



**SUBMISSION TO THE PRODUCTIVITY COMMISSION ISSUES PAPER ON
VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING WORKFORCE
July 2010**

Background to Community Colleges Australia

Community Colleges Australia (CCA) is a member-funded peak body. It was formed in late 2006, recognising a need for an industry association at a national level to represent not-for-profit (NFP) community owned providers of adult and youth education, training and learning in a local environment. It currently has 65 members representing over 60% of the VET delivery by NFP providers on the eastern seaboard of Australia. CCA's strategy is to have members from all states and territories within the next 3-5 years.

Membership comprises long established learning organisations located in metropolitan, regional and rural locations. The 'community colleges' are strategically placed to provide a focus on student welfare with commitment to the employment outcomes for, and personal development of, the individual.

CCA is committed to assisting our members grow their business and thereby to enhance the learning opportunities for all Australians through all stages of their adult lives. CCA promotes 'real education for today's Australians' by delivery that engages and belongs to local communities.

Our vision is for Australia to achieve more dynamic and vibrant communities, informed and empowered through learning.

Introduction

CCA members have a collective annual turnover of \$250million and deliver 6-7 million accredited training hours annually. CCA therefore not only welcomes this opportunity to provide input into the VET Education and Training Workforce Study, but considers it vital that the Productivity Commission recognise the unique needs of the NFP sector delivering VET and the implications for the workforces of community-owned enterprises.

This initial paper outlines the issues which already do, and will in the future, effect workforce planning and staffing for our members. CCA notes the increasing implications of the 'blurring' between school-based learning and adult learning and the impact this has on the workforce that 'community colleges' employ.

We are pleased to provide a set of data within this paper which quantitatively measures CCA's members' current workforce. It assists in painting a picture of some of the implications for our NFP workforce in a localised community environment. It should be evaluated in conjunction with the qualitative information that our members are currently experiencing and which is recorded in the following pages.

CCA is willing to assist the Commission further during its deliberations and preparation of its final report. We look forward to the opportunity to be present in a range of forums and for the Commissioner to hear directly from CCA members to further elaborate the arguments outlined in this submission.





Overview

CCA's response to the Issues Paper has been prepared following consultation with its membership through focus groups and seminars. CCA also requested a range of data from its members to provide quantitative statistics in regard to the specific sub-set of the VET workforce; the NFP community-owned entities.

Our commentary and observations are offered in a format as outlined in the Terms of Reference and Issues Paper. CCA first identifies its view of what comprises the VET workforce. It then details information on Demand for the VET Workforce, Supply for the VET workforce and concludes with a section on the Effectiveness and Efficiency of the Workforce.

A specific overview to this submission from CCA is that the characteristics of our members' workforce embrace recruiting employees who are capable of working with students who are extremely diverse individuals. The focus on local learning is a vital component to enabling individuals to reach their potential and engenders all who are involved in working at and for NFP community-owned education providers to be driven by a remit that focuses on more than just certification outcomes.

At a productivity level a juxtaposition to be evaluated is that funding is focused either by industry sector; or by region; or by job requirements and these funding options occur at specific points in time. However, the ability of the VET sector to provide a qualified workforce that can respond quickly and deploy resources to meet these 'point in time' demands is reliant on potentially longer lead times when needing to deploy, particularly tutors, with capacity and experience. This has particular resonance in regional areas.

Defining the VET Workforce

Australia has a comprehensive VET industry and CCA would encourage this terminology to describe the sector rather than merely "workforce". This would ensure that persons such as VET operational professionals e.g. CEOs, Managers etc. are automatically included in any future policy decisions on staffing matters. In addition, CCA considers it important to include government and industry association employees as part of the workforce. For example decisions taken by ACFE/Skills Victoria/ACE NSW bureaucrats directly or indirectly influence choices of VET providers. Industry Associations and other key stakeholders may also have an impact on VET policy, VET professionals and VET practitioners. "Providers" are therefore a subset of the overall VET industry.

