

## Community Colleges Australia Upper Hunter By-Election Background Briefing 28 April 2021

Community Colleges Australia (CCA) requests the New South Wales Government to **recognise, support and empower & enable** the state's not-for-profit community education providers, who are also called "community colleges" or adult and community education (ACE) providers.

*Each year, three ACE providers enrol almost 1,000 students in the Upper Hunter state electorate: Tamworth Community College, Atwea College (formerly WEA Hunter) and Central Coast Community College, which incorporates Hunter-V-Tec.*

### New South Wales Adult and Community Education

Not-for-profit ACE providers represent an important force in the NSW training landscape. Almost 40 community education providers provide post-secondary education and training to New South Wales residents, workers, students and communities. In 2019, NSW community providers delivered accredited vocational education and training (VET) to **14.8% (204,965 learners) of the state's total of 1,387,750 students** (which includes fee-for-service as well as government-funded students), *just over two thirds the number delivered by TAFE* (21.8%, with 302,900 students).<sup>1</sup> NSW community providers also delivered government-funded VET to **32,160 students in 2019, 7.8% of the state total** (TAFE delivered to 62.5%, representing 258,820 students).<sup>2</sup>

### ACE Providers Reach Vulnerable and Disadvantaged Learners

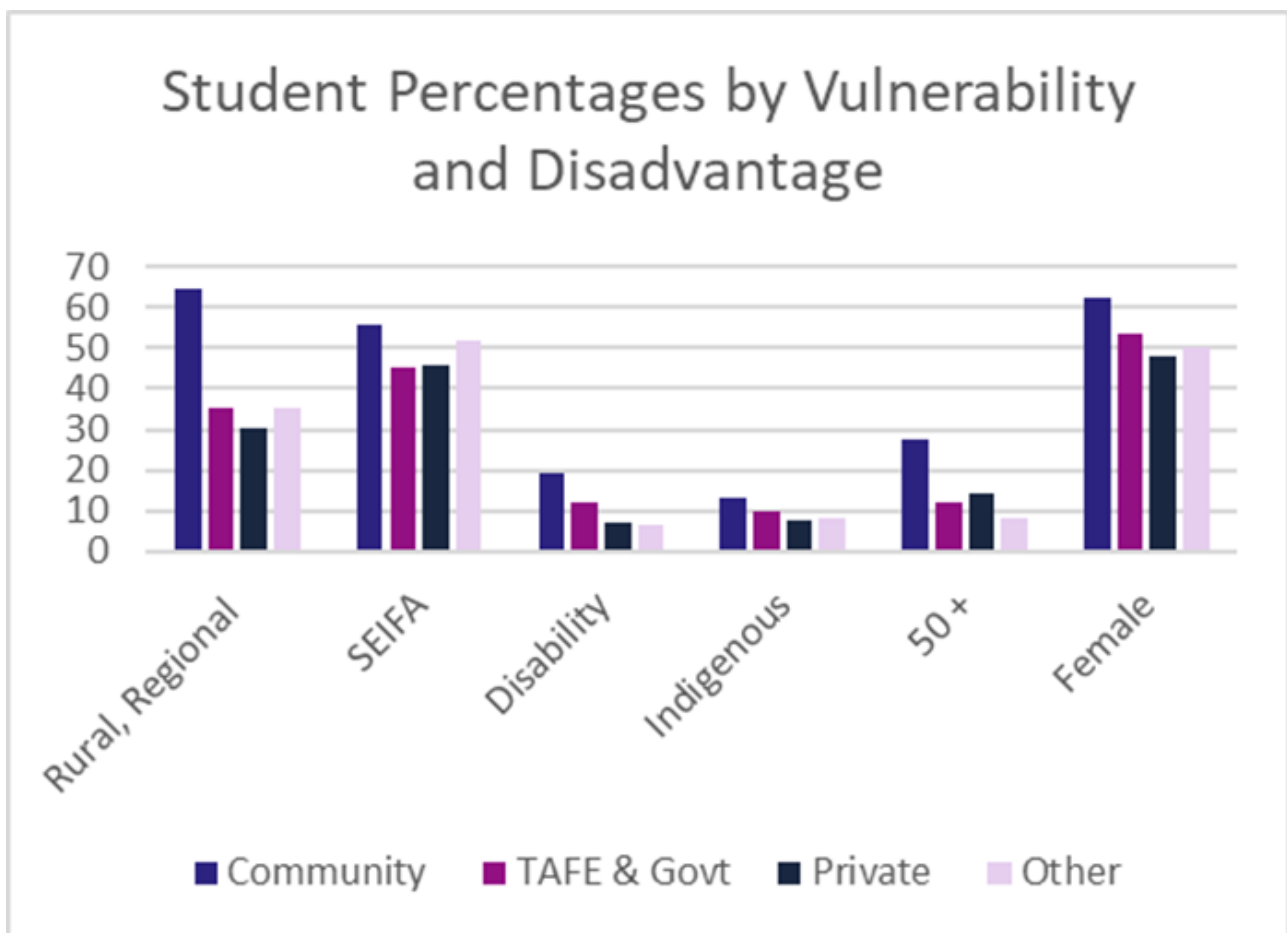
NSW community providers specialise in delivering education and training to many of the state's most vulnerable and disadvantaged learners.

