



**TAFE
DIRECTORS
AUSTRALIA**

SUBMISSION

Department of Employment and Workplace
Relations

FUTURE DIRECTIONS FOR APPRENTICESHIP SUPPORT SERVICES

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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Introduction

TAFEs dominate the market in the delivery of training for apprenticeships, partner extensively with secondary schools for delivery of vocational education and training including school-based apprentices, and prioritise support for vulnerable and less advantaged Australians, including women.

The delivery of apprenticeships should be subject to local conditions and an industry lens. It is the collaboration between employer, union, State/Territory government, TAFE and student that will deliver capable employees more quickly. Increased recognition of the role that TAFE can play in this tripartite relationship will improve outcomes and minimise the likelihood of duplication from some of the proposals put forward.

As educational organisations, TAFEs have highly skilled educators able to assist in language, literacy, numeracy and digital (LLND) assessment and have already invested in suitable technology for such an assessment. TDA recommends that TAFEs should be used in assessing an apprentice's language, literacy, numeracy and digital capability and supported to enhance that role.

Future Directions for Apprenticeship Support Services

TDA is broadly supportive of the aims of the Future Directions Apprenticeship Support Services Consultation Paper. However, TDA would like to highlight the role of TAFEs in apprenticeship support, in particular the existing investment and expertise that they all have in language, literacy, numeracy and digital (LLND) tools. Most TAFEs already assess apprentices for LLND and put in place support plans. This LLND support is not provided by the trades teachers but by qualified educational experts in foundation skills and other areas that work with the trades teachers to support students appropriately.

TAFEs have made investments in LLND tools as required for VET Student Loans and have many, many years' experiences in how to maximise the use of these tools. If this is not recognised, then it is likely that there will be duplication of investment by support networks. Greater collaboration with TAFE and allocating some of the apprentice support funding for TAFE to use these tools for this purpose is recommended.

It may not be the best use of funding for new organisations to start to make this investment for apprentices when the tools already exist in TAFEs. Noting that LLND tools are essentially an education tool, it is therefore the educators (at TAFEs) who know how to use the tool and target the appropriate support as required. TAFEs already have the existing place-based relationship with the apprentice so increased support for TAFEs would mean increased support for apprentices in helping them to complete.

Opportunities for women

Skills and qualifications generally allow entry to better-paying careers. TDA has welcomed the additional fee-free TAFE places for 2023 which are important for improving access to study, including seeing increased participation by women.

The 2021 NCVER data shows that women in particular use TAFE later in their career/life to get a qualification or re-train, more so than men. The issues associated with apprenticeships including completions and gender balance continue to be critical in the discussions. Trades

are generally undertaken by those under 30 years of age and female enrolments in trades apprenticeships remain low.

While the current focus may be on attracting younger women to commence their career in a trade, there may be opportunities to target women who are looking to re-train later in their career e.g. should there be consideration of incentives for women over 30 to be able to access women-only apprenticeships or traineeships? This may be worth further exploration.

TDA acknowledges that there is significant further scope for TAFEs to develop programs and initiatives that support female training access and completion in key economic sectors, particularly where women are under-represented, as well as designing training models that address barriers to study for women. However, the issue of low numbers of women in trades and equal opportunities for women cannot be addressed by TAFEs alone. It is a challenge shared by both TAFEs and trade employers and solutions need to be developed together.

Reducing barriers and disincentives to work, including the role of childcare, social security settings and employment services are also important considerations for increasing women's participation in male dominated industries. Creating safe, respectful and friendly work places areas that have traditionally been male dominated is also essential to developing a culture change.

Many of our TDA members encourage and promote the participation of women in traditionally male dominated fields and would be a valuable source of input, perhaps through some targeted meetings which TDA could facilitate.

Conclusion

TDA would be happy to engage further with the Department of Employment and Workplace Relations (DEWR) on how our members are supporting Australian apprentices and where to target additional support for the highest impact on boosting completion rates.

Recommendations

1. TAFEs should do the LLND assessment for apprentices and be funded to do so and for the educational support identified.
2. Those who receive funding to support apprentices should be required to strengthen their collaboration with TAFE, especially in the educational support that is necessary for successful completions.
3. TAFEs should be part of the discussion to find examples that work for women in male-dominated apprenticeship workplaces.