



2020 | TAFE Directors Australia (TDA) ANNUAL REPORT

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Introduction

This Annual Report reflects the activities and achievements of TAFE Directors Australia (TDA) for the period of 1 January to 31 December 2020 following the decision of the TDA National Board to move to calendar year reporting.

About TAFE Directors Australia (TDA)

TDA is the national peak body, incorporated in 1998, to represent Australia's public Technical and Further Education (TAFE) institutes and the TAFE divisions of dual sector universities.

The national TAFE network of public providers delivers a comprehensive and integrated range of tertiary education and training for individuals, enterprises and communities across Australia. This comprehensive offering ranges from vocational education and training (VET) in schools through to higher education programs at the master's degree level. Nine of the 27 TDA member institutes also provide higher education services alongside VET, while a further six TDA members are TAFE divisions of dual sector universities.

TAFEs operate in [metropolitan, regional, rural and remote locations](#), providing vocational and higher education programs and services on campus, online, in workplaces and in international markets.

In focussing on its students, TAFEs work to fulfill their education and training aspirations and to be equipped for their career ambitions as part of life-long learning and re-skilling.

TDA's core business is to support its members with policy and advocacy for TAFEs' important role in meeting Australia's need for increased productivity, participation and workforce skills. TAFEs also have an important role in serving their communities, especially across regional, rural and remote Australia where other education bodies do not operate.

Our purpose is to:

- Provide services for members to meet current and emerging priorities;
- Position TAFE nationally as the major provider of high-quality skills vocational education and training;
- Advance technical and further education policy to support industry growth in Australia;
- Lead advocacy for improved outcomes for students, both domestically and internationally; and
- Facilitate opportunities for growth, collaboration and partnerships in national and international settings.

About TDA

TDA Vision

TAFE is recognised as a pre-eminent provider of tertiary education in Australia and as a global standard in vocational education and training.

TDA Mission

To champion TAFE institutes by enhancing their reputation and brand, leading policy thinking, influencing decision-makers and advising and supporting TAFEs.

National Board Members in 2020

Mary Faraone | Chair (appointed October 2016; re-appointed September 2019; member since 2015) | CEO | Holmesglen Institute

Leanne Cover | Deputy Chair (appointed January 2019; re-appointed September 2019; member since January 2016) | CEO | Canberra Institute of Technology

Mary Campbell | Board Member (appointed September 2019; member since November 2017) | CEO | TAFE Queensland

David Coltman | Board Member (appointed September 2019; member since May 2019) | CEO | TAFE SA

Jenny Dodd | Board Member (appointed September 2019 to December 2020; member since March 2018) | CEO | TasTAFE

Terry Durant | Board Member (appointed September 2019) | Managing Director | South Metropolitan TAFE, WA

Ashar Ehsan | Board Member (appointed September 2019 to December 2020; member since January 2019) | Pro-Vice Chancellor (VET) | Charles Darwin University NT

Steffen Faurby | Board Member (appointed November 2019) | Managing Director | TAFE NSW

Craig Sloan | Chair of TAFE Chairs Council (appointed September 2019; member since October 2017) | Chair | Canberra Institute of Technology

Executive staff in 2020

Malcolm White | Ex Officio, CEO TDA (November 2014 - September 2015)

| Chair | National Scholarship Foundation (appointed May 2015 to November 2020)

Craig Robertson | CEO TDA | (April 2017 - current)



The Chair's Report

Message from Mary Faraone

TAFEs have successfully continued to engage learners and their communities and industry partners, and I thank all staff in TAFE across the country for their work and commitment.



I am pleased to present the TAFE Directors Australia 2020 Annual Report. It is hard to believe that 2020 is over, in some ways it felt the year progressed slowly and in other ways it appeared to fly by. As you all know, the year was challenging for everyone in Australia and around the world, however it has been rewarding for us in TAFE to be able to continue working throughout the year. Despite the challenges for our learners and our staff in 2020, TAFEs have successfully continued to engage learners and their communities and industry partners, and I thank all staff in TAFE across the country for their work and commitment.

In 2020 TDA published [#The Power of TAFE: The COVID Story](#), which outlined the remarkable COVID-19 transformation within TAFEs during 2020 to adapt teaching and learning to make sure students and businesses could continue with education and skills training. The publication documents the approaches adopted by TAFEs, how their staff adjusted and how students coped. Most importantly, the experience of 2020 lays the foundation for us to consider what is next for vocational education and training and how TAFE can lead the way.

