

TAFE pathways to employment and university

- 4.1 The importance of Vocational Education and Training (VET) in providing pathways to employment and university education was well documented in the evidence received throughout the inquiry.
- 4.2 As the major public VET provider, TAFE has a responsibility to provide opportunities to increase skills and improve prospects for work and accessing university education. The pathways that TAFE provides are linked with the particular issues that many prospective and current TAFE students face.
- 4.3 Of the 6 635 responses to the Committee's online survey, numerous respondents indicated that TAFE has been of benefit to their personal situation and has enabled them to gain employment or continue onto further education. A selection of comments from the survey expressing these benefits is included in Figure 4.1 below.
- 4.4 This chapter details TAFE's role in providing pathways for employment and university education, and also identifies the further community support provided by TAFE in respect of opportunities for those in positions of disadvantage and vulnerability.

Figure 4.1 Committee survey responses: Respondents comments on the personal benefits of TAFE

Q18. Has your experience with TAFE been of any benefit to your personal situation?

Please tell us why.

Yes. It enabled me to gain employment. And it enabled me to retrain to a completely different career after I was made redundant. It gave me many life skills along the way.

Yes, my TAFE course was not only a professional development opportunity but a personal development one.

Through doing Women's Ed at TAFE, I have gained a huge amount of self confidence, I believe in myself, and I am able to continue to look ahead towards a better future for my son and myself.

It greatly improved my confidence and employability post-school as I had learning difficulties and no career mentor.

Attending TAFE gave me a second chance, lifted my confidence and gave me employment

It had helped me ease into society having mental issues such as depression, PTSD, anxiety and other mental illness it has helped

It was the start I needed. It gave me practical skills which were very valuable to my successful career. I am now a business owner and send all my trainees to TAFE

I was a sole parent depending for all my income on parenting payment single. I gained part-time employment within 3 months of completing my diploma and by the time my child was in high school I was employed full time and no longer a [C]entrelink client

Source: Education and Employment Committee online student survey (see Appendix D)

National Partnership Agreement on Youth Attainment and Transitions

- 4.5 The Council of Australian Governments (COAG) National Partnership Agreement on Youth Attainment and Transitions was developed in recognition of a mutual interest between the Commonwealth, states and territories in improving the engagement of young people aged between 15 and 24 with education, training and employment.¹
- 4.6 As outlined in Chapter 2, the purpose of the partnership is to strengthen the education and skills outcomes of young Australians in order to support pathways and future economic productivity. The agreement was due to expire as of 31 December 2013, however, the 2013-2014 Budget

1 Council of Australian Governments (COAG), *National Partnership Agreement on Youth Attainment and Transitions*, Clause 6, http://www.federalfinancialrelations.gov.au/content/npa/skills/youth_attainment_transitions/national_partnership.pdf viewed 24 October 2014.

allocated an additional 12 months funding giving a new expiry date of 31 December 2014.² The agreement's main objectives are to contribute to the following outcomes:

- increased participation of young people in education and training;
- [for] young people to make a successful transition from school to further education, training or full-time employment; and
- increased attainment of young people aged 15-24 including Indigenous youth.³

4.7 The agreement consists of a mix of shared and individual Commonwealth, state and territory responsibilities in, for example, providing access to and places for education; funding for new and existing programs; and the provision and delivery of programs.

TAFE pathways to employment

4.8 There is a strong link between education and training, and employability, as noted by Dr Caroline Smith, Deputy Chief Executive Officer of the National Employment Services Association:

There is a clear correlation between educational achievement and labour force participation. For example, almost nine out of 10 people of working age with a non-school qualification, or 86.2 per cent, were in the labour force in 2001, compared with seven out of 10, or 68.9 per cent, of those without a post-school qualification.⁴

4.9 As the Good Shepherd Youth and Family Service put it, 'economic participation is a key to long-term positive life outcomes and ... gaining a vocational qualification is a vital step along this path'.⁵

4.10 The value of TAFE in providing pathways to employment was affirmed in responses to the Committee's online survey. Just over 64 per cent of respondents indicated that the purpose of their study at TAFE (past, current or planned) was as a pathway to employment.⁶

2 Australian Government, 'Budget 2013-14, Part 2: Expense measures, Youth Attainment and Transitions – extension', <http://www.budget.gov.au/2013-14/content/bp2/html/bp2_expense-09.htm> viewed 24 October 2014.

3 COAG, *National Partnership Agreement on Youth Attainment and Transitions*, Clause 16, <http://www.federalfinancialrelations.gov.au/content/npa/skills/youth_attainment_transitions/national_partnership.pdf> viewed 24 October 2014.

4 Dr Caroline Smith, Deputy Chief Executive Officer, National Employment Services Association (NESA), *Committee Hansard*, Melbourne, 15 April 2014, p. 1.

5 Good Shepherd Youth and Family Service, *Submission 29*, p. 1.

6 Education and Employment Committee online student survey (see Appendix D).

- 4.11 There was also clear recognition in other evidence of TAFE's importance in this context. The St Vincent de Paul Society National Council stated that:

For many Australians, TAFEs may accurately be described as an essential rung in their educational ladder. They provide an invaluable pathway to employment for many trying to enter or re-enter the workforce for various reasons, including many vulnerable groups for who the Society supports, for example single parents, unemployed people, migrants and refugees, those with mental or physical disabilities, older Australians in poverty, and ATSI people.⁷

- 4.12 Mr Stephen Bolton, Senior Advisor, the Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ACCI), acknowledged the particular importance of TAFE and other non-commercial Registered Training Organisations (RTOs) in providing employment pathways as compared to commercial providers:

TAFEs, along with many not-for-profit training organisations and some commercial RTOs, or registered training organisations, have often provided the first stepping stones along the path to employment for many of our most vulnerable members of the community. Language, literacy and numeracy programs, work readiness courses, basic vocational skills courses and pre-apprenticeship training have started many Australians on the pathway to sustainable employment. There is often little commercial incentive for training providers to offer these types of courses and, without public funds being made available to support these programs, there is a danger that many people may not find the pathway to sustainable employment open to them.⁸

- 4.13 LeadWest noted similarly:

The TAFE system has emphasised the idea of developing skills 'pathways' (with a focus on building skills that will deliver long term outcomes for individuals). While a similar service is provided by some of the community-based Registered Training Organisations (RTOs), such as the Brotherhood of St Laurence or Mission Australia, there is little incentive for commercial private providers to do deliver the same. They are only reimbursed for

7 St Vincent de Paul Society National Council, *Submission 12*, p. 5.

8 Mr Stephen Bolton, Senior Advisor, Employment Education and Training, Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ACCI), *Committee Hansard*, Canberra, 4 June 2014, p. 1.

delivery of certificates, not for supporting the building of educational and skills development pathways.⁹

- 4.14 TAFE offers a crucial alternative to tertiary education for those who seek careers in trades or related fields. The value of such skilled positions to the economy is clear, and was affirmed in the evidence. As Professor Scott Bowman, Vice-Chancellor and President, CQ University, stated, 'we need to value the diesel fitter as much as the physiotherapist ... we need diesel fitters just as much as engineers.'¹⁰
- 4.15 TAFE provides significant pathway options for mature-age learners, who benefit from TAFE's ability to provide training and skills at various levels for those with differing needs. Mature-age students constitute a significant cohort within VET; according to the National Centre for Vocational Education Research (NCVER), in 2010 just over half (50.9 per cent) of equivalent full-time VET students were aged 25 and over, with 34.7 per cent in the 25–44 age bracket.¹¹
- 4.16 TAFE is also instrumental in providing employment pathways for school students who choose not to follow a tertiary route. It was noted in the evidence that schools work closely with TAFE Institutes in promoting pathways for students transitioning out of schooling and into the workforce. For example Mr Harry Pasich, Vocational Education and Training Coordinator, Morley Senior High School, stated that the school:
- ... prepare[s] for TAFE and employment. We collaborate with TAFE just as we do with universities and the employers to prepare our students for an efficient, effective and hopefully successful transition to higher training and employment.¹²
- 4.17 One school indicated, however, that recognition of the TAFE pathway for school students does not appear to match recognition of the pathway to tertiary education:
- ... our school based apprenticeship program is a great success in our school. Most of our kids that are doing their last year of schooling do not finish the year with us, which is fantastic,

9 LeadWest, *Submission no. 23*, p. 2

10 Professor Scott Bowman, Vice-Chancellor and President, CQ University, *Committee Hansard*, Canberra, 25 June 2014, pp. 2-3.