As NFP entities, CCA members' workforces are characterised differently to other VET providers where the workforce may assess themselves as being purely teachers or trainers. Our workforces have a concept of 20th century volunteerism and in the 21st century an approach involving 'giving back' to the community. CCA members VET practitioners should not all be considered "the same". One of the benefits of the community college system is the vibrancy of different backgrounds and differing reasons for working at the educational venues.

In addition, some community colleges have created business divisions that provide goods and/or services that are of benefit to their local community and can contribute to the training offerings for locals through their surpluses being made available to education programs which can be offered more cheaply. One example of this is a business copying centre. The employees of this business are impacting on VET provision in their local region and therefore should be considered part of the total VET workforce.



Historically, CCA members have had access to a 'volunteer' workforce. This includes operational as well as strategic volunteers. Volunteers still play a critical role in NFP learning entities. At a governance level, the board members of the colleges are not paid directors. They do however play a vital role as they identify strategies for their organisation to have a sustainable business model to match future VET demand in their colleges. The policies these volunteers develop will be directly impacted from the anticipated demand of their VET workforce. CCA notes that under the model developed in the issues paper these persons are not recognised as being part of a VET workforce description. However, their role is both vital and legislated for and CCA considers that in identifying 'demand and supply' of a future VET workforce, this component of the future workforce should not be ignored. CCA members currently have 400 volunteers at a governance level.

Colleges have also in the past had volunteers at an operational level - both practitioners and professionals. This is changing rapidly. With the level of compliance now required and audit demands by a range of agencies requiring considerable time and project management by colleges, it is less likely to find administration staff in colleges who are volunteers. The complexity and consistency required with e.g. student database management, recording contact hours, tasks achieved etc has meant that colleges now employ persons with appropriate skill sets and pay them for these services.

It should also be noted that with teaching demands increasing, more tutors are expecting administrative matters to be managed by other staff in the college. The requirements for NFP educational entities to have a greater number of non VET practitioners as part of their workforce is imposing higher costs on business operations.

Nevertheless, Colleges are occasionally approached by highly qualified persons who want 'to give back' in their chosen industry through training future workers. Usually these will be retirees who have a strong ethos on community participation. Sometimes it can be a previous student who has been so affected by their own learning experience that they are prepared to return and train others for no or little remuneration. In general, however, and for the future, CCA members expect fewer operational positions to be held by volunteers. CCA members currently have just under 400 operational volunteers.

It should also be clear to governments at all levels, that community owned NFPs are competing directly with other RTOs in the VET sector and it should not be assumed that community colleges ought to receive less funding because of our prior volunteer structure. CCA members operating cost structures may not differ dramatically from other learning institutes. In addition, CCA members are obliged to fund capital purchases directly and this is an increasingly onerous requirement because this is what both the VET workforce and the students demand for their training. If funding for VET in the community is not commensurate with the desire of government and businesses to have well-trained, certified individuals, CCA members will be challenged to maintain a positive, focussed workforce and will risk practitioners going to work somewhere else.

In 2010 CCA members employ VET professional staff of 750 (FTE) and 3,200 VET practitioners. 75% of VET practitioners are contract or casual employees.

Current and future demands for the VET workforce

Increasing Student Numbers

It has been recognised in Australia that there is a need to up skill the workforce; in particular at a VET level¹. Government encouragement for youth to continue their education beyond year 10-12 of school, adults who missed out on obtaining job skills and mature-aged workers to re-train into a vocational qualification will increase the numbers undertaking both VET and formal 'non-accredited' training in learning institutions.

¹, As noted in the Communiqué from the 3rd Strategic Industry Forum, 2 June 2010, Skills Australia



The up-skilling agenda brings special demands to NFP community-owned deliverers of training. Some of the sector features of CCA members which attracts students to our training venues include:

- Flexibility in our learning processes, noting the specific needs of students to accomplish their full potential;
- An Individual approach - which may sometimes mean that not all students will complete a full qualification, but will allow them to segue into other educational institutions or gain employment;
- An Increasing number of young people who have disengaged from school but who through an empathetic and 'adult learning' approach re-engage through community colleges and realise their education potential.