We need to learn from the experience and take forward the lessons from the innovation forced upon teaching and learning. While the core mission of TAFEs remains unchanged, we will not be the same again - 2020 has changed our DNA forever. The experience of 2020 has shown, as a sector, we are adaptable and flexible and points to the changes we need to continue to be at the core of the education and training response to Australia's COVID-19 recovery and future.

At the end of 2020, we saw the departure of two of our board members including Ashar Ehsan from the Northern Territory and Jenny Dodd from Tasmania. On behalf of the Board, I would like to thank them for the commitment and passion they both brought to the Board during the year.

TAFEs are critical to the recovery of the economy in skilling and reskilling the workforce. TDA continues to work for its members in positioning TAFE in the VET sector and advocating on behalf of the sector, to ensure TAFEs and the TAFE brand is front and centre. TAFEs delivered nearly a third of all program enrolments in 2019¹ in Australia and do the heavy lifting with apprenticeship training. To further the #Power of TAFE, the Board and CEO regularly meet with Commonwealth department representatives and federal ministers. TDA continues to be invited onto a number of ministerial and departmental committees.

I thank the CEO and the dedicated team at TDA for their work in 2020, and thank the directors for their time, commitment and continued passion for the sector.

Mary Faraone

Chair, TDA National Board

The CEO's Report

Message from Craig Robertson

As if the state of vocational and higher education in Australia was not already in a state of flux, 2020 caused more disruption and uncertainty. Like all education institutions across Australia, in 2020, TAFEs adapted their business and delivery models to accommodate students who were forced to learn from home, and supported businesses which still needed skilling for their workers. At the end of 2020, TDA published the story of this transition by TAFEs in its publication, [*#The Power of TAFE: The COVID Story*](#). For me, the most amazing outcome from changes made in 2020 was the experimentation by teachers of their approach to teaching and learning including the use of technology. Most feedback has shown that teachers grasped at the chance to use available electronic tools to continue with their teaching and training.

We cannot afford to return to pre-COVID operations. One thing is sure – technology is here to stay and students now have a taste for the flexibility of learning in different modes. However, a strong message from most students is that they still enjoy and appreciate learning at a TAFE with other students, and with the benefit of face-to-face engagement with TAFE professionals. For the benefit of VET in Australia in the future these new ways of engaging in learning need to be considered. The sector also needs to acknowledge that TAFEs were quick to adapt to delivering quality learning outcomes. This is a positive platform for self-assurance, a new priority of the Australian Skills Quality Authority (ASQA). Further autonomy needs to be given to TAFEs to develop programs that better meet the needs of students and employers.

Unfortunately, due to travel restrictions and social distancing during 2020, we were forced to cancel our TDA convention set for Perth in August. With travel disruptions still expected to extend into 2021 we have made more effort to use video conferencing, virtual meetings and webinar platforms to bring TAFEs together.

Front and centre in this effort has been the growth of our policy networks during 2020. Members of the Quality, Regulation and Compliance Network met regularly to talk through and share approaches on adjusting to remote delivery while still maintaining quality and compliance. This network has continued to play a key role in assisting TDA and the Board to advocate for better educational dimensions to be included within VET qualifications.

At the same time, the study of international students was also disrupted, and members of the Australian TAFE International Network were able to share their stories about how they supported international students, particularly when they were not able to access work. The care and support provided to international students from all TAFEs is a legacy that the TAFE network should be very proud of.

The network of TAFEs which deliver higher education were also very active during 2020, particularly in applying for new short form higher education certificates. These TAFEs continue to show the benefit of a comprehensive program of offerings across all VET qualifications and into higher education.

In 2020, the network of TAFEs also established the National Enrolled Nursing Advisory Council (NENAC) to drive reform, particularly of the enrolled nursing qualification. At present there is a risk that the qualification specifications within the training package do not align with the expectations of the profession nor the employing industry. The Council will continue to advocate for reform of the Diploma of Nursing qualification to better align with the professional expectations of enrolled nurses.



TDA continues its strong engagement with stakeholders. Key industry representatives met with the TDA National Board to reflect on their priorities for VET. Engagement with the federal government and the opposition has been ongoing, as has liaison with the Australian Government Department of Education, Skills and Employment and ASQA. The secretariat has been particularly active in supporting skill service organisations and skill organisations which play a key role in defining the qualification requirements of industry. The commitment of TAFEs is to deliver industry relevant vocational education that meets the needs of local industry and equally empowers individuals to build a career.