11 National Centre for Vocational Education Research (NCVER), *Tertiary education and training in Australia 2010*, p. 12, < <http://www.ncver.edu.au/wps/wcm/connect/03dc5705-2051-48a0-bf07-0fbcff210008/2010-Tertiary-education-training-2489.pdf?MOD=AJPERES&CACHEID=03dc5705-2051-48a0-bf07-0fbcff210008>> viewed 24 October 2014.

12 Mr Harry Pasich, Vocational Education and Training Coordinator, Morley Senior High School, *Committee Hansard*, Perth, 13 June 2014, p. 2.

because they are picking up employment through school based apprenticeships. More and more, those numbers are leaving us. It is almost becoming an aim of ours now that those kids do not finish the year with us – that they get so entrenched with the employer on that one day a week that they are working with them that, at some stage through the year, they have picked up a job. Again I think it is about making it clear what the pathways are. The pathway to university is very clear, and I think families understand that. I do not think families or students understand the current pathway in TAFE and where that fits in.¹³

- 4.18 The impact of current state/territory VET funding models in relation to TAFE as provider of employment pathways was raised in the evidence. In its submission TAFE Directors Australia (TDA) outlined the structure of the current VET funding approach:

The current funding approach is managed by state and territory jurisdictions, on a nominal hour pricing structure per student. This means that completion of a unit of competency attracts funding calculated by the agreed nominal hours at the specified rate. This rate is now set as a contribution to the cost of a student's training and in no case does the contribution cover the full cost. The actual rate is based on the assessed need for those skills as determined by state government agencies.¹⁴

- 4.19 Mr Tony Kennedy, Chief Executive Officer, IndustryLink, suggested that this approach can impact negatively on TAFE's role in providing pathways to employment due to an imperative to maintain class numbers:

When employers look to TAFE and say, 'Have you got anyone,' the TAFE says no, because if the students do not finish the class that class will not exist next semester and the person will be out of a job. That is a crazy system. That teacher should be on everyone's shoulders at the end of the semester. People should ask, 'How many of your 20 students finished the class?' 'None of them; they've all got jobs.' But that is not how it works. The TAFEs keep them in there and shield them from employers.¹⁵

- 4.20 In its evidence the Australian Government Department of Industry indicated the Government's intention to raise this issue with the states and territories:

13 Mr Michael Chalkley, Principle, Catholic College Bendigo, *Committee Hansard*, Bendigo, 16 April 2014, p. 30.

14 TAFE Directors Australia (TDA), *Submission 70.2*, p. 2.

15 Mr Tony Kennedy, Chief Executive Officer, IndustryLink, *Committee Hansard*, Launceston, 30 April 2014, p. 47.

The Government is concerned that current payment arrangements may prioritise enrolment at the expense of completion and the ultimate outcome of a job relevant to the training, and will be holding discussions with States and Territories to examine options in this area.¹⁶

Examples of specific pathways

Foundation skills for employment

4.21 A lack of the basic foundation employment skills (dressing appropriately for work, punctuality, social etiquette, basic computer skills and so on) can be a barrier to employment or further education. For people in this position, TAFE can provide, through qualifications such as Certificate I and II, basic foundation skills and even the confidence to continue education in order to transition to employment or further training.

4.22 Ms Jennifer Field, Board Member, Australian Council for Private Education and Training (ACPET), indicated the importance of foundation training in relation to the VET sector as a whole:

... we will always have a marginalised group of students who will forever need a cert I or cert II qualification. It is more than just the training and the skills that they develop; it is the confidence that they develop ... Certainly we always think of cert I as a stepping stone to something else.¹⁷

4.23 As the public training provider, it is vital that TAFE continues to teach foundation skills, providing pathways to opportunities that benefit the whole community.¹⁸

4.24 The Metropolitan South Institute of TAFE commented on the impact of VET policy and funding decisions on the resourcing and delivery of courses below the Certificate III level such as foundations skills courses:

It is imperative that the foundation skills and opportunities for those who see VET as a second chance in education are seen as an integral part of student success and funded accordingly. The policy focus on Certificate III and above is significantly reducing the availability and resourcing of lower level courses for adult learners ... For students who experience learning difficulties,

16 Australian Government, Department of Industry, *Submission 186.1*, p. 5.

17 Ms Jennifer Field, Board Member, Australian Council for Private Education and Training (ACPET), *Committee Hansard*, Melbourne, 15 April 2014, p. 49.

18 Mr Adrian Marron, Member, TDA, *Committee Hansard*, Canberra, 16 July 2014, p. 4.

foundation skills and bridging courses are essential to developing their level of skill and confidence.¹⁹

Language, literacy and numeracy

- 4.25 Related to the development of foundation skills, language, literacy and numeracy (LLN) issues were raised a number of times in the evidence. The instance of illiterate and innumerate students entering vocational education is a continuing challenge for teachers. As the public provider, TAFE has a community role in providing LLN assistance to students to enhance their ability to enter/re-enter the workforce or continue on to further education.
- 4.26 Concern was expressed over illiteracy and innumeracy rates and the effect of this on students' ability to learn and gain subsequent employment. Mr Robert Paton, Chief Executive Officer, Manufacturing Skills Australia stated that:
- A significant proportion – 40 per cent or more – of the Australian workforce do not hold a post-school qualification. They are obviously skilled because they are holding down productive jobs, but their skills are not recognised. Another more damning fact is that 40 per cent or more do not have the required language, literacy and numeracy skills that they need to operate in society and in jobs now and in the future.²⁰
- 4.27 Mr Geoff Fader, Executive Officer, Group Training Association Tasmania Incorporated, also stated that:
- ... two out of every three applicants for apprenticeships are unemployable simply because their literacy and numeracy are such that they would be a danger to themselves and others in the workplace. You may be surprised, but it is not really surprising when data prepared by the Australian Bureau of Statistics tells us that 51 per cent of 15- to 19-year-olds are leaving compulsory education while still functionally illiterate and 57 per cent while functionally innumerate.²¹
- 4.28 Mr Fader emphasised the fundamental importance of addressing LLN needs:

19 Metropolitan South Institute of TAFE, *Submission 39*, pp. 5–6.

20 Mr Robert Paton, Chief Executive Officer, Manufacturing Skills Australia (MSA), *Committee Hansard*, Brisbane, 7 June 2013, p. 17.

21 Mr Geoff Fader, Executive Officer, Group Training Association (GTA) – Tasmanian Incorporated, *Committee Hansard*, Launceston, 30 April 2014, p. 44.

No matter how much money governments throw at providing training or retraining for these people, they will in the main remain unemployable without addressing their literacy and numeracy needs.²²

- 4.29 Delivery of basic LLN training and development is primarily delivered through foundation programs such as that offered through the Foundation Studies Section of the Sydney Institute of TAFE, Ultimo campus. As noted by Ms Kristen Highet of the Institute, the Foundation Studies Section:

... provides an entry point for many students who need to develop their literacy and numeracy skills before they are able to enter vocational programs. This may include people who are changing jobs, upgrading current skills or people who are seeking work and did not, for a variety of reasons, develop these skills during their schooling.²³

- 4.30 For industry, training in respect of LLN needs is a critical part of the service TAFE provides. REDARC Electronics, for example, has engaged with TAFE to improve the LLN skills of its apprentices:

In the last three years we have engaged in the LLN program, and we had the adult national program launched at REDARC a couple of years ago. We have been involved in that program for three years. Our reason for getting involved was that we were taking young people from the southern suburbs of Adelaide – it does not matter where; it could be the western suburbs of Sydney – and we were finding that their mathematics skills, their ICT skills and their communications skills meant that they really struggled in an apprenticeship. So we engaged with TAFE as the provider of that LLN training.²⁴

- 4.31 Mr Kevin Heys, Treasurer and Public Officer, Australian Vocational Education and Training Research Association (AVETRA), also recognised TAFE's importance in addressing the LLN needs of disadvantaged members of the community:

We are a multicultural society in Australia and a lot of people come due to displacement or because of family connections or from disruptions or in isolated areas and a lot of those people have not had the privilege of formal education ... [and] have not met

22 Mr Geoff Fader, Executive Officer, GTA – Tasmanian Incorporated, *Committee Hansard*, Launceston, 30 April 2014, p. 44.

