NLS

Impact of TAFE
inclusiveness strategies

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Publisher's note

Additional information relating to this research is available in *Impact of TAFE inclusiveness strategies—Support document*. It can be accessed from NCVER's website <http://www.ncver.edu.au/publications/2002.hmtl>.

About the research

Impact of TAFE inclusiveness strategies by Veronica Volkoff, Kira Clarke and Anne Walstab

Given current patterns of employment and demographic projections, the aggregate labour force participation rate is set to decline in coming years. A priority for research in the area of vocational education and training (VET), therefore, is to examine how VET can support greater participation in the workforce, especially for groups whose participation is relatively low, for example, Indigenous Australians, people with a disability, refugees, young people 'at risk' and prime-age and older men and women with low educational attainment and literacy levels.

This report examines the nature and impact of the inclusiveness strategies implemented by technical and further (TAFE) institutes in Australia. It is part of a larger suite of research undertaken by the National Institute of Labour Studies, Flinders University, and the Centre for Post-compulsory Education and Lifelong Learning, University of Melbourne.

Key messages

- Adopting effective inclusiveness practices can occur within both strongly market-driven and community-based models. These do, however, call for collaboration and expanding relationships with community stakeholders to meet the increasing and more complex needs of disadvantaged groups.

- Poor literacy and numeracy remain a significant barrier to accessing and completing training.

- It is important that TAFE institutes with high proportions of disadvantaged learners engage these groups in training that provides skills required by industry at sufficiently high levels to lead to sustainable employment.

- These learners also need a range of support mechanisms beyond the classroom to ensure successful study and employment outcomes. Over a third of TAFE institutes are yet to focus on ways to help their disadvantaged groups get a job.

- Strong institute leadership and enthusiasm for the inclusiveness agenda are crucial. If not embraced by mainstream staff, this agenda is at risk of being marginalised.

For a synthesis of the consortium's entire program of work, see *A well-skilled future* by Sue Richardson and Richard Teese.

Tom Karmel
Managing Director, NCVER

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Executive summary

By understanding and effectively responding to industry skill needs and shortages, demographic shifts and pressures, VET and, in particular, technical and further education (TAFE) institutes, can play a key role in maximising labour supply. TAFE institutes are also in a unique position to address the impediments to VET access, participation and successful outcomes faced by disadvantaged groups. Strategies for dealing with these issues—inclusiveness strategies—are vital to equitable building of individual human capital outcomes, for community strengthening, and for ensuring that those who are disadvantaged are able to access opportunities to develop initial knowledge and skills, become lifelong learners and maintain up-to-date skills, guaranteeing that they too can contribute to maximising the stock of available industry skills.

This research forms part of a larger study, *A well-skilled future: Tailoring VET to the emerging training market,* which aims to investigate the responsiveness of the VET sector to the twin imperatives of changing industry and individual needs, including the ways in which these are experienced in different community settings. In particular, this study aimed to explore the nature and impact of the inclusiveness strategies that have been implemented by TAFE institutes in Australia.

The methodology for this study involved a national survey of 58 TAFE institutes and an analysis of 2004 VET student participation data and regional demographic data. These provided an illustration of the diverse range of state/territory and regional community contexts in which the TAFE institutes operated. The student data were analysed to examine the variations between TAFE cohorts, particularly variations in the densities of disadvantaged students and the complexities of disadvantage arising from high proportions of differently disadvantaged students. To facilitate analysis of the different levels of disadvantage of students within each TAFE institute, all were ranked according to their relative numbers of students across a set of key disadvantaged and/or targeted groups. A mean rank across the defined groups was then calculated to indicate each TAFE student population's relative complexity of disadvantage. Thus the level of complexity of disadvantage of a TAFE institute reflects the proportions of differently disadvantaged students within its cohort and the intricacy of the demands for inclusiveness from that cohort.

The national survey of TAFE institutes and all state/territory training authorities involved telephone and face-to-face interviews. Seven broad themes were explored in these consultations: the demographic and industry/economic context; governance; strategic planning; targets and accountability; barriers; post-completion outcomes; and the role of the central authority.

