



INDEPENDENT REVIEW INTO REGIONAL, RURAL AND REMOTE EDUCATION

TAFE Queensland submission to the
Australian Government Department
of Education and Training

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TAFE Queensland Submission to the Australian Government Department of Education and Training

Independent Review into Regional, Rural and Remote Education

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Purpose

This submission provides TAFE Queensland's response to the Independent Review into Regional, Rural and Remote Education and provides examples of innovative approaches taken by TAFE Queensland to support improved access and achievement of students and their transition to further study, training and employment.

Introduction

TAFE Queensland appreciates the opportunity to contribute to the Independent Review into Regional, Rural and Remote Education and believes that all young people should be provided with the opportunities, resources, support and assistance they need to succeed at school and beyond, whether that be in further education and training or employment.

TAFE Queensland is the State's premier public provider of Vocational Education and Training (VET). With over 130 years of history and through a state-wide network of locations, TAFE Queensland is the most experienced provider of VET in Queensland.

TAFE Queensland employs more than 4,000 teachers and support staff spanning the state's far north, regional centres and the metropolitan area and offers training through a variety of modes including classroom delivery, distance learning, online tuition, workplace training and blended delivery methods combining two or more delivery modes.

TAFE Queensland continues to be the largest provider of VET services in Queensland with more than 122,000 students choosing to study with TAFE Queensland in 2016/17. During this period more than 52,000 qualifications were awarded ranging from statements of attainment to bachelor degrees in over 600 program areas. TAFE Queensland delivers high quality outcomes for students and employers, with:

- Competency completion rates of more than 89%;
- Students that are employed or in further education of more than 85%;
- Student satisfaction of more than 86%; and
- Employer satisfaction of more than 92%.

Students from more than 80 countries choose to study with TAFE Queensland in Australia and abroad due to its international profile, world class standard of training, state-of-the-art facilities and the wide range of programs offered.

TAFE Queensland's is also the largest provider of trade and technician training in the state. Our apprentice and traineeship students learn skills, expertise and technologies that are currently used in the workplace as our teachers are both personally and professionally connected to many specialists and organisations in their industry.

TAFE Queensland operates effectively across 56 campuses to deliver education and training and engage with the local community with a primary focus on servicing the local area in which the network of campuses are located.

TAFE Queensland recommends:

1. That the Australian Government fund the implementation and administration of pre-vocational programs through secondary schools as a key platform for developing work-ready skills and supporting students' journeys through school and beyond.
2. That funding be allocated to assist students in rural and remote locations to attend VET block training courses, which would greatly assist in the uptake of student numbers, and could assist with travel costs and subsidised accommodation.
3. That the Australian Government ensure equitable access for all learners to facilities and services in learning environments; and that reasonable adjustments are made to enable diverse learners to participate on an equal basis.
4. That teaching and administrative staff are adequately trained and informed of their responsibilities to provide learning environments that are responsive to and inclusive of diverse learners.
5. That curriculum development is inclusive of the needs of diverse learners and provides clear pathways to achieving success at senior school, vocational and/or higher education, and to employment.
6. That high school students in regional, rural and remote areas receive more support, by way of Australian Government funding, in preparing them for post-school education, training and work by providing additional opportunities for students to participate in:
 - work experience and volunteer work;
 - adult learning environments;
 - career assessment and career guidance activities in order to assist them in recognising their career goals and their areas of strength.
7. That schools are funded to allow them to implement into their curriculum units of study that increase students' skills and capabilities, in preparing them for post-school education, training and work, in terms of:
 - literacy and numeracy;
 - enterprise skills including digital literacy skills;
 - soft skills and work readiness skills.
8. That funding for the development of digital literacy skills be prioritised for VET students in preparation for their transition to work.
9. That a model, similar to that of the IYMP (Indigenous Youth Mobility Program) be adopted for rural and remote community children, that provides a holistic approach to career planning, education and training plans, accommodation, and professional and personal development.