The above examples highlight that whilst the NFP sector of VET is a small percentage when compared with the TAFE network, the VET work undertaken by CCA members provides a vital component to assisting individuals who might otherwise not complete any training qualification at all. The growth in these areas - for disengaged youth, adults who need to acquire skills to enter the workforce or older persons wishing to re-train - places increased demands on community college workforces as the need to seek staff who are compatible to the requirements of the increasing student numbers.

In considering future VET student numbers, CCA notes that there may eventually be less demand for classroom style VET teaching (in 10-20 years). This could be as a result of employers incorporating or increasing traineeships and apprenticeships in their workforce training and undertaking onsite education (using the VET workforce from colleges or other VET providers). It also could be through future technology advances whereby greater numbers of Australians may study through e-learning.

Notwithstanding these future changes, CCA members mission is to encourage community social inclusion² and therefore whilst some types of teaching may change, we are confident that humans need for interaction and a sense of belonging, will continue to see various forms of training (not all necessarily VET) undertaken face-to-face in groups.

In 2009, total VET and pre-VET enrolments by CCA members totalled just less than 200,000. Student contact hours in 2009 were 7.2 million.

Changing training patterns and demands on VET practitioners

CCA members' teachers and tutors increasingly need to be 'well rounded' i.e. holding both industry experience & training/education skills. There is a higher need for work-based training (on-site work experience or college mock-up facilities) rather than simplistic classroom based tuition. There is also an expectation that there be industry placement for VET employees as part of performance planning and professional development for staff to ensure practitioner skill sets are maintained. And, as the colleges' emphasis on social inclusion expands, tutors need sometimes to have life skills that go beyond pure education or industry knowledge, in order to ensure our students reach their work potential. These changing/additional expectations increases the skills required by VET teachers in community education providers and may discourage potential practitioners (especially when taken in conjunction with a decision on NFP educator wage rates).

² As outlined in, The Ministerial Declaration on Adult Community Education, Ministerial Council for Vocational and Technical Education, December 2008



General learning tools expectations from students and tutors are also increasing. Smart boards are becoming the norm in all classrooms, together with increasingly sophisticated assessment tools, such as 'point of view technology' for hairdressing validation whereby a tutor can be offsite when the test is being undertaken.

Technology enhancements bring two specific challenges to NFP VET providers. The first is identifying capital investment and searching for funding options. Unlike government providers of VET, CCA members have very limited direct access to annual capital budget money. The recent Commonwealth Government funding of ICET projects has been welcomed by the NFP VET sector because it has given an opportunity to improve capital infrastructure including technology. The second challenge is ensuring our workforce is competent in the use of new technology; often requiring the up skilling of more mature tutors –at a cost to the providers. Whilst CCA is keen to ensure training of staff is undertaken by its members, many examples from members highlight the issue of losing staff after the college has paid for their up skilling, to other providers who are able to pay more.

These are existing demands which CCA members anticipate will grow in the future. CCA members currently employ (through contract and casual employment arrangements) 3200 VET practitioners. The demands that VET places on these practitioners is not necessarily reflected in the payments they receive. While a number of CCA members pay above the new award rates, it has also been noted by many colleges that funding for VET provision has not increased in line with cost increases over the past decade.

This is notable not only in direct VET funding but also in programs that our members deliver which directly correlate to a student's ability to undertake VET e.g. AMEP, LLNP etc. Whilst funding bodies will desire *quality* outcomes, if student contact hour fees for such programs do not at least cover the organisation's operational costs for delivering these programs, it is questionable as to why an independent locally-owned NFP organisation would continue to participate in these critical learning programs. Yet, the ethos and form of learning community colleges offer, often lends them to being the most appropriate deliverer of these types of pre-VET formal training.