To facilitate analysis of the impact of inclusiveness strategies a score representing the level of development of inclusiveness strategies was determined for each TAFE institute on the basis of self-reported data provided through the survey. TAFE institutes were rated against seven dimensions:

✧ approach to inclusiveness

✧ TAFE management of inclusiveness

✧ community engagement

✧ strategies for identifying disadvantage

✧ facilitation of access and supporting progression and completion

✧ provision of literacy and numeracy support

✧ promotion of post-completion outcomes.

All TAFE institutes were allocated a value of 1 to 3, with the higher values indicating more highly developed strategies, across the seven dimensions named above, leading to a total score. Institutes were then ranked according to the overall level of development and sophistication of their self-reported inclusiveness approaches and strategies.

During the last decade, VET providers, in particular TAFE institutes, have been required to respond to both federal and state/territory policy shifts and a diversity of drivers for inclusiveness, including the equitable building of individual human capital outcomes, the need for community strengthening and the demand for industry skills. Increasing participation of diverse learner groups has prompted VET providers to develop practices to promote inclusiveness and mechanisms for delivering a broader range of training outcomes.

Analysis of the student participation data revealed that TAFE institutes deliver to widely differing cohorts of students across and within states and regions. In three states/territories, TAFE institutes delivered to higher than expected proportions of the most socioeconomically disadvantaged people in that jurisdiction, while in the remaining five states/territories there were much lower TAFE participation rates (range of 0.4%–8.7%) by similar groups. Capital city institutes tended to have higher proportions of the most socioeconomically disadvantaged students than major city or their regional counterparts. There was also a strong relationship between socioeconomic disadvantage and the Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF) level of study. Those with the most disadvantaged cohorts had the highest enrolment levels in basic (certificates I and II) courses and the lowest levels of enrolment in advanced (diploma and above) courses. Similarly, those with the highest levels of complexity of disadvantage among their cohorts had relatively low rates of participation in advanced courses.

TAFE institute responses to their community demand for inclusiveness were diverse. They reported different impulses and drivers for inclusive practice. Three types of approaches to inclusiveness were identified: a 'compliance' approach (reported by eight), driven by incentives and typified by the comment, 'whatever they measure, that's where our effort goes'; an 'existing cohort' approach (32): 'we need to respond to the needs of everyone who walks through our door'; and a 'community obligation' approach (18). The latter group commonly referred to 'capacity building', a 'learner-centred approach', the importance of holistic community engagement and support to make sure that 'training is not in isolation'. They also reported their understanding of training as 'the vehicle that provides them [students] with opportunity … [and] a concept of self'.

While a majority of TAFE institutes (91%) were concerned that student self-identification of disadvantage through the enrolment process was weak as a data collection instrument and not an effective method of identifying the disadvantage, only 19% reported using dedicated data-gathering and formalised knowledge-sharing with external stakeholders. The importance of understanding disadvantage and educational barriers beyond the TAFE institute was acknowledged, but there was a great diversity in the extent to which each actively sought data to inform their planning processes. TAFE institutes nominated more than 15 groups who faced barriers to accessing and completing VET training, most commonly nominating the group of people with low literacy and numeracy skills as facing barriers to accessing (64%) and completing training (72%).

The ways in which institutes distributed their student support staff and resources and managed their internal infrastructure to address disadvantage varied considerably. The importance of strong institute leadership and enthusiasm for the inclusiveness agenda being embraced by mainstream staff were emphasised. Dedicated delivery units for access, general education programs, specific positions for community engagement and institute-wide support units were also seen to be important.

A majority of TAFE institutes stressed the important role of the broader community in: providing support mechanisms for students; advising and informing inclusive provision; and facilitating

pathways to VET through partnered delivery for people facing severe disadvantage and barriers to accessing training. Fewer than 20% of TAFE institutes reported that they had no identified community engagement strategies; more than 40% reported informal community engagement and another 40% reported formalised two-way community engagement.

