

Friday, 11 July 2014

Robert Little

Inquiry Secretary

Standing Committee on Education & Employment

Department of the House of Representatives

Parliament House

Canberra ACT 2600



Dear Robert,

RE: FOLLOW-UP ON HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES HEARING (13 June 2014)

Following our discussion after the Hearing for the House of Representatives inquiry into the role of the Technical and Further Education system and its operation, attached please find three documents:

- a selection of useful reports from the National Centre for Vocational Education Research (NCVER);
- a further submission from our affiliate the State School Teachers Union of Western Australia (SSTU);
- a statement by Aliesje Kolovis providing examples of predatory behaviour by private colleges and TAFEs

UnionsWA, as the Western Australian Branch of the Australian Council of Trade Unions (ACTU), broadly supports the policy positions on Vocational Education and Training arrived at by the 2012 ACTU Congress.

Essentially UnionsWA maintains that public funding for Australia's VET system is a critical enabler of social and economic equity as well as being a significant contributor to meeting the vocational skills needs of the economy.

To that end, we argue that the national pursuit of a 'training market' has resulted in serious underinvestment in training by employers, skills shortages, reduced productivity and competitiveness, and a system in which short term demands are prioritised over longer term strategic needs, and narrow based skills over strong vocational education and training delivering robust generic transferable skills and literacies.

Future VET policies by both Federal and state governments should therefore prioritise

- A public VET system that has adequate levels of guaranteed funding
- A transparent process for the development of the bilateral Commonwealth-State agreements on VET provision
- Public investment in both quality provision and compliance with high standards of training
- The creation and enforcement of a single, high standard of entry of providers into the 'training market'
- Mechanisms to ensure training under an entitlement model is linked to identified industry skill needs and job outcomes.
- Ensuring public authorities have adequate funding and resources to effectively audit and regulate the performance of training providers, and enforce rigorous standards for entry into the market.
- A definition of 'quality' that reflects fitness for purpose and industry standards for the deployment of skills in jobs
- States providing *at least* a second chance at a guaranteed entitlement
- A national workforce development strategy for the VET workforce addressing the level and quality of teaching qualifications in the sector, and the unacceptably high levels of casual employment. This should be developed in partnership with the relevant unions
- Greater regulatory control to ensure all VET is provided by an appropriately qualified and registered workforce.
- A public examination and review of the consequences of full competition on TAFE and VET, including the impact on educational quality of VET, levels of student support and teaching infrastructure

I thank you for the opportunity to comment further on this inquiry.

Yours sincerely

Meredith Hammat
Secretary

Select Bibliography of NCVET and Other Reports on VET

Vocational education and training: the terra incognita of innovation policy (Toner, Phillip; Dalitz, Robert) 2012

... it was argued that one reason for the exclusion of VET from innovation policy was the general absence of innovation metrics that can be used to describe and evaluate its performance in a NIS. Developing such metrics could be a useful tool in improving these linkages. These metrics could include representation of VET in innovation advisory structures; improved measures of the engagement of persons with VET qualifications in R&D; proportion of technology start up companies headed by VET trained personnel and measures of the capacity of VET colleges and teaching staff to keep up to date with the demands of industry for technological upgrading.

(pp.17-18)

http://scienceindex.com/stories/2664285/Vocational_education_and_training_the_terra_incognita_of_innovation_policy.html

The value of completing a VET qualification (Karmel, Tom, Fieger, Peter) 2012

- *The pay-off from completion in terms of employment outcomes is highest, in general, for those not employed before training, irrespective of whether they were unemployed or not in the labour force.*
- *The pay-off from completion in terms of further study is highest for those not employed before training. In addition, the pay-off is higher for those undertaking a certificate I/II (that is, very few of those who drop out from a certificate I/II continue in other accredited training).*
- *The two groups for whom there is a significant pay-off from completion in terms of wages are those undertaking diplomas and above and those who are not employed before training and who are undertaking a certificate III/IV.*

(p.25)

http://www.ncver.edu.au/wps/portal/vetdataportal/restricted/publicationContent!/ut/p/a1/lZDNbslwEISfpQeOkdeJ_3JMqa2DqCpBqxJfkOM4wSiYQFzUx69BvVLavY00u_PtIIXWSHI9dp0O7uB1f9GKbUqcTqUkMH-VkkHJn96WK_meAWboAymkjA9D2KLKm7M9bcatPtImAsNn3TzvTROIKUpu3gH3dnGjq7zV2VcgypsSF63XCSY1XICWo0TYTFNMIpTiiltIWcRpYoocGMK-BNptEyfC0n4lu4QkUI5e5Qznr9ANP8YfomolgO_GSlpWv3zqfk96vi12x2PqogtH3ywXwGt79Y87Pdi1y7YUkBG--7hGx9cX9U!/dl5/d5/L2dBISEvZ0FBIS9nQSEh/

