

Slide 1 **The Case for a National Charter for TAFE**

Slide 2 Overview of this presentation

Slide 3 TAFE Directors Australia argues that the time is right to present the case for a National Charter for TAFE:

- The Australian Government is currently negotiating a National Partnership Agreement for Vocational Education and Training with the States and Territories
- States and Territories are looking to implement new contestability arrangements to drive productivity and participation.

TDA represents the 59 TAFE institutes (including five dual sector universities) nationally and advocates on their behalf. TAFE providers offer qualifications across the Australian Qualifications Framework and have a wide national footprint.

The Board of TDA, with a representative from each State and Territory, believes that the TAFE sector needs a better deal than it has been receiving. Largely, this “better deal” will come from **all** Australian governments through access to the resources needed to sustain the TAFE offerings.

Slide 4 **Why now?**

The experience of Victoria has been salutary – the drop in market share for TAFE providers from 75% in 2008 to 49% in the last quarter of 2011 is a dramatic representation of marketization. That all this is happening when the National VET Regulator has only been in existence since July 2011 and has been slow to deliver – beggars belief!

Other States and Territories are in the throes of developing plans for implementing the next stages of VET reform – code for extending competition and contestability

States and Territories, as we know, have inconsistent policies on fees and charges, definitions of entitlement and eligibility ...

Uncapping the funding for undergraduates in public universities from 2012 will have a significant impact on TAFE institutes and the VET sector in general.

In what Andrew Trounson described in article in *The Australian* newspaper on 8 November 2011, as “the biggest policy change in universities since the 1980s Dawkins reforms ... the Gillard government from next year will remove caps on the number of government-funded places they can offer. It is aimed at increasing university participation to expand the country’s skill base”.

TAFE providers may well find themselves in competition with universities for students.

The policy gaps between universities and TAFE have widened in the last three years. Far from an integrated tertiary sector, there is much now that separates rather than interconnects – funding; different regulators; different visa arrangements for international students; and the list goes on ...

You will see when you read TDA’s *Case for a National Charter* the number of governments and government agencies that have seen TAFE as central to skills development and the health of the Australian economy and society.

Slide 5 The TDA Board believes that it is time to go beyond the rhetoric and for the Commonwealth and State and Territory Governments to:

- **affirm** the significance of TAFE in delivering on the Government’s productivity and participation agenda;
- **define** the role, scope and responsibilities of TAFE, and
- **commit** to administrative and funding arrangements that will enable TAFE providers to perform this role effectively.

A starting point, the Board believes, is for governments to embed support for TAFE in the new National Partnership for VET.

Skills Australia in *Skills for Prosperity: a roadmap for vocational education and training, 2011* expressed this in recommendation 9:

That the Australian Governments ... articulate the role of the public provider in the next intergovernmental resourcing agreement for the sector.

If the National Partnership Agreement is the starting point, TDA maintains that governments should agree definitions and arrangements to enable greater consistency across states and territories.

Slide 6 To that extent *The Case for the National Charter*:

- documents some of the challenges facing TAFE institutes
- identifies the special characteristics of TAFE providers
- makes seven recommendations which are the steps needed to develop a National Charter
- outlines five components that ought to be part of a Charter.

In a nutshell, the five components proposed for a Charter are:

Slide 7 **The Five Components of a National Charter for TAFE**

1. Redefining the TAFE's Role
2. 'Full Service Provision'
3. Quality Criteria for Access to Government Funding
4. Consistency in Student Entitlements, Eligibility and Concessions
5. Governance

Slide 8 ***Component 1: Redefining the TAFE sector's role***

Recommendations 1 & 2 relate to this Component

In recommendation 1, TDA is urging governments to affirm the role of TAFE providers in the next National Partnership, as per the Skills Australia recommendation.

In recommendation 2, TDA is highlighting the anomalies in the funding arrangements for universities and TAFE providers and recommending consistency where both sectors are offering equivalent qualifications. This recommendation builds on TDA's support for a diverse and vibrant tertiary sector.

Slide 9 ***Component 2: 'Full Service provision'***

TDA recommends that now is the time for a more sophisticated examination of the services and allied costs of 'full service provision'. Recommendation 3 in the Charter calls for a national agreement on funding the "constituent parts" of TAFE, that is, ensuring their ability to maintain critical programs, including the capacity to continue offering high cost technical courses if market forces prevail...

Achieving a common definition is "critical" if TDA providers are to meet the full extent of their delivery, especially in regional and remote areas.

Slide 10 ***Component 3: Criteria for accessing government funding***

Recommendation 4

In this recommendation, TDA is arguing that there should be "common and robust quality criteria which determine RTO eligibility for access to Government funding".

The South Australian Government has been developing criteria and the NSW TAFE Commission has developed a proposed set of criteria.

Slide 11 ***Component 4: Criteria for student entitlements, eligibility and concessions***

Recommendation 5 & 6

TDA recommends consistent – not necessarily uniform – student entitlements, eligibility and concessions ... and that through collaboration with other providers, data and experience are shared, resulting in better risk management and addressing the negative consequences that might arise.

Recommendation 6

Think Victoria!

Slide 12 ***Component 5: Governance***

Recommendation 7

The Case for a Charter identifies governance models in a variety of States and Territories. The words sound similar. The reality seems to be different. The issue from a TDA perspective is how can TAFE providers, as public entities, deliver on the government's agenda without being trammelled by excessive bureaucratic request?

Where is the even playing field?

Slide 13 **Next steps**

1. **Consult** with key stakeholders including all levels of government, local members, student and staff representatives, and industry and community groups to forge strong bonds and working relationships.
2. **Seek agreement** on the inclusion of a statement of in-principle support for a **National Charter for TAFE** in the new National Partnership for Vocational Education and Training and the National Agreement for Skills and Workforce Development.
3. **Develop** a draft **National Charter for TAFE** for consideration by the COAG Standing Council on Tertiary Education, Skills and Employment by June 2012.

Slide 14 Thank you.