

## **Members of the Cairns TAFE branch of the QTU would like to present the following points in regards to the enquiry:**

### **1. Certificate IV in TAE**

**A.** We are bemused that the commission continues to support the practice of allowing VET Teachers to teach for up to 2 years without having completed the “mandatory” Cert IV TAE. What other education sector in Australia allows its practitioners to work without a teaching qualification and no immediate requirement to gain one? Either the qualification is necessary to ensure quality teaching at VET level and should be mandatory BEFORE beginning to teach OR it is spurious and should be ignored in favour of some other qualification more suited (e.g. a Diploma in Adult Learning).

**B.** We agree with other respondents to this enquiry such as the MGSE that there is confusion over just what the Cert IV TAE is trying to achieve. Is it the skills and knowledge to work as a teacher in an adult setting OR is it looking to ensure accurate competency based training and knowledge of VET procedures and processes? Currently it does neither very well.

**C.** We also agree with MGSE that *those who already have teaching qualifications should not be required to undertake the Certificate IV, particularly if it emphasises teaching and learning and pedagogy. They should be required to undertake induction or professional development that introduces them to VET and CBT if they are to teach VET qualifications* (pg 11). Myriad are the stories of school teachers with B.Eds and Masters moving into VET who are then classified as unqualified to teach due to their lack of a Cert IV. It is embarrassing and demeaning for employees to be treated this way.

**D.** Finally, if teachers currently hold a Cert IV in TAA, there are private RTOs advertising on the internet who will, for a small fee, “upgrade” the TAA to a TAE. It is apparently considered an equivalent qualification to the TAA. The question then to be asked: what is the point of the TAE?

### **2. Competition among providers is seen as beneficial regardless of the potential negative effects on quality outcomes**

The experiences of our members with private RTOs (as related to us by students and employers) have continually shown the folly of believing that “the market” will deliver a quality product at a low cost. Some explanatory comments follow:

**A.** An unsuccessful student went on and completed her child care studies with a private RTO due to her being unable to cope with the requirements of the TAFE course she was enrolled in. She later met with one of her TNQTAFE teachers, noting that when she completed the baby unit **CHCCN5C Care for babies**, all she needed to do was carry an egg around for a week and take photos of it in various different care routines. Such as the egg engaging in nappy changing, sleeping and eating routines. This was due to the private RTO experiencing difficulty in gaining placements for its students in nurseries. An egg was considered “reasonable adjustment” for the assessment which normally requires access to a baby to be completed satisfactorily.

**B.** The Director of a Child Care centre approached teachers at TNQTAFE concerned that she was going to fail reaccreditation for her centre, due to the lack of skills and knowledge displayed by graduates of a private RTO that she had employed.

**C.** How are TAFEs meant to compete with private RTOs whose clear self-interest suggests the training of students in the shortest time for the least cost? Most TAFEs have buildings, libraries, cars, canteens, and workforces under award conditions. Private RTOs often have nothing more than a website and rented rooms with casual staff for teachers. Of course their course fees will be cheaper than those of TAFEs. But where is the quality?

**D.** A Cert III graduate in Children's Services, trained by a private RTO, brings their statement of attainment along to TNQTAFE when enrolling in a Diploma. The statement showed that the time elapsing between the Start of Study and the Close of Study for all the units in the Cert III was a period of six weeks! A properly run Cert III can involve study for up to a year.

**E.** The apparently high success rates of student completion from private RTOs needs to be followed up with longitudinal studies of vocational endpoints. Where do these graduates go and are their employers satisfied? TAFEs are far more likely to demand genuine student achievement; the imperative to pass all students regardless of achievement will always be an unstated and unadmitted impetus for teaching staff at private RTOs. This systemic conflict of interest is obvious for private RTOs.

**F.** Last weekend in the Cairns Post was an advertisement from a private RTO looking for Cert IV trainers, with no industry qualifications requested. One cannot help wondering what the RTO wanted the potential trainers to assess. Would they be required to assess electricians or child carers just because they have a Cert IV? The Cert IV as it stands on its own doesn't qualify you to do anything. You must have a vocational expertise in order to use it. This kind of muddled approach is typical of so many of the fly-by-night (or is it fly-by-the-seat-of-the-pants) private providers that have exploded in number across Australia in recent years. Another example of the quality diminishment directly resulting from the spurious promotion of private RTOs against the more reliable and certifiable quality of the TAFE system.

**G.** A private RTO enrolled a remote living Indigenous student in a Cert III for 2011. A TAFE staff member was visiting the community and was asked to assist, as the RTO had sent no learning materials and had made little contact with the student in the time since the student had completed enrolments.

### **3. The freedom of TAFE management to dictate wages and conditions of its teachers is viewed purely from a short term cost-benefit analysis**

**A.** That the VET system needs to be able to respond quickly to changes in the needs of industry and society to ensure ongoing capacity of trained teaching staff cannot be denied. However, to suggest that denying TAFE workers the protections and benefits of long fought for salary and conditions of service can only result in positive outcomes as regards response times, excludes the possibility that such a move will decimate the ranks of TAFE staff of its most valuable employees – the experienced and qualified practitioners who have worked hard to reach such positions in their careers.

**B.** Yes, it will be cheaper and easier for management to respond to the needs of industry without having to pay heed to these "current rigidities" of worker rights BUT once again it

becomes a question of what cost to the quality of the graduates produced? Push the experienced teachers out of the market and who is left? Those lesser qualified and lesser experienced who will be happy to work for far lesser wages, not necessarily lesser teachers but on the balance of probabilities, certainly not reaching the average standards of those experienced teachers being ignored.

**C.** Another very concerning issue seems to be one of wanting to pay teachers commensurate to whatever the marketplace currently values work in their vocational areas (as measured by average salaries from industry). Hence plumbers earn more than hospitality workers, so their TAFE teachers should earn salary commensurate – hospitality teachers will be paid \$X, plumbing / trades teachers will be paid two times \$X. Clearly a ridiculous, unfair and untenable strategy.

**D.** On this topic of pay differentials, we suggest that if the mining industry is not getting enough trained staff through VET courses in Australia (because no VET provider can afford to entice workers away from the industry to teach), then perhaps agreements between the mining industry and providers to have salary “topped up” by the relevant industry might be a suitable solution.

We hope that our submission is of some use in the decision making of the Commission regarding this enquiry into VET.

Pat Meakin

**President  
TAFE Cairns Branch**

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