TDA today continues to be called upon from other countries for advice from TAFEs about the attributes of high-quality vocational education. TDA has been active with several countries and has engaged TAFEs to support the delivery of projects.

Often disruptions, like a global pandemic, bring fundamental change and that is the portend of many change programs that are underway within the tertiary education system in Australia – both at the Commonwealth and state and territory level. TDA seeks to be a voice for quality vocational and higher education in this context.

The secretariat has appreciated working closely with all TAFEs, the policy networks and the Board. States and territories continue to support TAFEs and the TAFE model and can be expected to continue to lead the way in vocational education and policy. The advantage of the federation is the chance to learn from each other. This applies across the TAFE network as well.

The priority for TDA is to continue to demonstrate the power of the TAFE model – not only in terms of its service across all communities in Australia but also its strong industry focus to bring contemporary skills and vocational education to all students so they can power the workforce and economic recovery. This is going to require long-term effort. More can be achieved if we do this together as the TAFE network.

Craig Robertson

Chief Executive Officer, TDA

Member Services

Despite the unprecedented challenges posed by COVID-19, TDA built on its communications with members, partners and stakeholders in 2020 through a variety of platforms including emails, [newsletters](#), the [TDA website](#), meetings, publications, surveys, [submissions](#), social media and [media releases](#). As 2020 unfolded, face to face meetings and events became a thing of the past as we all rapidly embraced new virtual meeting technologies. “You’re on mute” became the catch cry of 2020.

The TDA Board identified the need to communicate proactively about the TAFE response to the pandemic. The message was clear: TAFEs were open for business, but not business as usual. An informal national TAFE communications network was established, and members provided stories to feature on the TDA website about how TAFEs were adapting and transforming, and how domestic and international students were coping.


The [domestic](#) and [international](#) ‘TAFE responding to COVID-19’ pages were published on the TDA website on 4 May 2020. Page views on the TDA website increased by over 200 per cent from the first to the second quarter of 2020. Interestingly, one of the most popular stories on the site with over 800 views in the second quarter of 2020 was ‘[Detailed insights into how a large institution is transforming](#)’ provided by Chisholm Institute.

Website analytics also showed that while Australians were the predominant users of the TDA website, there were visitors to the site based in countries such as the United States, China, Japan, South Korea, Ireland, India, New Zealand and Canada to name a few.

TDA also significantly increased its engagement through its professional networking and social media channels. For example, TDA made over 1,500 new connections on [LinkedIn](#) throughout the year and used the site to engage with a broad range of stakeholders. TDA also created a [Facebook page](#) in June 2020 to expand its member engagement and is steadily increasing its following, and had over 1,000 followers on [Twitter](#).

The weekly [TDA newsletter](#) (with well over 2,000 subscribers), continued to have a high rate of engagement including 620 new subscribers in 2020. The newsletter is distributed to members and non-members including TAFE and industry leaders, international partners and government policymakers.





*“You’re on
mute” became
the catch cry
of 2020*

It provides thought-provoking content on developments in the tertiary education sector, it shares TDA’s and TAFEs’ national and international ventures, and updates members on the latest industry news, government policies, training reviews and upcoming events. Importantly, it provides a vehicle to showcase the great and diverse work of TAFEs to a wider audience. In the second, third and fourth quarters of 2020, the newsletter page on the TDA website was the most highly viewed page on the site with between 1,500- and 2,000-page views per quarter.

In recognising TAFEs’ public mission to serve their communities, including a commitment to the advancement of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders, the traditional owners of Australia, TDA featured other targeted commentary and content on its website throughout 2020, notably in response to the new [Closing the Gap](#) National Agreement in July 2020, highlighting [National Skills Week](#) activities in August 2020 and celebrating [NAIDOC week](#) in November 2020.

During 2020 TDA continued to consult regularly with members to shape TDA’s position on a range of national policy areas using a variety of strategies including:

- representation on a number of key external committees and forums to provide a TAFE voice (for example, senate enquiries, government committees and reviews, stakeholder liaison groups and so on). Regular reports to the TDA Board supported TDA collaboration with stakeholders and TDA’s engagement on the Commonwealth’s implementation of VET reform processes.
- TDA CEO and secretariat staff delivering presentations to a range of audiences, both domestically and internationally. 2020 saw a proliferation of virtual conferences and events to which TDA was able to add its voice to promote TAFE and the Australian VET sector more broadly.

While TDA acknowledges that TAFEs are owned by their states and territories, a national voice is paramount in ensuring #The Power of TAFE message features loud and clear in the national agenda.

