TAFE DIRECTORS AUSTRALIA SUBMISSION
TO THE

ASSURING QUALITY WHILE REDUCING THE HIGHER EDUCATION REGULATORY BURDEN REVIEW.

TAFE Directors Australia (TDA) welcomes the opportunity for consultation provided by Professor Kwong Lee Dow AO and Professor Valerie Braithwaite in relation to the Australian Government review, Assuring quality while reducing the higher education regulatory burden review.

TDA acknowledges that some TDA members will also provide their own institutional response to this review.

TDA’s position

TDA recognises that there are many levels of reporting / data collection by a state and federal agencies that involve duplication of effort and information for our members.

TDA supports the need for a reduction of the reporting burden for higher education providers and welcomes any recommendations by this review to achieve such a reduction.

In broad terms TDA welcomes any alignment that can be achieved across government agencies of data metrics and data in the public domain as a way of alleviating the administrative impost on our tertiary institutions.

Specifically current regulatory arrangements between ASQA and TESQA are not sufficiently aligned. These agencies would benefit from a shared set of principles and risk approaches which are less focussed on fault finding and more on creating conditions that illuminate what is working well for learners and institutions.

TDA recognises that ASQA and TESQA have responsibility for two diverse sectors; however the overlap between the two sectors should be explored as it provides fertile ground for identifying commonalities between the agencies. This would not mean however the adoption of a university centric model as a basis for regulation.

TESQA has developed three principles: regulatory necessity, reflecting risk and proportionate regulation, to inform its regulatory practices, but members still feel it falls short in its execution, in such matters as tardiness of response to requests for course approval and the use of out of date data in feedback provided to institutions.

This paper summarises points raised in the consultations:

TERTIARY EDUCATION SYSTEM ARCHITECTURE

As the recommendations will be forward looking, with provision they may propose new
legislation, discussion turned to TEQSA and ASQA staying separate entities. In its submission to the Bradley Review TDA argued that there ought to be one tertiary regulator, not two. While TDA recognises that following the establishment of ASQA and TEQSA under separate legislation that a merger of the two regulators is now unlikely, TDA would support all TAFE institutes that are higher education providers being only responsible to one agency, likely TEQSA, rather than dual reporting and regulation.

TAFE institutes like public universities operate within well founded governance arrangements. These governance arrangements have been recognised in the past with a number of TAFE institutes having delegation to self accredit.

Second, the SCOTESE Ministerial Council passed a resolution to support the NSSC proposals for a ‘LTO licensing’ framework to overhaul VET regulation. TDA maintains that this review should be informed by the proposed standards framework, and that in any new ‘tertiary architecture’ there is merit to bring synergies between HE and VET where possible, while recognising their different missions. For instance, the Department of Immigration and Citizenship struggled to identify at risk registered training organisations because there were no risk categories for vocational education and training providers, unlike for higher education providers regulated by TEQSA.

RED TAPE

Professor Braithwaite has noted that some within universities (a la Prof Greg Craven) had argued that when this Inquiry reviews current TEQSA regulation, it should additionally look at the regulation overlay already in place particularly in universities, but also in TAFE institutes. This had been the background to universities enjoying self accreditation for many years, and some TAFE institutes enjoying delegations prior to ASQA.

TDA supports university arguments that TEQSA / ASQA should focus on at risk players, consistent with principles of regulatory necessity, reflecting risk and proportionate regulation while there should be a reverting to self-managed risk by the public HEPs (unis and TAFEs), and this would flow potentially to ASQA for TAFE institutes. The alternative is a multiplier effect of regulation, and spiralling costs.

TDA sees the current NSSC development of a new regulatory framework as providing an ideal opportunity for strengthening the alignment between the regulatory frameworks of ASQA and TESQA with the aim of lessening the administrative burden on educational institutions.

DATA REPORTING

ACTION – TDA submits suggestions as an attachment to this submission in the form of a letter drafted for TDA by Independent Economics, Canberra. Independent Economics has been commissioned by TDA under Federal funding, to develop a new VET sector econometric model to analyse current and new contributions under National Entitlement.

TUITION ASSURANCE

Sect 4 suggests exemptions for universities to TAS for VET provision. This looks very ad hoc, and suggested a wider recommendation for all university and TAFE public providers.
OUTCOME STATEMENTS

To be clearly outcome focussed any standards of TEQSA should able to require evidence based responses from institutions to questions such as

- How do you know that your students have consistently achieved the required level of professional competence?
- How do you know that your students have been engaged in a meaningful and quality learning experience?
- How do you know that industry/employers or licensing/registering bodies are satisfied with the skills of your graduating students?
- How do you know that your educational and operational systems reflect international practice?
- How do you know that your facilities, support services and learning and information resources accord with student expectations and curriculum requirements?
- How do you know that the rights and interests of your students are being respected and safeguarded?
- How do you know that your teaching staff have the educational skills and experience to contribute to the development of individual student capability?

Should you wish to clarify any of the comments in this submission please contact Pam Caven, Director Policy & Stakeholder Engagement, TDA at pcaven@tda.edu.au

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