Shaken not stirred? The development of one tertiary education sector in Australia (Fredman, Nick, Arkoudis, Sophie, Moodie, Gavin, Bexley, Emmaline, Wheelahan, Leesa) 2012

A key conclusion from the project is therefore that one tertiary education sector is emerging and it is broader and much more differentiated, encompassing, as it does, different types of institutions. However, it is also hierarchical and stratified, such that private providers and TAFE institutes position their institutions and programs by their relationship to universities.

(p.33)

http://www.ncver.edu.au/wps/portal/vetdataportal/restricted/publicationContent!/ut/p/a1/IZBLb8IwEIR_Sw8cl6-DH-GYgloHUVWCvIW-IL8SJIIJxEX9-TWoV0q7t5Fmd74dJNEayaDOvIXRH4LqLlqyTYXzqRAE5q9CMKj409tyJd7HgBn6QBJJE2Ift6gO5uxOm2GrTs6OoP_UnTfXS8MickLh4u1V66wbfBuuyiniLass1popOMmgwz0hemEw3jGfagsYNpeCwSih1QoEbU8KfSJNI-lwKwhdphxQ5VLNHMeOTF0jmH8MvEXVi4DdDBEWrfz41v0edvva741GWqeVDiO4rovXdmv9vtg1C7YsYey79uEbG0bRMQ!!/dI5/d5/L2dBISEvZ0FBIS9nQSEh/

Skilled migrant women in regional Australia: promoting social inclusion through vocational education and training (Beale, Denise, Faine, Miriam, Webb, Susan) 2013

VET institutions could work more effectively to provide learning opportunities and other forms of support, not only to skilled migrants, but also to organisations seeking to work in more culturally diverse ways and to become learning organisations that learn from their employees.

(p.45)

http://www.ncver.edu.au/wps/portal/vetdataportal/restricted/publicationContent!/ut/p/a1/IZDBbslwEES_pQeO0W5ixw7HFNQ6iKoStCrxBa0TE4yCCSRF_fwa1Cul3dtIs7tvBjSsQHs6u4YGd_DUXrQW6yJOJkpxnL0qJbCQT2-LpXpnGAv4AA268kM3bKH01dme1v2WTrYeYfdpWlddL_UjTETKlt6OGlvb3jX-gjpXQ0mmJsmYiMwYtCsjMDJEQbi44RuUknETUMqAgjcmxz-RBsvkOVdczsMOzxIs9qKscvGMw_hl9eIIFB3nyiUlj-M9TsHnVI7XbHo85Dywc_2K8BVndr7vb7bLeZi0WGLG2bh2_Bt_WR/dI5/d5/L2dBISEvZ0FBIS9nQSEh/

Students and courses 2013 (NCVER Statistical Report) 2014

There were 1.88 million students enrolled in the publicly funded vocational education and training (VET) system in 2013.

In 2013, compared with 2012:

- *Student numbers decreased by 3.4%.*
- *Subject enrolments decreased by 3.9%.*
- *Hours of delivery and full-year training equivalents (FYTEs) decreased by 2.7%.*

- *Indigenous students decreased by 4.2%.*
- *Students with a disability increased by 1.9%.*
- *Students from non-English speaking backgrounds increased by 5.2%.*
- *Government-funded students decreased by 3.9%.*
- *Domestic fee-for-service students decreased by 1.2%.*
- *International full fee-paying students decreased by 1.7%*

http://www.ncver.edu.au/wps/portal/vetdataportal/restricted/publicationContent!/ut/p/a1/IVDLbslwEPyWHjhGu3Gc2DmmonZBVJWgVRNfkGs7wSiYQFLUz69BvQLt3kaa2XmAqkVyfXqtHtverOWGbrMiZTISjOX4XlsGRPb8uVeE8wzuADJEjtx37cQO31yR7Xw0YdrZlg_XZOX35NEyQMIpnbq9aa-zgWn9B2hmo86ThjWp0xLlJlqptHClieISKqCRPiW6Ctol6RMERv-CfkgbK9LkQIC2ChnKC5exRzFj-goH8S7hhUYcM7KqJSGH1z1Lze6lDa7c9HGQRvt770X6PUN2dud_t-LZZZEuOSdq1Dz9aUE6u/dl5/d5/L2dBISEvZ0FBIS9nQSEh/