23 Ms Kristine Highet, Foundation Studies Section, Sydney Institute of TAFE, *Submission 149*, p. 1.

24 Mr Anthony Kittel, Managing Director, REDARC Electronics, *Committee Hansard*, Adelaide, 12 June 2014, p. 18.

the adult learning arena. ... [so they] will come back and say, 'I would like to go and learn to read. I am terribly embarrassed but I do not have any literacy skills. I want to go back to acquire some educative skills.' What TAFE has been able to do is be a public arena working across the whole spectrum.²⁵

4.32 Migrants and those with English as a second language (ESL) are also assisted through LLN programs provided by TAFE. Manufacturing Skills Australia noted that 71 per cent of students from non-English speaking backgrounds chose TAFE as a provider of foundation education.²⁶

4.33 The St Vincent de Paul National Society described how TAFE assists migrants in skills development and further education through foundation courses:

Recent migrants to Australia can also be tremendously helped by TAFE language and skills courses. The Society notes the Asylum Seeker Resource Centre's current 'Right to Work' campaign, to which the Society is a signatory, which makes the point that attending a TAFE course leads to employment, as well as a real sense of empowerment, for migrants needing a skills update.²⁷

4.34 During an inspection of TAFE SA's Regency Campus in Adelaide, the Committee observed first-hand migrant and ESL students undertaking LLN foundation programs specifically designed to incorporate everyday activities, including workplace participation, into the curriculum. This comprised of work experience in a kitchen environment, with the aim of teaching effective communication within a hospitality workplace.

4.35 Dr Caroline Smith of the National Employment Services Association argued that TAFE should be strengthened specifically in respect of its foundation skills/LLN training role:

What we also know is that there are many people of working age falling through the training gaps – for example, in the areas of literacy and numeracy, which are considered to be key foundational skills. A key question is how we make sure we have the most sustainable, adaptive and productive workforce we can, and NESAs believes strengthening TAFE could go a long way to help answer that question.²⁸

25 Mr Kevin Heys, Treasurer and Public Officer, Australian Vocational Education and Training Research Association (AVETRA), *Committee Hansard*, Sydney, 8 April 2014, p. 3.

26 Mr Robert Paton, Chief Executive Officer, MSA, *Committee Hansard*, Brisbane, 7 June 2013, p. 17.

27 St Vincent de Paul National Council of Australia, *Submission 12*, p. 4.

28 Dr Caroline Smith, Deputy Chief Executive Officer, NESAs, *Committee Hansard*, Melbourne, 15 April 2014, p. 1.

Mature age students

- 4.36 TAFE has been identified as a provider of second chance opportunities for mature workers facing career changes for reasons such as retrenchment or injury. The Blue Mountains TAFE Teachers Association, in their submission, provided the following example of this:

Geoff, aged 53, found that due to his age, re-entering the workforce after retrenchment was very difficult. He had no idea how to approach an interview, very limited computer skills and no knowledge of how to send resumes by email. Geoff completed an Outreach course which helped him to recognise his life skills and he also gained the skills he needed for employment, and as a result is now employed by Bunnings hardware store.²⁹

- 4.37 A further example noted TAFE's provision of opportunities for a person who had left the workforce due to injury:

Kerrie had been a bricklayer all his working life when a back injury stopped him in his tracks. Kerrie joined an Outreach 'Introduction to Computers' class and when the term was over, progressed to the next step and enrolled in a small business course.³⁰

- 4.38 The Australian Manufacturing Workers Union indicated that TAFE is a preferred option for retraining:

As a trusted and respected institution, TAFE has been able to engage effectively with our members, many of whom have bitter experience with redundancy in previous workplaces where the responses involved brigades of consultants and private training providers appearing with pre-determined solutions that generally involved generic training programs that made little difference to the employment mobility, or future prospects of our members.³¹

- 4.39 In an economic environment where there are manufacturing closures and significant redundancies, TAFE can be a lifeline to reskilling and providing new opportunities for mature age workers. The recent automotive industry closures in South Australia and Victoria, cannery closures in Victoria, and public service redundancies in Canberra, are all examples of circumstances where TAFE can be a crucial enabler for those looking to re-enter the workforce.

29 Blue Mountains TAFE Teachers Association, *Submission 4*, p. 4.

30 Blue Mountains TAFE Teachers Association, *Submission 4*, p. 4.

31 Australian Manufacturing Workers Union, *Submission 16*, p. 6.

Women

4.40 Women can face unique challenges that may lead to disadvantage in accessing education, training and skills development. Women who have cared for children, for example, may seek to enter/re-enter the workforce later in life where they face a lack of, or have outdated skills. Many women find that they lack the confidence, ability or funds to pursue education necessary for gaining employment and, therefore, feel marginalised.

4.41 Ms Linda Simon, National Convenor for Women in Adult and Vocational Education and Council Member, Economic Security4Women, recognised TAFE's importance in providing pathways for women, including via its linkages with community organisations:

TAFE has the capacity to provide pathways for women and less advantaged members of the community into education and training through its ability to work with community organisations. It can take entry level and early-access training programs into community settings and prevocational engagement strategies. It can provide quality career advice, social glue, community responsiveness, collaboration and capacity building.³²

4.42 One striking example of TAFE's role in providing opportunities for women was provided by the Blue Mountains TAFE Teachers Association:

Julie entered the Outreach 'Work Opportunities for Women' course as a single mum with very few employment prospects. Nearly 10 years on, Julie has gained skills to be employed by a very large company, she has also returned to complete further qualifications to enable her to expand her role and act in higher positions.³³

32 Ms Linda Simon, National Convenor for Women in Adult and Vocational Education; Council Member, Economic Security4Women, *Committee Hansard*, Brisbane, 7 June 2013, pp. 25-26. See also Unions WA, *Submission 49.1*, p. 24.

33 Blue Mountains TAFE Teachers Association, *Submission 4*, p. 4. See also Australian Federation of Graduate Women Inc., *Submission 3*.

University to TAFE

4.43 It was noted in the evidence that, at times, university graduates can require additional technical or practical training from TAFE to enhance their employability. Mr Kevin Heys of AVETRA noted that:

... there is a larger group of students who come back to TAFE from university than go from TAFE to university. What they are looking for is the hands-on, practical, applied skills.³⁴

4.44 Mr Adrian Marron, Member, TDA, provided one specific example of a graduate who attended TAFE to gain practical skills:

We had an honours science degree candidate from ANU finish that and come back and do an apprenticeship in the electrical field. In fact she was the apprentice of the year a couple of years ago and now works for Actew AGL. I just wanted to also say that it is a two-way pathway. When we talk about pathways, that is an element that sometimes does not get the attention it deserves.³⁵

4.45 Mr Anthony Kittel, Managing Director, REDARC Electronics, indicated that his company has utilised TAFE to train tertiary educated employees with basic trade skills:

Part of our training package in the last 12 months has been to put engineering-type people through lean manufacturing training, which essentially is stuff that they would learn in their trade qualifications. Again, we have engaged TAFE SA to provide that lean manufacturing training, and that is done in house.³⁶

4.46 This type of need has led to some universities being approached by industry to incorporate more technical education in their degrees. Professor Bowman of CQ University stated that:

One of the things that industry really wants is for us to include skill sets in our degrees. There are a couple of examples. In engineering, the industry is saying: 'Could you do a certificate in project management as part of the engineering degree? Could you put a skills package in welding in the engineering degree?' One of the strange ones has been performing arts. Performing arts wants us to put in a certificate I in construction; they are making sets, so they look really glamorous up on stage, but when they come offstage and get a nail gun in their hand they look really scary, so

34 Mr Kevin Heys, Treasurer and Public Officer, AVETRA, *Committee Hansard*, Sydney, 8 April 2014, p. 5.

35 Mr Adrian Marron, Member, TDA, *Committee Hansard*, Canberra, 19 March 2014, p. 2.

36 Mr Anthony Kittel, REDARC Electronics, Managing Director, *Committee Hansard*, Adelaide, 12 June 2014, p. 20.

we are teaching them how to use the nail gun, and it might just give them the edge. If everything else is equal, then that might get them the job.³⁷

- 4.47 Ms Pyne of Barrier Reef Mount Isa and Tropical North Institute of TAFE advocated for the incorporation of vocational skills in university courses:

They graduate with a degree but then have to supervise a whole lot of people who have more skills in building and construction than they do. Sometimes this is called reverse articulation. I do not think that is the right terminology, but universities need to be incorporating more of those vocational skills in programs like engineering.³⁸

Partnerships

- 4.48 Partnerships, particularly between industry and TAFE, form an important part of the provision of pathways to employment for TAFE students. Industry can utilise TAFE resources in order to meet its training needs, develop employees, and identify qualification benchmarks for recruitment. Such partnerships also provide students with opportunities to learn in an environment that has industry support and the potential for outcome-based employment.
- 4.49 The Committee had the opportunity to see an example of a partnership – the industry-supported Central Underground Training (CUT) mine – during its inspection of the Central Institute of Technology in Perth. The CUT mine was purpose-built to provide a simulated training experience for the mining industry, which provided advice, sponsorship and donations of equipment for the mines development. Initiatives such as this provide realistic training experiences and a benefit to industry due to the outcome of increased student capability.
- 4.50 Mining industries have also been involved with TAFE Institutes in other partnership agreements, such as with the Durack Institute, to boost employment opportunities for women and Aboriginal people within the mining sector. Mr Emmanuel Hondros, Manager, People Strategies, Chamber of Minerals and Energy Western Australia stated that:
- Certainly industry has looked at broadening its pool of people who would perhaps traditionally not have been involved in the sector. There are numerous instances of apprenticeship and

37 Professor Scott Bowman, Vice-Chancellor and President, CQ University, *Committee Hansard*, Canberra, 25 June 2013, p. 4.

