



**TAFE  
DIRECTORS  
AUSTRALIA**

## **SUBMISSION**

Department of Employment and Workplace  
Relations

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# **FUTURE DELIVERY OF FOUNDATION SKILLS TRAINING IN REMOTE AUSTRALIA**

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February 2023

### **About TAFE Directors Australia**

[TAFE Directors Australia \(TDA\)](#) is the national peak body that represents Australia's network of state and territory publicly owned Technical and Further Education (TAFE) institutes and university TAFE divisions. All TAFE institutes and TAFE divisions of dual sector universities across Australia are [members of TDA](#). TDA members range from the largest registered training provider in Australia, TAFE NSW to regional TAFEs with significant geographical coverage such as North Regional TAFE (WA). The primary business of TDA members is vocational education and training focusing on nationally accredited qualifications and skill sets, non-accredited training for bespoke employer purposes, and foundation skills. Over half of TDA members also deliver higher education.

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TAFE Directors Australia (TDA) appreciates the opportunity to provide feedback on the future delivery of foundation skills training in remote Australia. TDA will continue to represent TAFE views on foundation skills through its representation on the Foundation Skills Advisory Group (Jenny Dodd, CEO TDA).

## **TAFE's role in delivering foundation skills**

TAFEs are the dominant providers in Australia of foundational, preparatory and pathway qualifications including spoken and written English. An understanding of the different types of students who come to TAFE institutes versus other providers, and the diversity of the TAFE student population is therefore important in terms of the future delivery of foundation skills training in Australia, including in remote areas.

In terms of the student population, the [2021 NCVER data](#) shows that TAFEs continue to have above average representation from students who identify as indigenous (6.1 per cent), who identify as having a disability (7.6 per cent) and who speak a language other than English at home (19.1%). The NCVER 2021 data also shows that across all providers, students who identify as indigenous are over-represented in Certificate I and Certificate II courses. In terms of socio-economic status, just over 40 per cent of TAFE students were in the bottom 2 quintiles of social-economic disadvantage in 2021.

The NCVER Report [Journeying through VET: a case study of foundation skills learners](#) further notes that:

- The majority of enrolments in employment skills programs were government-funded, certificate I, accredited qualifications and undertaken with a TAFE
- For Adult language, literacy, numeracy and digital skills (LLND) program enrolments, two-thirds were with TAFE and were either at the certificate I or certificate II level.

TDA members operate in over [550 locations in Australia](#), including regional, rural, and remote locations and deliver to hundreds of thousands of students. The skills and training needs in one part of Australia may not be reflected in another region of Australia. TAFE is well positioned to provide this local, place based learning and advice.

TAFEs, in keeping with their public mission to serve their communities, are committed to the advancement of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders, the traditional owners of Australia. TAFEs work in partnership with community education providers and first nations community-controlled organisations to deliver vocational education and training in remote locations.

TDA members are actively involved in the Commonwealth programs outlined in the discussion paper (e.g. SEE, FSFYF, AMEP etc) which aim to support the delivery of foundation skills in remote Australia. Our TAFE members would be well placed to engage in a roundtable or online discussion on how these programs could be strengthened as well as to share success stories. TDA would be happy to assist in convening a meeting with our members and suggests that this would be a good format for exploring the questions posed in the discussion paper.

## **TAFE as a partner**

TDA appreciates that the main target for this review is not TAFE. However, TDA emphasises the role that TAFEs can play in partnering with other providers in foundation skills.

TDA has provided a small number of examples below of the different ways in which our members engage in remote locations (for the delivery of foundation and other skills). This may provide some insight into the type of support that our TAFE member institutes can provide in terms of the future delivery of foundation skills in remote Australia. We look forward to further engagement with DEWR on this.

## Charles Darwin University, NT

### Higher costs of delivery for equity students

Supporting students from disadvantaged backgrounds to attain higher and vocational education leads to better outcomes for those individuals and society more broadly. Barriers to engagement, participation and attainment persist and require various interventions and supports.

