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Association
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TAFE Workforce: The Continuous Transition

A VTA Discussion Paper

Arising from the VTA Search Forum "The Future of the TAFE Workforce"
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FOREWORD

The Future of the TAFE Workforce Search Forum was an initiative of the Victorian TAFE Association (VTA) in response to the outcomes of the 'Trends in the TAFE Workforce: A Research Report' published in March 2000, together with the increasing pressures on TAFE to address the ageing profile of the workforce and the challenges facing the sector in seeking to attract and retain high quality teaching and support staff.

The Search Forum has provided an opportunity for key stakeholders to have a substantial influence on the sector through their participation in the process and provides a useful resource in the lead up to the Ministerial Statement on Building Knowledge and Skills for the Future due to be announced in March, 2002. It is expected that the Statement will pave the way for a more strategically focussed human resource development policy for Victorian TAFE.

I would extend a sincere thank you to all who participated in the Forum, particularly the introductory speakers and workshop facilitators. The VTA acknowledges the excellent contribution made by Kaye Schofield, Director Kaye Schofield and Associates, in the planning and facilitation of the Forum and the drafting of the outcome Paper.

The VTA extends its thanks to the Victorian Office of Post Compulsory Education, Training and Employment for its support in sponsoring the Forum.

For those interested readers, copies of the power point presentations made by the key speakers are available by contacting the VTA on tel (03) 9417 2677 or e-mail at enquiries@vta.vic.edu.au.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Foreword	1
Table of Contents	2
Preface	3
Introduction	5
Looking for alignment	7
Alignment with labour market changes and client demand	7
Alignment with government policy priorities	8
Why renew the TAFE workforce?	11
External reasons for renewal	11
TAFE workforce characteristics	12
New forms of work organisation	13
Who is responsible for leading workforce renewal?	14
What might the TAFE workforce look like after renewal?	16
Who needs to be involved?	19
What systems and structures are required?	20
An enabling policy environment	20
Better recruitment practices	21
Commitment to learning and development	21
New career opportunities	22
Improved workforce planning	22
How will success be measured?	24
How to start and sustain workforce renewal?	25
Conclusion	26
Recommendations of the Search Forum	27
Beyond a 3 year timeframe	33

PREFACE

In 1999 the TAFE Staff Development Advisory Committee in the Office of Post Compulsory Education, Training and Employment commissioned a series of strategic research projects to identify and respond to Human Resource Development issues likely to impact on Victorian TAFE Institutes. One of these issues was workforce management and development.

The Committee commissioned research to investigate, identify and describe the major trends in the recruitment, commitment and maintenance of the workforce for TAFE Institutes in Victoria for the next decade. At that time, this was an area that had not previously been systematically researched and documented.

The resulting report, *Trends in the Victorian TAFE Institute Workforce: A Research Report*, was published in March 2000.¹ This study identified characteristics of TAFE Institute workforces, patterns of change over recent years, and individual Institute profiles. From this data emerged some critical issues about workforce development and planning strategies, recruitment and the maintenance of quality in learning outcomes and services. It also identified a shift in the mix of Institute workforces towards growing numbers of contract and sessional staff.

The report identified the way in which the world of work is changing, the skill requirements that these changes imply, and what they might mean for work organisation and workforce development in the Victorian TAFE system. Four main issues were discussed:

- The impact of technology on the way work is done, with whom and when.
- The increasing need for flexibility in the workforce, achieved through contractual and other working arrangements.
- The value of organisational knowledge and the way it is developed and managed.
- The requirement for less segmentation in terms of work roles, and for a more team-based approach to whole-of-process management and accountability.

¹ Office of Post Compulsory Education, Training and Employment (2000) "Trends in the Victorian TAFE Institute Workforce: A Research Report", a TAFE Staff Development Advisory Committee Project.

Against this background and with rising interest in TAFE workforce issues growing, the Victorian TAFE Association (VTA) initiated and facilitated a Search Forum in August 2001 on the future of the Victorian TAFE workforce. The Forum was sponsored by the Office of Employment, Training and Tertiary Education (ETTE).

70 stakeholders contributed to the Forum. Participants were drawn from all TAFE Institutes, Universities with TAFE Divisions, other education and training providers, industry bodies, employer associations, ETTE and other Government Departments, Trade Unions and Research Institutions with an interest in workforce issues.

This Discussion Paper represents the views of those who participated in the Search Forum. It offers a snapshot of some key TAFE workforce problems and some potential solutions. Its purpose is to provide a starting point for discussion about what effective workforce management and development might look like in TAFE in the future and what action might most usefully be taken now to achieve individual, group, organisational and system excellence.

INTRODUCTION

TAFE's key role is to develop the skills and potentials of individuals, enterprises and communities, and to contribute to the social and economic progress of Victoria. To fulfil this role, it needs to perform at the highest level. The industries and citizens of Victoria deserve nothing less than organisational excellence.

Many factors determine whether TAFE achieves organisational excellence. Good governance, leadership, sound strategic planning, enabling technologies, efficient and effective management

In the social sector, as in business and government, performance is the ultimate test of an organisation.

Peter F. Drucker

and operations, sufficient financial resources and productive relationships will all play their part in ensuring quality service delivery to individual and enterprise clients. These success factors rely upon the work of nearly 13,000 TAFE² staff on whom organisational performance depends.