Policy Networks

Increased TAFE engagement through policy networks

If anything, the onset of COVID-19 served to strengthen the engagement in, and action of, TDA's various policy networks, particularly in the absence of the usual face to face meetings and events, including the TDA convention. Throughout COVID-19, the policy network model proved to be very productive in bringing in TAFE expertise to the advocacy process and for engaging with the plethora of review processes underway. Equally, network members were able to make connections across TAFEs and appreciated the opportunity to influence national policy. The activities of these networks are summarised below.

TDA Policy Network on VET Quality, Regulation and Compliance (QRC)



The TDA Policy Network on VET Quality, Regulation and Compliance (QRC) aims to improve the quality and relevance of TAFE VET programs by establishing and maintaining genuine supportive regulatory conversations; and pursuing VET regulation and audit reform. The QRC informs TDA's broader public policy and advocacy platform on issues related to quality, regulation and compliance in VET, through analysis and sharing of information and experiences.

Members of the QRC found value in meeting on a fortnightly basis during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic in Australia to share and discuss the institutional challenges that the national restrictions and lockdowns were having on campus operations and campus life. In 2020, the network engaged with the Australian Industry Skills Committee (AISC) and its emergency sub-committee on the impact of mandatory work requirements during COVID-19. It also considered the collective implications of training package transitions and extensions, including implementation costs, and it discussed qualification reform and the use of micro-credentials amongst TAFEs. The QRC engaged with representatives from the Australian Government Department of Education and Training to feed its views into ongoing reform processes.

TAFE Higher Education Provider (HEP) Network



The [National Enrolled Nursing Advisory Council \(NENAC\)](#) was established in August 2020 to act as the peak body within Australia to represent TAFEs in all state and territories that offer enrolled nursing programs. NENAC provides strategic comment and advice to both regulatory and core nursing and midwifery organisations on relevant policy and strategy matters relating to enrolled nurses. NENAC leads and represents those who provide education to enrolled nurses while also promoting the public image of enrolled nursing.

During 2020, NENAC provided [strategic feedback](#) on the Enrolled Nursing Training Package, provided a [NENAC response](#) to [Educating the Nurse of the Future](#), the independent review of nursing education conducted by Emeritus Professor Steven Schwartz AM, and pursued changes to the training package model to reflect a best practice approach for the enrolled nursing profession.



TAFE Higher Education Provider (HEP) Network

The purpose of the Higher Education Provider Network is to advance higher education opportunities for students who think a traditional academic pathway and degree is not for them. The network advances the capability of TDA member TAFEs to provide higher education in a TAFE setting, and to create greater opportunities for traditional VET students to expand their educational aspirations and career ambitions.

Nine of the 27 TDA member institutes provide higher education services alongside VET, while a further six TDA members are TAFE divisions of dual sector universities.

Priorities for this network in 2020 included advocacy to abolish or reduce the 20 per cent administration fee incurred when taking out a FEE-HELP loan. The network also advocated for access to Commonwealth Supported Places (CSPs) beyond the CSP Undergraduate Certificate short courses offered during 2020 in response to COVID-19.

The network also considered strategies for preparing the policy ground for self-accreditation with the Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency (TEQSA), including liaison with:

- TEQSA – as the sector regulator;
- The Australian Government Department of Education, Skills and Employment (DESE) – as the source of policy advice to the federal government; and
- The Minister for Education.

Responding and adapting to the COVID-19 pandemic and beyond was also a key focus during 2020. TAFE HEPs, as with the remainder of the TAFE network, reflected on the many lessons learned during COVID-19 on digital delivery and the student experience.

Australian TAFE International Network (ATIN)

The purpose of the ATIN is to share information and promote exchanges on international activities, both onshore and offshore, across VET and higher education. It also provides a platform for engagement with government officials and for advocacy of TAFE positions from a policy perspective. The network also shares international market updates, circulates business opportunities and promotes cooperation within the network.

Some of the key priorities for ATIN during 2020 included responding to the impact of COVID-19 on the international education sector including student welfare, new education and immigration measures related to international students and regular meetings between the ATIN network and the Department of Home Affairs (DOHA) on migration issues.

At the height of the COVID-19 crisis, the ATIN network increased the frequency of its meetings, moving to a fortnightly format from March to July 2020 and monthly for the rest of the year.

Sharing of information was also supported throughout 2020, including:

- Three ATIN working groups created to allow for TAFEs to share experiences and best practices in international student support, international communications and international student fees; and
- the launch of the ATIN Working Group on onshore student transfers in October 2020.