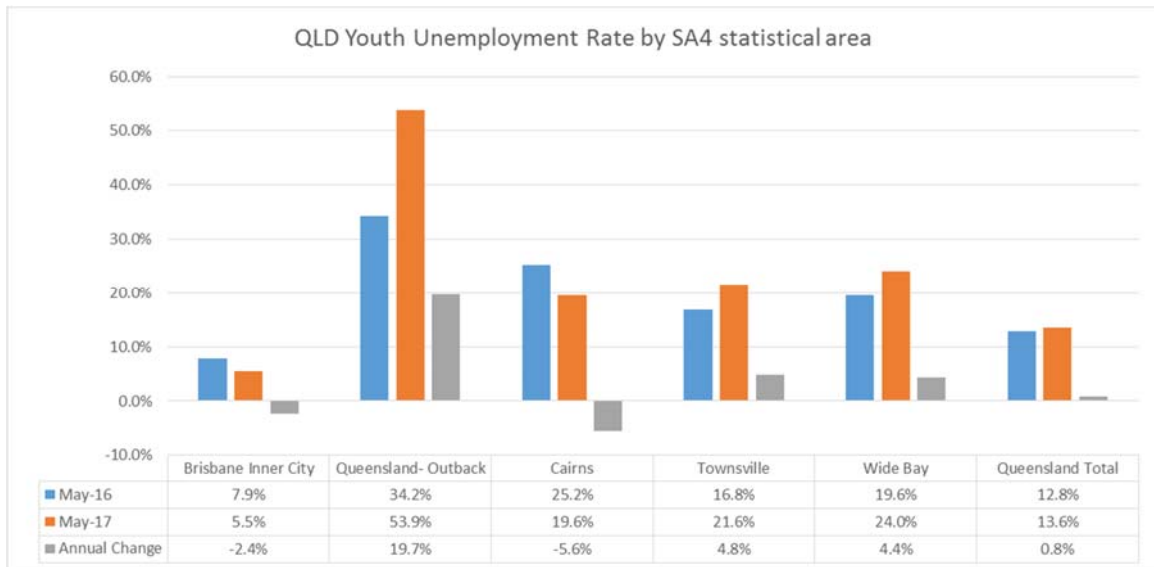
Background

The importance of education and training, and of encouraging young people to complete school and successfully transition to further education, training or work is well known and there is a clear link between educational attainment and improved social and economic outcomes for the individual, society and the economy (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2016).

While the youth of today face a range of challenges, including restricted labour market conditions, there is a growing body of evidence on how responses to these challenges can improve with integrated policy and program structures that support young people in their journeys through senior school and beyond. All stakeholders including governments, industries, training providers, employers and students have a role to play to achieve outcomes for Australia's youth.

While Queensland's youth unemployment rates may be attributed to economic transition, many regions have endured more consistent high unemployment rates. As shown in figure one, the Queensland outback is experiencing severe, entrenched youth unemployment.

Figure 1: Queensland Youth Unemployment Rate



Source: - ABS 6291.0.55.001, released 22 June 2017

TAFE Queensland educators live within these communities and actively work to respond to these problems utilising their knowledge and skills through programs such as the Skilling Queenslanders for Work initiative. Working in partnership with local community organisations and not-for profits, TAFE Queensland has delivered 52 training programs cross a range of industries. TAFE Queensland also responded to over 1,416 job seeker referrals as part of the State Government's Back to Work Regional Employment Package. Based in Hervey Bay, Dalby, Mt Isa, Cairns, Townsville, Rockhampton and Mackay, Jobseeker Officers are providing career and training advice to build regional employment solutions and match jobseekers with employment opportunities.

Many regions across Queensland are dependent on a small number of fluctuating industries. Government investment in education and training, among other areas, is the catalyst that will grow new jobs and drive employment growth leading to new demand for existing local businesses at the same time as providing the career paths, opportunities and quality lifestyles for local citizens.

