

College Community Forum at Rosny College – 19 July 2007 Communiqué

On 19 July 2007 from 4:00 to 5:00 pm the Minister for Education, David Bartlett MHA, hosted a forum at Rosny 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 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. Do TAFE teachers need to be registered? Relationship between teacher registration, current organisations and the future.

Issues such as these will be resolved by the Employee Relations Working Group.

2. How will the proposed structural changes impact on retention? How will students who have dropped out be attracted back into education? Importance of student/teacher relationship. Some teachers feeling disenfranchised.

There is a very high level of confidence from education, training and enterprise commentators that the proposed model will contribute to significant increases in post-Year 10 retention and qualifications. Whilst saying that, there is every opportunity that the model can be built upon and improved. Feedback is encouraged from stakeholders, including college teachers to provide input into how to best to implement the model successfully.

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, involving Pathway Planning Officers, Youth Liaison Officers and Vocational Education and Learning Development Officers, working in conjunction with the Tasmanian Youth Consultative Committee and the Tasmanian Council of Social Services to name a few.

The model cannot be viewed in isolation from other Government policies and priorities which when combined will see improvements in education and skills for more Tasmanians, these priorities include:

- ♦ Early Years - strengthening education links between a child's early years and their later learning success
- ♦ Improving literacy and numeracy in schools

- ♦ *Guaranteeing Futures* initiative including; pathway planning and transition support in high schools, mandating participation in education, training or work until the age of 17 or achievement of a certificate III level qualification, Post-Year 10 Curriculum Review Project (PY10) etc
- ♦ Improving accommodation options for students living away from home

The new organisations will provide attractive and clearer pathways with pastoral care with 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.

3. What is a meaningful qualification?

A meaningful qualification is contextual. That is a qualification which enables an individual to achieve a desired employment outcome, e.g. in order to become a doctor a medical degree is required; to be a tradesperson a certificate III qualification is required etc, and which is valued by prospective employers.

4. Division between polytechnic and academies. Are academies exclusive? How will setting up academies improve retention?

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. By developing the 'polytechnic' as a 'tertiary' pathway with vocational and paraprofessional outcomes, credit transfer to university, and a strong integration of a holistic education, vocational learning, and work, its image will be enhanced.

The academy will offer stronger partnerships with University and more opportunities to accelerate study. Those that enjoy academic learning will be provided with strong support in pursuing academic goals.

5. Data from People Staying on at School (see ref on document handed out at meeting) – suggest that Tasmania comes out highly).

There is a multitude of retention figures (direct, apparent, completion, participation, ...) and they are all open to interpretation. Regardless of which figures you use, there is broad agreement that too many young Tasmanians are currently 'falling through the cracks'.

Tasmania is behind other states and it has not been showing any signs of improvement over the past few years, which can no longer be ignored.

6. Range of diverse options available at Colleges at present. How will students know which institution to attend at the end of year 10? Is segregation of students at this level a good thing?

Pathway Planning Officers, Youth Learning Officers and VEL Development Officers in high schools will engage with young people and their parents to provide guidance and assist them to make informed choices based on their aspirations and preferred learning styles. The model will provide more flexibility and broader options to more young Tasmanians than what is currently available. By choosing specific pre-tertiary subjects in year 11, many young Tasmanians already make a choice about their future pathway.

7. If polytechnics and academies co-exist at the same site, what is different to what we have at the moment?

The polytechnic and academy may exist on the same site, or possibly in the same region or community. The key difference is that they will provide a broader and more accessible range of course options and learning models for students – both young people and mature-age students. This is quite different to what is in place at the moment where for example, vocational options for college students are limited.

The best way to describe the differences will be through case studies to explain what things may look like under the new model. These will be developed on the website.

8. Hours of operation in Colleges and TAFE are quite different. How will awards take account of this, particularly for mixed sites?

No one will be forced to change their working conditions. If new arrangements are negotiated, this would be done through the Employee Relations Working Group. The working group, which 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), has been established to work on these issues and all staff will be kept informed of its work. This group will provide advice on the best way to implement this aspect of the initiative.

It is envisaged that if new arrangements are negotiated, staff would have a choice to stay on their current arrangement or transfer to the new one. There would be a 'grandfather clause' for existing staff, and new staff would be employed on the new agreement. The arrangement is subject to the outcomes of the working group.

It is likely that the training enterprise will have a different agreement from the academy and polytechnic; however, that would also be subject to negotiation.

9. What are we doing wrong at the moment that you see that needs to be changed? Students are at all levels and not all reach the standard of VET programs.

We are not yet meeting the post-compulsory school needs of all young Tasmanians.

One of the aims of *Tasmania Tomorrow* is to create many peaks of educational attainment. Those that 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. Students need to have access to the best training and learning facilities with some of the best currently only available at TAFE campuses.

10. Importance of academies as rich learning places. Will adequate resources and facilities be available to academies? Need to have a range of courses available, including non-pre-tertiary.

In some cases, the current campus could accommodate both the academic and applied studies pathways while others may specialise.

The details of the curriculum that will be offered through the academy will be determined by the Educational Program Working Group. The academy will not be restricted to only pre-tertiary subjects, but may also offer non-pre-tertiary subjects and introductory pre-tertiary subjects offering a holistic post-school education experience. The University of Tasmania has also

suggested a university college option which could see academy students able to commence their university study in Year 12.

Students enrolled at the academy may have options available that would allow them to study VET courses. The detail for these possibilities is being considered by the implementation team and working groups in consultation with stakeholders.

11. Tasmania Tomorrow figures are based on 2001 data. 2006 census shows population in Tasmania has grown. Does this affect the interpretation of the data?

The 2001 Destination Survey is only one data set that is referred to; if anything the most recent data adds to the urgency of the issues behind this initiative.

It is true that the 2006 population census data shows that Tasmania's population has grown with the majority of the increase in the 55 and above age groups.

Demographic work indicates that within two years in Tasmania the number of people leaving the workforce will be greater than the number entering it, creating massive challenges for staff recruitment and retention.

Right now, 86% of jobs in Australia require a post-Year 10 qualification and in Tasmania only 47% of the workforce has that level of qualification.

Tasmania Tomorrow addresses a number of issues confronting Tasmania including skills shortages, low productivity, poor retention and completion rates, and low levels of post-school qualifications. These are just some of the reasons why post-school reforms are necessary to ensure that more Tasmanians have every opportunity to stay in education and training and gain a meaningful qualification.

12. How flexible will you be in how the model will develop?

The model is by no means a 'done deal.' 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.

13. Can desired improvement be effected within the current system with better partnerships and communication between Colleges and TAFE?

Currently there are partnerships between colleges and TAFE in certain situations creating VET options for some students. The intention of the initiative is for *all* young people to have access to a range of learning options which meets their aspirations and suits their learning styles best. Discussions between TAFE and College personnel on the possibilities and opportunities under the new arrangements are beginning to happen now.

14. How do we ensure that we do not 'drop the ball' as we move through the change?

The government will see this change through. There are major state economic and social issues and implications in addition to the educational ones that are driving this change.

Considerable effort is going into a campaign to educate the community and to raise awareness of the need to improve outcomes for students. This will need to be ongoing.

The new organisations will commence from January 2009. However, 2009 will be a transition year as Colleges will be completing programs for students enrolled in 2008. It is also possible that the polytechnic and academy will evolve into their final structure over time (as patterns of enrolment, etc emerge).