic option for people in lower socio-economic backgrounds to break out of the poverty cycle. It is precisely this which is under major threat from the proposed reforms to TAFE in WA and Australia more generally.

The reforms contemplated for WA TAFE in 2014, appear to be inherently based on a 'firstness' or 'oneness' principle¹⁰. This is reflected in the proposed minimum entitlement to a subsidised

⁹ Adapted from the 2005 International Labor Conference, "Pathways to decent work" report

qualification as being “to a minimum of the first Certificate III...” This implies once such a qualification has been obtained, regardless of how job ready the student has become, there is no further entitlement to any additional training on a subsidised basis. Unfortunately, it appears that should a student not be job ready, or indeed, find employment after having obtained their entitlement to a subsidised training place, and require further or different training for employment, they will have to pay for such training, at commercial or full-fee rates. This will significantly increase the cost to the student of further training courses. Introducing HECS-like income contingent loans to students for further training will only impoverish disadvantaged people in WA society further.

TAFE has always delivered a cost effective solution for people to study, or obtain skills to enable them to either enter the employment market for the first time, or re-train after a career change. This capacity is now significantly threatened by the market based reforms which form the basis of the proposed competitive funding proposals. We suggest that there should be no change to the current entitlement that every person in WA presently has to access multiple government subsidised qualifications through the TAFE system over their lifetime. Indeed, as Lewis Stevens suggests:

“It is perhaps both simplistic and naïve to expect that one low level qualification will equip a person with the skills required to compete and fully participate in a complex economy and employment market throughout their lifetime.”¹¹

This is further reflected in the following comment from a former TAFE student:

“Even though I already had a University degree which got me my job, TAFE made it easy for me to undertake a Certificate IV in Occupational Health and Safety which really enhanced my skills in my existing job. I did not have to have much time off work, the course was reasonably priced and getting back to a learning environment without the hassles of University was an added bonus for me.” (Bill Bakalis, CPSU/CSA Organiser)

Lewis Stevens, a TAFE CPSU/CSA Union Delegate, has provided a personal account of the significant impact that TAFE has made in his life¹². His story is reflective of the real and meaningful chances TAFE provides to the WA community, and emphasises that with appropriate and increased funding for a growing state population, TAFE should be able to concentrate on creating and delivering a wide variety of high quality qualifications, exemplifying industry best-practice and employing well-paid, dedicated staff working in world-class facilities. The capacity of TAFE courses to be both industry relevant and have reputable quality associated with them means they provide the best opportunity

¹⁰ National Partnership Agreement on Skills Reform (28. a.)

¹¹ See Appendix B

¹² See Appendix B

for a path to employment. TAFE's focus on vocational skills and quality training has always assured this. The threat of private providers diminishing the training market cannot be understated, as private training providers' aggressive commercial nature and motivation cannot be overstated. It is important that public services are kept in public hands and there is significant support in the WA community for this.¹³

3. The delivery of services and programs to support regions, communities and disadvantaged individuals to access training and skills and through them a pathway to employment

We firmly believe that TAFE in WA plays a pivotal role in delivering opportunities through training which are required to secure a better future for those in regional WA, and those from disadvantaged backgrounds. TAFE in WA is an integrated network which provides particularly for the needs of the vast areas of regional WA. TAFE is unique in its provision of support services to refugee and migrant groups, those with a disability, and members of the WA community who are of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander descent. Further, it is our view that women are most likely to be significantly disadvantaged by funding cuts and reforms to TAFE as suggested elsewhere in Australia.¹⁴ Rather than limiting the funding available for TAFE, further funding is required to expand and increase the existing support TAFE provides. All of these areas are unique to TAFE and the subject of continuous threat and uncertainty, making staff working within them among the most pressured in TAFE.

A. Regionally

The Hon Ljiljana Ravlich, opposition spokesperson for Training and Workforce Development, raised the following question in the Legislative Council in 2012:

- For each year, from 2008 to 2012 inclusive, for each of the Technical and Further Education (TAFE) Institutes, what was the dollar value of the efficiency dividend and/or productivity savings or other funding cuts imposed on such institutes? (i.e. 3 per cent 2008, 2 per cent 2012 etc.).¹⁵

¹³ Save Our Services survey (2011)

¹⁴ <http://minister.innovation.gov.au/chrisevans/MediaReleases/Pages/VictorianwomentobearbruntofBaillieusTAFEbudgetcuts.aspx>