38 Ms Joann Pyne, Director, Barrier Reef Mount Isa and Tropical North Institute of TAFE, *Committee Hansard*, Townsville, 7 May 2014, p. 4.

traineeship programs that have targeted women and targeted Aboriginal people. Up in the Durack Institute in Geraldton in the mid-west of WA there has been a program which won the WA Training Initiative Award last year at the state training awards, which was focused on Aboriginal people and getting into the maritime industry to service the oil and gas sector ... As part of Central Institute there was a fast-track program for Aboriginal women, which was with the involvement of industry, Rio Tinto and Macmahon. It was pulled together through the state Resources Industry Training Council. That program looked at pre-employment, personal development skills and technical skills ... Out of that program we had two Aboriginal leaders from Central Institute mentoring and facilitating, and 10 women progressed into traineeships with Rio Tinto and Macmahon out that sort of program.³⁹

- 4.51 Mr Steven Balzary, Employment Education and Training Consultant, Restaurants and Catering Australia, gave another example of the hospitality industry working with several TAFE Institutes in providing pathways for employment for TAFE students:

We are actually working, and have selected public providers to work with, across the country. Going around the eight we are working with, they are: Far North Queensland, Southbank, North Sydney, Western Sydney, William Angliss, Regency and Challenger. We have chosen those eight institutes because, obviously, from our point of view, they are leaders in the industry in the public arrangement. We are doing that in introducing a number of new pathways.⁴⁰

- 4.52 In some cases, TAFE is the only option for industry to obtain training due to the large amount of necessary capital, and the changing nature of industry requirements. The Australian Submarine Corporation (ASC), for example, partners with TAFE SA to provide capability screening to potential recruits, as well as training for the ongoing development of employees. Mr Christian Hamilton, Workforce Capability Manager, ASC, stated that:

For its part, TAFE SA is considered by ASC as a vital component to our workforce development. TAFE accounts for approximately one in every four dollars that ASC has spent on training since

39 Mr Emmanuel Hondros, Manager, People Strategies, Chamber of Minerals and Energy Western Australia, *Committee Hansard*, Perth, 13 June 2014, p. 21.

40 Mr Steven Balzary, Employment, Education and Training Consultant, Restaurants and Catering Australia, *Committee Hansard*, Adelaide, 12 June 2014, p. 25.

2012. As such, ASC has taken a particular interest in its performance. I think the reason for this interest is best illustrated by the critical role that TAFE has played in the creation of the air warfare destroyer workforce. If taken in isolation, TAFE has delivered approximately 56 per cent of the total training that the air warfare destroyer workforce has undertaken.⁴¹

- 4.53 Mr Anthony Kittel of REDARC Electronics supported the important relationship between industry and TAFE in providing pathways to employment and ongoing development:

In South Australia, Regency TAFE is the only place for us to train our electro-technology apprentices. There is no private provider that can provide any of that training, and we have been doing that since I have been in business. I have owned the company now for 17 years. Without TAFE in South Australia or the Regency electronics school, our company would not be here. It would be in Florida, or it would be in North Carolina, or somewhere else like that. So, TAFE is absolutely critical.⁴²

- 4.54 Some disparities were noted between industry and TAFE, however, for example regarding industry requirements for responsiveness to changing operating environments. Mr Hamilton, ASC, noted that:

There is almost certainly a lag, if you like, between our ability to identify and to seek to utilise the technology – for example, within our shipyard – and the VET system's ability, through both training packages and non-accredited training, to actually catch up.⁴³

- 4.55 Ms Jan Davis, Chief Executive Officer, Tasmanian Farmers and Graziers Association Industry, further indicated that there are challenges in overcoming stereotyped perceptions of certain industry sectors (for example agriculture) within the TAFE environment.⁴⁴

- 4.56 Partnerships between non-industry organisations and TAFE can also provide valuable pathways for employment. Dr Kay Cuellar, Senior Manager, Sentence Management and Industries, Tasmania Prison Service, outlined the evolving relationship between TAFE and Tasmania's Risdon Prison in providing pathway opportunities for inmates:

41 Mr Christian Hamilton, Workforce Capability Manager, Australian Submarine Corporation (ASC), *Committee Hansard*, Adelaide, 12 June 2014, p. 9.

42 Mr Anthony Kittel, Managing Director, REDARC Electronics, *Committee Hansard*, Adelaide, 12 June 2014, p. 18.

43 Mr Christian Hamilton, Workforce Capability Manager, ASC, *Committee Hansard*, Adelaide, 12 June 2014, p. 10.

44 Ms Jan Davis, Chief Executive Officer, Tasmanian Farmers and Graziers Association, *Committee Hansard*, Launceston, 30 April 2014, p. 2.

Essentially, we believe that education and training provide a really critical pathway for us to assist offenders to desist from offending and to help them reintegrate back into the community. We feel that increasing their exposure to education and training and their level of employability into the future is really critical for them and for assisting them to participate more fully as a member of the community. We are currently in a process of putting together a partnership with the Department of Education and TasTAFE. We are essentially asking TasTAFE to take carriage of the delivery of education and training into our prisons because we feel they are experts in the field where we are not and that we will get much better outcomes in terms of the pathways for education and training for offenders in our facilities.⁴⁵

TAFE pathways to university

4.57 TAFE can be a second chance at education. For those that were not able to finish school, have tertiary entrance ranks that are too low, are disadvantaged, or are disabled, TAFE can provide the opportunity for an educational foundation leading to university entrance. As the Australian Education Union (NSW Branch) stated:

TAFE has a long tradition of giving people a 'second chance' at education, and the possibility of life-long education as well as expert training to keep our communities running.⁴⁶

4.58 While employment may be a major motivator for TAFE education, just over 19 per cent of respondents to the Committee's online survey indicated that the purpose of their study at TAFE (past, current or planned) was as a pathway to further education.⁴⁷ According to NCVER, in 2011 some 13 per cent of VET graduates were enrolled in associate, bachelor, or higher degrees, or in diplomas or advanced diplomas.⁴⁸

4.59 It was noted in evidence that TAFE is the traditional provider of further education pathways. Mr Kevin Heys of AVETRA stated that:

45 Dr Kay Cuellar, Senior Manager, Sentence Management and Industries, Tasmanian Prison Service, *Committee Hansard*, Launceston, 30 April 2014, p. 29.

46 Australian Education Union (AEU) (NSW Branch), *Submission 8*, p. 3.

47 Education and Employment Committee online student survey (see Appendix D).

48 NCVER, *Tertiary education and training in Australia 2010*, p. 24, <<http://www.ncver.edu.au/wps/wcm/connect/03dc5705-2051-48a0-bf07-0fbcff210008/2010-Tertiary-education-training-2489.pdf?MOD=AJPERES&CACHEID=03dc5705-2051-48a0-bf07-0fbcff210008>> viewed 24 October 2014.

