

TAFE COLLEGES STATEMENT OF EXPECTATIONS

Foreword

Western Australia's vocational education and training system plays a key role in ensuring a skilled workforce to meet the economic and community needs of the State.

Western Australian TAFE Colleges form the cornerstone of the State's public vocational education and training system, servicing over two thirds of all publicly funded students. The Colleges are highly valued by the community and industry for their essential role in providing access to high quality vocational training that supports individuals and organisations to participate in and contribute to the state's economic growth.

The Government is determined to ensure that the Colleges' critical role and status is sustained and that Colleges continue to provide high quality training services to meet the challenges of the future.

With this objective clearly in mind the Government has comprehensively reviewed the VET sector, starting with the 2013 *Independent Review of the Vocational Education and Training Sector in Western Australia* led by Emeritus Professor Margaret Seares. The review highlighted the need for greater clarity in respect of the State's expectations of the VET sector during a period of significant transformation and diversification.

In response to the Seares Review, the State Government launched the *Training Sector Reform Project* to examine in further detail the function and structure of Western Australia's VET system with a particular focus on the State's Colleges.

The review found that Western Australia's Colleges are performing well compared to the rest of the country but could be further improved with enhancements to their governance and structure and ensuring a greater alignment with government priorities.

As State Government authorities, the Colleges are accountable to the Government and the people of Western Australia to provide efficient high quality vocational education and training services that meet the state's skilled workforce needs.

TAFE Western Australia's Statement of Expectations sets out new governance and structural arrangements as well as a clear direction to work collaboratively as a network, streamline business processes and be accountable to government and other stakeholders through improved performance reporting mechanisms.

Hon Liza Harvey MLA
Minister for Training and Workforce Development

Introduction

Western Australia's TAFE Colleges were established as separate statutory authorities through the passing of the *Vocational Education and Training Act 1996*. A key driver for the establishment of separate TAFE authorities was to ensure that the Colleges were responsive and accountable to their local communities and to position TAFE to be able respond to increased competition in the VET sector.

Overall, the autonomous TAFE College model has served Western Australia well with the Colleges consistently recording high student satisfaction levels and the Colleges successfully adapting to increased competition and significant national and local VET sector reforms over the last two decades.

During this time however, there has been a lack of clarity in respect of the role of the Colleges in a competitive market and the degree to which the Colleges should act independently of each other and in some instances without reference to government priorities. At the same time, all government agencies operate in a tight fiscal environment and there is a need to ensure the most efficient operations of the Colleges without compromising their focus on high quality training services.

The Training Sector Reform Project identified a number of areas that would assist in meeting these objectives. The reform project noted that Western Australia has seven of the eight smallest TAFE Colleges in Australia and that this was not sustainable in the current environment. To this end, the reform project found that a consolidation of Colleges would enhance governance and management capability, improve government oversight of college performance and enable a more efficient allocation of resources, while continuing to serve their local communities.

Furthermore, the reform project made a number of recommendations to underpin a clearer role for TAFE including, heightened collaboration between the Colleges, streamlined business planning and reporting, increased specialisation of training, greater government oversight of the Colleges' commercial activities and increased centralisation of corporate service functions.

Central to these reforms is the need for government to articulate clear expectations of the Colleges as the primary agencies responsible for delivering vocational education and training services that meet government priorities.

College Strategic Objectives

The *Vocational Education and Training Act 1996* and accompanying regulations set out the legislative framework and accountabilities for Western Australia's Colleges in their provision of publicly funded and fee-for-service courses for vocational education and training, including apprenticeships and traineeships.

The Act also prescribes a requirement for the Colleges to produce a strategic plan that sets out the Colleges' medium to long term objectives and an annual business plan outlining the services that the College will provide for the year ahead. These plans are then translated into a Delivery and Performance Agreement between the Department and each College.

