

TAFE Tasmania Community Forum at Alanvale Campus 24 August 2007

Communiqué

On 24 August 2007 from 11:00 am to 12:00 pm the Minister for Education, David Bartlett MHA, hosted a forum at the Alanvale Campus of TAFE Tasmania about the new model for post-Year 10 education and training outlined in *Tasmania Tomorrow*. The purpose of the forum was to provide the TAFE community with the opportunity to raise their top 10 or so concerns about the model directly with the Minister.

At the forum, the Minister committed to placing the issues raised on the record, providing information and answers to each, and distributing them to staff and forum attendees. The questions below are a summary of the issues raised with responses to each provided.

This forum was one of a series of forums held around the state at college and TAFE campuses; part of the consultation phase of the project which runs from July to September 2007.

Feedback is also being sought through the website:

<http://tomorrow.education.tas.gov.au/consultation/your-feedback>, by email to tomorrow@education.tas.gov.au and by phone (1800 469 997). Feedback received during the consultation phase will inform the implementation of the model.

Questions and answers

I. How can you be sure that this is the best model?

There is a very high level of confidence from education, training and enterprise commentators that these changes will contribute to significant increases in post-Year 10 retention and qualifications. You can listen to what some of these commentators said about the reforms at the *Tasmania Tomorrow* Breakfast Symposium held on 24 July 2007 by going to: <http://tomorrow.education.tas.gov.au/events>

The model itself has been determined through extensive research into post-year 10 education structures both nationally, and in other countries which have seen a dramatic increase in their skills and qualifications base with retention rates over 90%. This research was used to provide guidance on what we needed to consider in developing a strategic approach to our retention and qualification issues. Whilst using other models as a guide to establish the broad framework, the consultation phase of the project will seek local input to the implementation to ensure that the model is customised to meet Tasmania's needs.

From feedback received during the consultation process, improvements to the model will be made to ensure the views from educators, students, parents and the general community contribute to developing the best opportunities from these reforms.

While structural reform is essential for improving retention and qualification rates, it is only part of the strategy. The other elements are: pathway planning for all government school students in Years 8 to 10; the Guaranteeing Futures legislation which requires students to continue with education or training until they are 17 or have achieved a certificate III level qualification; and improving accommodation options for students living away from home. Also, the government is

investing greater resources in early childhood education and literacy and numeracy across the government school sector from Kindergarten to Year 10. By increasing the number of students with the necessary literacy and numeracy skills we will ensure that even more will have the basic skills they need to succeed in education and training.

2. What is meant by consultation?

The Minister and the project team have hosted student forums to gather students' views on what's working in the current system and what isn't. This information is important to ensure that the good things such as the excellent pastoral care and social environment currently available in our senior secondary colleges are maintained in the new structure.

In addition to talking to those students who are engaged in the current system, the project team is talking with disengaged students. These young people are part of the more than 40% of young people who disengage from education before the end of Year 12 or who leave school without a qualification.

Feedback and stakeholder views have also been received through online forums, the designated email address and 1-800 number. All feedback, including issues raised at the forums, will be analysed and a response will be prepared providing clarity regarding the way forward. This response will be available in October.

The next phase of the project will see the real work on planning and implementing the new organisations. Working groups are being established to look at key issues such as educational programs, employee relations, logistics and business models. Local advisory panels consisting of local government, community and educational leaders will advise on the implementation of the *Tasmania Tomorrow* initiative. To find out more about the working groups and their membership, refer to the first issue of *Tasmania Tomorrow* News available at:

<http://tomorrow.education.tas.gov.au/news/Tasmania-Tomorrow-News.pdf>

3. Where do we see people who feel they fit partly in the training enterprise and partly in the polytechnic?

It is envisaged that the Employee Relations Working Group will endorse a staffing process that takes into account employee preferences to determine which staff will work for the training enterprise. Currently, in TAFE Tasmania, about 50 per cent of staff are working with staff from enterprises and about 50 per cent are helping individuals prepare for their careers. Many staff will be attracted to the training enterprise because they have a strong loyalty to enterprises and want to continue working with them and their employees. These staff will make a natural transition to the training enterprise. For those staff who really enjoy campus-based delivery, then the 'polytechnic' would more align to their career goals.

In some cases delivery teams might have a presence in both the training enterprise and the polytechnic. The detail of the educational programs that each organisation will offer will be considered by the relevant educational program working group.