TAFE has a very proud history in diploma-equivalent certificates, diploma-entrance certificates, entry-level Higher School Certificates and Tertiary Preparation Certificates so that people can go into that type of education at a university level having the competencies and the skills that equip them to become very positive learners in that sort of domain.⁴⁹

- 4.60 For disadvantaged students, TAFE can provide an important foundation for tertiary success:

... students regarded their prior TAFE studies as a major enabler of success at university. This allows us to highlight the importance of the work of TAFE in support of low-SES background students for higher education equity.⁵⁰

- 4.61 According to one study, often people from disadvantaged backgrounds have felt that, while university is perceived as 'elitist' and not for someone of their social standing, TAFE has been able to give them confidence and skills to break down those barriers.⁵¹ A statement by a university to TAFE student sums up this experience with TAFE in preparation for university:

... so I think there can be a bit of a perception that TAFE's sort of down here and Uni's up there, but having studied at both I feel that this course has ... really prepared me well for uni studies ... I feel quite confident about it ...⁵²

- 4.62 Employees can also find pathways to university through TAFE. Mr Anthony Kittel of REDARC Electronics elaborated in relation to one employee:

He dropped out after first year, did a couple of things in between, then applied for a job with us. We said, 'Look, if you join us, we would need you to go to TAFE to do an apprenticeship.' He was more than happy to do that because he just felt that university was a bit of a step jump for him and he wanted to start from the base, so he went through his trade. Then he did his advanced diploma. We were talking about him showing a real aptitude to grow and develop, so what was next. In conversation with TAFE we worked out that he could go on and do an associate degree at Flinders

49 Mr Kevin Heys, Treasurer and Public Officer, AVETRA, *Committee Hansard*, Sydney, 8 April 2014, p. 2.

50 The Deakin University Social Work/Gordon TAFE Community Services Work Geelong Based Project Team, *Submission 45*, p. 5.

51 The Deakin University Social Work/Gordon TAFE Community Services Work Geelong Based Project Team, *Submission 45*, p. 12.

52 The Deakin University Social Work/Gordon TAFE Community Services Work Geelong Based Project Team, *Submission 45*, p. 12.

University, and he is now halfway through that. Just this year he got Chancellor's letter of commendation in the second year of his associate degree. So, here is someone that dropped out of university, got a base qualification, saw that there as a career path and that TAFE could help him get into that, and now he is back at university.⁵³

- 4.63 While the direct pathway from TAFE to university is still present, evidence suggests that this is not the only route. As Mr Stephen Bolton of ACCI noted in relation to VET more broadly:

Vocational education and training is now, for many individuals, the first step to obtaining a university education. However, the pathway from vocational education and training into university is not linear. There is no set pathway or holistic approach that facilitates the move from VET to university...⁵⁴

- 4.64 It is also worth acknowledging that TAFE does not necessarily have to be only a staging-point to university for obtaining tertiary qualifications. Some TAFEs, as noted by Ms Kaylene Harth, Board Member, TDA, are themselves offering tertiary qualifications:

There are a small but growing number of TAFE Institutes that are offering higher-education qualifications, including bachelor degrees. Students, many of them first in family, from low-SES backgrounds and regional and remote backgrounds, are achieving higher-education qualifications that it is doubtful could have been achieved through a university pathway.⁵⁵

- 4.65 NCVER has also noted that 'there is overlap between VET and higher education in qualifications delivered at diploma, associate degree, advanced diploma, bachelor degree, graduate certificate and graduate diploma levels'.⁵⁶ In its evidence the National Tertiary Education Union noted 'increasing competition between public universities and TAFE Institutes especially at the diploma and advanced diploma level'.⁵⁷

53 Mr Anthony Kittel, REDARC Electronics, Managing Director, *Committee Hansard*, Adelaide, 12 June 2014, pp. 19-20.

54 Mr Stephen Bolton, Senior Advisor, Employment, Education and Training, ACCI, *Committee Hansard*, Canberra, 4 June 2014, p. 1.

55 Ms Kaylene Harth, Board Member, TDA, *Committee Hansard*, Brisbane, 7 June 2013, p. 2.

56 NCVER, *Tertiary education and training in Australia 2010*, p. 8, <<http://www.ncver.edu.au/wps/wcm/connect/03dc5705-2051-48a0-bf07-0fbcff210008/2010-Tertiary-education-training-2489.pdf?MOD=AJPERES&CACHEID=03dc5705-2051-48a0-bf07-0fbcff210008>> viewed 24 October 2014.

57 National Tertiary Education Union (NTEU), *Submission 38*, p. 2.

- 4.66 Students are also attending TAFE post university; just over 37 per cent of respondents to the Committee's online survey who were previous, current or future TAFE students held undergraduate or postgraduate qualifications.⁵⁸
- 4.67 Many universities are working in partnerships with TAFE Institutes to support student pathways to tertiary education. The 'Tertiary Enabling Program' run by Bendigo TAFE and La Trobe University is an example of this:
- [With this program] the students work one day a week at the TAFE and one day a week at the university. Their involvement is about building the seamless pathways in terms of confidence and awareness of what is available and an ability to learn the cultures of tertiary education. These things are a little bit intangible but they are the critical things when it comes to the student perspective – and I think the student perspective is really important. We work very hard to ensure that students and the people of Bendigo – parents, employers, teachers – understand that TAFE is a valid first choice pathway for many students. University is not for everybody, and it does not always work straight out of school. So understanding that TAFE is a valid first choice pathway is an important part ...⁵⁹
- 4.68 The Box Hill Institute in Melbourne continues to strengthen its partnerships with Australian Catholic University, Monash, Deakin, and LaTrobe universities in order to provide greater pathway options for students; for example, guaranteed entry, joint curriculum delivery and design, and industry partnerships.⁶⁰
- 4.69 Tertiary institutions such as CQ University and Victoria University, which have amalgamated with TAFE or supply services to TAFE, provide students who would not otherwise attend or would be intimidated by university with the opportunity for exposure. This presents advantageous pathways for students from TAFE to university by breaking down barriers – a particular advantage for low socio-economic or ESL groups. Moreover, this type of collaboration provides opportunities for both institutions in reducing the duplication of infrastructure.⁶¹

58 Education and Employment Committee online student survey (see Appendix D).

59 Ms Catherine Farrell, Project Coordinator, Bendigo Tertiary Education Partnership, La Trobe University, *Committee Hansard*, Bendigo, 16 April 2014, p.4.

60 Box Hill Institute, *Submission 40*, p.6.

61 Brimbank Social Justice Coalition and Brimbank City Council, *Submission 27*, p. 7.

- 4.70 Some evidence, however, suggested that relationships between universities and TAFEs in providing pathways could be improved. Mr Christian Hamilton of ASC envisaged a lesser degree of differentiation between universities and VET:

There have previously been models, or certainly attempts in Australia, to get universities and TAFEs to partner. Some have been successful; some have not. However, rather than differentiating between universities and VET the logical solution is that they are ostensibly one piece of infrastructure rather than two. It is too easy to play demarcation against each other – as I said before, where TAFE finishes and university begins. I am not suggesting by any stretch that that is not a contentious option but, for as long as that exists, there is an opportunity to suggest that that will be where the turf war is.⁶²

- 4.71 In Tasmania, according to Mr Paul Murphy, Acting Deputy Secretary, Skills, Communities, International Education Services, Department of Education Tasmania, TAFE is not as involved in the pathway to university:

Most students who wish to get to university will tend to go directly to the university through a foundation program rather than to make a conscious decision to go through a VET program. I think that is probably unique to Tasmania, because the university in Tasmania is more than capable of picking up most of the demand.⁶³

- 4.72 The impact of current state/territory VET funding models in relation to TAFE as provider of pathways to tertiary education was raised in the evidence. Professor John Rosenberg of La Trobe University contended that ‘there is a serious disconnect between the TAFE system and the university system’, and that, in Victoria, the transition from TAFE to university is difficult due to the funding structure that is in place:

I have to say that the few students who have actually managed to go from TAFE to university have had to work hard to achieve that goal, because it is not easy. It is not easy for a number of structural reasons. The funding models are very different. Now in Victoria in particular there are some strange transition rules about which direction you can move. I should say that we believe there is good

62 Mr Christian Hamilton, Workforce Capability Manager, ASC, *Committee Hansard*, Adelaide, 12 June 2014, p. 14.

63 Mr Paul (Ciaran) Murphy, Acting Deputy Secretary, Skills, Communities, International Education Services, Department of Education, Tasmania, *Committee Hansard*, Launceston, 30 April 2014, p. 29.

opportunity for students to move both from TAFE to university and from university to TAFE, but that direction now is very difficult because of the funding regime in this state.⁶⁴

4.73 Mr Peter Crocker of Concerned Vocational Educators submitted that:

The interface between University and VET programs suffers generally from the differences in funding access and regulation applying to each sector.⁶⁵

4.74 In its submission the National Tertiary Education Union also raised the impact of funding structures on student choice:

Student choices should be based on their aspirations and merit without being distorted by financial considerations because of inconsistent policy and funding frameworks between HE and VET or in different States or Territories.⁶⁶

Community support

4.75 TAFE has an intangible, but highly significant, community support role as a provider of opportunities for those in positions of disadvantage and vulnerability, whether for employment, accessing mainstream education, or improving life/social circumstances. This was a clear message in evidence to the inquiry, including responses to the Committee's online student survey as shown in Figure 4.2.