Promotion of post-completion outcomes and pathways is an area of inclusiveness practice still being developed, and more than a third reported that facilitating employment outcomes for disadvantaged groups was not a focus of their inclusiveness agenda. Five metropolitan institutes reported that strong historical ties to industry impeded progress towards greater community inclusion as each attempted to balance their economic/industry obligations with their social and community responsibilities.

Increasing the participation of disadvantaged people in vocational education is of key importance if TAFE institutes are to effectively fulfill their multiple roles of responding to industry skill needs, address individual skill needs and promote community strengthening. However, TAFE institutes vary in their capacity to engage learners from disadvantaged backgrounds. It is essential that those institutes attracting high proportions of this group engage disadvantaged people in training that provides skills in demand by industry at sufficiently high enough AQF levels to lead to sustainable employment. TAFE institutes must also provide an effective array of support mechanisms to ensure successful study outcomes, including higher-level study and employment.

There are observable and fundamental differences in the approaches that TAFE institutes take to inclusiveness. The culture of an institute is influenced by its historical role and its perceived place in the community and this was reported to impact on its approach. The bottom line for those institutes not driven by any internal inclusiveness agenda was compliance with externally set targets and requirements, but these targets were not sufficient to promote broader engagement with the inclusiveness agenda. For some, there remain tensions in striving to achieve a balance between meeting economic/industry obligations and their social/community responsibilities. Yet, those with the most highly developed inclusiveness strategies based these on a 'community obligation' approach and implemented cohesive, community-oriented strategies that connected individual capacity-building with industry needs and experiences, and learner support needs with community resources.

Overall, the TAFE institutes that reported the most highly developed inclusiveness strategies were more likely to be larger than average; be located in capital city, major city or inner-regional locations; have cohorts with higher-than-median levels of complexity of disadvantage; have the most socioeconomically disadvantaged cohorts and have higher proportions of unemployed and lower proportions of full-time employed students. They were also more likely to have higher proportions of students who: had a disability; were Indigenous; were from a language background other than English; and were early school leavers who had not completed Year 10 study.

As respondents to this study acknowledged, TAFE institutes do not provide successful training experiences in isolation, particularly for people from disadvantaged groups. This study highlights the importance of TAFE institutes engaging in strong and broadly based community partnerships with the capacity to: provide reliable data about industry demand for skills and changing community demographics, support networks and partnership arrangements for training delivery; promote education pathways from schools and other VET providers into TAFE; and foster employment outcomes.

Effective inclusiveness practice can occur within strongly market-driven and community-based models. However, as TAFE institutes increasingly face the demand for non-educational responses to the barriers facing their cohorts and broader catchments, the imperative to expand relationships becomes more urgent. The support document contains three case studies which explore in more detail the conditions for and impact of market and community-based models of TAFE inclusiveness practice.

Introduction

Aim

Vocational education and training (VET) and in particular, technical and further education (TAFE) institutes, as the major providers of VET across all states and territories, can play a key role in maximising labour supply through understanding and effectively responding to industry skill needs and shortages, demographic shifts and pressures and addressing the impediments to VET access, participation and successful outcomes faced by disadvantaged groups. Effective TAFE inclusiveness strategies are vital to equitable building of individual human capital outcomes, for community strengthening and for ensuring that those who are disadvantaged are able to access opportunities to develop initial knowledge and skills, become lifelong learners and maintain up-to-date skills, guaranteeing that they too can contribute, in an ongoing way, to maximising the stock of available industry skills.

This research forms part of a larger research program, *A well-skilled future: Tailoring VET to the emerging labour market*, which aims to investigate the responsiveness of the VET sector to the twin imperatives of changing industry and individual needs, including the ways in which these are experienced in different community settings. In particular, this study has explored the nature and impact of the inclusiveness strategies that have been implemented by TAFE institutes in Australia.