There is an expectation that to offer appropriate training for students, education and learning institutes should offer VET practitioners a commensurate wage; particularly for those persons whose qualifications are at an appropriate or high level. However, colleges should not be expected to deliver VET courses at a loss. There has become a mismatch between what students can afford to pay and a reasonable wage for delivery by VET practitioners. In addition, given that VET tutors may also access work directly within their chosen industry, demand for tutors could be driven by the rate that can be paid by industry.

This demand pressure does not appear to be recognised currently as an issue for the on-going delivery of VET, despite organisations where sustaining losses year upon year is not economically viable. CCA members are adept at providing student contact hours at very reasonable rates but if demand pressures as cited above continue, it will become increasingly difficult to deliver a full range and scope of VET qualifications.

Future Demand for VET professional management skills

The VET business environment and funding structure has seen a number of changes in recent years, and these are likely to continue.³ Operating a NFP education provider now requires significant general management skills, rather than merely 'education principal' skills.

As a result of business failures, the quality assessment regime for all RTOs has become very bureaucratic. Whilst CCA is fully accepting of ensuring VET education is delivered at the highest possible quality standards, the increase in audits by a plethora of different government departments does not necessarily indicate an improvement in quality assurance. It is however, placing a burden on managers of NFP entities. Performance indicators should support the direction of where the college is aiming, however this is not currently occurring.

³ As one example, Contestable funding in Victoria for ACFE programs which has been introduced from the 2010 year.



Streamlining compliance and audit requirements would provide an opportunity for VET professional managers to spend more time on other aspects of their business e.g. ensuring quality delivery of training by their VET practitioners, managing the welfare of their students and seeking grant funding.

Grant funding places another pressure on VET professionals managing VET practitioners. CCA members are accepting of the open tender process for education delivery. However, it does create challenges for offering contracts to VET tutors. At times, government departments appear not able to comprehend that delivery of programs in short timeframes can be difficult when there are not necessarily a 'waiting' group of VET tutors with availability to teach immediately. The community colleges are not in a financial or operational position to have staff employed with their organisation if they are not undertaking work in their relevant field of expertise.

These changes to business operations will make finding and keeping VET practitioners more challenging in the future.

Learning Pathways - Demand and their connection to VET

School is the most important foundation to a student's education pathway through life. Occasionally, however, a few individuals find the school system fails them or they fail with the style of learning provided. Community colleges have long been committed to the 'pathways' concept and offering adults another chance at learning.

Building a learner's potential can often begin through a 'foundation' course; it gives the new student the self-confidence to be prepared to take on further, higher qualified training. CCA members can attest to students who may have come to a college for the first time to undertake a personal development/lifestyle learning course only to realise that they enjoy and are capable of gaining greater education knowledge in the environment and are then better prepared for studying a comprehensive VET course. Managing the demands of both a VET and pre-VET workforce is becoming increasingly challenging. The administrative requirements differ significantly from VET to pre-VET and whilst VET speciality tutors may have higher qualifications and therefore are paid at a higher rate, the 'fee for service' students may be required to pay more creating a surplus differential between the VET and other learning courses.

Whilst this issues paper is to address VET workforce implications, CCA has identified a need to contemplate specific issues relevant to our members with regard to VET and non-VET training. The members of CCA are focused on providing a socially inclusive learning environment for individuals and groups. This includes:

- New migrants
- People with disabilities
- Students attending independent secondary schools
- Corrective and juvenile service participants
- Adults wanting to retrain
- Older persons wishing to remain mentally and physically active
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders



Colleges have identified through many years of learning delivery that the social inclusion agenda and its related issue of youth disconnect from education, may require intense 'one on one' style training. A challenge in delivering this learning, together with non-accredited but worthy self-development courses, is finding and keeping suitable trainers. Despite the challenges with employing casuals and contractors, our members persist because it is evidenced by the results, that placing people through personal development and introductory educational courses, does lead on to people undertaking VET skill courses thereby helping workforce participation rates. CCA members consistently note that the pathways outcomes success, be it a job, traineeship or other higher qualification training assists the skilling of individuals throughout Australia.