64 Professor John Rosenberg, Senior Deputy Vice-Chancellor, La Trobe University, *Committee Hansard*, Bendigo, 16 April 2014, p. 4.

65 Concerned Vocational Educators, *Submission 176*, p. 7.

66 NTEU, *Submission 38*, p. 2.

Figure 4.2 Committee survey responses: Respondents comments on the support offered by TAFE

Q18. Has your experience with TAFE been of any benefit to your personal situation?

Please tell us why.

It greatly improved my confidence and employability post-school as I had learning difficulties and no career mentor.

It had helped me ease into society having mental issues such as depression, PTSD, anxiety and other mental illness it has helped

I was a sole parent depending for all my income on parenting payment single. I gained part-time employment within 3 months of completing my diploma and by the time my child was in high school I was employed full time and no longer a [C]entrelink client

Source: Education and Employment Committee online student survey (see Appendix D)

4.76 The NSW Greens identified the special value of TAFE to the community and outlined its importance in terms of reducing socio-economic disparities:

As an education institute, TAFE is unique in its ability to create economic wealth, social cohesion and social justice. It facilitates socio-economic mobility and provides educational outcomes for people with special needs and diverse learning styles. It undermines the division between wealth and poverty and creates a more inclusive, tolerant and functional society.⁶⁷

4.77 The Brimbank Social Justice Coalition and Brimbank City Council also noted the broader societal benefits of VET:

Enabling further educational engagement, such as that provided through vocational education has considerable flow on benefits; to others in the family and their educational outcomes, broader participation and citizenship engagement, personal fulfilment and improved health outcomes; in fact the broad range of benefits that flow from higher socio economic status.⁶⁸

4.78 National trends based on NCVET research indicate that the majority of people who attend vocational training institutions are:

... more likely to be older, indigenous, have a disability, reside in outer regional, remote or very remote regions, be from a non-English speaking background and experience greater levels of

67 Greens NSW, *Submission 15*, p. 1.

68 Brimbank Social Justice Coalition and Brimbank City Council, *Submission 27*, p. 2.

relative socio-economic disadvantage compared to those undertaking higher education qualifications.⁶⁹

- 4.79 In comparison to private sector providers, TAFE has a higher ratio of disabled and disadvantaged students and is commonly the main provider of VET education for rural and remote areas.⁷⁰ In its submission the Blue Mountains Community Sector noted that, while some private RTOs offer educational opportunities for vulnerable people within the community, TAFE is still the majority provider:

... TAFE has community service obligations (access and equity measures). Other RTOs are not required to demonstrate the same level of commitment to ensuring that the most vulnerable in our community get the support and encouragement they need to engage in, and persevere with, study. To this point, TAFE fees have also been proportional to the ability to pay, and taken account of the fact that many of those commencing vocational training pathways are not in a position to pay high fees.⁷¹

- 4.80 Further:

... TAFE is obliged to provide the full range of student services (counselling, equity and support programs, career advice, and library services) - not all RTOs can or will offer this range of services. There will be a cost to the community if such services are not mandatory offerings, or withdrawn/cut.⁷²

- 4.81 Ms Aliesje Kolovis, who works with vulnerable young women, also agreed that TAFE provides opportunities for those in a vulnerable position:

I strongly believe that TAFE is a necessary component is assisting people from vulnerable communities in breaking the cycle of poverty and abuse. I believe education provides more than just knowledge and information about certain subjects, it promotes confidence, independence and empowerment, especially in young women.⁷³

- 4.82 TAFE responds to industry and community needs through outreach programs that often draw on national Training Packages to support student transition from support programs to mainstream education.⁷⁴
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69 Holmesglen, *Submission 34*, p. 10.

70 St Vincent de Paul Society National Council of Australia, *Submission 12*, p. 4.

71 Blue Mountains Community Sector, *Submission 35*, p. 6.

72 Blue Mountains Community Sector, *Submission 35*, p. 6.

73 Unions WA, *Submission 49.1*, p. 24.

74 TAFE Outreach, *Submission 43*, p. 1.

Disadvantaged students

- 4.83 Ms Susan Fergusson, General Manager, National Centre for Vocational Education Research (NCVER), indicated that those in disadvantaged situations turn to TAFE for their training and developmental needs:

We have some details about the characteristics of students – if you are from a non-English-speaking background, if you are Indigenous, if you live in a remote area, if your intent is to find a pathway to university, then you are more likely to be at TAFE ... If you have very low literacy and numeracy, you are more likely to be at TAFE.⁷⁵

- 4.84 Manufacturing Skills Australia also recognised the importance of TAFE in this context:

The TAFE system also plays an important role in providing support for learners from specific equity groups such as Indigenous learners, learners with disabilities and learners from non-English speaking backgrounds.⁷⁶

Remote and Aboriginal communities

- 4.85 People from rural and remote communities are often subject to disadvantage due to geographical restrictions for educational opportunities, and a lack of available jobs. Manufacturing Skills Australia indicated that:

In 2011 there were 1,239,586 students attending TAFE. This was two thirds of all students participating in publicly funded training in Australia. 43% of those students came from regional and remote areas of Australia, highlighting the importance of the TAFE system in meeting the needs of regional areas. If the Socio-Economic Index for Areas (SIEFA) is applied to this data, 15% of students at TAFE were identified as belonging to the “Most disadvantaged” quintile (quintile 1). In remote and very remote areas, the percentage of students identified as being within this quintile at TAFE jumps to 30% in remote areas and 50% in very remote areas.⁷⁷

- 4.86 From a teaching perspective, remoteness also provides barriers to the quality of delivery. Associate Professor Barry Wright, Executive Director, Industries Skills Centre, Federation University, indicated the challenges

75 Ms Susan Fergusson, General Manager, NCVER, *Committee Hansard*, Adelaide, 12 June 2014, p. 1.

76 MSA, *Submission 9*, p. 7.

77 MSA, *Submission 9*, p. 7.

TAFE teachers in regional Victoria can face when delivering training for students:

The other day we had to sign up an electrician apprentice in Nhill. Nhill is 4½ hours drive from Ballarat, so I have to put a teacher in a car to drive to Nhill to meet with the employer, the apprenticeship centre representative and the student to sign the training plan and then drive 4½ hours back. When you look at the industrial awards that that teacher is under, that means a huge chunk of his teaching time has been taken to sign up that student. The geographical locations that we work in are huge.⁷⁸

4.87 In these areas, TAFE is also often the only opportunity for further education and skills development for Aboriginal communities. Aboriginal communities are among the most disadvantaged in Australia and, due to unique cultural factors, often require specialised assistance for pathways into mainstream education.

4.88 Tasmanian Polytechnic provided an example of how TAFE has provided support in this context:

(An) Aboriginal student who is a young single parent with one child enrolled in the Aboriginal class Certificate I in Preparation for Work & Study in 2011 to build her confidence. In 2012 she then enrolled in another two Aboriginal classes the Certificate II in Community Services and the Certificate I in Active Volunteering. After gaining both these qualifications she has in 2013 enrolled in a mainstream dual Certificate III in Community Services Work and Certificate III in Disability. Her aim is to enrol in a Nursing degree at the University of Tasmania in 2014. This student has only progressed down this pathway by starting out in a culturally sensitive program that builds both confidence and skills enabling our Aboriginal students to move confidently into mainstream.⁷⁹

4.89 However, Tasmanian Polytechnic also commented that it faces significant challenges in meeting the needs of Aboriginal students:

A service that has been cut from our program just this year due to reducing team budgets has been the tutorial support for Aboriginal students struggling with their studies. Students in need previously may have been eligible for 2 hrs per week of tutorial support. This was often only required for short periods of time to

78 Associate Professor Barry Wright, Executive Director Industry Skills Centre, Federation University, *Committee Hansard*, Bendigo, 16 April 2014, p. 7.