For more than a decade, it has been TAFE professionals individually and collectively who have designed, experienced, driven and managed unprecedented levels of change. These changes have been evident in the organisation of TAFE work and in the social, technical, physical and economic environment within which that work is performed. They have been driven by changing client expectations and preferences, a rapidly transforming labour market, new technologies and by government policies and priorities.

These changes have largely focused on two areas: increasing efficiency by cutting costs, and achieving workforce flexibility. Substantial productivity improvements have been achieved. On just one measure of productivity, equivalent full-time staffing in TAFE Institutes has declined sharply since 1996 while student contact hours have increased.³ Greater workforce flexibility has certainly been achieved, creating new work organisation that includes a large contingent workforce. This presents new and different challenges for human resource services and professional development.

2 Of whom 60% are Teachers (43% tenured, 25% contract, 32% casual) ETTE Annualised Staffing Returns 2000

3 See Office of Post Compulsory Education, Training and Employment (2000), p.30

Without doubt, changes made in recent years have in some instances come at a price in terms of staff morale and lack of loyalty, trust, and insufficient investment in workforce development and planning.

TAFE in Victoria needs to deal effectively with the challenges that lie ahead and to look for new ways to improve organisational performance.

Like all organisations, TAFE has undoubtedly entered the era of continuous transformation. Despite a wish that may be held by some for a moratorium on change, this is simply not feasible if TAFE is to be an

integral part of the knowledge economy and a learning society. TAFE will need to lead continuous change, to learn rapidly, to reflect, to innovate and respond quickly.

TAFE professionals are committed to working with the students, enterprises and communities they serve. A well-led and managed workforce, rich with talented and committed people, remains the most important TAFE asset and the best prospect for achieving organisational excellence in the future. This must become a priority for TAFE.

This new corporate culture gives rise to a fundamental paradox: downsizing has weakened the traditional ties of job security and loyalty that bind employees to firms, at the same time decentralized decision making and cross-functional teams increase firms' dependence on human capital. Specifically, companies have lower incentives to invest in long-term employee development, yet the new organizational practices depend more heavily than ever on a well-trained workforce.

*Human Capital Sub-Project Report,
Understanding Intangible Assets
Project, The Brookings Institution,
Washington DC*

At the same time, understanding of the changing labour market and client needs and expectations is frequently based on impression and individual experiences. The absence of good quality workforce data and the lack of robust market intelligence in some areas makes it difficult to plan for, manage and measure alignment between the demand for TAFE services and the characteristics of the TAFE workforce. TAFE managers report that they find it increasingly difficult to anticipate and plan for new skill formation strategies and therefore to structure their workforces accordingly. Current planning, profiling and purchasing mechanisms are widely seen as inadequate for the task of capturing the dynamic nature of labour market changes at the enterprise, industry or regional level.

Alignment with government policy priorities

While the general contours of public policy for VET in the first years of the 21st century are reasonably clear, the specifics in relation to TAFE as the public provider and its role within VET are still taking shape. Substantial policy analysis is currently underway in this area and greater clarity is expected early in 2002.

The Search Forum indicated that there is considerable uncertainty across TAFE about the priorities it is expected to pursue as the public provider, the means at its disposal to achieve them, and the constraints and opportunities arising from government policy. At least three factors appear to be contributing to this uncertainty:

- The level and utilisation of resources available to TAFE Institutes are heavily controlled by policy settings that are not fully understood across all TAFE Institutes.
- A general failure to distinguish between those aspects of workforce management and development which are policy-dependent and those that are not.
- A failure to distinguish between strategic HR and operational HR.

Meredith Sussex, Director Office of ETTE in her address to the Forum, explored the alignment between the TAFE workforce and policy settings from a historical perspective. The key points from her presentation are summarised in Exhibit 2.

Exhibit 2: Summary of presentation to VTA Search Forum
by Meredith Sussex, 21.8.01

Period	The policy priorities	The workforce
1980s	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Vocational education as second chance learning - TAFE framed in educational paradigm - Responsive to community needs - industry part of the community - Manufacturing 27% of employment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Industry personnel trained as teachers - Support staff enhancing campus experience - Strong institutional support via curriculum development - Permanent workforce centrally employed
1990s	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Industry driven - Competency-based training - Shift to the service sector - Purchaser/ provider split - Flexibility and competition - Maintenance of effort/ growth through efficiency 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Local employment/enterprise bargaining - Top-down management - just do it - 'Clover-leaf' workforce - Softening of qualification requirements 'trainers' not teachers - Withdrawal of curriculum and staff development support - Minimal workforce planning
21st Century	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Year 12 or equivalent completion - The innovation economy - Employability skills - Workplace learning - Continual skill upgrading and retraining - E-Learning - Community-building 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Retention/ replenishment - Skills for workplace currency - New focus on teaching and learning - Balancing quality, flexibility and workloads - Empowering professional teams - Staff learning and development - Building status, standing and distinctiveness of TAFE

Source: Summarised from presentation by Meredith Sussex, to VTA Search Forum 21.8.01

This demonstrates that workforce management, development and its requirements shift with the policy priorities and the evolution of TAFE.

The Search Forum expressed a strong aspiration for greater policy clarity and communication at both state and national level about the future role of TAFE within the VET system, about the basis on which governments will fund TAFE in the future and on competition policies within VET. This view coincides with matters concerning TAFE raised by the Kirby Review,⁴ to which the Victorian Government is currently actively responding.

However, the Forum debate suggests that there is much that can be done right now to address a range of TAFE workforce issues. Policy settings matter of course, especially on funding, but they are not the only factors shaping the TAFE workforce.