When community colleges are no longer able to provide 'pathway' training courses, a potential teacher shortage occurs, partly because without knowing the certainty of grant funding it is not possible for VET professional managers to develop a 'stepping' program for teachers. VET workforce shortages also occur in the colleges because continuity of employment is important for people - especially those with higher degrees. If there are insufficient students for a VET course and a college has not been able to secure grant funding for foundation courses, keeping a quality VET practitioner becomes more challenging for CCA members.

As it becomes more challenging to fund these 'pathway' courses, CCA and its members are constantly identifying opportunities to identify new revenue sources in order to compete with TAFE and other RTOs for staff who are often seeking employees from the same "labour pool". In the future there may be more focus on training with employers where fewer direct VET practitioners are required to deliver the same level of outcomes.

Development of LLN and equity programs is similarly limited by lack of resources to support engagement of full time professional staff. CCA members are in a unique position of providing VET, accredited programs and non-accredited but worthy self-development courses. The challenges for recruiting staff however is that there is inconsistency between government programs and rates paid e.g. for AMEP, LLN, ESL etc. As employers however, it is inappropriate (and almost impossible logistically) to pay a different rate to the same VET practitioner for teaching students enrolled in different foundation and VET courses.

In 2009 CCA members enrolled 108,000 students in pathway/personal development courses.

There can also be different employee requirements for short vs. long courses and pre-VET vs. VET training. Colleges working with youth or AMEP or LLNP may require tutors who have a traditional 'teaching' qualification or experience. Whilst their skills could be transferable to specific components of VET training, their hourly pay rate, may not match effectively to other tutors offering VET training. Historically, CCA members have not distinguished between similar qualifications when recruiting for teaching classes. However, the new modern award has impacted teaching rates significantly with qualifications incongruously valued. The way colleges seek teachers has been impacted by this, e.g. HE qualifications appear less relevant. As previously noted, members cannot always afford to pay qualified people because the government program rates do not pay sufficiently to allow the training to break-even.

The boundary between VET and non-accredited training programs can be considered artificial when vocational outcomes are determined by the learners (not necessarily the funders or the qualifications body) and the customers of education and training programs (who may be SMEs working with our colleges for key, specific, targeted training outcomes). As such the learning delivery is benefited by marrying teaching practitioners to students regardless of the course they undertaking or the money the student is capable of paying.

The current and future supply of the VET workforce

Who joins, who leaves

The supply of staff, especially VET practitioners, is already a challenge for community colleges. Gaps exist in employing the 'right' trainer at the 'right' time in the 'right' location. For CCA members, the diversity of



workforce supply requirements matches their diversity of business activities. For example, a VET professional may be seeking trainers at the same time for delivery of courses in their local community as diverse as Advanced Stablehand - Racing Cert III, Food Hygiene for Food Handlers, Cert IV in Disability, Welding for Beginners, Cert III in Hairdressing etc.

A series of focus groups with colleges identified the following attributes/characteristics as key to the current workforce supply:

- Women - currently the workforce of CCA members (staff and volunteers) is 73% female;
- "tree/sea changers". The average age of VET professionals in the CCA members workforces is estimated at 45 years;
- highly qualified - 35% of CCA members workforces hold degrees;
- Ages dependent on industry area e.g. hospitality require younger VET practitioners, community services older VET practitioners;
- Student dependent e.g. Delivering literacy/numeracy programs -some groups benefit from older teachers, others require younger teachers.