In this context, TAFE Queensland believes there is significant economic benefit to both the Australian and State Governments in retaining the existing regional capacity for delivering quality education and training through public providers. TAFE Queensland's 56 delivery locations across the state provide geographical and demographic reach for the Queensland Government to efficiently leverage to increase access and opportunity to quality education and training.

The key issue for training delivery in rural and regional Queensland in comparison to metropolitan areas is attracting the required critical mass of students to run a financially viable training program. This means that training delivery to rural, remote and regional communities is characterised by smaller class sizes (due to smaller population bases) at the same time as increased delivery costs.

The challenges that governments and industry face in tackling this issue and its cumulative community effect, need sustained attention from governments, schools, vocational training, and universities as well as continuing financial support and employment programs.

1. Curriculum and assessment

TAFE Queensland is supportive of a national curriculum that better meets the learning needs of regional, rural and remote students, and of a curriculum that can be tailored to suit differing local requirements in regional, rural and remote communities.

The Australian Curriculum can and should be tailored to the needs and interests of students in any context. This is particularly important in regional, rural and remote settings where it can be difficult for students to draw connections between standardised units of work and their local environment. Resourcing is required to allow schools to develop units of work suitable to their students' needs and to develop relevancy to their local communities.

Although the Australian Curriculum provides a broad platform, there is a requirement for a greater focus on units of work, skills, and knowledge that students need to develop as they move through school and into post-school options. Along with subjects from the Australian Curriculum, vocational education and training (VET) forms a key part of senior students' learning in Queensland (as in other states). Completion of VET certificates or diplomas during years 11 and 12 provide credit towards achievement of the Queensland Certificate of Education. More importantly, VET provides industry-relevant training and skills, and job readiness that school subjects do not provide. This enhances student transition to post-school education, training and employment (See Section 9). In 2015 nationwide there were 257,100 'VET in Schools' students, of whom 7.8% were school-based apprentices and trainees (NCVER 2016).

The more limited range of subjects offered in schools resulting from small school size could be improved and supplemented through partnerships with TAFE Queensland for delivery of 'TAFE at School' programs. In regional and remote areas, it would be useful for students to commence some vocational training to prepare them for further study or employment.

Recent TAFE Queensland research undertaken with CSIRO identified communication skills as a key area that was experiencing the highest growth in demand. Queensland's predicted transition towards a service based economy, particularly in the areas of health and community services to service an ageing population are drivers of this demand.

In relation to STEM cluster the areas of highest growth included technology design (generating or adapting equipment and technology to serve user needs), mathematics (using mathematics to solve problems) and computer use (using computers and computer software to program, write software, set up functions, enter data, or process information).

Future skilling needs research continues to identify enterprise skills, sometimes referred to as soft, generic or twenty-first century skills, as transferable skills that enable individuals to engage with a complex working world and which have been found to be a powerful predictor of long-term job success, and include skills such as communications, problem solving, teamwork, research, writing and project management. As many of these enterprise skills are commonly sought across various occupations, the Foundation for Young Australians (FYA) in their report *The New Work Mindset: 7 new job clusters to help young people navigate the new work order*, suggests that educators and policy makers could use the common skills requested by job clusters to help design suitable resources that are core to multiple curricula.

Innovative ways of delivering curriculum

- TAFE Queensland are trialling a mixed delivery model in 2018 for students living in rural and remote communities. Delivery includes online resources, with one day per month via online teaching ('school of the air' model). To ensure students receive the practical component of training, block delivery is then scheduled on school holidays for students to travel and stay in local accommodation services.
- Away-from-Base delivery across regional, rural and remote areas in Queensland where TAFE Queensland students attend residential study blocks, funded by the Australian Government. This includes vocational placement (when able to be timetabled) so that students have an opportunity to work in industry.
- TAFE Queensland have recently invested in a mobile van for delivery of VET in Queensland's South West starting in 2018. Initially based in Toowoomba, the mobile van will service the regions of Toowoomba, Warwick, Ipswich and Dalby in the automotive trades, light vehicle, heavy vehicle and auto electrical programs. The mobile van will be fitted as a contemporary learning space with Wi-Fi technology throughout, teacher and student desk stations and tools and workshop equipment suitable to conduct onsite training workshops. As the mobile business develops, the intention is to service the wider regional community with delivery circuits encompassing Goondiwindi, Roma and Chinchilla. A similar concept is also being considered for the construction trades. The mobile training van will increase opportunities and access to training and education for students in rural areas, better service the apprenticeship market and increase numbers of regional students in the automotive fields.
- Other blended delivery models are in place at many of TAFE Queensland's regions whereby students may study via workbooks, online and via virtual classrooms and face to face.