⁴ *Ministerial Review of Post Compulsory Education and Training Pathways in Victoria* (2000) (Chair: Mr Peter Kirby), Department of Education, Employment & Training, August, p.18

The structure of the following sections was drawn from a framework developed by General Electric to guide a transformation process at the company, cited in Ulrich, D. (1998) 'A New Mandate for Human Resources', Harvard Business Review, January-February, pp.124-134

At this stage, there is no shared view regarding workforce renewal across TAFE in Victoria. Rather there is a growing sense that there are specific problems that will need to be addressed if TAFE performance is to continuously improve. Participants in the Search Forum identified many reasons for renewal. These can be organised into three groups:

- External reasons for renewal.
- TAFE workforce characteristics.
- New forms of work organisation.

External reasons for renewal

The emerging significance of the knowledge economy will challenge TAFE to attract new clients and to provide new and innovative educational services in new ways across new occupations and industries. New 'corporate universities' will join existing competitors – higher education and private providers – to create a stronger competitive environment in vocational education and training in the knowledge economy. VET may increasingly occur through schools and adult and community education.

A new policy context for TAFE exists, emphasising the importance of the public provider, capacity building, community, cross-sectoral and whole-of-government partnerships, and these new emphases will require different approaches and new organisational capabilities.

Technology offers many exciting opportunities for e-Learning and e-Business, and TAFE needs a workforce able to enhance practice sooner rather than later.

More demanding clients and stakeholders expect both quality and flexibility. Concern about the quality and currency/ relevance of teaching and learning is on the rise, and clients and stakeholders want to be assured of the quality of the services delivered by TAFE staff, but not at the expense of flexibility.

TAFE workforce characteristics

The current Australian workforce is ageing and retiring earlier, which affects the pool of available labour. Victorian TAFE must take a lead in the race for quality recruits and retention strategies. Lack of recruitment in the 1990s has 'hollowed out' the TAFE staff profile and natural succession has been disrupted as a consequence.

Difficulties are anticipated in recruiting the best and the brightest to TAFE in the future, especially in regional Victoria. Lack of rewards and incentives for TAFE staff, perceptions that pay levels are uncompetitive, the absence of robust succession planning and flat career structures, combined with limited career and professional development opportunities for

TAFE staff, especially for sessional and contract staff, will make it hard for TAFE to remain competitive and an employer of choice in some but not all locations or functional areas.

Low staff morale, a 'jaded' workforce and unhealthy levels of staff cynicism are evident in parts of TAFE. There seem to be low levels of trust between management and staff in some areas, and some poor people management practices have not helped the development of relationships based on trust. There is a belief (if not hard data) that there is a mismatch between the current skill profiles of staff and the skill profile that will be required for the future. The industrial relations settings in TAFE Victoria are not generally seen to be collaborative. A highly contingent (sessional and fixed term) workforce is seen to reflect a preference for flexibility. Adversarial relationships in some workplaces are evident. There is a view that the industrial framework imposes constraints on the ability to achieve organisational excellence through workforce renewal.

Change has a way of scaring people – scaring them to inaction. HR's role as a change agent is to replace resistance with resolve, planning with results, and fear of change with excitement about its possibilities.

Ulrich, D. (1998) A New Mandate for Human Resources' Harvard Business Review, January-February, pp.124-134

New forms of work organisation

New forms of work organisation in the knowledge economy include changes in the way work is organised within and between TAFE Institutes.

Within Institutes, the role of TAFE teachers is changing quite fundamentally. The core-periphery model of staffing, multi-skilling, work intensification, increased use of technology to support teaching and learning and new concepts of professionalism have produced many TAFE staff who are experiencing difficulties in adapting to new roles and work practices. Interestingly, the Forum also identified staff boredom as an issue arising from the current approaches to job design and organisational structures.

The individuality and diversity of each of Victoria's 18 TAFE providers has generated 18 separate and segmented TAFE workforces. New technologies are becoming increasingly important. Like-minded organisations are learning to practice collaborative synergies to achieve competitive advantage. The value of knowledge management is becoming more fully appreciated, and intellectual and human capital are increasingly seen as some of TAFE's greatest assets. This context offers new opportunities for re-thinking work organisation within TAFE Institutes and relationships between them. As yet these have been explored in only the most rudimentary way.

Overall, the Forum identified a need to move in a planned way from the workforce reduction strategy of the past as a consequence of downsizing, rationalising, outsourcing and amalgamating of TAFEs to a TAFE growth strategy (changing or extending the mix of labour, capital, knowledge and technology, and changing or extending services, products and locations).⁵

The key element in workforce renewal is by initiating and implementing the 'Employer of Choice' approach.

If significant workforce renewal is to be pursued, then staff within individual Institutes and across the spectrum of TAFE need to be involved in the change process, understand the reasons for it and have confidence in those who are leading and managing it. Additionally, the change must offer demonstrable benefits to them individually and to TAFE in both the short and longer terms.

⁵ This conceptualisation was put forward by Jeff Malley in his presentation to the VTA Search Forum on 21.8.01

WHO IS RESPONSIBLE FOR LEADING WORKFORCE RENEWAL?

Leadership will be essential in any efforts to renew the TAFE workforce. Yet it is not clear at this stage who is prepared and well-placed to assume leadership responsibilities. The answer is likely to depend on the scope and nature of renewal that TAFE ultimately commits to implement.

