

PRESENTATION TO ACPET INTERNATIONAL

[DELIVERY 6 MINUTES]

There's a story in the old testament of the bible about Daniel in the Lions Den

Daniel's country had been occupied by a foreign force THE PHILISTINES

and Daniel's people THE JEWS were being forced to pledge allegiance to the religion of their occupiers

Daniel refused and was put in a den of lions to either

force that declaration of allegiance

or face death

So here I am representing the best, most solid, trustworthy and reliable VET providers in Australia – TAFEs

and here you are representing the other side!

- So, I bet you think I'm going to talk public is good, private is evil
- Well, I may be STUPID (after all I come from the TAFE sector) but I'm NOT THAT STUPID

But what really was going on in that story

- It's not just a story about good vs evil
- It's not just a story about political power
- It's a story about the power of values
 - Daniel risked his life to stay true to his values – in this case his allegiance to his God.

Let me be clear, I don't mean to be-little or make light of the fact that many people around the world have given their life for

their country

religion or

freedom of the press.

I am simply wanting to look at what I think is the core of the issue facing the tertiary system in Australia and its position in a global education marketplace.

When I talk VALUES:

- I am not talking about Value of education, although that is important
- I am not talking about Value for money from education, although that is important
- I am not talking about Return on investment nor Export Value, although they are also important.

I am talking about Values –

our **core beliefs** as individuals, as business owners or workers
which **drive and motivate us.**

[pause]

Put values first then value, value for money and export opportunities will follow.

[pause]

Dare I say, the university sector is at risk of compromising their values, if they have any at all I hear you say!!

- we as non-universities would dream of a funding cut of a 2.5% for two years as a **mere flesh wound**

- And 10% of funding being put at risk on performance – **luxury**.

Here we have the sector bleating over money, not prepared to take a hit for the country.

[pause]

Many years ago in the renewal of public sector administration there was a deliberate move away from rules to the delegation of power and decision making so that the services to the public were more responsive, more contextualised for individual circumstances.

- you say THAT CLEARLY DIDN'T WORK
- But for the policy wonks in the room – New Public Management or Principal:Agency theory

There – have I built my credentials!!

Moving public servants away from rules based to principles based decision wasn't going to be an easy thing.

Think about how you've adjusted the rules around your kids once they were adolescents and then moved into adulthood

Although wait a minute you say, they've never followed rules

So VALUES were introduced to guide public servants.

[pause]

And the education sector has had the equivalent – think standards.

And the VET sector has had its time as a principles based system – student choice, open access, contestability. I fear these times have gone.

VET Student Loans risks getting **bigger than tax law**.

States and territories are **tightening their rules**.

And I think the govt is enjoying treating us as **delinquent teenagers**

[pause]

As we flee rules it is so easy to look for the easy money.

So what scares me is data.

I fear we as a sector are transferring from one bubble (VFH) to another.

- VET international students have grown by about 17 per cent in the last year
- And let me tell you it is not in TAFEs, their numbers are static at best
- And when you look at the data, around 70% are in business studies and general courses
- That doesn't seem to be a values driven growth.

Note, I am not accusing you in this room.

And more rules is not the answer.

[pause]

So you ask me,

what are those values and

how would they apply in the tertiary market, especially for international cooperation.

Let me start – but these need to be subject to a national debate.

1. We serve the interests of the individual to build capability for career and self-actualisation, not just respond to reductionist industry qualifications
2. We are driven by an educational mission and excellence, not by an endless drive for efficiency and cost-cutting
3. For our international and cross-border work we work for the interest of the individual and the country they will return to, not the export dollar
4. We celebrate and encourage diversity in delivery cause we know that a closed and protected system eventually withers

And what does this mean in practice?

It may mean

- we tell some agents to piss-off
- We train to Aust industry and education standards because what is good for Australians is good for our international students
- We may close down courses that simply turn over students
- It'll be outcomes over profit
- And it means we must prosecute diversity in the sector, till our university brethren come along with us.

In this time of uncertainty I want to be a Daniel.

- I want to be remembered for making a principled stand.

- I want to lead a sector that operates from core values
- I want to go overseas and say we are a sector of integrity not just assured by rules
- I want to stand up for the value of quality education and training
- I want say to every student we are committed to growing YOU, not just our bottom line.

I want to be a DANIEL

Do you want to be a DANIEL? Or a DANIELLE?

- The govt won't save us, but our shared values will
- Let's stand up for what is good in education, what is good for students and what is good for our global reputation.
- Let's stand together and we'll face down the Philistines.

We can all be Daniels? We can all be Danielles?

We need to be Daniels, we need to be Danielle's

END