

7th April 2017

Ms Alicia Bales
TAFE NSW
Lower Ground Floor, G Block
Hindman St,
Port Macquarie NSW 2444

Subject: TAFE NSW Review of Sustainability Services

Dear Ms Bales

Thank you for the opportunity to provide input into the review to modernise the provision of TAFE NSW Sustainability Services. The NSW Chapter of the Australian Association for Environmental Education has had a long association with TAFE and has been a supporter 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.

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 the light of TAFE's outstanding record in the past, this is especially the case for this review. All of the specific comments below are made from this perspective. In making comment we note that we have reviewed the documentation provided and commented accordingly. Further we will write to the TAFE Managing Director expressing our overall views.

In specific terms, the following comments are made:

- TAFE needs to continue to be clear in its understanding of sustainability. This understanding needs to be communicated to all sections of TAFE and through all Institutes. Commitment to working within an agreed understanding of sustainability is vital. When understanding and commitment are achieved throughout the organisation, individuals can use their own professional creativity to incorporate it into their teaching and practice. Further, an agreed understanding across all sections of TAFE will reduce/remove confusion for students about sustainability.

Such coherence cannot come about by accident. Deliberative efforts must be made to:

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

AAEE believes these activities are fundamental to the role of the Sustainability Specialist. If such a position is centralised and there is only one specialist - much of the good work to date will be lost.

- TAFE must ensure the understanding of '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 continuing on the ground support to integrate these attributes and perspectives.

- TAFE needs to rethink the notion that the 'customer' is the centre of all decision making is important. In a sustainability context, the centre of decision making must be sustainability. This must be made explicit to the students for two reasons:
 - TAFE is able to demonstrate integrity in valuing sustainability
 - Students (TAFE's customers) learn how to operate with sustainability at the core.
- TAFE needs to conceive of its role as helping to set the sustainability agenda; it must work to create a sustainability future not just wait and react to what others create. 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.



- As indicated briefly above, AAEE NSW believes that TAFE should celebrate the fact that it is not starting from scratch. TAFE has had a focus on sustainability for well over a decade. There are exceptional and leading edge examples of where staff, and indeed whole industries have incorporated sustainability thinking and learning into their practice; there may be examples of how staff have led the way nationally in training students to be the best sustainability practitioners in the country. The Environmental and Sustainability Specialist roles must gather and communicate these examples wherever they can be found. And both roles must be supported by sustainability specialists in each Institute.
- 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.
 - Sustainability must 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.
 - A sustainability team would provide training, review documents and policies, support programs, and identify world's best practice training.
 - Trainers make the difference. The HR model must ensure staff are trained and supporting in incorporating sustainability values, knowledge and skills into their teaching and into their practice.

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. TAFE must take a leading role in helping NSW (and Australia) become sustainable.

Yours sincerely

President AAEE NSW