Thursday Island's Tagai High School previously worked with TAFE Queensland to deliver a Certificate III in Health Studies to students in grades 11 and 12. Of the eight students that participated, six went on to further study in Health.

Recommendation 1: That the Australian Government fund the implementation and administration of pre-vocational programs through secondary schools as a key platform for developing work-ready skills and supporting students journey through school and beyond.

Recommendation 2: That funding be allocated to assist students in rural and remote locations to attend VET block training courses, which would greatly assist in the uptake of student numbers, and could assist with travel costs and subsidised accommodation.

2. Teachers and teaching

TAFE Queensland acknowledges the difficulties faced by teachers in regional, rural and remote schools to be knowledgeable across a broad range of subjects and topics, often across a range of year levels to cover the diverse learning needs of students.

TAFE Queensland are supportive of;

- Improved or new incentives to attract and retain high quality teachers to regional, rural and remote communities.
- Provision of access to high quality and ongoing professional development for teachers who take on teaching positions in regional, rural and remote schools.
- Development of vocational and enterprise skills for students relevant to the community in which students are learning, with the longer term view of post-school opportunities and options.
- Promotion of opportunities presented by regional rural and remote schools (earlier career progression).
- Encourage people in the community to train as teachers/support staff and utilise their understanding of the local needs and setting.
- Expansion of programs such as Teach for Australia – (currently no schools in Queensland).

Additionally, awareness and knowledge of school staff could be improved with education programs for school teachers and staff including general education about the VET sector and VET options for students, and training opportunities in specific industry areas.

This will be exacerbated by advances in automation and technologies that will require new skills that rely upon a solid foundation of literacy and numeracy. As such it is proposed that career guidance officers and other relevant school staff receive professional development in regard to the literacy and numeracy requirements of trade careers and many other occupations affected by automation and emerging technologies.

3. Leaders and leadership

There is benefit in engaging with respected elders and community representatives who can oversee the cultural challenges that exist within remote communities. Making Indigenous culture central to an organisation or program was highlighted as critical to success (Secretariat of National Aboriginal and Islander Child Care [SNAICC], 2012). An evaluation of several community development projects indicates many positive developments of the projects are "in no small part due to the key Indigenous leaders involved" (Burchill, Higgins, Ramsamy, & Taylor, 2006, p.

RATEP (Remote Area Teacher Education Programme) is a community-based teacher education program to enable Indigenous people to become fully qualified teaching assistants and/or registered teachers. This course is a partnership between TAFE Queensland, Queensland Department of Education and Training (DET) state schools and James Cook University. DET employ teacher coordinators in a number of locations, who support students through their course.

58). The Australian Government's Policy for Indigenous Affairs includes its support for initiatives

that empower indigenous communities “to give more authority to local Indigenous leaders with a view to achieving the Closing the Gap targets more quickly (The Coalition, 2013).”