TDA Events

TAFE Meets Parliament

TDA, on behalf of its member institutes, hosted another successful 'TAFE Meets Parliament' event on 24 February 2020 at Parliament House. The event was an opportunity for members to showcase TAFE activity and capability, including the contribution TAFEs make to innovation and inclusive economic growth across the country. The event brought together senior TAFE and industry executives with federal parliamentarians who were keen to engage with TAFE leaders in their electorates. TDA would like to thank the Canberra Institute of Technology (CIT) for its support in providing staff and interactive displays for the event.

The program included interventions from the Hon Steve Irons, MP, Assistant Minister for Vocational Education, Training and Apprenticeships; the Hon Tanya Plibersek, MP, Shadow Minister for Education and Training; Mr James White, ACT Apprentice of the Year; and Ms Mary Faraone, CEO of Holmesglen Institute and Chair of the TDA Board.





CEO Dialogues

On 25 February 2020 TDA hosted a CEO dialogue for its members. CEO dialogues provide a forum for the exchange of ideas and issues for TAFE senior executives and TDA. Importantly, they provide the opportunity for staff at TDA to gather the views of CEOs and hear first-hand the impacts of government policy and reform processes. The February 2020 CEO dialogue took place before the full impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic were realised. It covered the broad reforms and reviews being undertaken in the tertiary sector as well as observations and priorities for tertiary education, skills and public provision. It examined priorities for TAFEs and for TDA in 2020. CEOs were also invited to a discussion with Ms Jennifer Westacott AO, Chief Executive of the Business Council of Australia (BCA).

TDA also held a virtual post-budget briefing for its TAFE member CEOs on 7 October 2020 (following the release of the 2020-21 Budget which was delayed until 6 October due to COVID-19). The briefing was an opportunity for CEOs to discuss the unprecedented budget measures designed to supercharge Australia's economic recovery from the impact of COVID-19. With JobKeeper and JobSeeker being phased out and with the new JobTrainer and boosting apprenticeship commencements measure, it became clear that TAFEs were key in the government's vision for a skills-led recovery.

The impact of COVID on TAFES: National and international perspectives

In collaboration with its corporate affiliate TechnologyOne, TDA ran a [webinar](#) in December 2020 for TAFE executives to reflect on the impact of COVID-19 on TAFEs. TDA presented the key messages of its report '[#The Power of TAFE: COVID and beyond](#)' on how TAFEs responded and adapted to COVID-19, the result of a national survey of TAFEs. TDA's long-standing TDA corporate affiliate TechnologyOne gave its global perspectives on lessons learnt from adapting to new ways of teaching and learning as a result of COVID-19.

Indonesia Webinar Series

TDA collaborated with the International Labour Organization's (ILO) office in Jakarta to provide a [webinar series](#) that shared Australia's know how and lessons learned so Indonesian Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) may successfully meet the challenges posed by COVID-19, and contribute to Indonesia's economic recovery.

A 10-week webinar series on the design and delivery of vocational education and training online was delivered to Indonesian policymakers and practitioners by Australian TAFEs from June to August 2020.

Experts from Australian TAFEs and dual sector universities shared their expertise across a range of topics including on guidelines and standards for setting up online delivery; design of online courses; use of new technologies and virtual reality for online delivery; trainer training for effective online TVET design and delivery; assessment and certification of online TVET courses; and addressing the digital divide. The webinars attracted between 101 and 376 participants at any one time and an average of 232 participants per session.

Two webinars were also run by TDA in November 2020 as part of the Austrade Business Connect Campaign on TAFE collaborations with Indonesia in the areas of tourism and hospitality and creative industries. The webinars were delivered in partnership with TAFE Queensland and William Angliss Institute for the tourism and hospitality webinar and Melbourne Polytechnic and Bendigo Kangan Institute for the creative industries focused event.

While these webinars showcased TDA members and their expertise in tertiary education and skills training, and their ability to respond to changed circumstances, the webinars demonstrated the commitment of TDA and members to support the Australia Government's engagement across the Asia Pacific.

TDA Annual Convention 2020

In the first quarter of 2020, the TDA Board made the difficult to decision to postpone the TDA convention 2020. It was due to take place in Perth in August 2020 to align with the national WorldSkills competition. Later in the year, TDA rescheduled the convention for April 2021, again to align with WorldSkills in Perth. Unfortunately, with ongoing COVID-19 outbreaks and hotspots causing sudden border closures across the country, the TDA Board decided in December 2020 to cancel the convention in 2021.