Disadvantaged learners and VET to higher education transitions (Griffin, Tabatha) 2014

There appears to be a more pronounced focus on helping students to transition from VET to higher education than from lower-level to higher-level VET qualifications. The limiting factor in this, however, is that disadvantaged learners are concentrated in lower-level qualifications. Given this, an argument could be made for putting supports into place that encourage and enable students in lower-level VET qualifications to work their way up to higher-level VET. These higher-level VET qualifications are more likely to lead to employment outcomes or transition to higher education. But it needs to be acknowledged that this is a long road for many.

(pp.18-9)

http://www.ncver.edu.au/wps/portal/vetdataportal/restricted/publicationContent!/ut/p/a1/IZDNbslwEISfpQeO0a4T_6THFFQcBKoErUp8Qa7jBKNGAnFRH78G9Upp9zbS7M63AwRwoLw-u1YHd_C6u2jFNyVJx1JSnL1lybEUz6_LIXzLkHB4BwXK-NCHLVTenO1pM2z1ydYj7D8_Omeul4YRpoLkF2-vW1vbwbX-goyroWpqlRpBeGKZyRKK2iSaIU0s1xllRlBiWUSplgremAL_RBot42khqZjHHZqnWE6e5EQ8LjCafwy_RFSRQdwMkQxW_3xqdo86fu12x6MqYssHH-xXgPXdmvv9Pt81c77MMWNd-_ANn9rORg!//dl5/d5/L2dBISEvZ0FBIS9nQSEh/

Entry to vocations: strengthening VET in Schools (Clarke, Kira) 2014

Figure 2 presents findings from the online survey of system and TAFE/registered training organisations takeholders. Respondents were asked to assess the extent to which VET in Schools provides students with an ‘opportunity to learn in real industry environments’ and a ‘strong understanding of occupational pathways within their industry area’. In both cases, less than a third of TAFE/registered training organisation respondents agreed that the current approaches to VET in Schools were ‘very effective’. System-level respondents viewed the current systems in a slightly more positive light, but there is clearly considerable room for improvement.

(p.27)

http://www.ncver.edu.au/wps/portal/vetdataportal/restricted/publicationContent!/ut/p/a1/lZDNbslwEISfpQeO0W4Sx06OKah1EAgJWpX4gvxHMAomkBT18WtQr5R2byPN7n4zIGANwsuLa-TgjI62Vy3opoqTMecEpwvOKVbs5W254u8pxhQ-QIDQfuiGHdReX-x50-k2ZoRdp-qdfp2qR9hQII-9Xayscb2rvE3pZ2BmlCtisKmEYmLLCJoVKSYSYLMrN6m1Eila0odUPDOIpgn0mAZv5acsFnYIXmC1eSZT1gxx2D-Mfzyog4M7O4TnsHqn6Gmj6hDarc_nUQZWj76wX4NsH5Yc3c45PvtjC5zTLO2efoGBiBXag!!/dl5/d5/L2dBISEvZ0FBIS9nQSEh/

Barriers and facilitators affecting course completions by apprentices and trainees with disabilities

(Cocks, Errol, Thoresen, Stian H) 2013

Similar proportions of apprentices and trainees in the disability and comparison groups reported barriers related to training and education. However, more participants among the graduates with disabilities reported support from registered training organisations, particularly from lecturers, tutors, disability liaison officers, and fellow students at TAFE as facilitating their course completions.

(p.33)

http://www.ncver.edu.au/wps/portal/vetdataportal/restricted/publicationContent!/ut/p/a1/pZNdb4lwFib_il542bTUUuglfhbxY5EtE25MKUUXiiholv36VWaWaSlzWa96kuc073nPWxjCBQwzcU5Xokz3mdhe6pAuXQN3OSdoNOOcltcaVM59_tZGBoXvMlShzMq8XMMgk2d1XBZrcVRxC-WnaJvK6qWihbDJrAubi5WKVZGusqgSaQwDLBlqMYkAEIdIAxGAJsHEcgYiqOFI2jTG1tZRAS0EPjoNuldrDTg-509nUZr42EKLX_hc-pLhzAfgEacCfDyZ9v41s63_9GniqvwZ4xmmNdlcOJ9ZYz0xsjNzeh_csdTfiXYE6iyqgzoNaQIsM9BTWwymGFPq_1mpSJhhWwE5iCUjCTBApQkAcUUoTkEpJBw94Vu6ORxCR-dsn5Xqo4SL76BVZVa2UFW2UJrpWK3Ln0sjLYqTahCm04fbFroXf-cxN2_EP5PJ0V9Leyy-5pfxku529StzPG9N5P5IOQRiZ-flz7DjN5heVavEs/dl5/d5/L2dBISEvZ0FBIS9nQSEh/