At one level the answer seems relatively straightforward. TAFE Institutes are the employers of TAFE staff and it is the responsibility of Institute Councils to determine whether workforce renewal is required within their Institute as part of their overall strategy for the Institute. If so, then they are also responsible for setting the strategic directions for renewal, harnessing the resources for it, leading it and ensuring that management delivers the required results.

Institutes are keen to protect their autonomy in relation to their individual workforces, and they emphasise their right to organise and structure their workforce according to the markets and communities which they operate within, consistent with their values, strategies and industrial awards/agreements. In this context, no single renewal program is likely to work well across all TAFE Institutes in Victoria. One size is unlikely to fit all.

Despite this assertion of Institute autonomy, Institute managers believe there are many external constraints on their ability to renew their workforces in the ways they see necessary. The Forum identified three main constraints:

- Perceived failure of governments to recognise TAFE as a critical part of an enabling service industry and invest in it at a level commensurate with its contribution;
- The current funding model, it is argued, limits investment in workforce development and innovative approaches to renewal; and
- Outmoded industrial relations settings, including awards and work practices, which are seen to limit TAFE's ability to respond quickly enough to changing circumstances.

If these (or other factors) are proved to constrain workforce renewal at Institute level, they will need to be addressed.

Forum participants did identify substantial opportunities from TAFE Institutes acting collaboratively to support workforce renewal in areas such as:

- Enabling staff movement and offering career pathways across Institutes;
- Sharing of expertise, resources and emergent solutions across Institutes to facilitate workforce renewal; and
- Providing sessional staff with opportunities to construct a portfolio of cross-Institute work providing some income security and an incentive for Institutes acting collectively to invest in sessional staff development.

There is at this stage no clear sponsor for cross-Institute collaboration. If such collaboration is to occur, it will require some entity and/or individual to own and champion it.

The Forum participants also examined the responsibility of policy-makers within ETTE and the Victorian government for workforce renewal. Two views of this responsibility emerged.

The first suggested that the primary responsibility of ETTE is to remove the major external constraints faced by TAFE Institutes wishing to renew their workforces. With these obstacles removed, it was argued, individual Institutes would be in a position to resolve workforce issues in their own context and according to their own priorities.

A second view assigned a more proactive role to ETTE. It suggested that ETTE needed to reposition TAFE more strategically within government; affirm, recognise and advocate the value of TAFE staff; facilitate constructive discussion on workforce issues, and in some instances coordinate change. On this view, ETTE would need to develop or adapt policies which support, rather than hinder, organisational renewal and ensure that such renewal strikes a productive balance between the interests of individual Institutes, the interests of TAFE staff and the social and economic interests of Victoria more broadly, thereby facilitating the modernisation of working life.⁶

⁶ See European Union Green Paper 'Partnership for a new Organisation of Work' for further discussion on the modernisation of work, http://europa.eu.int/comm/employment_social/soc-dial/social/green_en.htm#flexib

WHAT MIGHT THE TAFE WORKFORCE LOOK LIKE AFTER RENEWAL?

Developing and communicating a credible vision for the future TAFE workforce capable of producing tangible results is a pre-condition for effective change.

While there is widespread agreement on elements of a vision, these have not yet come together to provide a compelling integrated and strategic view of the organisational and individual capabilities that TAFE will need to build for the future. The capabilities identified by the Forum included the following:

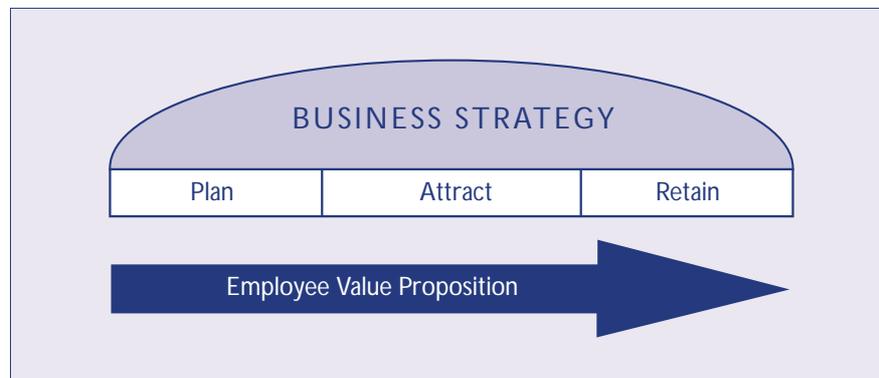
- Leaders and managers who can create an open and collaborative culture within individual Institutes and between Institutes, who can develop family friendly workplaces to encourage younger staff to join and stay in TAFE, and who can modernise work organisation and job design to provide opportunities to learn, diversify and innovate.
- Managers with the capacity to anticipate and manage the full range of workforce issues as distinct from reacting to outflow and recruitment issues.
- Staff with the technical and professional skills needed to lift the quality of TAFE teaching and learning and who are empowered to be innovative and respond flexibly to community, enterprise and individual demand.
- Staff with the ability to work positively with diversity and continuous change, to innovate, solve problems as they arise and achieve tangible results along the way.
- Staff capable of working together in cross-functional, cross-hierarchical groups for open exchange of information and development of solutions.
- The ability to partner – to form and sustain relationships with stakeholders and clients.
- Strong business development and commercial capability throughout TAFE.
- Capability to exploit the full potential of technologies for improving both teaching and learning and business processes.
- The knowledge, skills and abilities necessary to work globally and to internationalise TAFE.