TDA Policy

Submissions in 2020

TDA's [policy submissions](#) are available to download on the TDA website. 2020 policy submissions are listed below.

SUBMISSION TITLE	SUBMITTED TO	DATE
Review of the National Agreement for Skills and Workforce Development	The Productivity Commission	13 January 2020
Overview of student welfare situation across the TAFE network	Department of Education, Skills and Employment	17 April 2020
Letter to Minister Alan Tudge on key immigration issues related to international students studying or intending to study in Australia	Department of Home Affairs	12 May 2020
Response to Interim Report on Review of National Agreement on Skills and Workforce Development	The Productivity Commission	30 July 2020
Critical Role of Blue Teach Digital Skills in Australia's Economic Recovery	The Australian Government	24 August 2020
Submission on a Proposed Code of Practice for VET Student Loan Scheme Providers	Commonwealth Ombudsman	27 August 2020
Submission on Approach to Effective Self-Assurance for the VET Sector	Australian Skills Quality Authority (ASQA)	10 September 2020
Letter to Minister Alan Tudge providing feedback on new student visa measures announced in July 2020	Department of Home Affairs	18 September 2020
Inquiry into Australia's Foreign Relations (State and Territory Arrangements) Bill 2020 and Australia's Foreign Relations (State and Territory Arrangements) (Consequential Amendments) Bill 2020	The Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade Committee, Department of the Senate	25 September 2020
Feedback on proposed amendments to the ESOS Act to improve the regulation of supplementary courses	Department of Education, Skills and Employment	12 October 2020
SMEs and TAFEs collaborating through applied research for growth	The Australian Government	19 October 2020
Making and Assessing Claims of Scholarship and Scholarly Activity	Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency (TEQSA)	18 December 2020
Submission on ACER Language, Literacy and Numeracy Review	Department of Education, Skills and Employment	18 December 2020

TDA Media Releases in 2020

TDA's [media releases](#) are available to download on the TDA website. 2020 media releases are listed below.

TITLE	DATE
Report shows VET sector's vital role in a new era of jobs automation	11 March 2020
Urgent assistance needed for international students	1 April 2020
Joint Australian Institute of Sport and TDA media release: TAFEs on board in support of elite athletes	30 April 2020
TAFEs to offer more higher education places under Morrison Government's skills initiative	15 May 2020
TAFEs ready to offer practice, informed input into new VET stakeholder liaison committee	7 July 2020
Government skills package offers the chance to reset for a new era of training and jobs	16 July 2020
Critical Role of Blue Tech and Digital Skills in Australia's Economic Recovery	2 September 2020
TAFEs launch National Enrolled Nursing Advisory Council	9 September 2020
TAFEs welcome the appointment of National Skills Commissioner	25 September 2020
Small business applied research a key to unlocking economic growth and innovation	27 November 2020
Australian TAFEs in winners circle at World Federation of Colleges and Polytechnics 2020 Awards of Excellence	27 November 2020
TAFEs responding to COVID-19 – a story of transformation	7 December 2020



TDA Publications

in 2020



Critical Role of Blue Tech and Digital Skills in Australia's Economic Recovery

TDA collaborated with its corporate affiliates Cisco and OPTUS on a [report](#) in August 2020 to the Australian Government on the need for the Australian Government to work with industry and TAFEs for greater action on the rising requirement for Australia to develop blue tech and digital skills.

A particular focus was on sectors more vital to economic recovery as Australia came out of the COVID-19 pandemic. In the recovery phase, sectors such as advanced manufacturing for onshoring, digital healthcare and clean technology were identified as important sectors as well as sectors where future job

demand will be greatest due to the emergence of blue tech and digital skills.

One of the objectives of collaboration between the Australian Government, industry and TAFEs was to re-ignite the employment of those displaced by governments' strategies to manage COVID-19. While engagement continued with the Australian Government on this work, industry and TAFEs continued to work closely to realise the benefits of further and deeper collaboration for the skilling of Australians for an economy that is being further digitised.

SMEs and TAFEs collaborating through applied research for growth

Based on research of the Canadian model of applied research in publicly funded vocational colleges, TDA together with corporate affiliates Cisco and OPTUS, published a [report](#) in October 2020 calling for national funding to support improved collaboration between small and medium enterprises (SMEs) and TAFEs.