¹⁵ [http://www.parliament.wa.gov.au/Parliament/sitsched.nsf/AllDocs/8874C10D4F3C42654825795D00063EDE/\\$file/CQ381238.pdf?OpenElement](http://www.parliament.wa.gov.au/Parliament/sitsched.nsf/AllDocs/8874C10D4F3C42654825795D00063EDE/$file/CQ381238.pdf?OpenElement)

The Minister for Training and Workforce Development response suggests that over the four years from 2008 to 2012, \$48,476,507 was saved from TAFE budgets in efficiency dividends. It is interesting to note, that over the same four years over \$307 million of funding was given to private Registered Training Organisations (RTO). A further \$98 million in 2012-13 has been allocated to RTO's. Further, the total number of publically funded TAFE courses available in 2013 has reduced by 191 from 2011 figures.¹⁶ We suggest that TAFEs differ from private Registered Training Organisations. By taking a look elsewhere in Australia, experience tells us that some private providers are running diploma courses in days rather than the months or years it normally takes students to acquire these skills. Some are even luring them with cash or other incentives onto courses with few job prospects, with students not realising they are blowing their one chance at a government-funded place.¹⁷ TAFEs provide proven quality, through their teaching methods and student support. TAFE is an integrated learning environment which provides pastoral and special needs care for its students, this is not something provided by RTOs. TAFE provides student support and counselling services for its students free of charge. This ensures students remain engaged with their studies and feel supported throughout.

Perhaps most worrying, is the reality that the Pilbara Institute has suffered a direct efficiency dividend funding loss of \$4.1 million since 2008, the greatest cut of any regional TAFE, despite the region clearly being the engine room of Australia.¹⁸ Historically, the Pilbara region has relied on TAFE to provide skilled workers and work closely with industry to provide innovation and expertise required for their enterprises. It is reasonable to suggest that further funding cuts to this regional TAFE will severely impact upon its ability to provide skilled labour. Indeed, the Pilbara institute no longer offers the following courses as of 2012:

- Certificate I in Health (Aboriginal Communities)
- Certificate I in Business
- Certificate IV in Business
- Certificate II in Creative Industries (Media)
- Certificate III in Tourism (Visitor Information Services)
- Certificate I in Automotive
- Certificate III in Engineering Mechanical Trade
- Certificate II in Mining Field/Exploration Operations

¹⁶ [http://www.parliament.wa.gov.au/publications/taledpapers.nsf/displaypaper/3815361c4bcb634c79f5130948257ab60007f816/\\$file/5361.pdf](http://www.parliament.wa.gov.au/publications/taledpapers.nsf/displaypaper/3815361c4bcb634c79f5130948257ab60007f816/$file/5361.pdf)

¹⁷ <http://www.tafe4all.org.au/moreinfo.html>

¹⁸ <http://www.economicprofile.com.au/pilbara/>

- Certificate III in Civil Construction Plant Operations
- Certificate I in Engineering [Pre-Apprenticeship Mechanical (Fitter Machinist)]
- Certificate III in Engineering Mechanical Trade [Fitter and Machinist ZB]

This loss of diversity as well as critical skills areas continues to degrade the TAFE network in WA more generally and poses significant risks for students and their families. A parent of an eighteen year old male in Port Hedland summarised this as follows:

“My son wanted to study a course at Pilbara Institute in South Hedland, but it was no longer offered in 2012. As a family, we struggle with the issues of being Maori in a small community and I want to have my son close to me and my de-facto partner so he does not get into trouble. He now needs to go to Perth to study his chosen course which means living away from home and I am really worried about it, because I cannot help him if he is so far away.”

B. Women

Data analysed by the Department for Communities in 2010 suggests women remain broadly disadvantaged in WA workplaces.¹⁹ For example, whilst women account for 49.3% of the WA population they are staggeringly underrepresented in leadership roles and representative forums:

- in 2010, women held 26.9% of Senior Executive Service positions in public sector agencies and authorities and 26.2% of Director General positions in public sector agencies;
- women represented 7.1% of the highest position (i.e. tier 1 management) in Local Government, and 25% in Public Universities;
- nationally, women chaired five boards and held 8.4% of Board directorships in the top 200 Australian companies; and
- the representation of women in politics in 2010:
 - Senate – 33%
 - House of Representatives – 26.7%
 - Legislative Assembly – 20.3%
 - Legislative Council – 47.2%.