The following are some great examples which the Australian Government could build on and implement on a greater scale, not just primary and secondary schools but also through vocational training providers such as TAFE Queensland, who deliver training in fifty-six locations across Queensland, including in many regional, rural and remote communities:

- In 2015/16 TAFE Queensland delivered VET to 6,331 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders throughout Queensland. Approximately 18% of this delivery occurred in Queensland’s North, where Indigenous enrolments achieved a competency completion rate of 88%. TAFE Queensland’s delivery to indigenous students is enhanced by Indigenous Student Support Officers that work across a number of locations to assist students and their progression.
- The Stronger Smarter Institute (formerly known as the Indigenous Education Leadership Institute) was established in 2005 as an innovative partnership between Education Queensland and the Queensland University of Technology, and seeks to achieve scale in delivering the Stronger Smarter approach to as many Indigenous students as possible by partnering and working with school and community leaders. To date they have partnered with over 500 schools across the nation and through over 1,900 graduates of their leadership program have directly influenced the classrooms and outcomes of over 38,000 Indigenous students.
- The Queensland Government has strategies in place for attracting, retaining and supporting quality teachers and educational leaders to regional, rural and remote communities, including online coaching modules that aim to strengthen pedagogical practice and teacher content knowledge – these provide a valuable resource for localised development and help to bridge the gap in graduate teachers’ knowledge and skills.
- The Rural and Remote Education Access Program (RREAP) funding, administered by the Queensland Government, is paid through school grants payments each year. These funds are available to assist eligible schools and school communities to support and enrich a curriculum that is appropriate for the educational needs of geographically isolated primary and secondary school students.

School principals in regional, rural and remote locations would benefit greatly from being part of a network of principals and local community business leaders that interact on a regular basis to share information and resources, and to provide each other with professional and peer support.

4. School and community

Students need role models and to be supported when they leave home to study. Connection with their family, friends, peers and the community while they are away is paramount. This

could be via family members visiting in-person, online chatting (e.g. Skype, FaceTime), peer group support (online and in-person) and student support officers.

Student achievement should be linked to knowledge of opportunities and what is happening in the wider world. TAFE Queensland's #DiscoverMyFuture program aimed at Year 9 students has assisted in building the aspirations of young people, allowing them to explore post-school options and create awareness of opportunities. This program is currently offered at no cost to schools.

TAFE Queensland has partnered with the Lighthouse Club Australia, a not for profit charity, that offers educational bursaries to young people for construction related educational courses. The recipients come from disadvantaged communities and backgrounds. In 2017 TAFE Queensland and the Lighthouse Club Australia provided bursaries to two construction apprentices at risk of not completing their apprenticeship due to financial hardship.

A review undertaken in July 2016 of this program included feedback from participating high schools who said that the program was meeting the needs of Year 9 students prior to the development of Senior Education and Training (SET) planning in Year 10. Over ninety percent of students who used the program stated that it helped them identify interests and explore career pathways and over eight-eight percent indicated that it helped them understand a variety of pathways.

Areas for improvement that were identified from the review included:

- Students wanted more time to explore their future job options;
- Student wanted the program to be able to let them explore more job types and perhaps more emerging roles (such as games development in light of coding etc. now in schools);
- Those students who identified their future job through the program wanted more detail on the specific job as well as comparisons on pathways to the job (e.g. University vs TAFE and global study options).

TAFE Queensland offers scholarships each year with a focus on skills needs for the economy. These scholarships are open to regional, rural and remote students intending to study with TAFE Queensland post-school and provide financial support for any expenses associated with study and living away from home.

Further promotion of scholarship opportunities post-secondary school should be a priority to raise awareness with students and parents. For example, scholarships for students to leave home and find accommodation could be funded by the philanthropic sector. Many scholarships appear to go to the brightest students, however often the students who are not necessarily top of the class but may be from disadvantaged backgrounds and have a good attitude are the ones who would benefit most from support

5. Information and Communication Technology

Efficient information and communication technology is no longer a luxury in employment and everyday living, but a necessity and this is especially true in all sectors of education and training.

Without fast, reliable internet connections, up-to-date and appropriate software and ICT support, effective teaching and learning can be hindered and ICT skills may lag employer needs.