Employers' use and views of the VET system 2013

Employers' use of the VET system has decreased. Between 2011 and 2013, the proportion of employers:

- *using the VET system decreased 4.2 percentage points to 51.9%*
- *with jobs requiring vocational qualifications decreased 3.1 percentage points to 33.3%*
- *with apprentices and trainees decreased 3.5 percentage points to 26.9%*
- *using nationally recognised training (which was not part of an apprenticeship or traineeship) decreased 3.7 percentage points to 20.0%.*

http://www.ncver.edu.au/wps/portal/vetdataportal/restricted/publicationContent!/ut/p/a1/IZDNbslwEISfpQeOkdfGfxxTUOsgEBK0KvEFmcQORsEE4qI-fg3qldLubaTZnW8HabRGOpiLb0z0x2Daq9Z8U2AyVorCdKEUh0K8vC1X6n0ImKMPpJGuQuziDpWhutjzpt-Zs60H0H1uW1_dLvUDIFywq7czja1t75twU5WvUclrII4JyISk24waMsqk4yazmDnBHCCe44RSJhS4Mzn8iTRZxq-5omKWdqgkUEye1USM5pDMP4ZflsrEIO6GKIZW_3xq-og6fe33p5POU8vHEO1XROuHNXeHg9y7GV9KGLK2efoGLtxJHQ!!/dI5/d5/L2dBISEvZ0FBIS9nQSEh/

Second-chance vocational education and training (Karmel, Tom, Woods, Davinia) 2008

The findings suggest that:

- *The reputation of the VET sector as the 'second chance' sector is fully justified.*
- *The percentage of VET students who can be characterised as second chance is very substantial—second-chance students represented 41% of the VET student population in 2004.*
- *The percentage of the eligible second-chance population who undertakes VET is also very substantial—around 50% of early school leavers and the vast majority of eligible adults over the age of 25 years participates in second-chance VET.*

http://www.ncver.edu.au/wps/portal/vetdataportal/restricted/publicationContent!/ut/p/a1/IZDNbslwEISfpQeO0W4S_WYgloHUVWCViW-IMcxwSiYQFzUx69BvQLt3kaa3fl2QMESINcn1-rg9I53Z63YqkyzsZQEep29SMiz58_t8IT9yTBl8ggJlfOjDBipvTva4Gjb6aJsR9I9158zl0jDCVOTp2dvr1jZ2cK2_KOMagBpjbG1rniCueUIEZYnOhEkIs5xllhKa5RGlIih4ZQr8E2m0jF8KSfgs7hCRYTI5khP--lrR_Gu4EVFFBn41RFJY_POp6T3q-LXbHg6qiC3vfbDfAZZ3a-53O7FdZ9hcYE679uEH3i7W2g!!/dI5/d5/L2dBISEvZ0FBIS9nQSEh/



House of Representatives

Standing Committee on Education and Training

Inquiry into the role of Technical and Further Education (TAFE) system and its operation

Provided as attachment to the UnionsWA Supplementary Submission.

Submitted by: State School Teachers' Union of Western Australia

8 July 2014 – Authorised by Tony Mullen, General Secretary, SSTUWA.

Supplementary Submission Attachment

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Introduction

The SSTUWA notes the work that the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Education and Training has carried out in terms of its inquiry into the role of Technical and Further Education (TAFE) system and its operation throughout Australia.

Following the appearance of Union at the Committee's hearing in Perth on Friday 13th of July, 2014, via our representative, Ms Ramona Mitussis, we submit this document, as an appendix to the Supplementary Submission made by UnionsWA. This document attempts to provide further information as called for during the hearing. We hope this submission will be considered in terms of the Committee's final deliberations as it constructs the final report. We understand that the Committee is open to recommendations that may apply to Federal as well as State Governments.

Section 1 – Clear articulation of role and importance of public TAFE sector

It is essential that the Committee clearly articulates, through the inquiry report and recommendations, the vital role and importance of TAFE, that is, of the publically owned and operated TAFE sector.