The growth in compliance requirements continues to create limitations on growth and innovation, including in sourcing the supply of the 'right' type of workforce. For the NFP sector of VET education providers, what will form a potential workforce supply is impacted by:

- Opportunities for volunteers decreasing due to legislative/quality requirements e.g. change to reception, volunteer teachers and trainer support;
- Skills of employees need to include the way VET practitioners and VET professionals work with community members and community aspirations;
- Workers who understand the need to facilitate learning through empathetic and flexible delivery methods;
- People who are looking for flexibility which may not be available in the private sector e.g. the requirements for a work/life balance, a preparedness to give up higher salaries to work in a sector with worthy values. Currently 55% of CCA members VET professional workforces are part-time and approximately 32% have jobs in addition to their college roles;
- Persons who are committed to helping all students to develop their full learning potential.

As the general skills shortage begins to challenge CCA members, being flexible and recognising individualism is becoming more important in finding employees for community colleges. Community Colleges acknowledge that in the future there may be opportunities for recruiting a VET workforce through the changing Australian demographics. The country is ageing and yet despite this acknowledgement⁴, many older Australians currently have difficulty in finding employment⁵.

⁴ *Australia's Demographic Challenges*, Discussion Paper, The Treasury - Australian Government, February 25 2004

⁵ "The policy is targeted partly at 60,000 Australians aged over 55 who, despite wanting to work, have given up looking and count themselves as unemployed because employers consider them too old to hire." [The Australian](#), Abbott to keep oldies in workforce, August 04, 2010



CCA believes there is a positive opportunity to engage with older Australians seeking new/different work options. Community Colleges offer part-time contract work which could match the work desires of this group. The possibility leads to assisting in overcoming current ageism issues and provides a worthwhile forum in which such individuals can pass on their experience. Only 10% of CCA members current workforces come from a non-English speaking background and only 2% classify themselves as indigenous, so if CCA was to engage with older Australians these two specific sub-groups could be key targets.

However, these individuals may require up-skilling in teaching methods and access to gaining their TAE. The government will need to increase and broaden funding from existing programs to ensure such training because neither the individual nor a NFP educational organisation will be able to afford these costs. Government should see such funding as an opportunity benefitting both the country's future workforce and assisting in maintaining the existing workforce in jobs.

Adult learning in community-based venues is not a sector which achieves high media coverage (as opposed to other areas of adult education). As a consequence many people are unaware of the potential work opportunities, e.g. a mother/father who require part-time work, a migrant with pre-existing skills. Specific grants for advertising/work awareness, targeted to areas of most workforce need, could assist in strengthening the number of VET practitioners available

Technology may also impact the NFP education providers' ability to access suitable staff. With the level of investment required to have state-of-the-art training props, some potential employees will consider the opportunities with TAFE or schools and especially the quality and quantity of training materials available to assist their teaching in choosing their employer. Increasingly in the future, there will need to be continual investing in skills around IT - some people would be more willing to come and teach if they knew there would be appropriate levels of technology available. Equally a potential workforce may need to have training in technology to feel comfortable in teaching in 2011 and beyond. Governments should be prepared to fund upgrades in technology and also upgrading the skills of a possible workforce for VET providers so that staff shortages can be averted.

The future workforce for NFP education providers of VET may come through working with existing customers and clients. People who experience learning at a community college (either as a student or as a business client) often become the sector's most active 'champions'. It also ensures that as well as gaining industry-focussed or educational focussed employees, CCA members obtain staff who embrace the colleges learning approach.

Competition from others e.g. within education and outside e.g. industry specific

Community College potential learners are often not 'cash wealthy' and must carefully evaluate the cost of learning. Education charged by colleges on 'fee for service' courses is therefore kept to a minimum in recognition of what is financially viable for learners. And as discussed earlier in this submission, programs from government for literacy and numeracy are highly cost competitive. Therefore, VET practitioners are also in demand from other educational institutes e.g. schools, TAFE, private RTOs where higher costs may be absorbed either through government budgets or through charging students higher fees. It can be challenging for NFPs to match the salaries on offer from public sector or commercial RTOs.