Background

The national VET system has been strongly oriented towards an industrial training model, supporting skills formation for industry plus providing for individual skills needs at both entry levels and on a continuing basis. The Commonwealth's current approach to and policy for vocational education and training, was laid out in *Skilling Australia: New directions for vocational and technical education* in February 2005 (DEST 2005). The guiding principle for proposed changes outlined by the Department of Education, Science and Training (DEST) emphasises that 'Industry and business needs must drive training policies, priorities and delivery' (DEST 2005, p.VI). While references are made to inclusiveness and building stronger communities, with particular focus given to the engagement in and outcomes from VET for Indigenous people, the underlying theme is the need for skills development for industry needs. With state and territory governments taking the major responsibility for funding VET provision, VET strategies have also been linked to regional industry and economic development strategies. However, in conjunction with this economic outcomes agenda, TAFEs, as the public provider and recipient of the greater part of public funding for VET, also have the task of addressing social needs and responding to state and territory social policies and agendas.

During the decade 1995 to 2004, there were strong increases in participation in vocational education and training in Australia, with an overall rise in participation of almost 26% (NCVER 2005). More women engaged in VET study, more young people enrolled in VET in Schools programs and greater proportions of over 45-year-olds returned to study or embarked on initial study in VET. Participation in apprenticeships and traineeships increased (NCVER 2004a) together with support for VET participation by employers (ANTA 2003). The motivations that learners reported for undertaking VET also changed to include more non-vocational ones such as further study and personal fulfilment reasons (NCVER 2004b).

During this same period, concepts of equity and the national and state policies for addressing equity issues also changed. The National Training Reform agenda of the early 1990s focused on youth and on ensuring that there was 'equity within the system'. In the second part of the 1990s there was stronger recognition, documented in *Equity 2001* (ANTA 1996), of the need to focus beyond access and for equity strategies to address access, quality participation and successful outcomes for nominated equity target groups. Five equity target groups were identified and participation and attainment targets set. Towards the end of the decade, there was a shift of emphasis away from solely focusing on target groups towards a 'whole of system response' to diverse client needs (ANTA 1998). *Shaping our future: Australia's National Strategy for VET, 2004–2010* (ANTA 2003a), took this shift further and promoted an 'integrated diversity management' approach for all learner groups except for people with a disability and Indigenous peoples for whom dedicated 'whole-of-life' approaches had been developed and documented in 2000 with the *Bridging pathways* (ANTA 2000a) and *Partners in a learning culture* (ANTA 2000b) blueprints. Concurrently with national shifts, states and territories adopted different philosophical frameworks for addressing equity in VET, focused on individual characteristics or on structural barriers, each of them with clear limitations for shaping policy (Considine et al. 2005) and promoting inclusiveness in VET.

VET providers, in particular TAFE institutes, have been required to respond to these policy shifts and develop practices to promote inclusiveness of the diverse learner groups seeking a broader range of outcomes, including skills development. While the overall social profile of VET has been more representative than that of higher education, there is evidence that social inclusiveness weakens, the higher the Australian Qualification Framework (AQF) level of study. That is, the more disadvantaged students are likely to study in lower AQF level programs than those who are least disadvantaged. However, rates of completion of lower-level qualifications (certificate I and II), are relatively poor (Stanwick 2005, 2006) and employment outcomes for those who do complete are also poor, particularly for 20 to 24-year-olds, with subject-only completers even less likely to find employment or take up higher level study. Further, there is clear evidence that for some disadvantaged groups, participation in VET is less likely to result in successful progression, completion and employment outcomes, than for mainstream students (Dumbrell et al. 2005).

Australia's national strategy for VET 2004–2010 *Shaping our Future*, developed by ANTA prior to its abolition (ANTA 2003a), called upon VET providers to address the training needs of specific groups of disadvantaged people: Indigenous people, people with a disability, and people who face barriers as a result of factors such as their age, gender, cultural difference, language, literacy and numeracy, geographic isolation and socioeconomic disadvantage. TAFEs as the public provider are also required to address the needs of people disengaged from education and training in the community, such as early school leavers (Teese 2005) and mature-aged workers, especially those unemployed and unskilled.