A vision for Human Resource Development for the TAFE workers of the future identified at the Forum, had the following characteristics:

- Working in a strong and vibrant public sector as an employer of choice which enjoys high industry and community support.
- Comprising highly employable and cross-skilled staff who:
 - Have strong personal/professional portfolios that accredit their vocational knowledge, teaching and learning expertise and their generic skills and achievements.
 - Are confident and equipped to work with a wide variety of educational technologies at multiple locations or online within Victoria or offshore.
 - Work very flexibly in self-managing project teams or solo.
 - Receive full recognition for excellence in their professional practice that is of world-class standard.
 - Have clear personal career plans that are fully supported by their TAFE employer.
 - Are drawn from Victorian society representing the diversity of community and industry groups that TAFE serves.

Ann Whyte's (Director of Learning, TMP Worldwide Group) presentation to the Forum emphasised the need for human resource policy and practices to be located firmly within the overall business strategy. (Exhibit 3)

Exhibit 3: As the world evolves..... so must human resources



Source: TMP Worldwide, courtesy Ann Whyte, presentation to VTA Search Forum, 21/8/01.

She offered the concept of the employee value proposition, highlighting the need to think about renewal, not simply from the business perspective, but also from the employee's perspective. Here the principle of mutuality is emphasised. Exhibit 4 below suggests that employees in the future will look beyond financial benefits to a wider range of factors to do with the content of work, organisational affiliation and career when considering whether to join or remain in TAFE. On this model, the non-financial benefits may prove to be more important in employee decisions as employers increasingly compete to be an employer of choice for the best and brightest staff.

Exhibit 4: The Employee Value Proposition

Direct Financial	Indirect Financial	Work Content	Affiliation	Future/Career
Base Salary	Benefits	Variety	Organisation Commitment	Advancement
Bonus/ Incentive	Non-cash Recognition	Challenge	Work Environment	Personal Growth
Cash Recognition	Perks	Autonomy	Support	Development
Pay Process		Feedback	Culture/ Title	Security

Source: TMP Worldwide, courtesy Ann Whyte, presentation to VTA Search Forum, 21.8.01

Jeff Malley presented a framework that conceptualises workforce renewal as change management and flagged some of its key characteristics. (Exhibit 5)

Exhibit 5: Management purpose

Traditional Management	Strategic Management	Change Management
- planning and budgeting	- analyse the external environment	- create readiness for change
- organising and staffing	- analyse internal skills and resources	- create a vision for change
- controlling and problem solving	- analyse client base and competitors	- develop political and community support
- predictability and order	- develop objectives	- manage the transition
	- choose and implement strategies	- sustain the momentum

Source: Jeff Malley, presentation to VTA Search Forum, 21.8.01

WHO NEEDS TO BE INVOLVED?

There are many stakeholders with a keen interest in the ability of the TAFE workforce to contribute to TAFE's mission and the establishment of Local Learning and Employment Networks (LLENS).

The primary stakeholders identified by the forum include staff, students, ETTE, community, industry, Institute Councils and unions.

Secondary stakeholders include parents, schools, communities and regions, local government, suppliers, taxpayers and service organisations.

Commitment to workforce renewal will require a coalition of support from stakeholders within and beyond TAFE. The core of this coalition will be made up of TAFE employers (TAFE Institute Councils), TAFE staff, the unions who represent them and the Victorian Government through ETTE.

The style of Union-employer relations in TAFE have been strongly influenced by the approach to industrial relations pursued in Victoria in the past. It will take considerable time, commitment and patience to establish a basis for trust and cooperative effort in the areas of workforce renewal.

Not all participants in the Forum were convinced that efforts should be made to build a new relationship between TAFE employers and unions representing TAFE employees. However, good practice workforce management suggests that where representative structures exist, communication between management and representatives on the vision of where the organisation is going and the contribution employees (and their representatives) will make to its success will be essential for workforce renewal.⁷

Most workplaces are much less coercive than chain gangs. But the primary alternatives are not simply limitless cooperation, as if these are all-or-nothing characteristics of group relations. ...most professionals are... somewhat cooperative, but also somewhat autonomous and self-oriented. Further, some kinds of conflict in groups is critical for identifying alternative lines of action and avoiding groupthink, as long as conflicts are resolved constructively and with dignity. In practice, many working relationships can be multivalent, mix elements of cooperation, conflict, conviviality, competition, collaboration, commitment, caution, control, coercion, coordination and combat... They also involve attention to substantive tasks, managing the organization of work, genuine sociability, and even play.

Kling, R. & Jewett, T. (1994) 'The Social Design of Worklife With Computers and Networks: An Open Natural Systems Perspective', Advances in Computers, vol 39. Orlando, FL: Academic Press, pp.239-293

⁷ See for example the *Investors in People* program. (www.iipuk.co.uk)

The Forum identified many specific areas in need of substantial improvement if organisational excellence and workforce renewal are to be achieved, five of which are highlighted here:

- An enabling policy environment.
- Better recruitment and retention practices.
- Commitment to learning and development.
- New career opportunities.
- Improved workforce planning.

These embrace both strategic and operational improvements and are discussed below.