Post COVID-19, there is an opportunity to rebuild the economy through an innovation, applied research model where TAFEs collaborate closely with SMEs to develop or enhance products, improve services and processes and commercialise products.

#The Power of TAFE: The COVID Story

2020 was a year like no other in recent history. TDA surveyed TAFEs in the latter half of the year to understand their journey through COVID-19. The result is [#The Power of TAFE: The COVID Story](#) that describes the rapid and structured transformation TAFEs underwent during 2020 in response to COVID-19. It documents the approaches adopted by TAFEs – how students coped and how staff adapted. The scale of the digital transformation was unprecedented.

As Australia now starts the long haul to full economic recovery and pursue new areas of economic activity, the skills and capabilities of Australians need to follow. New demand will need new responses. Businesses have adapted their operating models to use technology more effectively. Consumers will buy more online. Students will demand easier online access to learning and teachers.

The extent to which TAFE business partners take up this new form of digital learning, and Australian industry embraces new ways that competencies can be acquired, will determine the acceleration of the change across vocational and higher education in Australia. The expectations of students and the new-found confidence of teachers to embed technology in their teaching and student engagement points to new operating models.

Paradoxically, effective learning is a social endeavour. The rhythm of class schedules, the dynamics of group learning and the power of the community of learners pushing all to succeed is likely to remain a strong feature of successful learning. Attendance on campus helps overcome isolation for many students.

COVID-19 has given rise to new dimensions of learning and engaging with students and business. Online courses have brought more people into a learning journey and this will need to continue as a buttress against the economic restructuring that will flow from the COVID-19 experience.

TAFEs across Australia, operating on behalf of their governments and working as a network across Australia, have proven capable of pivoting to new priorities. They will be the bedrock for a skills-led recovery.



#The Power of TAFE: The COVID Story

December 2020

International engagement

TDA's international engagement in 2020 focused on four key areas of work.

COVID-19 policy response

TDA engaged with the Australian Government and the sector regulators on the policy response to the COVID-19 crisis. This included:

- TDA CEO's participation in the Global Reputation Taskforce, initiated at the end of the bushfire season to shape Australia's response in times of reputational damage or significant external risk to the sector, and to accelerate efforts to build a strong cohesive national brand for international education. The Taskforce met 18 times between 3 February and 19 June 2020 and put forward a series of recommendations to the Minister for Education in June 2020;
- Four meetings organised by TDA between the ATIN network and DOHA between March to December 2020;
- Regular engagement with the Australian Government Department of Education, Skills and Employment regarding the adaptation of the Australian education system to challenges brought about by COVID-19 and the changes to be made to the ESOS Act.

International education policy and advocacy

Through 2020, TDA continued its policy advocacy and engagement on issues such as:

- proposed changes to the ESOS Act;
- consultation around the Foreign Relations Bill;
- consultation on the Chinese Foreign Teacher Regulation, organised by TDA and International Education Association of Australia (IEAA) with the Australian Embassy in Beijing,
- participation in the DOHA Working Group on regulating onshore student transfers.



Information sharing and external communications

Due to rapid changes related to COVID-19, information sharing was a crucial service provided by TDA to its members.

In April 2020, TDA undertook a survey to capture the situation in the international education space at TAFEs and dual sector universities, with a focus on student welfare and the support provided to international students affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. TDA also collected member stories of TAFEs supporting their international student cohorts through the crisis. This information was then passed on to the Australian Government and used in a communications campaign targeting international audiences and sent through the Embassy and Austrade network offshore.

From May to July 2020, TDA along with Austrade, with whom a collaboration agreement had been signed earlier that year, organised a series of market updates on key international student source countries and how these markets were affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. The countries of focus were Indonesia, China, India and South Asia and Latin America.

International opportunities and engagement with offshore partners

TDA continued to provide international opportunities and secured a number of international projects for the network. These included:

- Taiwan: the long-term partnership with the Workforce Development Agency continued in 2020 in an online format, with the support of Swinburne University and TAFE Queensland. A series of virtual meetings and consultations were held, focusing on trainer recruitment and progression, and competency-based certification.
- Indonesia: from May to July 2020: TDA delivered a webinar series on *Online TVET Design and Delivery*, in partnership with ILO Jakarta as outlined under the 'Events' section.
- Georgia: From August 2020 to March 2021, TDA and selected TAFE experts participated in the implementation of the World Bank funded *Strengthening Teacher Quality in Vocational Education and Training in Georgia*, in partnership with PwC Georgia.