In addition, TAFEs face the challenge of including and supporting learners who experience multiple and cumulative disadvantages, through belonging to a number of different disadvantaged groups (i.e. who face barriers as a result of multiple factors) (John 2005; Volkoff 2005; Golding & Volkoff 1999). The needs of these learners are complex and not easily categorised or addressed through broad client group targeted programs (Considine et al. 2005). Some TAFEs have taken a regional or local community focused approach which is better suited to recognising the diversity of learners, identifying specific characteristics and needs, examining structural barriers and balancing economic and social goals (Considine et al. 2005).

Patterns of delivery are largely influenced by the decisions that TAFEs make about provision within their regional or local context and the context of broader national and state/territory policies and targets. In considering the inclusiveness strategies implemented by TAFEs, it is important to recognise that they operate within a diverse range of state/territory and regional community contexts. Each state training authority plays a role in allocating funding and has varying levels of influence in defining priority areas for equity delivery and inclusiveness strategies. However, following consultations with Australian TAFEs, it is clear that there is an enormous degree of diversity in the approach that each institute takes to serving its catchment community, the way it

perceives and plays its role as an equity provider and its capacity to provide training and marketable skills outcomes to disadvantaged groups and individuals.

Methodology

The methodology for this research project involved a national survey of TAFE providers and state/territory training authorities and detailed analysis of 2004 AVETMISS student participation data and regional demographic data.

The AVETMISS data were used to create a student profile for each TAFE and to look regionally at the proportions of people from disadvantaged groups accessing TAFE training. To facilitate analysis of the different levels of complexity of disadvantage of students within each TAFE, all TAFEs were ranked, according to their relative densities of students, across a set of key disadvantaged and/or targeted groups and then a mean rank across the defined groups was calculated to indicate each TAFE student population's relative complexity of disadvantage.

Mainly telephone and some face-to-face consultations were conducted with representatives of 58 TAFE institutes and TAFE divisions of dual sector universities. Appendix 1 shows the number and location of TAFE institutes consulted by state/territory and lists the names of the institutes that participated in the survey. Seven broad themes were explored in these consultations:

✧ *Demographic and industry/economic context*: background data were gathered to identify the demographic and industry context within which each TAFE was operating and how student enrolments and characteristics reflected that external environment.

✧ *Governance*: the various internal structures that each TAFE used to govern equity and implement their inclusiveness strategies, including staff professional development, strategic leadership and resource management.

✧ *Strategic planning*: the processes used in negotiating the strategic approach to inclusiveness and the significance of data and community consultation in that process.

✧ *Targets and accountability*: the extents to which TAFEs set their own targets and/or were governed by centrally set targets and the accountability and reporting requirements associated with those targets.

✧ *Barriers*: what each TAFE identified as the most significant barriers to access, successful participation and completion and what strategies they used to overcome those barriers.

✧ *Post-completion outcomes*: the extent to which TAFEs embraced the role of promoting post-completion outcomes—employment, further study pathways and other outcomes.

✧ *The role of the central authority*: the role and impact of the state or central authority on the strategic approach of each TAFE.

In addition to consulting with TAFEs, interviews were conducted with representatives from the TAFE governing bodies, state training and/or purchasing authorities to provide a point of reference from which to examine the extent to which TAFEs were being proactively inclusive.

To facilitate analysis of the impact of inclusiveness strategies, a score representing the level of development of inclusiveness strategies was determined for each TAFE on the basis of self-reported data provided in response to the telephone survey. TAFEs were rated against seven dimensions: *Approach to inclusiveness*; *TAFE management of inclusiveness*; *Community engagement*; *Strategies for identifying disadvantage*; *Facilitating access, supporting progression and completion*; *Provision of literacy and numeracy support*; and *Promoting post-completion outcomes*. All TAFEs were allocated a value of 1 to 3, with the higher values indicating more highly developed strategies, across the seven dimensions named above, leading to a total score. TAFEs were then ranked according to the overall level of development and sophistication of their self-reported inclusiveness approaches and strategies.

TAFE provision

In striving to address the twin imperatives of industry and individual skill needs, TAFE institutes operate within and respond to a diverse range of state/territory and regional community contexts.