An enabling policy environment

Systemic impediments to workforce renewal need to be clearly identified and progressively removed. Such impediments identified by the Forum included the following:

Funding. There would appear to be many ways that meaningful workforce renewal could proceed in and between TAFE Institutes without additional funds. In some cases these simply require a more strategic and aligned perspective, management focus and goodwill, and a re-ordering of priorities, rather than an injection of additional public funds. Nevertheless there is a strong view expressed through the Forum that additional funds are needed if the key challenges of workforce renewal are to be addressed. Just what dimension of workforce renewal an injection of additional funds would be most effectively applied to, is a matter of further debate throughout TAFE.

Performance management framework. Attempting to change the behaviour of TAFE people without changing the way performance is valued, measured, controlled and rewarded will inevitably lead to failure. Institute Councils and the Victorian Government must be clear about this if they expect results other than the delivery of increased student contact hours at lower costs. If not, workforce renewal is unlikely. If other results are required (such as improved staff morale, appropriate staff turnover rates, industry and community partnerships, increased industry satisfaction with quality, better school retention rates, the creation of fulfilling and challenging TAFE jobs) then these results will need to be embedded in the TAFE performance management system and recognised by the Government's purchasing system.

Industrial Awards. The Forum expressed the view that current industrial awards (including load management, classifications, job design and pay differentials) are an impediment to workforce renewal for organisational excellence. Addressing this will no doubt be considered in the context of the next round of enterprise bargaining in 2002/2003.

Better recruitment practices

One of the key challenges identified by the Forum was recruitment – attracting the best and the brightest to work in TAFE in the future. Issues related to recruitment included the following:

- Systems including e-recruitment for making staff recruitment, especially recruitment of sessional staff, more efficient and effective across TAFE and within individual Institutes.
- Systems for assessing the technical and pedagogical capabilities of prospective TAFE staff to ensure high quality across TAFE Institutes.
- Proactive ways of preparing the next generation of TAFE staff, especially trade teachers, from within the ranks of the current student cohort and TAFE alumni.
- Raising the level of qualifications required for entry to TAFE teaching beyond the minimal levels set under the Australian Quality Training Framework.

At the same time, Forum participants recognised that effectively managing the movement of people into (and out of) the TAFE workforce is just one dimension of renewal.

Commitment to learning and development

Forum participants saw learning and development opportunities as vital to attract staff to TAFE, to maintain and develop their professional and technical skills, and to ensure their talents are fully engaged in helping TAFE achieve organisational excellence.

Learning and development refers to both individual learning and growth and the organisation learning and growth.

At an individual level, learning and development are no longer simply matters of formal professional development opportunities, important though these are. The content and organisation of work are significant influences on opportunities for growth and development, as are opportunities to work multi-functionally and across Institutes.

In the old economy, training was always there. For TAFE it was your core business. However, training was often something that good employees were sent away to do. Training was formal, structured and a cost. Learning, however, is an investment. It is not something you do once. It is something you do every day - on the job, out of the job, wherever, whenever... The corporate futurist Thornton May puts it this way. "New learning doesn't come from the Temple - doesn't come from traditional providers – it comes from conversations among smart people in shared spaces." This is learning that creates problem-solving, innovation and entrepreneurship. It is about learning in everyday life and work.

Source: Fiona Stewart, presentation to VTA Search Forum, 21.8.01

TAFE will need to develop new and innovative learning systems to engage and develop the potential of the TAFE workforce. Specific opportunities identified by the Forum included:

- Formal exchanges between TAFE teachers and industry and other education providers to develop technical currency and partnering capabilities.
- Support for effective teamwork and the deployment of teams to resolve specific workforce issues.
- More participatory management practices.
- An incentive structure which encourages individuals to learn and develop.
- A fresh approach to job design and work organisation which allows for greater task variety and work challenge.
- Development of the concept of communities of practice, and establishment of professional development networks across TAFE.

While taking strategic action to enhance individual learning and development, TAFE Institutes will also need to decide whether they believe that organisational learning and development are keys to organisational excellence in the knowledge economy. From the Forum discussion, the TAFE jury is still out on this point. Those who do will need to find ways of explicitly fostering an organisational culture within and across Institutes that promotes collaboration, sharing of information and lessons learned. This will be a challenge for all TAFE Institutes and the TAFE system as a whole.

New career opportunities

For TAFE to become an employer of choice, it will need to provide opportunities for advancement for all in the workforce, including but not confined to the teaching workforce.

One suggestion from the Forum to achieve this goal was to move to a career structure that recognises the diverse yet integrated nature of the skills of all TAFE staff. There was a view that a unified award structure would better reflect the multi-dimensional nature of TAFE work in the future and allow greater role flexibility in deploying staff for delivery, instructional design, project management, learning management, brokerage, international work, partnering and consulting.

The career opportunities for contract and sessional staff, who now comprise a significant proportion of TAFE staff, will also need to be addressed in a workforce renewal strategy. This will require additional investment.

Work teams that integrate Institute and ETTE relationships should be explicitly encouraged.

Improved workforce planning

Better workforce planning is a shared and recognised need across TAFE Victoria.

The fundamental purpose of workforce planning is alignment. It includes planning which helps each TAFE Institute align its workforce with its particular service delivery requirements, and planning which ensures that its workforce is aligned with the policy priorities of the Victorian Government. The degree to which each Institute workforce has the appropriate skills, the correct numbers and the right mix to achieve its mission in a rapidly changing labour market and a new policy environment will be essential to success.

The second dimension of workforce planning is sound management of the process within and between TAFE Institutes. The management of recruitment, retention, redeployment and retirement is not simply a matter for individual Institutes. There is a public interest dimension that needs to be considered.