Some suggestions as to how information and communication can be improved for regional, rural and remote schooling are as follows:

- Combining more online/distance training with face-to-face delivery, particularly for senior students, to improve the range of options and access to knowledge and expertise.
- Strengthen networks of small regional, rural and remote schools – there are benefits for students and teachers from being part of a network. Also wider networks of small schools with metropolitan schools and networks with TAFE Queensland to draw on vocational education and training expertise and infrastructure, may be achieved via online learning modules and remote communications including web conferencing.
- Fast, reliable internet access which delivers bandwidth and download speeds competitive with those in urban areas and under the same pricing structures must be a priority for schools in regional, rural and remote locations.
- Location and the reliance on the National Broadband Network (NBN) Satellite (which has been vastly oversubscribed due to no alternative internet service) means less providers, less competition and higher plan prices with lower speeds and data allowances. This impacts severely on all sectors of rural, regional and remote communities. The NBN rollout across regional, rural and remote communities will:
 - remove a major barrier to business operating out of these communities and their financial viability.
 - attract and/or retain employers who may currently be unable to operate effectively due to technology limitations. The loss of businesses reduces employment opportunities and, in turn, families leave the community often for urban areas where they have greater employment prospects.
- Mobile phone network coverage in rural and regional areas is also a major inhibitor to business operations, for example there are many towns with no coverage whatsoever.
- Due to widely dispersed populations across all rural and remote sites, VET and Higher Education providers cannot support face-to-face programs and so they meet their equity and access obligations through student access to online learning.
- Online learning has higher attrition rates than face-to-face programs and this is further exacerbated by the genuine struggles faced when trying to access learning materials, videos etc. that need reliable bandwidth and data allowances.
- Developers of online resources have to be committed to ensuring that what they create (e.g. videos) are 'as high a quality as possible within bandwidth restrictions'.
- Each community may have a dedicated training room for student access to networked computers, other digital technologies (3D printers, robotics, drones and more) and expert assistance, i.e. tutors/mentors and technical expertise. In essence these may become innovative makerspaces for community use, and may enable pathways for the community into training and education. TAFEs already may hold much of this equipment, which is sometimes donated by employers.

6. Entrepreneurship and schools

Entrepreneurship and innovation will become increasingly important across all sectors of the economy and need to be given greater focus in the education system.

Governments have invested heavily in development of STEM and communication skills to support economic transformation (NISA 2015). Further investment in development of enterprise skills - such as service, negotiation, active listening, critical thinking, problem solving, technology design, financial and digital literacy (FYA 2016) – may help students transition to further study, training or work (as employees or self-employed), as well as increasing innovation within the existing workforce.

Practical applied and action learning in workplaces is an ingrained teaching approach in VET programs, and this approach develops enterprise skills. However it is not necessarily a feature of general education in schools. Delivering VET as part of secondary schooling in regional, rural and remote areas may enable students to develop enterprise skills. These skills can also be gained through work experience or volunteer work. Connecting schools and students with community projects and local employers would enable students to apply and practice the skills they learn through VET and other school activities.

There are benefits in students attending non-school, adult learning settings that prepare them for post-school learning and work readiness, for example, they may develop responsibility for their own behaviour, attendance and progress. Enterprise and soft skills can also be gained through formal and informal school activities, work experience or volunteer work. Students could spend a week or a few days at one of the larger TAFE campuses to explore available courses and experience some of these courses in action. This could be tied into work experience and should encompass a number of different career paths rather than just one.

Additionally, feedback received through TAFE Queensland's industry engagement activities indicates employers feel school leavers are not provided with the necessary employability skills as part of their schooling to be taken on as apprentices/trainees. This includes a lack of understanding of being work ready, for example:

- being punctual;
- their willingness to accept authority and critical feedback;
- use of mobile phones and social media in the workplace.

As such it would be beneficial to introduce programs into schools which would enhance the employability skills of school leavers. Additionally, employers are critical of guidance officers at school being ill-informed about the level of literacy and numeracy required for most trade related occupations (engineering and electro technology in particular). It is proposed that career guidance officers and other relevant school staff receive professional development in regard to the literacy and numeracy requirements.