The governance relationship between TAFE institutes and their governing and/or purchasing authorities differs between states/territories and TAFEs are required to respond to varying policy mechanisms, targets and priorities set by the training authorities and the broader social parameters of their jurisdiction. There are also a number of jurisdictions where the TAFE sector is undergoing review, transformation or is in a state of flux. In particular:

✧ South Australia, where the eight existing South Australian TAFEs were recently (2005) amalgamated into three TAFEs (two metropolitan and one regional) following recommendations from the 2002 Kirby *Review of TAFE governance in South Australia* (Kirby at al. 2002);

✧ Queensland where the White Paper (Queensland DET 2006) heralded a number of changes from July 2006, including the amalgamation of four TAFE institutes within southern Brisbane into one Brisbane South Institute, the transformation of Southbank TAFE to Southbank Institute of Technology, the absorption of the Open Learning Institute in Brisbane North TAFE and the introduction of a statewide Trade and Technician Skills Institute to take control of delivery in key trade areas; and

✧ Victoria, where the Minister for Education and Training initiated the *Inquiry into vocational education and training* (DET, 2006), released in February 2006, included recommendations that registration conditions require that every provider make available comparable performance information and that there be a review of resource funding for recognition of prior learning (RPL).

In addition to policy specific to the VET sector within each jurisdiction, there have been various other policy developments that have had an indirect impact on the role and scope of, and demand placed on, the TAFE sector. Several states have recently implemented, or are in the process of implementing, changes to state post-compulsory education (Tasmania's *A state of learning*; Queensland's *Education and training reforms for the future*, Western Australia's *Our youth, our future*) that either encompass TAFE and VET in general, or have an impact upon the role of TAFE.

TAFE locations vary from capital and major cities, inner and outer regional areas, to remote and very remote locations, and some TAFEs operate across large geographic catchments delivering to urban, regional and remote communities. The regional/local communities that TAFEs deliver to also differ in a variety of ways including their: population size and characteristics including age, Indigenous status, language background and socioeconomic status; community social capital; local economic prosperity; industry types and their stability, growth or decline; employment opportunities; local infrastructure such as public transport; school effectiveness and the presence, role and effectiveness of other VET providers.

A detailed analysis of the AVETMISS 2004 student participation data has identified a range of differences between TAFEs. Enormous differences in size are evident between TAFEs: the smallest TAFE in Australia in 2004 had only 1600 students while the largest had more than 63 000 students. Non-metropolitan TAFEs tended to be considerably smaller in size than metropolitan ones and NSW had the largest TAFEs in the country. Size matters in relation to inclusiveness as

small TAFEs may find it easier to develop a more detailed understanding of local issues and needs and to implement case management approaches. However, a lack of density of learners with particular needs may mean that there is not a critical mass for support programs and targeted delivery. Smaller staff numbers and other resources can also make it more difficult to provide specific or individualised support. While large TAFEs are likely to have greater scope for dedicated staff and resource allocation to address specific learner group needs, it is more difficult to implement individualised screening (e.g. of literacy and numeracy proficiency) or support when the student numbers are very large.

Participation rates of different groups in TAFEs, and changes in these rates, are also not uniform across states and territories. They change in response to local economic conditions, demographic and social trends. TAFE student populations vary in their densities of particular forms of disadvantage and also in the complexity of disadvantage that each TAFE is called upon to address.

The proportions of students belonging to the established disadvantaged groups vary considerably between and within states and territories. The densities of these disadvantaged groups in state/territory TAFEs reflect the demographics of the state/territory, and in particular, of the TAFE catchment areas, equity policies and targets and the capacities of the TAFEs to facilitate access through their inclusiveness strategies. TAFEs in three states delivered to higher than expected proportions of the most socioeconomically disadvantaged (lowest decile SES) people, while TAFEs in the remaining five states/territories had much lower participation rates (range of 0.4%–8.7%) by this group. Capital city TAFEs tended to have higher proportions of the most socioeconomically disadvantaged students than major city or regional TAFEs.