For VET professionals employed by community colleges there are added job skills required which include operating NFP organisations and ensuring the governance and board skills in governing NFP VET providers is managed appropriately. Whilst CCA members may be community-owned the fiduciary responsibilities for each college is considerably more onerous than in the past, and often it is the paid VET professionals who must assist in ensuring the organisation is fulfilling all its legal obligations. This is often a 'hidden' job role but may lead to some VET professionals choosing work outside of the sector because they seek a position which focuses more directly on student engagement.



Generally VET practitioners (and professionals) want to spend their work time on training (or assisting training to occur). Currently, CCA members are challenged with balancing regulation requirements with education provision. Ideally staff would desire to spend less time on compliance and more time on training. If compliance becomes too onerous the education sector risks losing VET staff to industry.

The VET sector could follow the existing traineeship model where practitioners (and professionals) have more on-the-job training, have quality equipment in the workplace, thereby ensuring that knowledge in the workplace increases. Through this teaching method which benefits themselves, VET practitioners may be less likely to consider moving out of the sector.

The workforce structure and efficiency and effectiveness consequences

Workforce development activities and impacts

Community colleges are primarily organised around a core of fulltime staff organising a large workforce of casual and contract trainers. Community colleges provide learning opportunities that require low risk investments of time and money from the community. These limited investment requirements from students promotes participation, experimentation and diverse participation.

However, the expectation of some potential VET students is becoming increasingly challenging. As one example, CCA members' focus is on quality outcomes and the colleges undertake English proficiency tests to ensure the student will be able to undertake the training. However, students are often challenging of this approach and believe that their language skills do not need improvement. This is discouraging for VET practitioners, many of whom have significant experience in the work they are being requested to undertake.

Equally, CCA members also meet and engage with many students with limited English and/or formal education who do not feel they are ready to engage in accredited training. Within some communities there is an increasing expectation that all education should be free, including VET.

Other recent workforce changes that are causing community colleges to become stifled from innovation and strategic thinking include:

- levels of accountability and workload, reporting;
- An increase in day-to-day functions;
- Time involved in investing in new workers;
- Changes in training packages occur frequently and need to constantly update staff and tutors on these;
- Casualisation of the workforce means that administrative staff increasingly face the burden of answering to VET compliance questions (because the tutors are often not available to ask);
- VET compliance is increasing - 'we don't' have the financial support to pay the human support'. For example, 8 months on revisions of training packages for re-accreditation requirements.



Professional support for the VET workforce

A key challenge in providing professional support for the NFP VET practitioner workforce is that nearly all the colleges teaching/tutoring workforce is contract/casual. With some workers being engaged for as little as 4 hours per week, it is challenging both financially and in time to be able to offer as much professional support as the CCA members may want to. One method utilised by some colleges to assist VET practitioners with work tenure is to “share” their teachers with other similar institutes. This assists the practitioner in gaining more hours (if they desire) and also exposes them to a range of institutional practices which assists in their own personal teaching development.

Colleges have identified that the challenge of delivering training for their workforce is that not only are their practitioners casual, they are not all available at the same time for face-to-face training. E-learning is an option that some members use but it is not always a suitable solution.

CCA has developed its own on-line professional development facility, which operates in partnership with face-to-face training forums. CCA Online has many benefits including that members can ‘post’ questions on issues and receive ‘best practice’ solutions from other members. For colleges that are widely spread geographically and particularly for smaller entities where VET professionals often have to work in isolation, it is one solution to the provision of professional support.

Changing workplace and employment practices

There has been significant workplace change for adult education providers in recent years. From a regulation and compliance focus, administration requirements have increased significantly; especially additional outcomes tracking which are of benefit for governments e.g. where does a person go after pathway learning? These additional reporting requirements in the workplace have impacted on employing staff.

In addition, many NFP colleges now seek program funding through grants; work skills required now include tender writing and project management. These are new skill sets not previously required by VET professionals and often involve the employment of more staff. This change to business practice has also resulted in the need to employ at a full time, part time and casual level and these all require different management of skill sets.

