

College Community Forum at Hellyer College 16 July 2007

Communiqué

On 16 July 2007 from 4:30 to 5:30 pm, the Minister for Education, David Bartlett MHA, hosted a forum at Hellyer College about the new model for post-Year 10 education and training outlined in *Tasmania Tomorrow*. The purpose of the forum was to provide the college 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 college 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.

1. What flexible accommodation arrangements and other educational opportunities will be available to young people from remote areas?

The new arrangements will provide increased opportunities for young people in rural and remote areas to study in their home region. Although there will always be students who want to move to complete their studies in urban areas, the new arrangements will offer more study options and maximise the use of resources available in regional areas. For example for many students it could be possible to remain in their high school to undertake both pre-tertiary and some vocational studies through a school and academy or polytechnic partnership.

Individual circumstances will of course determine if and how far a student needs to travel to attend a course. For those students that will need to live away from home to study, work is currently underway on improving access to, and affordability of, supervised accommodation and a significant announcement can be expected in the coming months.

2. How do communities communicate their preferred options to the Minister and to the Project Team?

Local community and educational leadership is essential to implementing the new model effectively. People need to get together to discuss the options and make their views known. Through the 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.

There are several ways to comment or provide feedback on the initiative including: email tomorrow@education.tas.gov.au; telephone 1800 469 997; online feedback form <http://tomorrow.education.tas.gov.au/consultation/your-feedback>, or write to Tasmania Tomorrow Project Team, GPO Box 169, Hobart 7001.

3. How will this initiative be introduced so that young people currently in Year 10 do not experience further disadvantage?

The two year program of students who will be in Year 11 at a college in 2008 **will not be affected**. Even though the organisation in which they are enrolled in 2009 may change, their course and its location will not. Careful planning and provision for all transition issues will be undertaken.

Students will actually have more study options than those currently available; in particular, they will have access to a greater range of vocational courses at the polytechnic.

The new organisations will commence from January 2009. However, 2009 will be a transition year as students complete the programs in which they enrolled in 2008.

4. How will this initiative attract high school students currently disengaged from their education and at risk of dropping out?

Increasing retention and keeping those young people who have dropped out of education or who are at risk of dropping out engaged is one of the main aims of Tasmania Tomorrow. A comprehensive strategy to reach this group will include working with *Guaranteeing Futures* teams in high schools, working in conjunction with the Tasmanian Youth Consultative Committee and the Tasmanian Council of Social Services to name a few.

Currently, Youth Learning Officers (YLOs) work with high school students and provide individual support and pathway planning for young people who have disengaged from mainstream school or who are at risk of not completing a further two years post-Year 10 education and training. The work of the YLOs, together with additional choices offered through the new organisations will provide attractive and clearer pathways, with pastoral care and real college life in an appealing setting - making it more attractive for a young person to stay on with education.

The proposed model will invest more in those young people who are not academic learners. Through the polytechnic, students will be able to study applied learning pathways giving the skills, work experience and social experiences they need to be ready to enter the workforce upon achieving a qualification or articulate to university.

5. How will the new model accommodate the needs of students to move between organisations and change their minds regarding courses and modes of learning? Will students be able to enrol in both pre-tertiaries and vocational courses?

Flexibility is a key aspect of the new structure. Consultation through the working groups will need to ensure that students are able to move between organisations and that they are supported in any co-enrolments or transitions they need to make. It is intended that the excellent pastoral care and other student support currently provided in colleges will be extended to both the academy and the polytechnic.

For those students who wish to study pre-tertiary subjects along with VET courses, then the polytechnic would be the best option for them.

6. What about students with special needs – how will they be supported?

The Department'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.

7. How will you re-engage the parents of students who themselves did not achieve qualifications or complete Year 12 or similar?

Labour market patterns have significantly changed over the past few decades. Whilst it was common and perfectly acceptable for previous generations to leave school after Year 10 and go on to sustainable employment, this is far more difficult now. We need to ensure that young people going through the system actually complete a meaningful post-Year 10 qualification, especially as we know that 86% of jobs in Australia require a one. In Tasmania only 47% of the workforce has that level of qualification.