4. TAFE delivery relies heavily on Training Packages. Will this continue to be the case in the polytechnic? Will there be an investment in Professional Development to make this happen?

Yes – The majority of VET subjects in the polytechnic will be delivered as part of national training packages. It is likely that some VET will be delivered through accredited courses to meet training needs that are not addressed by existing training packages.

Professional learning will continue to be important for all staff in the new institutes. Ensuring that staff are properly qualified to deliver the appropriate courses (Training Package or otherwise) will be a crucial part of the professional learning program.

5. TAFE is already delivering flexible training for employers. Are there examples of where TAFE is not already flexible enough? Will awards reflect this?

The current arrangements allow for some flexibility, but not to the degree that industry requires. TAFE Tasmania has seen several examples of businesses requesting training in the first two weeks of January, or the week following Easter, because it suits their schedules. Because TAFE Teachers are on compulsory leave at that time; they are not able to meet the needs of those businesses. New arrangements are necessary if we are to fully meet industry demands.

It is possible that the training enterprise will have a different award to the academy and the polytechnic to ensure working arrangements are flexible enough to meet industry needs; however, they would be subject to negotiation. If new arrangements are negotiated, this would be done through the Employee Relations Working Group. The working group is underway with representatives of the key relevant unions invited as well as human resource experts from TAFE Tasmania, Department of Education and Public Sector Management Office. It has been established to work on these issues and all staff will be kept informed of their work. This group will provide advice on the best way to implement this aspect of the initiative.

6. How will grade 10 students choose between options available to them? How are students allocated?

Effective pathway planning in high schools is integral to the success of the new arrangements. Students will be supported in making informed choices about their future careers and the pathways to achieve their aspirations. Students will not be 'allocated' but largely will self select which organisation they will enrol in based on their career goals, educational background and preferred learning style.

According to student numbers it is likely that the polytechnic will be bigger than the academy in size as we know that only approximately 30% of college students go on to university.

One of the aims of *Tasmania Tomorrow* is to create multiple peaks of educational attainment. Those who enjoy more applied learning will benefit from studying at the polytechnic and have available to them a range of VET courses in broad vocational areas and at higher levels. To achieve this, students need to have access to the best training and learning facilities, with some of the best facilities currently only available at TAFE campuses.

We should value vocational and applied learning as much as we value academic learning. The qualifications gained by those who prefer a more applied learning style should be seen as being as prestigious as those gained through a university pathway. This cultural change will occur over time and, as this new tertiary sector evolves, the academy and polytechnic will be seen as

having the same status with both providing pathways to achieving meaningful and valued post-school qualifications.

7. How will students with a diverse range of disability needs be supported? How will students needs be assessed and supported, particularly if they have been disengaged for some time? Who will be doing the assessment?

The Government's responsibility to provide support for students with special needs stays the same, regardless of structure. The inclusion of all learning styles and abilities is a core part of the new arrangements. In fact, including more young Tasmanians than ever before in our education system post-Year 10, no matter what challenges they may face, is key to the goals of the Tasmania *Tomorrow* initiative.

8. Will any students be excluded from the academy? (For example if parents think they might provide stronger pastoral care.)

The academy is not exclusive – there will not be an entrance test. The aim is to have students achieving, in ways and in places that meet their learning styles and needs. It is intended that the excellent pastoral care and other student support currently provided in colleges will be extended across the academy and the polytechnic.

9. Are there issues about mixing of age groups of students on polytechnic campuses? Will adults on campus need to have a Good Character Check?

Some classes in both colleges and TAFE already have adults incorporated. For example, in TAFE, young apprentices, trainees and students learn side-by-side with mature-aged students and there are many benefits for teaching and learning in such an environment.

A safe and supportive learning environment will be essential in both the polytechnic and the academy to enable all students to reach their full potential. The project team will look at processes and systems to create this environment during the implementation phase.

10. How will the CKN be resourced to support people with literacy and numeracy learning needs, especially literacy and numeracy? What about other avenues of providing support?

The Community Knowledge Network is more of a distribution network rather than a content provider. These informal settings often help individuals to build the basic confidence and skills to embark on formal education programs provided through colleges, TAFE and university.

Programs such as TAFE's Adult Literacy and Basic Education will continue to be part of the new arrangements.

11. Will teachers be registered? What is the duty of care for each of the institutes and their staff? What are the behavioural management strategies? What assurances do mature age students have that they will not be disadvantaged by these changes? Could they be excluded from this learning environment?