TAFE provides specialised supportive courses designed specifically to meet the needs of women in a generally unrepresentative State. For example, the *New Opportunities for Women class*, offered by the CY O’Connor Institute in 2013 aims to enable participants seeking to return to employment or

¹⁹ <http://communities.wa.gov.au/serviceareas/women/FactsFigures/Pages/default.aspx>

further education/training to: broaden their awareness of the educational and career options available to them; enhance their self-confidence and find new directions; develop foundation employability skills; and develop skills and strategies to manage personal, career and lifelong learning goals.²⁰

Women account for 67% of the Department of Training and Workforce Development workforce and as such will be disproportionately disadvantaged by funding cuts in this area.²¹ This notion is set against the continued feminisation of the WA public sector workforce. Over time, changes in occupational demographics, in particular, the privatisation of many blue collar roles in the public sector and increased participation of women in human services roles has seen the percentage of women employed within the WA public sector change from 47.0% in 1987/88 to 69.6% in 2011/12.²² Further, experience from the east coast suggests, as described by Minister for Skills Senator Chris Evans, that:

“A preliminary study by the Victorian TAFE Association reveals the State Government budget cuts will disadvantage women students up to five times as much as men. The study compares gender enrolment in 20 of the most popular TAFE courses that will be impacted by the funding cuts. Courses with high female enrolments are set to be cut by up to 85 per cent, compared with 6 per cent of male-dominated courses. According to the new study, women also stand to be financially disadvantaged by the cuts with TAFE fees set to skyrocket for courses popular with females. One of the bigger TAFEs in the state is looking to increase course fees by up to 66 per cent next year, an \$800 increase. The Victorian Government's slashes to funding will force TAFEs to hike up fees making it harder for women to access training and enter or re-enter the workforce. Courses like hospitality, tourism, children's services, community services and business administration tend to attract high numbers of women - and will be the courses hardest hit by Premier Baillieu's short-sighted budget cuts. Cutting funding to sectors where skills are in high demand makes no sense. These are industries where we need more trained workers of both genders yet this is exactly where Ted Baillieu has targeted the cuts. Australian TAFEs play a vital role in our national training effort and open the door to opportunity. By taking an axe to these essential institutions, the Victorian Liberal Government is as good as slamming that door shut to tens of thousands of Australian women. For women looking to return to work, for single mothers, for women from

²⁰<http://www.cyoc.wa.edu.au/Documents/2013%20C.Y.%20%27Connor%20Institute%20Course%20Prospectus%20low%20quality.pdf>

²¹http://www.publicsector.wa.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/department_of_training_and_workforce_development_-_workforce_plan_2012-2017.pdf

²²http://www.publicsector.wa.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/state_of_the_sector_2012_1.pdf

*regional or low SES areas, the Ballieu-driven barriers to training will very likely prove to be insurmountable. These are women who could get rewarding work, earn a better wage, and make a valuable contribution to the workforce and to the Victorian economy."*²³

C. Refugee and Migrant workers

Refugee and migrant support workers in WA TAFEs have been the subject of uncertain funding and insecure employment for many years due to how such programs are actually funded. Gaining English language proficiency is key to successfully settling in Australia. Specifically, the Adult Migrant English Program (AMEP) is the Australian Government's largest settlement program.²⁴ It has been administered by the Department of Immigration and Citizenship and its predecessor departments since 1948. The program supports the government's social inclusion agenda through the provision of free settlement focused English courses for eligible migrants and humanitarian entrants who do not have functional English. Since 1998, the delivery of AMEP has been contracted to service providers around Australia, including universities, TAFEs, state educational departments, and community colleges. Many AMEP clients have limited or no history of formal classroom tuition or written literacy in their first language. The AMEP is structured to meet client's cultural and learning needs. The program is delivered flexibly to respond to individual circumstances, including clients who live in rural and regional Australia. It allows clients to learn at their own pace, choosing from a range of learning options. These include:

- Full or part-time classroom tuition, in learning centres or community-based settings, designed to meet diverse needs, educational backgrounds and learning abilities.
- The Home Tutor Scheme, providing language assistance by a trained volunteer, usually on a one-on-one basis in a client's home.
- Distance learning, either online or through a package of sequenced texts and audio-visual material, and backed by regular telephone contact with a qualified teacher.
- Self-paced e-modules, an online package available to all AMEP clients throughout Australia to support and supplement their learning on an independent basis.