Changing the attitudes of these parents and the community will be challenging and is something that will happen over time. We need to educate the community and to raise awareness of the need to improve outcomes for young people, in particular the need to complete a meaningful post-school qualification. This will need to be ongoing and must involve the new organisations, as well as community, parent, and industry organisations.

8. How will we shift the culture that says that school ends at the end of Year 10?

It is important for us all to work together to improve community attitudes towards continuing education and training so that participation rates will improve. The cultural shift is about the value of education and training to individuals and to businesses. 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.

9. How will teachers be able to work flexibly across the three organisations? What about the professional development needs that go with that? What are the implications for young people training to be teachers? What will the TRB have to say about the different qualifications for teachers from TAFE and colleges?

There needs to be professional learning for those teaching across the polytechnic and academy. A working group is being established to look at employee conditions and other industrial relations issues such as teacher registration requirements. The working group includes representatives from the Public Sector Management Office, and key unions (the Australian Education Union, Liquor, Hospitality and Miscellaneous Union, and the Community and Public Sector Union), and 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.

10. When will staff have a better sense of what the structures will look like and be able to start work on fleshing them out?

The implementation timeline is as follows.

Between **June and September 2007** the model will be developed further and we will spend time explaining and exploring the model with stakeholders. During this time the Minister will hold various forums at TAFE and senior secondary college campuses which will enable him to talk with students, teachers and parents and listen to them about the opportunities (and challenges) that the initiative presents. He will also host forums for business and enterprises.

Feedback received through consultation will be analysed and used to inform the implementation of the model.

Between **October 2007 and June 2008** we will start the real work on planning and implementing the new organisations. During this time working groups will be established to look at key issues such as educational programs, industrial relations, logistics and business models.

From **July to December 2008** we will move into a transition phase and will start the establishment of the new organisations so that they are ready for the 1 Jan 2009 start date.

Staff will be kept informed of progress through regular email updates, newsletters, website and media releases.

11. What arrangements will be made to inform and involve support staff in colleges and TAFE of the effect of the initiative on them?

All existing departmental and TAFE staff, including support staff, are receiving and will continue to receive regular updates on progress through email updates and the website. Existing staff will be guaranteed a position in one of the organisations but there may need to be a process, negotiated with staff representatives where more people wish to work in a particular organisation than there are positions. This will be a transparent process.

A Leaders Group consisting of College Principals and senior TAFE staff has also been established. Its members will be able to convey information and feedback from the project to staff and vice versa.

A regular staff newsletter is also planned to inform college and TAFE staff of the project's progress. The first edition should be available in mid August.

12. How have enterprises, businesses and industry been informed of the level of involvement required from them to provide work placement opportunities?

Discussions with enterprises have already commenced through business meetings and forums. Industry engagement is a key aspect of the communication strategy.

The polytechnic will work closely with business, industry and peak bodies to develop the linkages required to ensure that work placements are readily available. The fact that the polytechnic will be a statewide institute will ensure a coordinated and consistent approach. The board of the polytechnic will also have strong industry representation which will support increased industry commitment to this element of the model.

Skills Tasmania will also play a major role in promoting education and industry working together.

13. Where does this new structure fit with the Australian Technical College and influential businesses which support it?

The Australian Technical College is an initiative of the federal government that provides technical trade education combined with year 11 and 12 and a part-time apprenticeship for young people. As a non-State government entity, it is not part of *Tasmania Tomorrow*.

The polytechnic will provide a much broader range of learning opportunities to both young and mature-age students. It will provide vocational and para-professional outcomes, articulation to university, and a strong integration of a holistic education, vocational learning and work.

14. Will the new institutions follow the traditional school year?

The polytechnic and academy may follow the traditional school year. However, it is unlikely that the training enterprise will, as this organisation needs to be fully flexible to meet industry demands.

15. The timeframe is very tight!

Yes it is; however, there is broad agreement that too many young Tasmanians are currently 'falling through the cracks' and that something needs to be done now to address the major issues facing Tasmania, including skills shortages, youth disengagement and productivity.

2009 will be a transition year as Colleges will be completing programs for students enrolled in 2008. The polytechnic and academy will both continue to evolve over time in response to student interests and demand for skill, and as patterns of enrolment emerge.