In order to ensure a greater alignment between government priorities and the strategic directions of the Colleges, these plans will be guided by an annual statement from the Minister that sets out the strategic directions expected from the TAFE College network for the year ahead. College governing councils will then prepare the plans in accordance with these Ministerial objectives.

There will continue to be scope for the Colleges to propose innovative administrative and training initiatives in their strategic plans. With the approval of the Minister, the Delivery and Performance Agreements will codify the agreed strategic and operational parameters for the following academic year.

Governance and reporting

Governance arrangements for the Colleges include how they are managed, their culture, policies and strategies, and the way they interact with their communities.

The consolidation from 11 Colleges into three regional Colleges and two metropolitan Colleges is expected to result in greater accountability and alignment with government objectives as well as increased collaboration with each other and the Department.

College governing councils and managing directors will establish a collegiate working group and regular meetings to discuss all aspects of their operations with a view to identifying best practice improvements to their operations. Identified operational issues will be progressed through regular meetings between college managing directors and the Director General of the Department.

As with all government agencies there is an expectation that the Colleges publish key performance indicators to ensure public accountability and scrutiny of performance. The Colleges will work with the Department to develop a uniform set of performance indicators and these indicators will be reported individually through college annual reports and collectively by the Department.

Leadership in quality and inclusive services

As a public provider, TAFE Colleges are expected to maintain the highest standards of inclusion, service responsiveness and training quality. The Colleges are to be trusted for their high ethical standards and values.

The Colleges will continue to support the most disadvantaged in our community and will remain a provider of 'last resort' where the training market is not able to provide an alternative service in state priority areas.

The Colleges are expected to be leaders in the provision of high quality teaching and assessment and provide value for money services to their customers.

Collaboration and specialisation

A key feature of the new arrangements is for the Colleges to develop more collaborative approaches to better service the communities they represent. This includes working to facilitate better linkages between the metropolitan and regional Colleges and establishment of centres of excellence through specialisation.

Through the new consultative processes, the Colleges will be required to identify opportunities to use the capacity of the metropolitan Colleges to support regional Colleges to provide a broader range of services to regional and remote areas.

The establishment of centres of excellence will provide a focal point for industry and a critical mass of training expertise in identified areas. This will also build a strong foundation for the larger metropolitan Colleges to extend specialised services into regional Western Australia through partnerships with the regional Colleges and private training providers.

College Commercial activities

As not-for-profit entities, the Colleges engage in commercial activities and retain all revenues for reinvestment into their respective operations. The majority of commercial services revenues are derived from international education, along with a mixture of domestic accredited industry based training, adult community education programs and sub-bachelor programs to full fee paying international and domestic students.

In order to be confident that these activities are consistent with the State's strategic goals and do not disrupt privately financed training markets, College Governing Councils will need to demonstrate in annual business plans that these commercial activities are in line with the Minister's objectives and priced on a competitively neutral basis.

International education and training is a key service export industry for Western Australia that generates significant economic benefits to the State and enriches social and cultural life. The Colleges are well regarded internationally as trusted and high quality VET providers.

To capitalise on global education export opportunities, the Colleges will work collaboratively with the Department's international division, TAFE International WA (trading as TAFE Western Australia) to present a united brand under clear state policy settings when engaging with the international student market.

Efficient operations

The Western Australian Government expects all agencies to be efficient in their operations without compromising services to the public.

The Colleges will be expected to work with the Department to implement streamlining reforms to corporate services, regulatory and policy functions. This will build upon the established shared services arrangements and drive further efficiencies in operations.

Opportunities to increase standardisation and centralisation of key functions include: marketing, ICT systems, financial and human resource functions, infrastructure management, procurement, and corporate policies.

Infrastructure

The State will maintain ownership and management over College capital assets and continue to make decisions regarding the acquisition and disposal of land and buildings.

The Department and Colleges will develop and implement a campus utilisation strategy to determine the most efficient campus configuration and utilisation including increasing access to campus facilities by third parties.