The Australia Bhutan TVET Sector Reform project and the COALAR funded engagement project in Latin America, initially scheduled for 2020, were postponed due to the pandemic and are being implemented in 2021.



Performance against TDA's Strategic Plan (2020-2025)



The strategic priorities for TAFE Directors Australia for 2020 were drawn from the [TDA 2020 - 2025 Strategic Plan](#). 2020 was of course a year like no other. The adaptation of teaching and learning to make sure students and businesses could continue their training was remarkable. Tertiary education and skills training and TAFE are unlikely to return to the pre-COVID normal.

TDA's strategic objectives remained more relevant than ever, despite the unprecedented challenges posed by COVID-19 to TDA's members. TDA's strategic objectives for 2020 are outlined below.

Objective 1. Provide policy leadership and advocacy on behalf of our members

- TDA continues to provide strong policy direction through the weekly newsletter, media commentary, website, publications and policy submissions.
- TDA uses strong engagement and liaison across the VET sector to present a positive story of the role of TAFE in the tertiary education sector.
- TDA works with TAFE staff to generate momentum for change and continues to strengthen the use of VET data to support policy positions and the articulation of the TAFE value proposition, evident in its public submissions and commentary.

Objective 2. Provide expert support, advice and insights for our members

- Through the TDA National Board, TAFE CEOs, policy networks and TAFE staff, TDA provides policy advice and national context to support TAFE operations.
- TDA sees increased engagement from TAFE members in policy networks and events.
- TDA sees an increased appetite across the membership to work together, share resources to reduce costs, learn from each other and develop leading best practice, particularly while dealing with challenges of COVID-19.

Objective 3. Enhance collaboration and alliance building domestically and internationally

- TDA and TAFEs engage strongly with industry bodies to ensure TAFEs align with industry, employer and economic priorities.
- TDA and TAFEs also work with industry representative bodies to enhance the effectiveness of VET through their feedback on the development of training packages.
- TDA continues to build and strengthen its relationships with federal ministers, and with Commonwealth departments and agencies such as the Department of Education, Skills and Employment; Department of Home Affairs; Australian Skills Quality Authority and the Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency.
- TDA engages in international collaboration projects that build the reputation of TAFEs and open opportunities for institute to institute exchange.

TDA National Secretariat in 2020

TDA staff

TDA staff in 2020 included:

Craig Robertson | Chief Executive Officer

Ewa Filipiak | Director, International Engagement

Ronald Jackson | Director, Strategy and Tertiary Financing

Lyndal Manson | Policy and Project Manager

Astrida Uptis | Communications and Project Manager

Melinda Fischer | Business and IT Manager

Contractors

TDA contractors in 2020 included:

Andrea Newton | Chief Accountant

Bob Bowden | Media Contact

Jen Bahen | Consultant

Association Information

TAFE Directors Australia

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Location | 37 Constitution Avenue |

REID ACT 2612

Email | memberservices@tda.edu.au

Website | www.tda.edu.au



Our Corporate Affiliates

TDA acknowledges significant support from our corporate affiliates in 2020 including:

- [Australian Institute of Sport](#)
- [Cisco](#) and [OPTUS](#)
- [TechnologyOne](#)
- [Year13](#)

As an Australian national representative organisation, TDA has a truly national and global reach. By partnering with TDA, corporate affiliates benefit from TDA's national and international brand and profile, and gain access to the Australian and global vocational education and training sector and to the sector's leadership. At the same time, TDA and its members gain industry contacts and insights to the latest trends and developments in industry locally and globally.

Corporate affiliates and TDA work together for the promotion and skilling of a global workforce with productive capabilities that meet local industry needs and that contribute to global logistic supply chains.

The logo for OPTUS, featuring the word "OPTUS" in a bold, teal, sans-serif font.The Cisco logo, consisting of a stylized blue bridge icon above the word "CISCO" in a bold, blue, sans-serif font.The TechnologyOne logo, featuring a stylized "1" in a purple and yellow square followed by the word "technologyone" in a black, sans-serif font. Below it is the tagline "Transforming business, making life simple" in a smaller, black, sans-serif font.The YEAR13 logo, featuring the word "YEAR" in a black, sans-serif font followed by the number "13" in a bold, yellow, sans-serif font.The AIS logo, featuring a stylized yellow and orange graphic above the letters "AIS" in a bold, black, sans-serif font.The Elite Athlete TAFE Network logo, featuring the words "ELITE", "ATHLETE", "TAFE", and "NETWORK" stacked vertically in a black, sans-serif font, separated by a vertical line.

Our Members