79 Tasmanian Polytechnic, *Submission 32*, p. 3. (since receipt of this submission, Tasmanian Polytechnic has merged with and continued as TasTAFE)

work through a particular study issue and occasionally for longer periods for students with higher learning needs. The budget for this service has been eroded over the last 3 years until in 2013 when it has been stripped from our budget altogether. In the last two weeks there have been two Certificate III students and a Diploma student request tutorial support. The Diploma student is seriously considering pulling out of her studies.⁸⁰

Youth, homeless, long term unemployed and migrants

4.90 Other disadvantaged groups such as youth, those who are homeless, the long-term unemployed and migrants utilise the opportunities available through TAFE to improve their situation. TAFE has been instrumental in helping people in these sorts of situations to regain the confidence and skills needed for further education or in the workplace.

4.91 In her evidence Ms Aliesje Kolovis indicated that her engagement with TAFE has been life-changing:

I was going down a very bad path. If I had not been linked in with TAFE, I know for a fact that I would either have been in jail or dead – and definitely not sitting here today. Luckily, someone was able to push me in the right direction. I started my interactions with TAFE in a Gaining Access to Training and Education Course. I did the one which was a year 10 equivalency. That kept me off the streets and from doing bad things. It gave me the boosted maths, English and a few other subjects as well. After that, I worked for a while and then I discovered my passion was community service work. So I enrolled in a certificate III, went on to certificate IV, had a break to work for a while and came back and did my diploma in 2012. I cannot express how valuable being able to afford to go to TAFE was.⁸¹

4.92 The St Vincent de Paul Society National Council noted that TAFEs also undertake active outreach to disadvantaged people:

Many TAFEs also offer specific programs that target and benefit disadvantaged people. For example, the Western Sydney Institute of TAFE runs a range of programs that are targeted at helping Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people find work, and these courses are free. That TAFE, and others, also provide “outreach” programs, whereby officers go out into the community and actively engage with disadvantaged people, many of whom will

80 Tasmanian Polytechnic, *Submission 32*, p. 3.

81 Ms Aliesje Kolovis, *Committee Hansard*, Perth, 13 June 2014, p. 10.

then go on to some sort of structured learning and ultimately employment. The well-known Year 10 and HSC courses are another example of how TAFE's help provide disadvantaged individuals, who for reasons such as poverty, illness, and family problems have been unable to complete high school, with an opportunity to access the training and skills that other Australians take for granted.⁸²

- 4.93 The St Vincent de Paul Society National Council further described how TAFE supports homeless people through support, personal development and further education:

People without secure accommodation are also routinely excluded from mainstream education. One example of how TAFE's are playing a role in helping these people turn their lives around is in Holmesglen, where a housing facility for young homeless people is located on the TAFE grounds, and is linked in with the educational services that the TAFE provides.⁸³

- 4.94 Ms Rachel Neumann, President, Victorian TAFE Branch, National Tertiary Education Union, noted TAFE's contribution in helping to break the welfare cycle:

We have severely disadvantaged students living in a two-bedroom house with 16 people. We have students living in homes who do not have a regular electricity supply to the house. For those students to be successful they need huge amounts of support from the youth and equity workers in the student services areas, the Koori liaison officers, the participation assistants, and the counselling and disability liaison staff. These students are often only capable of foundation level courses ... For (these) student(s) it is life-changing. So TAFE helps break that poverty and welfare dependence cycle ...⁸⁴

Disability and accessibility

- 4.95 Those with disabilities often have special needs when accessing education – special equipment such as ramps, lifts and hearing loops may be required, or support services such as sign language interpreters, counsellors and scribes may be needed. The cost of providing such equipment and/or services may often be too great for private RTOs, which

82 St Vincent de Paul Society National Council, *Submission 12*, p. 4.

83 St Vincent de Paul Society National Council, *Submission 12*, p. 5.

84 Ms Rachel Neumann, President, Victorian TAFE Branch, NTEU, *Committee Hansard*, Melbourne, 15 April 2014, p. 16.

leaves TAFE, as the public provider, the most common (and sometimes the only) choice for those with disabilities.

- 4.96 Just over 11 per cent of respondents to the Committee's online survey indicated that they had a disability that affected them in terms of work and/or study options. Many respondents from this group also indicated that TAFE was a contributing factor in providing pathway options and improving their mental health and wellbeing (see Figure 4.3 below).⁸⁵

85 Education and Employment Committee online student survey (see Appendix D)

Figure 4.3 Committee survey responses: Respondents comments on the benefits of TAFE for people with disabilities

Q18. Has your experience with TAFE been of any benefit to your personal situation?

Please tell us why.

Helped me cope with my disability by providing interaction and support

...I am a person with an intellectual disability and it helped me to have better communication in my life which gave me better opportunities to receive employment under work capacity.

Tafe [sic] was my only option as I would not be able to cope with a full year 11 school workload due to my disabilities.

... I could not get a job due to a physical disability and had not gained high enough marks in the HSC to get into UNI, but the TPC course allowed me to get an ATAR so I could go to UNI where I am currently doing Medical Science with the hope of getting into medical research which doesn't have so many physical demands.

[TAFE] gave me confidence as a person with a disability. It helped me stand up for my own situation and others situation in social justice.

Very beneficial being at TAFE. Able to network and get to know professional persons in my field on [sic] endeavour and explore ways to make my disability workable to a situation.

I started with a Skills For All free course to get out of the house & started to realise what I was capable of, with the support & encouragement of my lecturer & other students. When new courses came up, many of us progressed on to study together. Studying improved my depression & gave me a focus, confidence, something I was good at; making me realise I may have a future outside of my disability after all.

I have a disability so TAFE offered flexibility and opportunity that university didn't.

Yes, it has added support for my disability.

TAFE were the only college that has disability support services and provided me communication access with Auslan interpreters and note takers.

Source: Education and Employment Committee online student survey (see Appendix D)

4.97 Manufacturing Skills Australia noted that TAFE is the main provider of training for those with disabilities:

Learners with a disability are more likely to be enrolled at TAFE with 70% of learners in 2011 participating in training through a TAFE course. Within the student population undertaking training, the proportion of students with a disability choosing TAFE (70%) was higher than the proportion of all students choosing TAFE (66%).⁸⁶

- 4.98 Ms Catherine Clark, Expert Advisor on Education, Deaf Australia Incorporated, provided evidence that, in relation to the deaf, private providers often do not offer the level of support that TAFE does:

Private education providers are very difficult for deaf people to enter into because they will not provide the support that they need, because it is expensive or it is seen as expensive. Many private colleges of education will not provide interpreting services, for example, and they use the unjustifiable hardship argument – the clause from the Disability Discrimination Act – to say that they cannot provide that support, because it is an unjustifiable hardship for them. So for deaf people TAFE is really the best place.⁸⁷

- 4.99 Ms Clarke further identified TAFE as a crucial alternative learning environment for the deaf:

Many deaf people do not do very well at school, not because you cannot educate them – that certainly is possible – but the system does not cater for them well and does not look after them well... So for many people, things like a university education are just too difficult for them to access, so the TAFE system has been a brilliant alternative for them.⁸⁸

- 4.100 In her submission Ms Marian Arnold noted that those with significant mental health issues are also more likely to attend TAFE because of the availability of support and services provided:

There are people, who for whatever reason suffer from a catastrophic mental breakdown. These are people who can and do re-build their lives with the help of a range of TAFE courses. One such person, some 4 years after first coming to TAFE, now has a permanent part time public service job at ¾ level and, I am confident, will go on from there to bigger and better things.⁸⁹

- 4.101 Global Access Project stated that the increasing support provided by TAFE to students with mental illness is to the detriment of services for students with other disabilities:

Through our discussions it is clear that TAFEs (and universities) are increasingly providing broad allied health support to students

87 Ms Catherine Clark, Expert Advisor on Education, Deaf Australia Incorporated, *Committee Hansard*, Brisbane, 7 June 2013, p. 27 (Evidence was provided via sign language interpreter).