CCA members have noted that it is becoming more difficult to appoint people with appropriately qualified skills; especially in regional areas. This includes both VET professionals as well as VET practitioners. Colleges therefore are employing people who require training to enhance their skills. An inherent danger in this practice as previously noted in this submission is that colleges can become trainers for other educational institutions and sectors.

As noted in the Issues Paper, VET practitioners can be classified as “dual professionals”. With changes to the programs CCA members deliver e.g. AMEP, LLNP as well as VET, there are often challenges/differences of opinion in teaching methods between trainers who are traditionally educationalists vs. trainers who are primarily industrialists. Employment practices created to resolve these differences include team teaching / and a mentoring approach.

Members who have been involved with NFP education providers for many years note that there is now a different nature to how youth are growing up. This has required changes in approach by CCA colleges in how best to engage these individuals in learning. CCA’s emphasis on social inclusion within their local communities means that learning techniques and delivery have had to be modified to ensure that those most at risk through lack of qualifications are able to benefit from learning options that offer an alternative approach to the traditional school and VET training environments.



The 2010 workforce comprises employees of diverse perspectives, motivations, attitudes and needs.⁶ Employers often note the challenges of managing multiple generations and some have expressed that there is a disconnect between youth and older people. Workplace requirements now seek solutions to managing these differing age groups and VET providers do have the potential to bridge the gap. With integrated, hands-on teaching techniques many youth and young adults who attend NFP colleges for training, engage through their teachers older persons who can instil behavioural actions for integrating any perceived/real work differences between age groups. For some of CCA members' learners' it may be the first time they have had an opportunity to engage in depth with an older person.

In order for the VET sector to be able to react to skill shortages, universities need to be more receptive to creating awareness and reducing restrictive practices by allowing recognition of TAE provision from the VET sector. This could be in a format where TAE is a unit offered within a degree. Best practice could be for partnership agreements between the university and VET sectors.

How well do employment agreements align with contemporary work practices

In 2010, the NFP VET sector moved to a new modern award for its workforces - Educational Services Post Secondary Education Award. Whilst designed to streamline employees of VET educational institutions (non TAFE) under one award, it has created some challenges. There are automatic rate increases to occur over the next 5 years which may significantly impact some colleges as payment on the basis of the workforce qualification will be a mismatch against funding received from governments for some programs.

The increasing IR complexity and regulation for staff requirements does also make it more challenging for CCA members to appoint employees. With no guarantee of on-going work due to funding being increasingly subject to competitive tendering many colleges are losing staff to other organisations/industries that can guarantee security of tenure.

Grant funding has also lead to a change in skill sets with colleges often requiring an industry specific skill set rather than a generalist VET teacher. Often the work skills that CCA members seek include the motivation to be part of a 'socially inclusive/empathetic learning environment" which can be challenging to identify within any industrial award and which also sets us apart from other VET providers.

An understanding of how to teach in a local community is not necessarily defined within any modern award. But the loyalty from the staff employed by a college can differ immensely to a practitioner employed in another VET institution. This is a very significant difference between the NFP community-owned VET sector and the balance of the industry. Staff may have life experiences which make their teaching values and facilitation vital to college delivery and this is what is important, rather than what may be defined within an award.

The 21st century education market place increasingly demands a cost-effective service. CCA members have always focused on delivered quality outcomes at reasonable prices to the students. However, with changes to award rates not necessarily matched by program funding increases this will become more challenging. Our members recognise that by encouraging and increasing an individual's personal and professional development a more vibrant and cohesive community can result, with greater workforce participation and more highly skilled individuals. The task ahead is to ensure that quality VET delivery continues for students whilst maintaining sustainable community educator businesses.

⁶ The Multigenerational Workforce , Managing and Motivating Multiple Generations in the Legal Workplace, Sally Kane, <http://legalcareers.about.com/od/practicetips/a/multigeneration.htm>