There is considerable concern about the potential outflow of experienced TAFE staff over the next five years as many approach 55 years. Superannuation arrangements were seen by forum participants to be creating an incentive for many to retire by then, even though they still have much to offer TAFE, and it would seem that some of these return after retirement to sessional and contract work in TAFE. The extent to which concern is justified on these matters is hard to determine in the absence of quantitative data. However, the management of the outflow will be critical. Another area to consider is how Institutes can attract and motivate the 'Generation X' workforce and following generations of workers.

Good data is the starting point for good workforce planning, yet data on the Victorian TAFE workforce is limited and it is not easy to get an accurate picture of patterns and trends across the state and in specific niche areas of both teaching and administration.

To achieve organisational improvement, the concept of workforce data needs to be broadened beyond the collection of accurate demographic data to include a sophisticated analysis of trends over time and to include data from a range of sources such as entry and exit interviews, climate surveys and benchmarking activities.

But, as Jeff Malley reminded the Forum, more workforce information assists decision-making but does not alter the values framework of management.⁸

HOW WILL SUCCESS BE MEASURED?

There is clearly a need to think differently about measuring organisational success. The current narrow range of measures embedded in the funding model and performance agreements provide few incentives to organisational and individual learning, collaboration, knowledge management, innovation, quality or engagement with community and industry for economic and social progress. The growing use of the concept of the Balanced Scorecard by Institutes or parts of Institutes reflects a dissonance between Institute interpretation of success and governments' interpretations of success. Measuring the success of workforce renewal will require improved and different data collection and analysis than is currently available.

There is a need to benchmark progress on workforce renewal in terms of both the results it achieves and the processes deployed to achieve it.

HOW TO START AND SUSTAIN WORKFORCE RENEWAL?

In a perfect world, renewal of the TAFE workforce would proceed from a shared understanding of the future challenges for TAFE service delivery, the scope and nature of current and prospective workforce problems, and a high degree of consensus about the solutions and the preferred way to proceed.

Ideally, workforce renewal would involve bringing together all the primary workforce elements – workforce management, work organisation, workforce development and relationships into a holistic strategy for workforce renewal.

However, a fully integrated and strategic approach to workforce renewal does not yet seem feasible in Victorian TAFE. There is a perception that there are too many policy uncertainties about the future role of TAFE as the public provider, variable capacities across TAFE to deal constructively with change, too many divergent views about a range of workforce issues and no clear champion to build consensus around workforce renewal.

The best way to proceed in such circumstances is not by pressing for a 'Grand Plan' but to address issues of need where there is a high level of agreement that they are important to TAFE's capacity to achieve its mission. Success in a small number of areas will build confidence and capability across TAFE and allow for robust debate about divergent viewpoints while preparing TAFE people to address constructively the more challenging and contentious issues through a long-term strategy. Small cooperative projects now will thus provide 'leveraging' points for making further improvements in the future.

The importance of context and the need to sustain organizational performance over the longer term should make us sceptical about change programmes which are universalistic, grandiose, dogmatic, branded.

Business Process Resource Center, Focus Group, The Relevance and Contribution of Socio Technical Systems, Focus Group Lead: Dr Harry Scarbrough, Warwick Business School

CONCLUSION

The effective management of human (and financial) resources lies at the heart of accountability, public trust and organisational excellence.

Human resource practices that significantly contribute to staff retention, accomplishment and morale can be found throughout TAFE in Victoria. However, these are by no means universal across TAFE and even where they are in place, their contribution to organisational performance is not always appreciated.

On the basis of the Search Forum discussion, there is much work to be done before TAFE could lay claim to being an employer of choice.

Creating consensus around a vision for workforce renewal and around those activities that will develop future organisational capacity is the immediate challenge.

The following recommendations by the Forum focus on six key issues. These recommendations should be viewed as first steps towards collaboration, leading in time to a more comprehensive and coherent workforce renewal strategy. (see Exhibit 6)

Exhibit 6: Start-up options for TAFE Workforce renewal

ISSUE 1: RECRUITMENT & RETENTION

Problem A - Potential shortage of highly skilled TAFE teachers in the future

Solutions & Timeframes:

- (i) Identify through workforce analyses, the current and anticipated skills requirements of teachers. *[Timeframe: Current - 12 months; Anticipated - 2 to 3 years]*
- (ii) Establish initiatives such as a TAFE Cadetship Program which will:
 - Identify students and graduates as potential teaching staff and encourage their recruitment *[Timeframe: 12 months]*
 - Provide dual training in technical skills and professional instructional/teaching skills to support a gradual transition from industry to TAFE (new qualification) *[Timeframe: 2 to 3 years]*
 - Implement a mentor program for potential TAFE trade teachers from within the student base *[Timeframe: 12 months]*
- (iii) Review recruitment policies and practices to provide for more flexible, family friendly and lifestyle choice options *[Timeframe: 12 months]*

Results:

- An assured supply of skilled TAFE teachers to replace those retiring in the next 3 to 5 years

Problem B - Inefficiencies in current recruitment practices

Solutions & Timeframes:

Form a cross-Institute, multi-functional team to examine ways of achieving tangible improvements in TAFE's recruitment practices and processes. The potential of the following should be explored:

- A state-wide e-Recruitment strategy and resumé bank *[Timeframe: 12 months]*
- A TAFE staff assessment centre to provide services to TAFE Institutes *[Timeframe: 2 to 3 years]*
- New models of communicating with prospective (and current) employees about the benefits of working in TAFE and careers pathways *[Timeframe: 12 months]*

Results:

- Recruitment of sufficient staff with appropriate skills.
- Better alignment between demand for TAFE staff and supply.
- Cost savings in recruitment of sessional staff.
- Improved staff selection tools.
- Consistent application of best practice.