The AMEP program is supported and administered by Refugee and migrant support workers in WA TAFEs. Support workers play an integral role in ensuring an individual student's economic, cultural and social background is considered, together with actively supporting them through literacy,

²³ <http://minister.innovation.gov.au/chrisevans/MediaReleases/Pages/VictorianwomentobearbruntofBaillieusTAFEbudgetcuts.aspx>

²⁴ <http://www.immi.gov.au/media/fact-sheets/94amep.htm>

language and numeracy programs as well as free psychological and counselling services. Unfortunately, the same cannot be said of the AMEP program in New South Wales (NSW). Navitas English, a multinational RTO was contracted by the Department of Immigration and Citizenship to deliver two major Australian settlement programs in 2011, the AMEP and the Humanitarian Settlement Services.²⁵ This resulted in 150 job losses across the NSW TAFE system.²⁶

D. Indigenous students

People in WA with the right skills have considerable employment opportunities, now and for the foreseeable future. It is therefore timely that the *Training together – working together* committee has considered what needs to be done to ensure that the local Aboriginal²⁷ population benefits from these opportunities.²⁸ Despite continued demand for skills and labour in WA, Aboriginal people are disproportionately under-represented in the WA workforce. Many Aboriginal people are long term unemployed and experience a level of disadvantage that impacts on their living standards, life expectancy and health, and this flows on into families and communities. However, funding cuts directly affecting this vital area have left Aboriginal Education Managers working in TAFE exasperated:

“This inappropriate and discriminatory funding of anything to do with Aboriginal people in TAFE only happens because we are Aboriginal. We are paid lip service, but we know we do not matter and do not get the same deal as everybody else in this system.”

Central to the notion of an Aboriginal workforce development strategy is the provision of specific training offered in a supportive environment. Further, the *Training together – working together* committee suggests annual funding of \$500,000 should be disbursed by the AWDC, through the Hubs, to support local training providers to provide mentoring support to students to effectively transition them from training to employment. Support for Aboriginal people transitioning from school to training, from training into jobs, from unemployment to employment is essential – relationship-based mentoring is the critical ingredient in helping individuals to make successful transitions into sustainable employment. This valuable work should be undertaken by Aboriginal Education Managers working in TAFE WA.

²⁵ http://navitasenglish.com/settlement_english

²⁶ <http://www.nswtf.org.au/news/2010/12/17/rally-supports-public-provision.html>

²⁷ The terms Aboriginal, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, and Indigenous in referring to the first Australians, are used interchangeably to maintain accuracy with respect to other preceding documents and initiatives. The term Aboriginal, more broadly used here, should be taken to mean Aboriginal, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, and Indigenous peoples.

²⁸ <http://www.trainingwa.wa.gov.au/trainingwa/detcms/navigation/category.jsp?categoryID=9549938>

E. Disability support services

Broadly, WA TAFE recognises that quality vocational education and training is for all, including people with disabilities and medical conditions. TAFE aims to provide access and equity of participation for students with disabilities to enable them to be involved fully and independently, in all aspects of college life, both academically and socially, by providing an accessible learning environment including buildings, services and learning and assessment strategies. Disability mentors in WA are at the forefront of actively encouraging people with a disability to participate in the workforce through quality training. They offer advice and services to students with a disability or medical conditions, both temporary and permanent, so that they can participate on the same basis as others. This can include:

- help with the details you need on course requirements;
- campus tours for physical access;
- working with students to inform lecturers about individual needs;
- finding ways to adapt certain study activities or assessments;
- providing audio and large print resource;
- sourcing assistive equipment and technology options;
- providing auslan interpreters; and
- mentoring options.

However, this overarching commitment is not easily translated into reality. The consistent underfunding of disability support services in TAFE was recently highlighted when all casually employed disability mentors at Goldfields Institute of Technology were stood down without notice, due to funding constraints. This service, vital for people with a disability to access TAFE courses, and unique to TAFE remains uncertain. As a result of the stand down of these casually employed disability mentors, a blind student was left waiting for an hour without their mentor to come and get them at the kerb side after being dropped off by taxi. Only a concerned passer-by was able to assist the anxious and confused student.

4. The operation of a competitive training market

We believe that TAFE in WA is integral to the operation of a competitive training market. TAFE is a benchmark setting institution for vocational education and training within WA. TAFE provides a

standard with which to measure existing market and demands. It provides a baseline from where competition can grow within the WA training sector. TAFE is necessary to the effective operation of a competitive training market as it is not required to be the risk taker in such a market. TAFE as a government entity is not driven by any profit motive, and thus, risk taking for the sake of profit is not within the ambit of its planning and delivery priorities. Sections of the training market which consider profit and risk taking should form a part of a modern and complex economy but not within the context of government funded or subsidised entities. Put simply, genuine private providers should exist and provide value in the WA training market, but without government funding or subsidy and by delivering real value to students.