7. Improving access – enrolments, clusters, distance education, boarding

In North Queensland, some of the TAFE Queensland Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander programs on offer are delivered in intensive residential blocks on campus, for example, the Certificate IV in Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Primary Health Care Indigenous Primary Health Care. The ability to do this can make a significant difference in retention rates for students who do not live close to a campus. However, this can still come at a high cost for some participants who have to find and fund short term accommodation, meal and travel costs often at their own expense. Residential stays can also have a significant impact on the emotional wellbeing of indigenous students, and students from remote communities who struggle with being away from their family and community.

The only way to build a sustainable health workforce is to start investing in local people and empowering them ... in their communities.

Robin Moore, CEO NQPHN.

Strengthened homestay networks in close proximity to educational/campus based facilities could assist to address the financial impost on students and allow TAFE Queensland to provide a broader range of educational outcomes. An alternative to residential stays that may also improve student retention rates in VET programs would be to use a blended model of online or external learning with intensive training blocks where TAFE Queensland trainers travel to central points across regional Queensland.

Queensland Government pays subsidies for eligible apprentices and trainees who are required to travel at least 100km (return) to attend off-the-job training away from their usual place of employment. However the current rate is only \$28 per day, including weekends, for accommodation when required to stay overnight within Queensland. This causes a significant cost impact for apprentices who are already on reduced wages as part of their training contract.

8. Diversity

Local training in rural, regional and remote communities may improve the retention of local youth from their communities. Furthermore this is exacerbated when families cannot afford the current financial costs of supporting a child (remotely), which often leads to the whole family relocating. TAFEs maintain a community obligation to deliver training state-wide and may run at a financial loss in rural and remote communities. Commerciality is important but some campuses cannot be

TAFE Queensland successfully piloted a low bandwidth multimedia 'virtual campus' for delivery of Community Services curriculum (communication skills) to regional and rural students. Students created their own community worker avatar and then used client-avatars to role play with peers in real time case management and counselling sessions in the virtual world. Student feedback includes: "Without that opportunity for this assessment, there would have been a string of "n/a" comments on the third party report that would have been facilitated by a limited experience in my work life at a local community centre" (Smith 2017).

expected to run as a commercially viable enterprise, rather the Government may emphasise their broader socioeconomic benefits.

Regionalisation of the public service increases the need for education and a trained workforce in regions. Government departments need to be encouraged to regionalise their workforce as that brings employment into the community and keeps the need for schools and hospitals and other essential government services. As previously mentioned, addressing the significant ICT issues in rural areas is also at the foundation of building entrepreneurs and employment in rural communities.

TAFE Queensland has a proud history of delivering VET to disadvantaged learners, including students with disability, students from low socio-economic background and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, which often results in a life-changing ability to participate in the labour market. This experience presents an opportunity for government to partner with TAFE Queensland to identify career pathways for disadvantaged and at-risk learners in schools. The critical role that education and training plays in enabling individuals to access opportunities within the economy is widely known, and TAFE Queensland has a strong commitment to providing inclusive learning environments to enable this state-wide.

Recommendation 3: That the Australian Government ensure equitable access for all learners to facilities and services in learning environments; and that reasonable adjustments are made to enable diverse learners to participate on an equal basis.

Recommendation 4: That teaching and administrative staff are adequately trained and informed of their responsibilities to provide learning environments that are responsive to and inclusive of diverse learners.

Recommendation 5: That curriculum development is inclusive of the needs of diverse learners and provides clear pathways to achieving success at senior school, vocational and/or higher education, and to employment.

9. Transitioning beyond school

Career Assessment and Guidance activities

By participating in career assessment and guidance activities through schools, students can increase their skills in articulating their areas of strength and their long term career goals and objectives.

Students need more exposure to the workplace to get a better understanding of what is required in the transition from school to work. There needs to be greater opportunities for work experience, work sampling and work shadowing. Vocational placement might also form an integral part of any TAFE at School program (see below).