88 Ms Catherine Clark, Deaf Australia Inc., *Committee Hansard*, Brisbane, 7 June 2013, p. 27.

89 Ms Marian Arnold, *Submission 168.1*, p. 2.

with mental health issues. We believe this is at the expense of services to students with disabilities.⁹⁰

- 4.102 Global Access Project expressed support for centralised accessibility support rather than via individual institutions, and raised concerns over TAFE's ability to support the '[t]sunami of students presenting with mental health disorders.'⁹¹
- 4.103 Evidence was also received that TAFE is not always responsive to students that have special needs. Deaf Australia, for example, noted that TAFE is not able to provide enough specialist services and equipment to deaf students and, that TAFE teachers can lack training to deal with students that have disabilities.⁹²
- 4.104 It is also important to recognise that, notwithstanding TAFE's prominence in this sphere, private RTOs can and do provide support for students with disabilities. Ms Jennifer Field, Board Member, Australian Council for Private Education and Training (ACPET) provided anecdotal evidence of TAFE not meeting the needs of a young person with special disability requirements. In this instance, a private RTO was able to take over and continue with the person's education with a positive outcome.⁹³
- 4.105 Mr Mel Koumides, Deputy National Chair, ACPET, also provided an example of a private RTO successfully training a student with disabilities, due to TAFE indicating its inability to provide the requisite support:
- We had an autistic student who was effectively told by TAFE that they could no longer support him. So he came in and did a certificate and a diploma with us. It took us a lot longer to go through that, with a lot less funding. He has recently graduated and he is working in his first employment area, website design.⁹⁴
- 4.106 Mr Daryl Neilson, Member, Victorian Executive Committee, ACPET, recounted an instance of a private RTO providing a qualification program aimed at assisting those with continuing mental health issues to build foundation skills:

We run a qualification that is aimed at people with persistent mental health issues ... this program ... is purely aimed at bringing people's communication skills and their self-confidence up to the level where they might be able to attempt the next step,

90 Global Access Project, *Submission 202*, p. 1.

91 Global Access Project, *Submission 202*, p. 1.

92 Deaf Australia, *Submission 47*, pp. 1-10.

93 Ms Jennifer Field, Board Member, ACPET, *Committee Hansard*, Melbourne, 15 April 2014, p. 44.

94 Mr Mel Koumides, Deputy National Chair, ACPET, *Committee Hansard*, Melbourne, 15 April 2014, p. 48.

whether it be employment or education ... The activity that that group of people chose was photography. To start off with, of the nine people, only one of them had ever taken photos before. Now all nine of them, after 12 months, have just participated in a community art show where they exhibited their own photos that they had taken, developed, framed and marketed. We sold over \$700 worth of photos at the art show, which was very exciting. But for Matthew, the chap I was talking to specifically last week, it was the first money he had ever earned in his own right, and he is 52 years old.⁹⁵

Fees as an access issue

4.107 Fees and fee increases as an access issue was raised in evidence to the inquiry and also in responses to the Unions Australia survey.⁹⁶ In its submission TDA noted, in the context of current state/territory VET funding arrangements, that fees have become an important issue for students:

The expectation is that students will be charged the difference between the cost of training and the funding contribution. This drives a cost/pricing mentality for RTOs to only offer programs which are affordable or chargeable often at the expense of quality outcomes. Given the qualification outcome is in theory the same no matter where it is gained, it also drives students to seek the lowest cost provider, or even no cost provider, irrespective of quality.⁹⁷

4.108 The Committee's online survey received comment on the fee issue. Some examples of survey responses are quoted below in Figure 4.4.

95 Mr Daryl Neilson, Member, Victorian Executive Committee, ACPET, *Committee Hansard*, Melbourne, 15 April 2014, p. 43.

96 See, for example, Unions Australia Survey Responses accessible from <http://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/House_of_Representatives/Committees?url=ee/tafe/subs.htm> viewed 24 October 2014; AEU (NSW Branch), *Submission 8*, p. 4; Australian Youth Affairs Coalition, *Submission 57*, p. 8; ACTU, *Submission 58*, pp. 17, 21; and TAFE Community Alliance, *Submission 68*, p. 8.

97 TDA, *Submission 70.2*, p. 2.

Figure 4.4 Committee survey responses: Respondents comments on TAFE fees

Q20. Please comment on what you think the TAFE system can improve.

In 2014 TAFE put my fees up (full paying student) so I have gone down to part-time to finish off the course.

I won't be able to study anymore with TAFE due to increase in fees

It needs to be cheaper for students as the fees have increased a great deal in recent years.

Fees have become unaffordable and made it impossible to retrain in a new area if needed because of prior qual rule.

I would like TAFE to have cheaper fees as I want to take the next step to do a business admin in certificate 3 and IV and hopefully a diploma. The cost of these courses are outrageous.

The present escalation of existing fees will have a huge impact on the future numbers of students who wish to enrol but can no longer afford to do so.

I think that the raising of the fees was the WORST move for TAFE as it marginalises an already marginalised area of society. Please make it more affordable to those who really need it.

The course fees should not be risen at such a high rate .Students will not be able to afford tertiary education.

More funding and cheaper or free courses for low income earners or people on government assistance.

For people on low-incomes (or on Centrelink) such as myself, the introduction of significant fees for TAFE in Victoria is a considerable barrier to entry, even if these fees can be deferred via a government loan. Having already studied an undergraduate degree some years ago the means-testing of government support for TAFE in Victoria makes me ineligible. This does not take into account the complete lack of employability my existing degree affords me (I studied fine art) and my desire to go to TAFE is to gain a practical and highly employable qualification.

Bring back affordability for to those on concession or earning under \$20,000

It needs to be an option for people on welfare or low wages. Fees started to go up after I left the system and I doubt I would have been able to study my course and change our lives if they cost as much as they do now.

Source: Education and Employment Committee online student survey (see Appendix D)

4.109 The Good Shepherd Youth and Family Service recounted an instance of fees constituting a barrier to accessing TAFE:

Arie has been looking for a job for about a year and currently receives Newstart Allowance. Arie would like to enrol in TAFE to become a cabinetmaker however he simply cannot afford the upfront costs. There is a \$700 a down payment for his TAFE course and then about \$400 for textbooks and tools. Arie is not eligible for an Advance Payment from Centrelink, as he is currently paying off an Advance Payment that he took out to cover the costs

associated with looking after his young son. Even if Arie were eligible for an Advance Payment, the maximum amount he could receive would be \$500, which is not enough to cover his TAFE fees and associated costs. For Arie, accessing TAFE is out of reach.⁹⁸

- 4.110 The Good Shepherd Youth and Family Service commented further on how TAFE fees can affect accessibility for those who are disadvantaged:

... we find that our clients who attend TAFE rely heavily on community funding which is sourced through the work of case managers. Without this assistance there would be no pathway available to this vulnerable group. With less community funding available and the increase in TAFE fees, without reforms, accessibility for disadvantaged Australians will decrease. The ability for this cohort being able to move out of poverty is at risk.⁹⁹

Committee comment

- 4.111 It is clear that TAFE has a critical role in the community as a provider of pathways to employment. This role spans a range of different needs and demographics, from those needing foundation skills development or LLN assistance, to mature age students and those coming to TAFE for further practical training after university. It is also important that technical and trade qualifications remain as recognised in the wider community as tertiary qualifications, and that technical and trade careers are valued.
- 4.112 Partnerships and linkages involving TAFE as it undertakes its role as a provider of pathways to employment are key, particularly between TAFE and industry, and are to be encouraged. Any negative impacts of the current state/territory VET funding models on TAFE provision of employment pathways are of concern. It is important, as has been indicated by the Australian Government Department of Industry, that the Australian Government raises this matter with the other jurisdictions for resolution.
- 4.113 TAFE is also instrumental in providing a pathway to tertiary education, and, while the traditional linear path remains, it is evident that the routes students take to further education can vary according to preference and need. As for pathways to employment, partnerships involving TAFE are key, and linkages between TAFEs and universities are to be supported. As for employment pathways, any negative impacts of the current

98 Good Shepherd Youth and Family Service, *Submission 29*, p. 3.

99 Good Shepherd Youth and Family Service, *Submission 29*, p. 5.

state/territory VET funding models on TAFE's provision of pathways to tertiary education and/or higher level studies are of concern. These impacts should be raised by the Australian Government in its discussions with the jurisdictions regarding impacts on pathways to employment.

Recommendation 3

That the Australian Government, in its discussions with the states and territories regarding the impact of current funding arrangements on TAFE provision of pathways to employment, also raise the impact of these arrangements on TAFE provision of pathways to tertiary education and/or higher level studies.

- 4.114 As part of providing pathways to employment and further education, but also in relation to the broader socio-economic context, TAFE performs a highly significant role in the community as a provider of opportunities for those in positions of disadvantage and vulnerability. This crucial role constitutes a particular complexity for TAFE as it operates in the competitive training market, and is considered further in this context in Chapter 5.
- 4.115 The impact of fee increases on student ability to access TAFE is of concern. The VET FEE-HELP scheme is to be supported in principle, as is the current trialling of extended income contingent loans to certain subsidised Certificate IV qualifications and a rigorous Government review of the trial.