All Australian governments, federal and state, need to promote TAFE as an integral part of public education in Australia of equal value and importance to the primary / secondary sector and to the University sector.

Recommendation: That the Australian Government and all those with an interest and a stake in the performance of the TAFE system to take all necessary action required to protect and support the capacity of TAFE to continue its historic role in providing high quality vocational education and training to Australians of all ages and backgrounds.

TAFE is a vital educational institution

The Committee should also clearly articulate that TAFE plays a key role in workforce development and planning, is responsive to individual and industry demand, allowing governments to respond to the projected needs of the economy and society and to plan for the short, medium and long term. TAFE works in partnership with large and small business to assist them in workforce planning and development and meeting the need for innovation and technological development.

Recommendation: To ensure that TAFE continues to meet the growing and changing needs of industry and the economy more broadly:

- TAFE Institutes must receive guaranteed funding as educational institutions;
- TAFE institutes should be funded to develop new and innovative training solutions to meet the needs of future students, changing technologies and industry innovation;
- Uncapped, 'demand' driven funding mechanisms will not allow government to respond to the projected needs of the economy and society. The system requires a planned model that ensures the needs of industry and community are met;
- Student support services, counselling (career and personal), and disability support, libraries and other support services must be funded and well resourced.

TAFE plays a key role in community building

The Committee should also acknowledge the key role that TAFE plays in community building both economically and socially — most obviously in regional areas, but also in metropolitan areas. TAFE promotes social cohesion and economic development.

TAFE Colleges need to be funded to provide the service needed to support communities even when these communities are small and in regional, isolated or remote areas. Government needs to understand that it will cost more to provide quality further education and training in these circumstances but that the service TAFE provides to such communities is vital to the building of their local economies and supporting their social needs.

Recommendation: To ensure that both economic and social community building continues there should be:

- No increases to student fees and charges
- No course closures
- No campus closures
- Appropriate funding to support TAFE services to regional, remote and isolated communities.

TAFE plays a key role in second chance education

TAFE plays a key role in second chance education supporting individuals to enable them to access employment for the first time, to build pathways into further and higher education, to return to the workforce after raising families and to transition into other vocations when structural adjustment in the economy results in unemployment.

Recommendation: To ensure that TAFE continues to play a key role in second chance education there should be:

- Access to government subsidised qualifications over an individual's lifetime;
- No restriction on an individual's capacity to access government subsidised training.

TAFE nurtures vocations

TAFE plays a key role in building the capacity of vocational education teachers and developing innovative pedagogy and a high skilled teaching and administrative

workforce. TAFE nurtures vocations, building vocational and academic knowledge, building research capacity in a public system that allows the benefits to be accessed by all.

Recommendation: To ensure that TAFE continues to play a key role in the vocational and academic knowledge base there should be:

- Adequate funding and support for research and professional development in TAFE;
- Adequate funding and support for initial and specialist vocational teaching qualifications;
- Access to professional development in specialist industry area, and support for return to industry programs;
- Decent working conditions, including security of employment.

Section 2 -Need to increase funding

There is clear evidence that State and Federal Governments have not maintained or increased funding to TAFE in real terms for many years. There is also evidence that some of the funding that has flowed from the Federal Government has been offset by a reduction in funding by the states.

Recommendation: That the Federal Government properly scrutinise how funding flows to State Governments to ensure that any Federal funding is contingent on state governments developing and implementing strategies to enable public providers to operate effectively and grow in the current environment of greater competition and contested funding. Ultimately if TAFE is to be saved in some states the Federal Government must put in place requirements on State governments to halt if not pull back the privatisation of the sector.

Actual delivery of 'Student Curriculum Hours' must be examined in both face-to-face and flexible, on-line and blended delivery.

All registered training organisations in Western Australia are currently funded, wholly or largely, based on a dollar value cost for each hour of training delivered. Despite increased costs associated with service delivery and inflation, Colleges are continually pushed to reduce the dollar value assigned to each Student Curriculum Hour. One of the ways of doing this is by reducing the number of contact hours a student has in the class, laboratory or workshop or by reducing the number of teaching hours assigned to a lecturer to support students through flexible, on-line and blended delivery modes.

The providers and the Department of Training and Workforce Development have long argued that these 'student curriculum hours' are nominal – meaning that providers can decide how many of these hours will actually be delivered.

This 'nominal' notion has led to many private training providers offering courses with almost no actual contact hours with students and yet are paid for the full nominal amount by the state government.

