



NSW Adult Literacy & Numeracy Council

Mr Jon Black
Managing Director TAFE NSW,
Building A, Maryann St Ultimo
By email: jon.black@tafensw.edu.au
12 October, 2017

Dear Mr Black

I am writing on behalf of the NSW Adult Literacy and Numeracy Council. We are a membership based professional organisation of adult literacy and numeracy teachers, teacher educators, researchers and policy and program managers. I am writing on behalf of members of the Council who have been alerted to the proposed deletions of Outreach and Multicultural specialist positions in NSW TAFE, and who are deeply concerned about the implications of this proposal.

Members of the Council have worked with TAFE Outreach and Multicultural specialists staff over many years and are aware of the specialist skills, knowledge and experience they bring to engaging adults in the community and demystifying the further education and training system, and what institutions such as TAFE can offer them to improve their employability, life in the community and personal development and wellbeing. For many adults who are recent arrivals in Australia, and/ or are anxious about approaching large institutions such as TAFE, the ways in which TAFE Outreach and Multicultural staff work in the communities of these adults has been invaluable. Their work is pedagogical. The staff require all of the knowledge and skills that teachers need to conduct a class in a TAFE college, and in addition, they need openness and agility to respond to new and unexpected needs about ways of working in different communities. We understand that NSW TAFE is proposing to replace these teachers with Customer and Stakeholder Relations administrative officers. Clearly, the Outreach and Multicultural educational staff do need to liaise with and build relationships with communities but they engage communities with a pedagogical purpose. This develops a sustainable and personalised learning program. This is very different to the service and referral role of the typical Customer and Stakeholder Relations model.

A key part of the success of many Outreach programs is their capacity to be initially delivered in a relevant community environment. Not only is this a critical part of student engagement, but allows for broader community engagement and easy access to community resources and specialists to enhance programs. Disengaged students, and those with little or negative previous educational experiences, can develop confidence before moving to a college based program. We believe community delivery should continue to be an option where relevant to maximise student retention and success.

We are aware that educational institutions in all sectors of education are involved in intensive community outreach activities, not only for educational and social justice reasons, but for ensuring that their 'brand' is known in the communities. Most universities currently have a significant outreach program aimed at engaging a broader student group and meet Commonwealth enrolment targets. In the kind of deregulated environment in which we now operate, reducing TAFE's Outreach activities will translate to reducing TAFE's market share, profile and presence as the quality public provider of post-compulsory education and training.

We urge you to rethink the proposal to delete the Outreach and Multicultural staff positions: they play critical roles in extending access and equity of education to adults in NSW.

We look forward to your response.

Yours sincerely,

Keiko Yasukawa, President