Supports available to students are critical for their success, and include pathways programs, mentoring, additional numeracy, literacy and language support and financial support for cost prohibitive course requirements such as placements or block study. Students with cumulative disadvantage from the Northern Territory often face multiple barriers that require additional support.

CDU uses the [Equity Initiatives Framework](#) to plan support for equity cohorts across the student lifecycle: pre-access, access, participation, and attainment/transition out. Examples of programs include:

**Pre-Access:** The Aspire Program build leadership and confidence in raising aspirations for further study for educationally & financially disadvantaged Year 11-12 NT based students. The Program is a holistic, longitudinal program built on a strength-based approach to build capacity with NT young people from educationally and financially disadvantaged backgrounds. On average, around 50% of students each year identify as First Nations and almost all are from regional and/or remote areas of the NT. Students attend on-campus programs across the 2-year period.

**Access:** Intensive pathway programs that include industry mentoring components have proven to be a successful entry to further study for First Nations students. Over the past 3 years CDU has implemented pathways programs in discipline areas of Business, Law, Health, Arts and STEM aimed at First Nations students. The programs require resources to plan and design a program that specifically addresses cultural needs and connects with industry and further VET/HE course opportunities.

**Participation:** Attempting study with English as a second or third language requires dedicated resources, usually in a face-to-face setting where often technical literacy is also a barrier. The Yirrkala academic literacy and culture program supports First Nations students by scaffolding their transition into academic literacy and culture. Collaborating with locally based Education providers, the pilot program supported 6 students as the first in their community to transition to University, with access to block study on-campus and on-country learning using resources that have been translated into local NT languages (Yolngu Matha and Warlpiri <https://www.cdu.edu.au/indigenous-futures-education-arts/resources-indigenous-learners>)

**Attainment/transition out:** A Student Success Coaching program targeted at high-attrition courses has been piloted at CDU. Using a strength-based approach, the coaches work one-to-one with commencing students identified as high risk (vulnerable cohort such as students with a disability and First Nations students). Coaches are selected for their expert knowledge of the relevant industry or profession and will help students to make sense of potentially disparate learning experiences, joining the dots between unit learning outcomes and employability skills.

Given the geographical expanse of the NT and the unique needs of our vulnerable equity cohorts, the higher costs associated with scaffolded and relevant support are genuine challenges faced by regionally located Universities.

## TAFE NSW

### Regional and remote Connected Learning Centres

TAFE NSW continues to improve access for rural and regional learners through improved learning platforms and innovative facilities. In 2021, there were over 118,600 enrolments by learners living in regional or remote areas, comprising 28.8 % of total enrolments. TAFE NSW continues to expand regional and remote access to education and training by establishing Connected Learning Centres (CLCs) across regional NSW. These centres provide multi-purpose, digitally enabled learning spaces in accessible locations to provide regional areas with skills critical for the NSW economy.

## TAFE Queensland

### Opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities

TAFE Queensland offers the Remote Area Teacher Education Program (RATEP) which is a joint initiative between TAFE Queensland, James Cook University and the Queensland Department of Education, in liaison with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. RATEP is a community-based primary education and early childhood education program that provides a direct pathway for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to become registered teachers, qualified teacher aides or early childhood educators. RATEP courses include the Certificate III in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education, Certificate III in Early Childhood Education and Care, Diploma of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island Education and the Diploma of Early Childhood Education and Care. RATEP is an initiative which respects the culture and knowledge of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, values the contribution they can make to the education of all young Australians and delivers from a range of regional and remote locations across the state.

## TAFE SA

### **Providing regional and remote access**

TAFE SA's Aboriginal Access Centre (AAC) provides support for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and offers a variety of programs from regional and remote locations. An example of this partnership is with the Port Wakefield to Port Augusta Alliance (PW2PA) and Interact Australia. This partnership delivers a 16-week Certificate II in Civil Construction. Sixteen Aboriginal people took part in the training which was delivered on site at Port Wakefield and as a result, 14 are now employed by construction companies. TAFE SA is also working to enhance its regional presence in 2023, as well as increase accessibility of education and training opportunities across regional, rural, and remote South Australia through the establishment of eight Regional Skills Advisory Committees.