- Student expectations of quick and easy, low attendance, fast tracked, online and short duration courses is now widespread leaving State Training Providers (TAFE Colleges) with little option but to look at cutting course duration and hours of delivery in order to still be able to attract students.
- The 'market driven' system has led to courses delivered in hours whereas the local TAFE College would deliver the same qualification in say, for example, 6 –

12 months. The current regulatory system does not deal with this issue – there is nothing that prohibits a provider from offering a course in a matter of days or weeks.

- Whilst flexible, on-line and blended delivery options can be of great advantage to certain groups of students this form of support is being undermined by poor quality, cheap to run, on-line courses of little if any educational value.
- Training packages overwhelmingly require the practical demonstration of skills which, in an extremely large range of courses and units, is not possible to be done effectively, sufficiently, verifiably or reliably in on-line learning environments.

And yet, of importance is the Western Australian Government's own definition of nominal hours, that being, **the number of hours in which an average student could reasonably be expected to complete the unit**, as prescribed in the Vocational Education and Training (Colleges) Regulations 1996, which states:

3AA. Nominal hours

- (1) *The nominal hours for a unit of a course means —*
 - (a) *for a unit of a course accredited by the Council — the number of hours set out in the application to have the course accredited under section 58C of the Act as being the number of hours in which an average student could reasonably be expected to complete the unit; or*
 - (b) *for a listed unit of competency that forms part of a listed training package, as referred to in the Vocational Education and Training (General) Regulations 2009 regulation 4 — the number of hours approved by the Minister as being the number of hours in which an average student could reasonably be expected to complete the unit; or*
 - (c) *for a unit of a course accredited under a corresponding law — the number of hours set out in the application to have the course accredited under the corresponding law as being the number of hours in which an average student could reasonably be expected to complete the unit.*
- (2) *The chief executive must give public notice of the nominal hours for each unit, in such manner and at such times as the chief executive decides is appropriate, which may include on a website approved by the chief executive.*

[Regulation 3AA inserted in Gazette 17 Dec 2013 p. 6256-7.]

Recommendation: Training providers should only be able to claim money from Federal or State Governments for actual hours delivered to the student.

Recommendation: Federal and State Governments need to closely examine the actual hours of delivery for each course, the course duration (as in number of weeks, months etc) and time spent with students undertaking training and further education in face-to-face delivery and in modes other than face to face delivery.

Recommendation: The Federal Government and State Governments need to conduct a complete and rigorous examination of the real costs of the provision of high quality vocational education, including skills for work, adult literacy and numeracy and crucial supporting knowledge and theory.

What could extra funding be used for?

In June of 2013 the SSTUWA (the Union representing lecturing or academic staff at TAFE Colleges) and the CPSU / CSA (the Union representing staff employed under the GOSAC Award in administrative positions) held a joint workshop for campus based Union representatives. The group was made up of representatives from campuses in the very north of WA to campuses in the very south and included new employees and experienced employees and a range of lecturers from diverse industry backgrounds and community experiences.

We asked the participants what they thought their College should do if it received \$1,000,000 from the Government. Their responses are all of importance and clearly demonstrate that investing in one area of concern can have benefits for all those involved.

Student centred ideas for using the money included:

- Affordable heavily subsidised TAFE places with low fee caps
- Enhanced and mixed learning spaces including:
 - more and modern equipment
 - better infrastructure
 - cutting edge computer and technological facilities in classrooms, resource centres and libraries including open access computer areas
 - better on-line administrative and educational facilities and materials

- Student consultation, common areas and better support services including:
 - on-site child care
 - career and personal counselling
 - building the capacity of students to have a say in the decisions that colleges make via student representational structures instead of the current focus where only industry involvement is facilitated
- More face to face contact time with lecturing staff for each unit of study.

Industry centred ideas for using the money included:

- Provision or supply of work ready students with:
 - some practical skills to be able to be immediately applied in the workplace
 - interpersonal and other 'soft skills'
 - other well taught basic skills
 - higher levels of literacy and numeracy
- Development of courses to meet specific industry needs
- Highly sophisticated technical learning environments and quality learning resources and experiences
- Highly trained teachers with contemporary industry skills and knowledge and greater access to those teachers
- Capacity for students to access affordable courses at all AQF levels at different stages of their life as the needs of industry grow and change
- Better support services for students at the college including well-funded resource centres / libraries and on site personal and career counselling services to assist students to make appropriate course selections, complete training and be able to cope within a new working environment.

