

**A response to the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations
Review of Australian Higher Education Discussion Paper, written by Professor
Denise Bradley**

**From William Angliss Institute of TAFE
July 2008**

Background

The “Review of Australian Higher Education Discussion Paper” written by Professor Denise Bradley and commissioned by the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations, looks at the current functions and characteristics of Higher Education in Australia and explores the challenges facing the sector and sets about questioning areas for change and development. While most of the report discusses issues and challenges specific to Higher Education, it also addresses the issue of how higher education connects with other education and training sectors. This section of the report is most relevant for William Angliss Institute as it questions the relationship between the two sectors and considers how they can work together to meet the needs for a skilled and productive workforce.

As the issue of the convergence of the two sectors attracts increasing attention on the education agenda, as a specialist centre which makes a significant contribution to training in higher education levels, William Angliss Institute would like to submit this response. We would particularly like to address the questions posed in section 3.4 which discusses the relationship between higher education and other education and training sectors.

Response to questions

15. To what extent should vocational education and training in higher education continue to have distinctive missions and how should these missions be defined?

While some perceptions of TAFE and university and their missions and goals in the education arena have changed over the past 20 years or more, the idea that TAFE specialises in training for traditional trades and emphasises vocational learning is still prevalent. Consequently the move from TAFE institutes into providing higher education degrees should not be seen as a convergence of the two sectors but rather broadening the spread of disciplines, and the geographical and socio-economical scope of education delivery. William Angliss Institute believes support should continue for TAFE institutes to expand into higher education delivery to cater for students with different learning styles.

William Angliss Institute is in support of two separate sectors that have distinct missions and goals, however also believes there should be a strong relationship between the two sectors. We believe the two sectors should work together collaboratively to ensure the up skilling of our workforce. It would not be beneficial or feasible to have the two sectors competing against each other for students. Encouragement into the higher education sector should not come at the expense of enrolments in VET and visa versa. Collaborative efforts from both the vocational education sector and the higher education sectors should be striving to achieve the common goal of a strong knowledge economy. The distinction of missions between the two sectors will also help to increase choices for people and give them more educational opportunities.

William Angliss Institute would support a joint venture outside of the teaching and learning arena that provides a ‘one-stop-shop’ approach to education advice. The centres created would be much like the Apprenticeship Centres that currently exist, however it would provide career counselling, skills recognition audits, career information and training advice as a way of servicing the needs of individuals and businesses. The focus for advice would be indented for all sectors – secondary, VET and Higher Education.

While we support distinct missions of the sectors, we do not support boundaries on Vocational Training centres to only deliver to certificate IV and below. As was the case for William Angliss Institute, we identified a need from industry and the labour market for more highly skilled professionals in the culinary, hospitality and tourism sectors. These sectors are specifically identified as areas that are experiencing skills gaps and are striving to raise the standards of education. As the specialist centre for training in hospitality, tourism and food processing we have the expert skill, knowledge and experience to meet this need of the industry and the workforce for highly skills graduates and consequently developed a bachelor degree in Culinary Management, and a Bachelor Degree in Hospitality Management. In developing these specialist degree, it was identified that access to the course should be tightly controlled to ensure the highest level of professional artisan skills are developed and to minimise any possible adverse impact that could result from raising qualifying entry level skills for admission of new chefs to the industry. It was also decided that the TAFE degree must be strongly vocationally focused, have clear linkages with relevant training package competencies and must address specific niche areas not covered by universities. The result has been a successful specialist degree program, which operates within the vocational education arena, but delivers higher level skills to meet the needs of industry and a highly skilled workforce.

16. Does the movement between the sectors of students with credit need to be improved? If so, in what ways?

Very little is known about student experience of movement between the two sectors, and in the review it was suggested that there is a very small percentage of students who do articulate from one sector to the other. However for William Angliss Institute, since the implementation of the specialist degree the majority of students have articulated from TAFE courses. This initially presented problems in terms of students and teachers adjustment to working at a higher education level. However the ease of movement has been strongly supported through teachers' professional development, student support through the implementation of a research unit within the institute as well as support from industry through work placement and mentoring schemes.

In the first semester of 2008, 38% of students starting either the bachelor of culinary or hospitality management had previously completed a VET course, and in semester two, 58% had articulated from a VET course. So contrary to the statistics proposed in the report, we experience quite a high number of students who want to further their education and move from one sector to the other. To ensure this ease of movement across the sectors, not just for students from our institute but for all students, William Angliss Institute believes that articulation pathways should be clear, easy to implement and adequately supported. We believe a system needs to be in place which will assist in increasing higher level qualifications and leads to greater productivity and workforce participation. Any barriers to articulating from one sector to another could be perceived as an inhibitor to the up skilling of our nation.

One of the main difficulties faced in encouraging our students to articulate to a higher degree is the cost associated with further education. William Angliss Institute believes income support for students is essential to overcoming barriers to further education attainment. William Angliss Institute also believes that not offering a government supported place to continue from one qualification level to another, or to even swap a study field to another could be perceived as a barrier to life long learning and continuous up-skilling and does not support the notion of continuous self improvement.

17. To what extent should relative provision between the sectors be planned or demand driven. What are the effects of current differences on funding, governance and regulation in limiting planning or influencing choice between the sectors?

The position of William Angliss Institute is that there needs to be some development in breaking down the complex structural and reporting requirements between state and federal government. We also believe structural difficulty between the sectors needs to be addressed at the systems level, not on an individual basis between individual schools and VET providers.

18. Can institutions provide examples of good practices which have led to movement between the sectors with high levels of credit and good learning outcomes?

At William Angliss Institute we have a very good example of students moving from studying a TAFE course in hospitality and culinary courses and then moving on to complement their studies further by undertaking a degree. This move to the degree program in the hospitality and culinary management sector has also received strong support from industry. Our most recent survey of degree students highlighted that they were very happy with the teachers, their teaching styles and their enthusiasm for teaching the particular subject. The survey also highlighted areas for improvement which were suggested as more theory and class work, and different prescribed texts. The outcomes of the survey also demonstrated a need to evaluate and assess the progress and satisfaction of student learning in the degree courses. It has also highlighted a need to track student outcomes and monitor career progression for students graduating from the degree course.

As previously mentioned the initiation of a degree course to our scope of education has led to some very positive benefits for the entire institute. The development of a Research unit has positively affected the institute by providing specialised research advice and expertise for teachers and students and served to increase the academic capabilities of the Institute. While there have been some initial difficulties experienced working at the higher education level, William Angliss Institute is positive about the results and outcomes our students will experience when graduating with a degree from our Institute, and are confident their employment opportunities and workplace knowledge will be just as great as those who studied at a university.