



**COMMENTS TO THE PRODUCTIVITY COMMISSION DRAFT REPORT ON
VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING WORKFORCE
March 2011**

Background to Response

Community Colleges Australia (CCA) requested input from its members on a number of key information requests/draft recommendations outlined in the draft report. The responses received have formed the basis of this brief response to the draft report.

Data Provision (sample size of 1)

Data on enrolments in TAA40104 and TAE40110 in 2010					
Individual students enrolled in TAA & TAE	Total number of unit enrolments	Unit completions recording "Competent" outcome	Unit completions recording "RPL Granted" outcome	Units carried over to 2011 study "Continuing Student" Outcome	Units recording a "withdrawn or not yet competent" outcome
363	3241	2736 (84.4%)	175 (6.4%)	219 (8%)	111 (3.4%)

Qualifications in TAA40104 and TAE40110 issued in 2010			
Individual students enrolled in TAA & TAE	Enterprise Skill Sets issued	Full TAA40104 Qualification issued	Full TAE40110 Qualification issued
363	9 (2.5%)	203 (56%)	14 (3.9%)

Notes:

8% of unit enrolments are continuing students in 2011. The college delivers all year round; therefore some students from November/December would still have been completing assessment tasks into 2011.

Outcomes for full qualifications and enterprise skill sets at 62.4% do not suggest non completion for the other 37.6% of enrollees. Many students enrol in only a few units; some enrol only to complete a single unit that was not packaged in their original qualification. Unit completions total 90.8%. Withdrawals and students deemed not yet competent total only 3.4% of enrolments.

VET Practitioner Data					
Total VET practitioners currently delivering programs	VET Practitioners holding TAE40110	VET Practitioners holding TAA40104	VET Practitioners holding BSZ40198	VET Practitioners holding Assessor only units	VET Practitioners working under supervision
51	2 (3.9%)	25 (49%)	19 (37.3%)	1 (2%)	4 (7.8%)



Information Requests

The Productivity Commission enquires in its draft report as to whether VET providers are compensated for pursuing non-commercial objectives requested by governments? (overview pg LVI)

CCA and its members would suggest that compensation offered through a range of government funded programs is not always satisfactory. Learning and up-skilling for equity clients are generally the most time intensive in terms of Vet Practitioners, yet these clients have the least opportunity to make an adequate financial contribution. As the costs of VET training increases - compliance and audit fees, data management, VET practitioner salaries (see comments below), technology requirements etc - the return on clients who require more time-intensive education is diminishing to a level where it could be financially unsustainable to have these persons as students.

The Commission seeks further input on the effects of the introduction of the modern award on industrial relations settings & performance incentives in private VET providers (Chapter 7 pg 7.38).

In considering the make-up of the VET workforce, and the Commission's findings regarding motivation for entering the VET workforce, it is unlikely that a performance management system linking pay to performance would necessarily be effective. The known "nature" of VET trainers and their motivations for engaging in this role suggests a low propensity currently for performance incentives. The Commission report notes that a significant proportion of current VET Trainers are mature workers who see VET teaching as a means of semi-retirement and an opportunity to share their knowledge and skills (pg 7.25). It is unlikely that such a group will be motivated by performance based incentives and could become a barrier to their engagement.

This may not always apply in a future workforce where younger entrants could be enticed by the concept of performance incentives. However, it is possible that both current and future VET trainers may be motivated by a clear pathway of professional development. Such pathways could provide motivation for improving performance and outcomes and could recognise those who improve their skills and knowledge. It could also be linked to pay scales.

Chapter 8: Improving the workforce's capability

Community College members' senior staff who have worked in the adult education sector for nearly 20 years and who have worked with many trainers over that time observe:

- The Diploma of TAA is designed to equip people with the required skills and knowledge to provide leadership in training and assessment practice with specific emphasis on the development of workplace cultures of learning and development that are appropriate and applicable within an RTO. This qualification is more relevant to managers within the training organisation, rather than trainers/assessors.
- If the basis upon which the Productivity Commission suggests a Diploma qualification as the minimum standard for delivery of the Cert IV in TAE is a perception that this will lead to higher quality, CCA members would not agree. Holding a higher qualification will not necessarily lead to the trainer having capacity to deliver a higher quality TAE program. Quality delivery stems from employing the right trainer in the first place (TAE qualified, knowledgeable, experienced and committed to helping his/her students achieve a quality outcome) and that the trainer be supported by sound, compliant

systems and support services. The management of the RTO are as much a part of quality provision as the 'on-the-ground' trainer.

- There was some concern expressed that in regional/rural areas where there is already a shortage of VET professionals, insisting on a Diploma could add additional costs without offering substantially improved outcomes. It was considered that when the TAA/TAE is delivered as per the qualification's design, people should be adequately training and skilled to deliver VET material.
- CCA notes that there are many other entry level qualifications which are not mentioned in the report, such as Vocational Graduate Certificates in VET offered in higher education. These too are satisfactory entry level qualifications and often have the Certificate IV in Training and Assessment embedded allowing graduates to meet the requirements of the AQTF.
- CCA advises that there has been some feedback about TAA qualifications that may have been "too easily gained". In the past member colleges of CCA have experienced interviewing potential staff who list TAA as a qualification who have admitted at interview that they had insufficient knowledge in teaching and who had gained little from their TAA course. Whilst these are limited cases it has caused some colleges to seek trainers with formal university qualifications in teaching adults, and university-level studies in adult skills acquisition (TESOL being quoted as one example).

Registration Schemes

A simple registration scheme, which allows VET trainers to register and describe their skills, qualifications, motivations, industry experience, training experience and demographic information etc, could assist in gathering data on the VET workforce that the Productivity Commission has noted as currently being insufficient. A simple registration scheme could be linked to a recruitment scheme (similar to Linked In) which could offer an additional motivation for trainers to provide their data.

The Commission seeks views on the appropriateness of increasing from 2 to 5 years the transition period during which existing VET practitioners should be required to gain a full Certificate IV.

CCA considers that a well delivered RPL program to a practicing VET trainer/assessor should not take longer than two years to complete. And that the requests recommended in 8.4 are reasonable and the timeframe appropriate, especially if the TAE40110 program is so developed to dovetail with supervised practice.

Recommendation 8.6: Governments should assess the adequacy of funding provisions for ongoing professional development of their VET workforce.

Research skills and skills in using research should also be included in the list identified in the draft report. There are few opportunities for VET practitioners to access the professional development (PD) recommended in this list. Structured programs to allow such PD could provide the basis for a performance management scheme and a structured career pathway.

CCA contends that PD has been underfunded in the past. A quality professional development scheme, linked to clear career pathways is essential to the future of a skilled and stable VET workforce.