It would be wrong to think that TAFE does not operate in a competitive training market. In terms of funding mechanisms the provision of User Choice funding in a WA context has had a competitive market aspect. Metropolitan Perth TAFEs have for many years competed for the same student intake by differentiating themselves from one another through emphasising their particular qualities. Such qualities can include geographical location, student access, public transport simplicity, industry links, new innovations, special facilities or equipment, winning national or global awards or having particular lecturing staff or unique support services. Similar competitive advantages or unique attributes encourage competition between TAFEs across varying regions in WA.

TAFE has fostered the development of a training culture within WA through the engagement and involvement of fellow RTOs and industry. TAFE provides external training services with access to established TAFE learning facilities for use by their own clients. Indeed, TAFE has formed partnerships with the private sector to deliver excellent courses in WA. The operation of a competitive training market is reliant upon the steady flow of ready trained industry training experts from the TAFE system into private providers. TAFE has consistently provided a training environment for all users which develops the high level training skills required of trainers in WA.

1. Those jurisdictions in which State Governments have announced funding decisions which may impact on their financial viability

We believe that the WA State Government should take heed of the TAFE developments nationally. Much has been already discussed in this submission about the devastating effect of reforms within the TAFE sector in other Australian jurisdictions around funding decisions and their impact. We urge the WA State Government to fully consider the ominous signs emerging from Queensland.

The media reports detailed in Appendix A should be considered not only through focussing upon Victoria but other states and territories. New South Wales reforms are yet to have their effects fully realised but the picture there in the context of considerable funding cuts appears bleak. South Australia introduced reforms similar to Victoria which take effect from 2013, but again it appears too early to gauge the effect of the reforms. A report commissioned by the Queensland State Government on their TAFE sector suggests that TAFE campuses are underused and should be sold and that the TAFE system is undermined by “*archaic industrial relations practices.*”²⁹ The Northern Territory has adopted a stance whereby its TAFE system and students will be the only ones that receive government subsidies and funding. While TAFE in this territory is unique, being a hybrid system with a University, the concept could be explored more fully when looking at TAFE in WA.

Recommendations

1. Positive and meaningful consultation between CPSUCSA and SSTU officials, TAFE delegates, and Department of Training and Workforce Development around the planning of proposed reforms in TAFE. Within which it is possible to address our concerns about the nature/impact of proposed reforms.
2. Reforms in TAFE are minimal and within existing frameworks. Any reforms within the TAFE sector address the need for increased funding to TAFE rather than ongoing and persistent funding cuts.
3. A moratorium on the use of RTOs within WA and a commitment that funding reforms will quarantine government funding of training to the TAFE sector.
4. Increased funding for TAFE student support services across WA.

²⁹ <http://training.qld.gov.au/resources/industry/pdf/final-report.pdf>

Appendix A: Related Media Articles

1. <http://www.abc.net.au/7.30/content/2012/s3564552.htm>
2. <http://www.caseyweeklycranbourne.com.au/news/local/news/general/tafe-protests-snowball/2648139.aspx>
3. <http://www.theaustralian.com.au/higher-education/tafes-doing-it-tough/story-e6frgcjx-1226434203036>
4. <http://the-scan.com/2012/08/06/protests-against-tafe-cuts-intensify/>
5. <http://www.melbourneweeklyphortphillip.com.au/news/local/news/general/staff-students-unite-to-fight-vandalism-against-public-education/2644409.aspx>
6. <http://speakuptfortafe.blogspot.com.au/>
7. <http://minister.innovation.gov.au/chrisevans/Transcripts/Pages/TranscriptDoorstopTreasuryPlace.aspx>
8. <http://frankston-leader.whereilive.com.au/news/story/rally-to-protest-frankston-tafe-funding-cuts/>
9. <http://www.abc.net.au/7.30/content/2012/s3562790.htm>
10. http://www.tafe4all.org.au/135008_10002.html
11. <http://www.theage.com.au/national/education/push-to-join-rural-tafes-to-ballarat-uni-20120806-23qak.html#ixzz22oBPGgZ3>
12. <http://www.melbourneweekly.com.au/news/local/news/general/rally-over-tafe-cuts/2638803.aspx>
13. <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2012-11-12/community-rallies-against-education-cuts/4365896>
14. <http://pinterest.com/pin/535435843167515779/>
15. <http://www.theaustralian.com.au/higher-education/tafe-cuts-put-training-at-risk-warns-senator/story-e6frgcjx-1226511792389>
16. <http://www.heraldsun.com.au/news/breaking-news/states-bent-on-destroying-tafes-union/story-e6frf7kf-1226512068668>
17. <https://www.tafensw.edu.au/about/news/news-121109.htm#.UKBRua74IzQ>
18. <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2012-11-07/tafe-pulls-hsc-courses-as-budget-cuts-continue/4357456>
19. <http://www.goulburnpost.com.au/story/725546/upping-the-ante-against-ofarrell/?cs=181>
20. <http://psa.asn.au/new-tafe-model-risky-business-union/>
21. <http://www.abc.net.au/am/content/2012/s3627308.htm>
22. http://www.cairns.com.au/article/2012/11/07/236138_local-news.html?fb_action_ids=10151152084472865&fb_action_types=og.recommends&fb_source=aggregation&fb_aggregation_id=288381481237582
23. <http://www.northerndailyleader.com.au/story/1399617/job-fears-as-tafe-new-england-funds-cut/?cs=159>
24. <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2013-04-05/worries-aired-for-tafe-campuses/4610920>
25. <http://theconversation.com/single-mothers-need-education-not-welfare-cuts-12803>

