

Submission to the Senate Inquiry into Technical and Further Education
Tuesday, March 04, 2014

In 2011 I was managing a range of student support provisions including the careers & employment services at Chisholm institute of TAFE, at the time BlueScope Steel announced 200 redundancies at their Hastings plant.

At that time the formal government response included collaborating with and relying upon Chisholm to ensure affected workers received access to skills assessment, career advice and counselling, and training grants to enter re-skilling programs. Each of these provisions to the effected workers was made available through the existing TAFE services, and by the existing TAFE staff. The BlueScope workers were often quite overwhelmed by the level of professionalism and dedication made available to them during what was for most a very challenging period.

TAFEs have always operated as more than simply 'training providers', every day delivering a range of valuable services to support and enhance the communities within which they operate. They work with industry partners to ensure emerging workers acquire skills to meet current and future industry demand. They work with community organisations, equity and cultural groups to ensure pathways into training are known, accessed and effective. They collaborate to assist local businesses to become more knowledgeable and productive, they partner with schools and universities to broaden educational opportunities, and they regularly lead government sponsored initiatives to address community disadvantage and build opportunity in a constructive and considered manner that is reflective of, and embedded within, a local community context.

The TAFE services that were called upon to provide BlueScope workers with the support and advice they needed, were essentially the same services available to any community member, business, or industry partner. In Victoria the Napthine government's cuts to the TAFE sector have specifically targeted the funding and operational capacity TAFEs have traditionally relied upon to maintain this type of service provision, which is known as the TAFE's Community Service Obligation.

In light of the mass redundancies that are occurring across the automotive, manufacturing and processing industries, the Napthine government's dismantling of these critical TAFE services must surely be recognized as shortsighted, damaging and irresponsible. Specifically, this government's decision to discontinue TAFE Community Service Obligation funding must be reversed.

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