

Media Release

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Productivity Commission workforce data questioned by TAFE

TAFE Directors Australia has expressed surprise that the Productivity Commission has included data from one undisclosed state in Australia, to highlight concerns about qualifications in sections of the TAFE workforce.

In its report, *The Vocational Education and Training Workforce*, the Productivity Commission claims that “up to 40% of TAFE sector workers who work as trainers and/or assessors do not have the necessary minimum educational qualification for VET practitioners...”

Specifically, the Commission says they do not possess the TAE40110 Certificate IV in Training and Assessment or an equivalent qualification. However, this was ‘undisclosed data’ from one state, and did not include detailed qualification levels of the TAFE workforce staff in remaining states and territories.

The Chief Executive of TDA Martin Riordan said the TAFE Institute sector is internationally renowned as world class for its high quality design and training delivery, and evidence shows a far different picture.

He said: “A major conclusion of the Commission’s report is that ‘data on the VET sector are inconsistent and incomplete’. It beggars belief therefore that the Commission, as one of Australia’s foremost evidence-based research organisations drew conclusions without including wider evidence, and in doing so opened the way for exposing the TAFE brand to damaging misinterpretation.”

Martin Riordan said while the Commission states that “up to” 40 per cent of TAFE teachers (in one undisclosed jurisdiction) may not have Certificate IV teaching qualifications, it separately cited a 2010 DEEWR survey which found that VET teaching qualifications are held by around 90 per cent of teachers in TAFE nationally. The report also noted that among trainers and assessors who hold VET teaching qualifications, many have qualifications above the minimum requirement.

He added: “The real figures on trainer and assessor qualifications are not hard to find. In Victoria for example, in 2010 there were 6,599 TAFE teachers employed in TAFE Institutes. Of these, 84.5% held at least a compliant Certificate IV or above in Training and Assessment, with more than 58% holding a higher level teaching qualification of Diploma, Graduate Diploma, Masters or Doctorate. This presents an accurate picture of the qualifications of the TAFE workforce in Victoria, and both TDA and VTA believe this could be demonstrated in every State and Territory.”

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Martin Riordan said it was even more puzzling when these statistics were sourced from the Victorian State Services Authority annual TAFE Workforce Data Collection.

“This information was easily available to the Commission. Why is it that the Commission draws conclusions from unsourced, inaccurate data when validated data is clearly available?”

Similarly, NSW TAFE has noted evidence of far greater application of qualifications than required.

The CEO of TAFE Directors Australia, Martin Riordan said:

“The Productivity Commission treatment of this subject must be questioned. I have written to the Productivity Commission to either disclose the identity of this “undisclosed jurisdiction” or else otherwise make clear the wider qualifications base of TAFE which remains otherwise world class.

“TDA supports the Commission’s longer term outlook for higher level teaching qualifications for all VET teaching staff but strongly refutes that many TAFE staff are not sufficiently trained to comply with the AQTF standards required for the registration and course delivery of a provider.”

TDA noted that the Productivity Commission’s recommendations in other respects held much credit, including an overhaul of industrial relations arrangements providing if necessary for individual workplace enterprise agreements, a base level of funding that states should underwrite to fund the work of TAFE in the community and equity student groups – given TAFE operates in a competitive environment with private RTOs -- and governance reform with statutory authorities preferred over existing links with State education and training departments.

TDA is reviewing the Commission’s report in detail, and will be making a wider response to the Australian Government in coming months.

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