Local community centred ideas for using the money included:

- Reduced or no fees or very low fee caps
- TAFE as a community hub with community involvement
- Courses that meet local community need, courses that will develop local industries and economies not just work ready programs for specific industries including:
 - Local provision of technical and further education without having to travel large distances or to the metropolitan area
 - creative industry courses and the acknowledgement that these play an important part in developing local economies
 - Increased pathway, access and equity courses
 - Increased access to courses that keep community members engaged in learning throughout their lives and no matter what their circumstances
 - Affordable courses at all AQF levels, from Certificate I to Advanced Diplomas

- Greater access to part time courses, night courses and special interest short courses
- Greater access to student accommodation
- Qualified teaching staff and more contact time with teachers in all modes of delivery
- Support services for students including:
 - On site career guidance counsellors
 - personal counselling by qualified psychologists
 - Enhanced career guidance and assistance with course selection provided by TAFE staff that understand the TAFE system, for high school students specifically.

Academic needs and responsibilities centred ideas for using the money included:

- More support for face-to-face classes where students are able to interact with each other and develop a range of necessary social skills to equip them for the work environment and greater number of hours of contact with students
- Investment in learning environments through:
 - Better and more up-to-date equipment, computer facilities particularly in the classrooms and resources centres / libraries
 - Rooms dedicated to media technologies so that lecturers can develop resources and communicate with students on line
 - Quality contemporary simulated environments, such as modern office practice firms
 - Resourcing of the development of learning materials for all modes of delivery
 - Resourcing of the development of new courses to better meet the needs of students, industry and local communities
- Professional development in teaching and vocations (industry) areas including:
 - provision for regular return to industry
 - Access to industry related professional development
 - Access study leave and assistance with fees for the attainment of teaching qualifications
 - More opportunities for collaboration with a college and within the study area across colleges
- More permanent positions as permanent and stably employed staff are better placed to develop relationships with industry and local communities
- Reintroduction of ability to deliver lower level courses and a fee structure that supports students doing lower level courses
- Sophisticated document templates to simplify compliance documentation and more reliable and flexible database systems for, for example, timetabling, and more administrative staff dedicated to supporting lecturers and students directly.

Administrative and support services centred ideas for using the money included:

- Providing more support for students and lecturers
- Staff development and professional development
- User friendly websites and on-line administrative processes whilst still supporting vital face-to-face services
- More permanent positions and better career structure.

Recommendation: Additional and desperately needed funding into TAFE could provide for not just an increase in affordable training places but a whole range of other initiatives that would greatly enhance the learning experience and facilitate quality student completions, better help to meet the needs of industry and local communities and provide for a stably employed workforce with greater access to professional development.

Recommendation: That Federal and State Governments need to identify and guarantee the level of funding required for the public TAFE system, based on a funding model that supports a strong and increased funding base for capital works, maintenance, infrastructure, and equipment. This funding model must properly recognise the important role of TAFE as the public provider in providing access to training and re-training in areas of high and low demand, and, particularly, in rural and remote areas and in support of improved access and participation for disadvantaged learners.

Recommendation: That State Governments, including the Western Australian State Government, need to fully and immediately reverse the funding cuts to TAFE Colleges (STP's).

Recommendation: That State Governments, in conjunction with TAFE Colleges (STP's) and the relevant Unions, need to develop a state workforce development strategy for the TAFE workforce that addresses the level and quality of teaching qualifications in the sector, and the unacceptably high levels of casual employment, and which specifically includes the allocation of adequate resources to enable TAFE teachers and institutes to develop and maintain close liaison with industry and local communities to assist them to meet their vocational skill needs.

Recommendation: The SSTUWA calls on Federal and State Governments to:

- Immediately end funding cuts to TAFE colleges across the country;
- Fully restore funding removed from the TAFE system; and
- Publicly recognise and affirm of the important role of TAFE as the public provider in providing access to training and re-training in areas of high and low demand, and, particularly, in rural and remote areas and in support of improved access and participation for disadvantaged learners.

Section 3 – Privatisation of the sector has not improved quality of service provision to students, industry or community.

We quote the recently released Independent Review of the Vocational Education and Training Sector in Western Australia by Professor Margaret Seares:

“With regard to moving to a fully competitive model, no submissions advocated such an approach. Neither is there any compelling literature that suggests that this would be in the best interests of the students, the employers, or the State (page 18).”

There are now countless stories and complaints about the poor quality of service and education provided by private providers. Further, in a government imposed fiscally restrictive environment, the capacity to deliver quality training and further education and make a profit is absurd. Industry, community and students are now uncertain about the quality of VET delivery in Australia – the brand has largely been trashed by a range of poor, ‘shonky’ and in some cases ‘fly by night’ providers. These providers are there to take advantage of a now fragile but rapidly privatised sector still funded by government money with ideologically driven state governments seemingly unconcerned about such rapid and dramatic changes.