Appendix B : Personal TAFE Union Delegate story

In 1998 I was working part-time in an aged care facility on an insecure contract. To survive financially I had to find whatever other unskilled casual work I could; mainly labouring, gardening and entertainment industry work. I was in my late thirties, experienced across a number of industries, but essentially unqualified and caught in the poverty trap. I really needed to “raise my prospects”.

So I did what so many others have done before and since, I purchased a TAFE Course handbook from the local newsagent, found a course that sounded interesting and enrolled in my local TAFE. The enrolment and course fees were reasonable and the College was easy for me to access and seemed adequately funded and appropriately staffed. The Diploma in Library and Information Services I studied over the next 2 years was well structured, professionally delivered and industry-relevant. I enjoyed my time at TAFE and felt quite honoured to be offered a chance to work in the TAFE Library system when I graduated at the end of 2000. By 2003 I was a permanent full-time public servant employed in a great job, finally earning a living wage and enjoying the wonderful feeling of having a relatively secure future. In all ways going to TAFE had completely turned my life around. I also really believed that by working in the Vocational Education and Training (VET) system, I was assisting literally thousands of my fellow citizens to achieve their hopes and aspirations for a better future.

In a broader sense, TAFE is helping to make a better Australia by giving everyone access to reasonably priced training, allowing them to develop practical vocational skills and so become engaged and contributing members of our Community. But all of this could be a thing of the past if the Barnett Government chooses to follow its usual privatisation agenda when implementing The National Partnership Agreement on Skills Reform.

In a nutshell, the Agreement is a document produced by the Federal Government and signed up to by the State Governments. It ensures the Federal funding of the VET sector of each State dependant on a number of demonstrated “reforms” of that sector. How and what those “reforms” are appears to be open for interpretation. That is where the real threat to TAFE and the future of low cost and accessible vocational training becomes apparent.

Most people would have heard something by now about the situation that has unfolded Victoria where the Liberal government of that State introduced a voucher system. This placed the choice of where the funding for VET would go into the hands of the consumer. Within 2 years TAFE in Victoria was systematically destroyed, the budget for VET in Victoria blew out by over \$400 million and shonky private Registered Training Organisations (RTO’s) received millions of dollars of taxpayer’s

money without delivering any real qualifications to their students. It is impossible to imagine that VET sector in Victoria will ever recover.

Despite this, the NSW, Queensland and South Australian governments have also introduced similar schemes, each announcing that their system will be “nothing like the Victoria”. The TAFE sector in NSW is beginning to show real problems already.

So far the Barnett government has been particularly silent on how, exactly, it intends to meet the requirements of The National Partnership Agreement on Skills Reform. Despite enquiries by our Union and Members of Parliament, the full details of what it intends to do to the VET sector in Western Australia have not been made available to the wider public. It does not take much imagination to come up with an answer for why that might be. I’m afraid to say, I have no confidence that the Barnett government will do what really should be done: that is to get right behind the proven providers of quality, accessible VET and inject the TAFE sector with the support and funding it needs to continue to help the citizens of Western Australia to realize their hopes and fulfil their training needs.

Lewis Stevens

CPSU/CSA Delegate

Branch Councillor for the Institutes of Technology