There was a strong correlation evident between socioeconomic disadvantage and the AQF level of study. TAFEs with the most disadvantaged cohorts had the highest enrolment levels in basic (certificate I and II) courses and the lowest levels of enrolment in advanced (diploma+) courses. Similarly, TAFEs with the highest levels of complexity of disadvantage (that is, with high representation of multiple disadvantaged and targeted groups) had far lower rates of participation in advanced (diploma+ courses) than TAFEs with the lowest levels of complexity of disadvantage. The TAFEs with the most socioeconomically disadvantaged cohorts were also the ones most likely to have student cohorts with the highest levels of complexity of disadvantage.

The presence of other VET providers and their effectiveness in engaging disadvantaged learners also affects the role of TAFE in providing skills within a particular community. In some regions, the presence of multiple VET providers was associated with a highly competitive environment, while in others, strong collaborative partnerships evolved between VET providers including TAFEs, schools, private registered training organisations (RTOs) and community education providers. Analysis of the data revealed that community education providers played different roles across the three states where they provided VET in 2004. In Victoria and South Australia, community education providers engaged higher proportions of the most disadvantaged students than TAFEs or private RTOs, while in NSW the reverse tended to be the case.

It is important to note the diversity evident within the TAFE sector and the demands that TAFEs are required to respond to including: their jurisdictional policy priorities and targets; the demands for training arising from their very different local/regional catchment communities; the issues associated with different student locations and, for some TAFEs, accommodating learners from across city, inner and outer regional areas.

The density of disadvantaged learner groups, particularly the socioeconomically disadvantaged, and the complexity of disadvantage both have an impact on the level of study of TAFE cohorts, with the most disadvantaged likely to be in the lower-level programs. For this reason, TAFE strategies for inclusiveness need to not only focus on facilitating access to skill development but also on supporting pathways to higher levels of study and employment. To ensure effective and useful training outcomes for disadvantaged people, decisions about what programs are offered and at what AQF levels need to be informed by data about local/regional industry skill needs.

The next section presents and analyses the self-reported TAFE approaches to inclusiveness and the strategies that have been adopted to promote participation in and effective outcomes from VET by disadvantaged groups.

TAFE responses to the demand for inclusiveness

TAFEs address the needs of their student cohorts while responding to industry skills demands and community growth imperatives. In doing so, they operate within specific regional/local contexts with a range of factors which impact on both the demands they are required to address and the resources on which they can draw for support, as Figure 1 below outlines (building on the model *Which way does VET face?* Teese et al. 2005).