Problem C - Valued staff and intellectual capital leaving Institutes

Solutions & Timeframes:

Develop an Alumni database of staff nearing retirement and recently retired *[Timeframe: 12 months]*

Results:

- A pool of skilled, valuable staff remain available for casual, sessional or part-time roles including mentoring of staff.

ISSUE 2: COLLABORATION OF SHARED LEARNING

Problem A - Insufficient cross-Institute learning and sharing on HR matters

Solutions & Timeframes:

Develop active Human Resource networks and communities of practice across Institutes to:

- Promote/model sharing of workforce solutions, policies and practices between Institutes and other relevant organisations *[Timeframe: 12 months]*
- Develop a "Good Practice" structure for TAFE HR Departments, including model functional/service roles *[Timeframe: 12 months]*
- Benchmarking HR practices between TAFE and other organisations, possibly including climate surveys *[Timeframe: 2 to 3 years]*

Results:

- A culture that successfully promotes improved organisational performance and behaviours.
- A collaborative approach between peers will promote adoption of and implementation of best practice.

Problem B - Insufficient collaboration between Institutes with ETTE on workforce issues

Solutions & Timeframes:

- (i) Development of a TAFE-wide charter of collaboration, using HR as a pilot function *[Timeframe: 12 months]*
- (ii) Establish a strategic planning dialogue between TAFE Institutes and ETTE on ways of partnering for workforce renewal *[Timeframe: 12 months]*

Results:

- Clarity on respective responsibilities.
- Maximising synergies between statewide and individual Institute workforces.
- Evidence of benefits from collaboration.

Problem C - Insufficient opportunities for sharing knowledge between teachers

Solutions & Timeframes:

Cooperative team-based development of courseware in identified priority areas *[Timeframe: 2 to 3 years]*

Results:

- Cost savings on product development.
- Increased sharing of knowledge between Institutes and teachers.

ISSUE 3: WORKFORCE PLANNING

Problem A - Inadequate workforce planning information, access to and use of it in workforce planning

Solutions & Timeframes:

Establish at Institute and system level collaborative workforce planning to gather and analyse workforce data for planning purposes on matters such as stock & flow of staff; factors influencing the decision to join or leave TAFE including OH&S and organisational climate *[Timeframe: 2 to 3 years]*

Results:

- Improved workforce planning information that is timely, useful and accurate
- Workforce information used to improve organisational performance.

Problem B - HR Tends to focus on operational rather than strategic activities

Solutions & Timeframes:

Expand HR Role to place increased emphasis on Strategic Workforce Planning & Management. This would include improved use of related IT, quality and finance systems *[Timeframe: 2 to 3 years]*

Results:

- Improved workforce planning information that is timely, useful and accurate
- Workforce information used to improve organisational performance.

ISSUE 4: WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

Problem A - A Workforce without the full range of skills needed for service delivery

Solutions & Timeframes:

Institute collaboration to establish a range of learning and development strategies including:

- Exchange programs such as industry exchanges and travelling scholarship [Timeframe: 12 months]
- Management /leadership development at all levels to promote foresight, and innovation change management [Timeframe: 12 months]
- Development of professional practice network [Timeframe: 12 months]
- Job design for improved workplace learning [Timeframe: 2-3 years]
- Facilitating staff movement between Institutes [Timeframe: 2-3 years]
- Enabling all teachers to work across multiple delivery modes including workplace and e-learning [Timeframe: 2-3 years]

Results:

- A workforce with the skills and knowledge needed to contribute to improved organisational performance.
- All TAFE jobs, are meaningful, challenge those who do them and provide substantial learning opportunities.

ISSUE 5: CAREERS

Problem A - Narrow career pathways make TAFE a less desirable place to work.

Solutions & Timeframes:

Development of compatible career/classification structure for TAFE general and teaching staff *[Timeframe: 2-3 years]*

Results:

Improved perceptions of career opportunities available to the TAFE workforce.

ISSUE 6: POLICY SETTINGS FOR TAFE IN VICTORIA

Problem A - The risk that TAFE Victoria will become less relevant in the knowledge economy.

Solutions & Timeframes:

Embark on a systematic process with stakeholders to reposition TAFE in the knowledge economy and gain recognition by government of VET as an industry/single strategic interface *[Timeframe: 2-3 years]*

Results:

TAFE recognised as 'new economy' organisation in the education and training industry.

Problem B - Potential for declining quality of TAFE teaching

Solutions & Timeframes:

Review current entry-level requirements for TAFE teaching to identify whether minimum teacher qualifications set under the AQTF are sufficient for the needs of TAFE in the future. *[Timeframe: 12 months]*

Results:

A suitably qualified TAFE workforce which is able to drive organisational excellence.

BEYOND A 3 YEAR TIMEFRAME

The Forum identified other actions for the longer term which are worthy of notation and future action including:

- Investigate a move to an integrated career/classification structure for all TAFE staff with common conditions of employment.
- Continuous improvement of TAFE's strategic workforce plans, systems, projects.
- Implementation of ongoing and whole of organisation succession planning.

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