Research into this issue is currently being undertaken, with a view to presenting options to the steering committee and relevant working groups.

12. What does it mean for online learning?

The new organisations will support personalised learning and focus on meeting the learning needs of individuals. This will include offering a variety of learning modalities which includes online and other flexible and open learning options.

13. How do we ensure that the community is educated about the changes, so that all pathways are seen as first choice options?

We need to convince Tasmanians of the value of vocational education and of investing in those students who may not be academic learners. We need more Tasmanians to understand that a meaningful qualification is vital for life options in today's world. Raising community awareness will help to achieve the cultural change needed to see the model implemented successfully. By developing the polytechnic as a 'tertiary' pathway with vocational and paraprofessional outcomes, with articulation to university, providing a holistic education based on vocational learning directly connected to work, its image will be enhanced. The cultural shift that will occur over time will see more people realising the value of education and training to individuals and to businesses.

Parents and students will be informed on how they will be affected by the post Year 10 changes. Both Department of Education and TAFE Tasmania staff are being kept informed of progress through regular email updates from the project team and a regular newsletter which is available at: <http://tomorrow.education.tas.gov.au/news>. The website is also a good source of information about the initiative including answers to frequently asked questions, supporting research and information, information on how to provide feedback and more.

Changes to the post-school arrangements will be the focus of the Department's stand at the upcoming Hobart, Launceston and Burnie shows in October providing the opportunity to raise general community awareness on the changes and of the need to improve outcomes for young people.

It is accepted that this is an ongoing task that will require many strategies over time to succeed.

14. Where does international education fit, including mainstream delivery, pastoral care, English language programs and overseas partnerships?

The Vice-Chancellor of UTAS has already flagged the potential that lies in the new arrangements, particularly in the academy, for students to accelerate through Year 12 with effectively a mix of university and Year 12 study. This possibility would be very attractive to Tasmanians and international students and would raise the international profile of Tasmania as a unique study destination.

International education brings many educational benefits to our system, as well as economic benefits to our state. All of the new institutes would be encouraged to be involved in international education. How this would develop (including offshore possibilities) would be up to the boards of the new institutes, but it is recognised that pastoral care and English language support are crucial aspects of these programs.

-----The following questions were raised after the Minister had departed-----

15. When and how are the working parties being formed? Will we be informed about their membership and progress?

You can find out about membership, timing and the role of the various working groups from the first issue of *Tasmania Tomorrow News* – the regular newsletter for staff to provide an update on the changes to post-school arrangements from the project team available at:

<http://tomorrow.education.tas.gov.au/news>. Future issues of the newsletter will provide an update on progress, including the membership of the working groups.

Members were nominated by senior TAFE and departmental staff and generally include the relevant TAFE and Department of Education equivalent staff member in each group.

16. Specifically, what are the actual inefficiencies that warrant the breakdown of the TAFE system and a change to the GBE?

This is not so much about inefficiencies as about purpose and focus. It is difficult to try and be all things to all customer groups in the one organisation. The way TAFE currently works with employers and their employees is different to the way it works with independent students. The delivery style, the relationships and outcomes are different and the new organisations should be the very best it can be for each customer group. This will be best achieved by having organisations that have clear and unambiguous purpose and identify closely with the people and groups they seek to serve.

17. Why does it have to be implemented by January 2009?

There is broad agreement that too many young Tasmanians are ‘falling through the cracks’ in the current system and leaving without gaining a meaningful qualification. The personal cost of this to students is high as is the cost to our community. Something needs to be done now to address the major issues facing Tasmania, including skills shortages, youth disengagement and low productivity. Improving outcomes for young people and the state is vital and urgent. For example, recent demographic work indicates that within two years in Tasmania the number of people leaving the workforce will be greater than the number entering it.

18. Where was the consultation about the model we are discussing?

The process for delivering the change in post-compulsory education outlined in the *Tasmania Tomorrow* initiative is based on extensive and comprehensive research of the issues to be addressed, and the development of a broad proposed framework on the basis of this research.

The decision was made to develop a model to base the consultation on in order to allow the initiative to be completed within a reasonable timeframe.

There are many decisions still to be made in this process and the input of stakeholders is being sought. These changes have been flagged at several points over the past year, including the Minister’s response to the Premier’s 2006 State of the State address.

19. What if people don’t want to go to the training enterprise? How will they be accommodated? What training options will be available to them?

Refer to response to question 3.