***On almost all tracked measures of vulnerability and disadvantage, NSW ACE providers significantly over-perform compared to TAFE, private for-profit and other providers, disproportionately catering for VET students from the state's most disadvantaged groups and regions.***<sup>3</sup>

This achievement results from the funding provided by the NSW Government combined with the ability of NSW ACE providers to use the funds effectively and successfully to meet desired outcomes to "guarantee training for key equity groups".<sup>4</sup> In 2019, NSW ACE providers achieved the following percentage proportions of their government-funded VET student populations:

- **19.2% students with a disability**, compared to 11.7% of TAFE and government providers, 6.4% of private for-profit providers and 5% of other VET providers;
- **64.5% regional and rural students**, compared to 35.1% of TAFE and government providers, 30.1% of private for-profit providers and 35.5% of other providers;

- **55.7% most disadvantaged students** in the bottom two SEIFA quintiles, compared to 45.5% of TAFE and government providers, 45.7% of private for-profit providers and 51.7% of other providers.<sup>5</sup>
- **13.2% non-English speaking background students**, compared to 21.1% of TAFE and government providers, 17.2% of private for-profit providers and 6.7% of other providers – this is the only student population that NSW ACE providers do not top the state, in large part because there are so many providers and students in regional areas, where there are fewer migrants.
- **27.8% older (age 50+) students**, compared to 12.2% of TAFE and government providers, 14.4% of private for-profit providers and 7.9% of other providers.
- **13.1% Indigenous students**, compared to 9.7% of TAFE and government providers, 7.6% of private for-profit providers and 8.4% of other providers.<sup>6</sup>
- **62.3% female students**, compared to 53.3% of TAFE, 47.9% of private for-profit providers, and 50.2% of other providers – ACE providers engage in fewer traditional male-dominated programs, including trade apprenticeships, and deliver proportionately more female-dominated certificates such as Individual Care, Child Care and Hospitality.<sup>7</sup>



# ACE OUTCOMES

Government Funded VET in New South Wales 2019



## POST TRAINING



81.2%

of students employed or in further training

## IN EMPLOYMENT



42.7%

of students moved from unemployment to employment after training

## JOB STATUS



62.3%

of students had a better job after training

## REASON FOR TRAINING



83.4%

of students achieved major purpose for training

## SATISFACTION WITH TRAINING



90.9%

of students were satisfied with the overall quality of training

## Delivering Employment and Training Outcomes

NSW ACE providers proportionately engage more vulnerable and disadvantaged learners than any other type of provider and deliver similar or better training and employment outcomes.

Highly skilled in reaching disadvantaged groups, the innovative approaches of community providers have strong impacts on regional economic development and social cohesion.

Embedded in their communities, NSW ACE providers deliver local solutions for local people through targeted "place-based" training.

NSW ACE providers support the Premier's policy priorities to: provide high quality education, break the cycle of disadvantage and contribute to a strong economy.

### Community Colleges Australia

Community Colleges Australia (CCA) is the peak national body that represents community-owned not-for-profit education and training providers. Our vision is for dynamic and vibrant communities informed and empowered through learning. Our members provide flexible and dynamic education and training opportunities to individuals, groups and businesses. These activities help build self esteem, re-engage "missing" learners and create and sustain social and community networks, all of which help reinforce and sustain their communities.

