

22nd April 2017

Mr Jon Black  
Managing Director  
TAFE NSW

**Subject: TAFE NSW Review of Sustainability Services**

Dear Mr Black

The NSW Chapter of the Australian Association for Environmental Education has had a long association with TAFE. It has especially been supportive of the initiatives and leadership that TAFE has shown towards enhancing the capacity of industry to include a focus on sustainability. The uptake of sustainability-focused policy and operations across business and industry is due in no small regard to the efforts of TAFE NSW. This letter relates to the current process that is being undertaken within TAFE to review sustainability services.

While the members of AAEE NSW see high value in adaptive management and review of functionality and effectiveness, we think it is essential that any change be built upon what has occurred previously. In light of TAFE's outstanding record, this is especially the case for this review. With this in mind, we would like to draw a number of matters to your attention.

We believe TAFE needs to be clear in its understanding of sustainability. An agreed understanding reduces confusion for students about the concept of sustainability. Such coherence cannot come about by accident. Deliberative efforts must be made to:

- develop an agreed understanding
- communicate and promote that understanding across all Institutes
- train staff
- ensure job descriptions align with the understanding of sustainability
- monitor and review uptake and performance against the agreed understanding.

AAEE NSW believes these activities are fundamental to the role of the Sustainability Specialist.

We are certain TAFE understands that 'job-ready' is broader than just skills. To be job-ready in a sustainability context, students across all TAFE faculties need the following attributes:

- an understanding of sustainability and where their work fits
- a set of values that include social justice, responsibility, commitment to low impact practices
- skills in communication, critical thinking and collaboration
- a capacity to contribute to shaping the future – to contribute to the thinking, design, learning and creativity necessary to make and construct a sustainable society.

TAFE staff need ongoing on-the-ground support to integrate these attributes and perspectives.



We believe TAFE needs to conceive of its role as helping to set the sustainability agenda for NSW. One implication for the two roles (Environmental Specialist and Sustainability Specialist) is that they go beyond ensuring compliance with regulations. These two roles must challenge compliance with legislative and regulatory obligations when those obligations lead to unsustainable use of resources, processes and products. These roles must not just help TAFE achieve objectives, they must contribute to setting those objectives; and the objectives must be founded on review of global best sustainability practice. The roles are beyond merely enhancing environmental performance. TAFE needs to set the benchmark for all providers on how to build a sustainable society in the future. AAEE believes TAFE can be the clear leader in establishing high quality sustainability benchmarks.

TAFE is encouraged to consider these suggestions for its HR model:

- Sustainability is so important that a single person in each role is inadequate. AAEE NSW believes there needs to be a team of Environmental and Sustainability Specialists spread throughout the state.
- A sustainability team would provide training, review documents and policies, support programs, and identify world's best practice training.
- Sustainability needs to continue to be a priority for TAFE so it is important to ensure that the head of a sustainability team is at a senior level. A GM Sustainability would be appropriate.
- Trainers make the difference. A Human Resources model that ensures staff are trained and supported in incorporating sustainability values, knowledge and skills into their teaching and into their practice is important.

AAEE NSW urges TAFE NSW to be bold, not timid. Achieving sustainability has become more than a nicety. It has become an imperative across all sectors of society. In our view, TAFE can continue to take a leading role in helping NSW (and Australia) become more sustainable. If AAEE NSW can provide further assistance, I would be very open to discussing the nature of that support.

Yours sincerely

President AAEE NSW