Such rapid change and the moving in of large multinational private VET providers is also causing concern for some of the more genuine private providers already operating in the sector.

It is our strongly held position that TAFE Colleges (State Training Providers) are best placed to deliver quality training to students, industry and community. These TAFE Colleges are accountable to Government, and ultimately to Australian citizens, in a way that private, particularly for-profit providers, are not.

Any shortcomings in TAFE Colleges are easily addressed given they are the responsibility of Government.

The risk of not halting the privatisation of the sector and in many states not remedying the damage already done - is immense. The risk is immense in terms of future skill development of individuals and communities, in terms of meeting the growing and increasingly more complex range of skills required by our developing economy and in terms of engaging vast numbers of individuals from all age groups, backgrounds and all regions in education at critical periods throughout their life.

We forget that TAFE has in fact served us well for generations and is ideally placed to continue to do so.

Recommendation: State and territory governments demonstrate their support for TAFE by requiring that the national entitlement to a guaranteed training place is offered only at TAFE.

Recommendation: The Federal Government needs to conduct a proper public examination and review of the consequences of the current levels of competition and contestable funding on TAFE and VET, including the impact on educational quality of vocational education, levels of student support and teaching infrastructure, and a reassessment of the case and justification for a competitive training market.

Recommendation: Ensuring the Australian Skills Quality Authority (ASQA) has the resources it needs to effectively audit and regulate the performance of training providers, and enforce rigorous standards for entry into the 'market'. This may require an injection of funding in the budget.

Recommendation: ASQA needs to develop a single, high standard of entry for providers into the training 'market' and rigorous enforcement of those standards.

Conclusion

We urge the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Education and Training to take the opportunity to save TAFE in Australia. The situation is so serious in many states that unless there is urgent intervention TAFE will be lost to current and future generations.

In the document we have attempted to provide some practical solutions in the form of recommendations and other text to help and inform the discussions of the committee in the lead up to the writing of the final report.

If at any stage the committee wishes to seek further information from the STTUWA, for further elaboration or explanation of anything contained within this document, we urge to committee to make contact with us.

Supplementary Submission to House of Representatives Enquiry to Technical and Further Education in Australia

By Aliesje Kolovis
Private Citizen

During the committee hearing on Friday 13th June 2014, I spoke about my experience in TAFE, the wonderful opportunities affordable education has provided me with and the struggles I have been facing in linking my clients in with education. I was requested to submit this supplementary submission around the predatory behaviours of private colleges and TAFEs.

Example 1.

This client who is a vulnerable and at risk young mum, came to me approximately 2 months ago, excited as she was enrolling into a Diploma of Community Services course with an online provider. When I explored this, she informed me that she met a man in public, who advised her that he was an employee of a college (organisation name is currently unknown) and he could enroll her into a Diploma of Community Services for \$13 000 and she would also be given a laptop/tablet. I immediately advised her against this, and provided her with education around alternative, cheaper options.

Not only is this an outrageous cost for a Diploma, but my client has had no prior experience or education in Community Services. I believe the lack of regulation is not only deceiving to potential students, but it will have a negative impact on the quality of staff employed in the industry. State TAFEs (to my awareness) all possess entry requirements to Diploma courses, generally a minimum Certificate IV or equivalent in experience.

Example 2.

An at risk young mum was researching education options recently through Open Universities. She was attempting to enroll into a \$10 000 Diploma in counselling. Prior to me providing information, this client did not know that \$10 000 for a Diploma was an unreasonable amount, and that she could do the same course for approximately \$2500 at State TAFEs.

Example 3.

Kirana training provide Diploma in Child care for \$15 000. Prior to my commencement, existing staff were unaware that State TAFEs provided this course (and many others) at much lower costs. Kirana were providing tailored information workshops to the young, vulnerable and at risk mothers advertising their courses accompanied by VET FEE HELP payment options, highlighting the conditions of repayment (only required once earning over a certain wage) with full awareness of their financial difficulties.

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.

The costs of Certificate III, IV and Diplomas are now almost, if not equivalent to, that of a University degree yet equal employment prospects do not accompany them. I believe this to be extremely predatory, dishonest and unjust. Without affordable, regulated tertiary education, many people in the community will not have the option to improve their lives as well as their families.