## A Special Role in Community Services

**Other education, training and community services:** NSW ACE providers also work closely with small business, as shown by the “Tech Savvy for Small Business” program, where NSW ACE providers delivered training to thousands of the state’s small businesses.<sup>8</sup> As well as accredited VET, NSW community providers provide non-accredited and personal development education and training, which engages many thousands of the state’s residents in learning. Most ACE providers complement training activities by delivering other community services – for young people, migrants, Indigenous Australians<sup>9</sup>, older Australians<sup>10</sup>, farmers, entrepreneurs and businesses, people with disabilities, people facing mental health challenges, women<sup>11</sup> and other groups.

**Special assistance secondary schools:** More than one-third of NSW community education providers run special assistance secondary schools that cater for marginalised and disadvantaged secondary students. The development of these schools constitutes a notable innovation of the community education providers, which have been transforming their business models to cope with the state’s changing social, economic and educational needs.

**Social capital:** Because of its community base, the New South Wales not-for-profit community education sector is a significant builder of social capital, particularly in regional, rural and outer metropolitan locations where local educational institutions are part of the “glue” that holds communities together.<sup>12</sup>

## What Does the NSW ACE Sector Need?

### RECOGNISE

#### Legislative Recognition through a new Government Structure

- Recognise the valuable work undertaken by the NSW community education sector through an official NSW State Government structure set up by Parliament, similar to the previous Board of Adult and Community Education, and possibly modelled on Victoria’s Adult, Community and Further Education (ACFE) Board. The State Government’s 2020 ACE Policy Statement is a tremendous beginning on which to build.<sup>13</sup>

#### National Recognition of Adult and Community Education

- The State of New South Wales needs to work with the Commonwealth and other states and territories to update and reissue the 2008 national Ministerial Statement on Adult Community Education (ACE).

#### Establish State Targets for VET Provided by Community Organisations

- Maintain community-provided VET to a minimum 20% of the total VET market and 15% of government-funded VET, for the NSW VET system to remain diverse, relevant and sustainable.



Only with a proper balance of not-for-profit for-purpose VET organisations can the state's training system maintain stability to address the state's future training needs.

## SUPPORT

### Infrastructure and Operations

- Supply ongoing maintenance and operations funding of at least \$100,000 per year for each NSW not-for-profit community education provider to build on the successful small one-off programs the NSW Government has provided in 2019, 2020 and 2021.
- Establish a replenishing facilities funding program to undertake construction of new facilities and major renovations of existing facilities.

### VET Program Funding

- Increase funding by 50% for the NSW Adult and Community Education (ACE) Program – which supports not-for-profit community education providers to deliver to disadvantaged groups – to at least \$33 million/year, as a highly effective investment in the state's future.<sup>14</sup>
- Annually index ACE Program funding at a minimum to inflation plus population growth.
- Quarantine ACE Program funding solely for not-for-profit for-purpose ACE providers.
- Extend ACE Program contract timelines from one year to at least three years to provide certainty, flexibility and greater innovation in delivery.
- Re-allocate some of the Smart and Skilled funding from other VET providers (particularly the private for-profit providers) to not-for-profit community providers, especially in locations of greatest social and economic need such as regional and rural NSW and Western Sydney.
- Support and acknowledge the crucial role accessibility and availability of foundational skills – reading, writing, numeracy, work-ready and digital literacy – has for the state's residents, and the vital role that ACE providers and TAFE play in servicing this need.
- Increase funding for foundation skills, adult basic education and teaching of English as a second language, because of their intensive and high-cost nature required for the lowest educational level of learners and the total “volume of learning” required in foundation skills programs.
- Recognise and support the core role that ACE providers play in providing these skills locally – providing pathways and building the strength of communities and economies.
- Develop a targeted program delivered by ACE providers to assist the state's older workers in retraining and employment skills.

## Governance, Leadership and Professional Development

- Fund organisational governance support and ACE sector-specific professional development to at least \$500,000 per annum, which will ensure ACE providers can fulfil their organisational purposes and achieve sustainability, with well-trained staff and strong governance structures.

## Quality of Teaching

- Re-establish and provide core funding to State Government-led professional development VET teaching, similar to the Victorian VET Development Centre (VDC).

## EMPOWER AND ENABLE

### Regional Economic Development

- Create a special section of Infrastructure NSW be set up as a “NSW Community Education Development Corporation” to ensure that the state’s not-for-profit community education providers have opportunities – and access to funds and land – to take their full role in the Sydney urban growth centres.
- Establish a regional community education economic development fund be established to assist the state’s not-for-profit community education providers to engage in innovative and community-focussed economic development projects.