Generally speaking, secondary schools may be better informed on the world of work outside of schools. There is a distinct lack of connection between academic subjects and core employability skills. More could be done in schools to contextualise subjects and align them to work related competencies (FYA 2016).

TAFE Queensland recognises opportunities to better inform and support students with their post-school choices through investment in this area. Some examples of TAFE Queensland innovative programs and tools include:

- **TAFE at School (TAS)** programs – providing a wide range of VET programs for school students to undertake while completing their senior years of schooling, with promotion through TAS Guides giving both program information and career pathway information.
- **#DiscoverMyFuture** program – an innovative TAFE Queensland program targeted to Year 9 school students and aligned to components of the Australian Curriculum Work Studies subject. The program educates school students about diverse education, training and career pathways with a focus on individual interests and strengths.
- **Discover My Career** assessment tool – a career assessment tool that assists Year 10 students to analyse their interests and strengths prior to subject selection, and senior education and training planning for senior schooling. The program is part of a longer term support strategy to allow students and parents to consider options for transitioning from school to work and/or further study, covering both university and vocational pathways. It addresses the misperception that TAFE training is a second choice to university.

In addition to this, TAFE Queensland actively engages with high schools through information sessions and maintains a strong presence at careers expos and other events to promote the advantages of a vocational education to high school students and parents.

Increased support from the federal government could strengthen TAFE's role in transitioning students from school to work or self-employment, for example via:

- A national campaign to enhance the reputation of the TAFE sector, its employer partnerships and employment outcomes;
- Supporting innovative career guidance activities in schools;
- Improved employment and career information available to students, school staff, parents and the community; and
- Broader promotion of career and employment opportunities by government and industry.

A number of rural secondary schools have supervised accommodation facilities to support students who do not have access to secondary schooling from their homes e.g. Leichhardt

House at Chinchilla and the Dalby SHS Bunya Campus. These facilities allow students to attend Government schools and depending on their location still go home for weekends rather than boarding schools (where they may only get home on school holidays) and thereby maintain the family dynamic. If accommodation facilities were made available on TAFE Queensland campuses, it may be support students needing to attend in-person study blocks. For example:

- the TAFE Queensland Kingaroy Electrical team has a very strong reputation for their training, and consequently apprentices from Roma, Dalby and Chinchilla prefer to attend in-person so it provides a cheaper accommodation alternative and parent's concerns around safety and security are reduced.
- Queensland Housing provides a small number of houses for families who wish to relocate from remote communities to Cairns in order to undertake a university or TAFE course.
- The Indigenous Youth Mobility Program (IYMP) provides houses for higher education or VET students who relocate to regional centres for study.
- Cape York AFL House provides dorm style accommodation and support for students who relocate to Cairns for school. Queensland Hockey have recently established something similar.

Partnerships between TAFE Queensland and government could offer greater opportunities to create accommodation facilities for cohorts needing to access either Secondary Schooling or TAFE in a secure, supervised home stay facility.

Recommendation 6: That high school students in regional, rural and remote areas receive more support, by way of Australian Government funding, in preparing them for post-school education, training and work by providing additional opportunities for students to participate in:

- work experience and volunteer work;
- adult learning environments;
- career assessment and career guidance activities in order to assist them in recognising their career goals and their areas of strength.

Recommendation 7: That schools are funded to allow them to implement into their curriculum units of study that increase students' skills and capabilities, in preparing them for post-school education, training and work, in terms of:

- literacy and numeracy;
- enterprise skills including digital literacy skills;
- soft skills and work readiness skills.

Recommendation 8: That funding for the development of digital literacy skills be prioritised for VET students in preparation for their transition to work.

Recommendation 9: That a model, similar to that of IYMP (Indigenous Youth Mobility Program), is adopted for rural and remote community children, that provides a holistic approach to career planning, education and training plans, accommodation, and professional and personal development.

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