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## Footnotes

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<sup>1</sup> Source: National Centre for Vocational Education and Research, <https://www.ncver.edu.au/research-and-statistics/data/databuilder#tva-students> (2019).

<sup>2</sup> Source: National Centre for Vocational Education and Research, <https://www.ncver.edu.au/research-and-statistics/data/databuilder#tva-students> (2019).

<sup>3</sup> Other training providers “refer to secondary schools, non-government enterprises, education/training businesses or centres, professional associations, industry associations, equipment/product manufacturers and suppliers, and other training providers not elsewhere classified.” (See <https://www.ncver.edu.au/research-and-statistics/publications/all-publications/government-funded-students-and-courses-2019>, p. 24.)

<sup>4</sup> The calendar year 2019 figures are consistent with the 2016, 2017 and 2018 government-funded VET data. See *Vulnerable and Disadvantaged Students of NSW Not-for-Profit Community Education Providers: Analysis of 2018 Data*, 25 September 2019, <https://cca.edu.au/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/Vulnerable-and-Disadvantaged-Students-of-NSW-Community-Education-Providers-Analysis-of-2018-Data.pdf>.

<sup>5</sup> The SEIFA index of disadvantage is calculated by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) by separating the Australian population into 5 “quintiles”, with each quintile representing 20% of the NSW total population. See <https://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/mf/2033.0.55.001>.

<sup>6</sup> In 2016, Indigenous Australians made up 2.9% of the NSW population; see <http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/Lookup/by%20Subject/2071.0~2016~Main%20Features~Aboriginal%20and%20Torres%20Strait%20Islander%20Population%20Data%20Summary~10>. Indigenous Australians participate in VET at a much higher rate than non-Indigenous Australians – approximately double; see <https://www.ncver.edu.au/publications/publications/all-publications/indigenous-vet-participation-completion-and-outcomes-change-over-the-past-decade>.

<sup>7</sup> Although women are not necessarily a disadvantaged group, they can be economically vulnerable, which has occurred through the uneven economic and job loss impacts due to the Coronavirus pandemic, with a higher proportion of women (8.1%) than men (6.2%) losing their jobs between March and April 2020. See “COVID’s toll on women – why Australia needs a Gender Impact Statement,” by Trish Bergin, *Broad Agenda*, 5 August 2020, <http://www.broadagenda.com.au/home/we-need-a-gender-lens-on-public-policy-more-than-ever/>; and “Progress towards economic equality for women in Australia has been wiped out by the coronavirus,” *SBS News*, 18 August 2020, <https://www.sbs.com.au/news/progress-towards-economic-equality-for-women-in-australia-has-been-wiped-out-by-the-coronavirus>.

<sup>8</sup> See the CCA submission at <https://cca.edu.au/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/Tech-Savvy-for-Small-Business-28March2018-final.pdf>.

<sup>9</sup> See NSW Community Colleges and Aboriginal Economic Development: Statement by Community Colleges Australia, March 2018; available at <https://cca.edu.au/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/NSW-Aboriginal-Economic-Development-Statement-by-CCA-27March2018.pdf>.

<sup>10</sup> In addition to reaching more than its share of NSW residents aged 50+, the wildly popular “Tech Savvy Seniors” program run by NSW ACE providers is heavily oversubscribed; see [https://www.training.nsw.gov.au/ace/tech\\_savvy\\_seniors.html](https://www.training.nsw.gov.au/ace/tech_savvy_seniors.html).

<sup>11</sup> Read about the importance of Australia’s ACE providers in training women: <https://cca.edu.au/covid-recession-hit-women-harder-than-men-says-grattan-institute/>.

<sup>12</sup> “Social capital” is defined by the OECD as “networks together with shared norms, values and understandings that facilitate co-operation within or among groups; see “What is social capital?”, <https://www.oecd.org/insights/37966934.pdf>; and Adult Learning Australia, “Adult Learning and Civic Participation”, <https://ala.asn.au/civic-participation/>.

<sup>13</sup> See <https://cca.edu.au/cca-welcomes-release-of-nsw-adult-and-community-education-policy-statement/>.

<sup>14</sup> For details of the ACE Program: [https://www.training.nsw.gov.au/ace/ace\\_program.html](https://www.training.nsw.gov.au/ace/ace_program.html).