Figure 1   Model of TAFE impulses and outputs
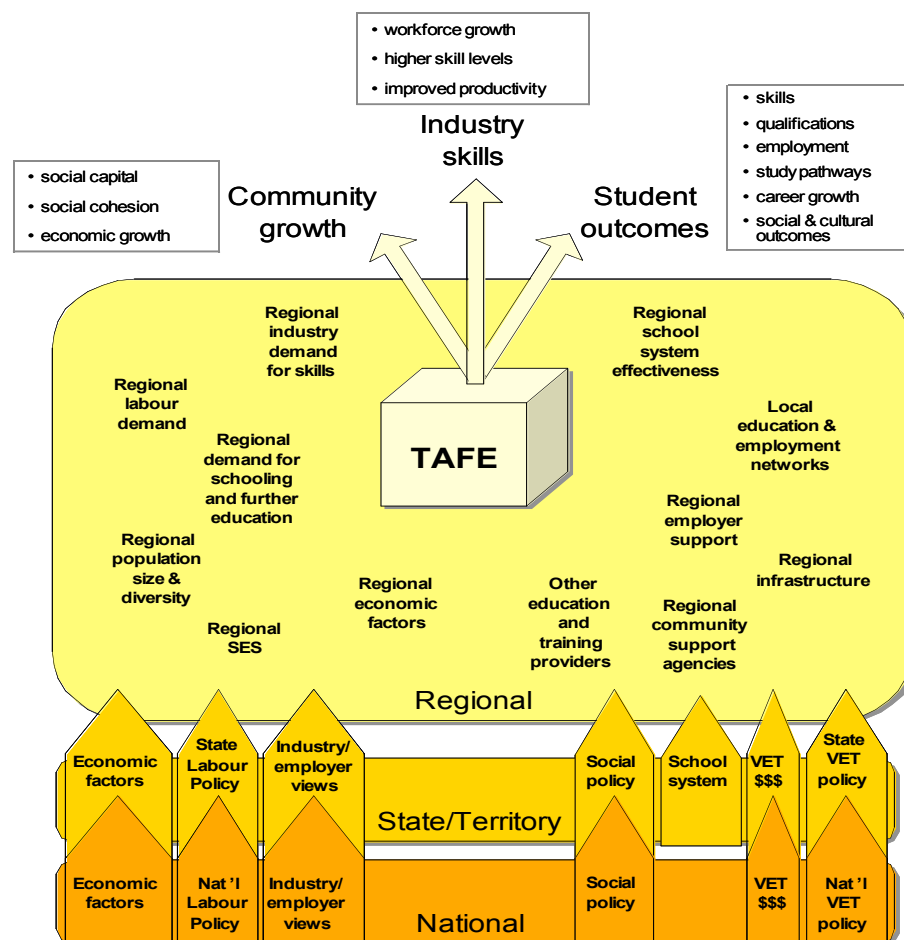
This section draws on nationwide consultations conducted during 2006 with representatives from 58 TAFEs to explore the diverse range of TAFE institute responses to the demand for inclusiveness that they face in their particular contexts. The seven broad themes explored in these consultations were: demographic and industry/economic context; governance; strategic planning; targets and accountability; barriers; post-completion outcomes and the role of the central authority.

Approach to inclusiveness

Representatives of the 58 TAFEs that participated in the consultations consistently reported an awareness of the disadvantages experienced by different groups in successfully accessing, participating in and completing training. However, this awareness was not translated into practice uniformly across the sector and a diverse range of ways of thinking about and attitudes towards inclusiveness were reported. The first difference in TAFE approaches to inclusiveness that emerged was that TAFEs appeared to respond to different impulses or drivers for inclusiveness.

A distinction could be made between TAFEs that were merely complying with the inclusiveness requirements of their performance and purchasing agreements and the overarching priorities of state and Commonwealth policy and those that were also being proactive in attempting to build wider community access to training and foster successful training pathways for groups of people experiencing disadvantage. The dual and sometimes competing impulses of industry demand for skills provision and community demand for wider access and engagement of disadvantaged groups were reported to be a key area of concern within some TAFEs. The impact of the current focus on increasing higher AQF level participation, was illustrated by the following comment: 'there is a constant tension in the VET sector as to who is the client: industry need and skill requirements for industry or the individual'. The self-reported approaches to inclusiveness of the 58 TAFEs were examined and a typology of approaches to inclusiveness was developed, as shown in Table 1 below.

Table 1   Typology of approaches to inclusiveness

1 Compliance approach (8 TAFEs)	2 Existing cohort approach (32 TAFEs)	3 Community obligation approach (18 TAFEs)
These TAFEs:	These TAFEs:	These TAFEs:
✧ refer to state/territory and Commonwealth requirements and targets as drivers of their inclusive practice ✧ are driven by industry needs for skills rather than community needs.	✧ are driven by the needs of their existing cohort ✧ have targeted support for existing cohorts ✧ report managing diversity, specific unit type approaches.	✧ are driven by both the needs of their existing cohort and the broader disadvantage, needs and advocacy of their catchment community ✧ report managing diversity, specific unit type approaches ✧ see community capacity building as part of their role ✧ report cohesive, holistic, community oriented approaches.

The following quotes illustrate the differences between the *compliance*, *existing cohort* and *community obligation* approaches:

✧ A representative from one of the 8 TAFEs identified as having a *compliance approach* summarised their response by saying that, 'whatever they measure, that's where our effort goes'.

✧ An interviewee from one of the 32 TAFEs responding to the needs of its existing cohort suggested that, 'we need to respond to the needs of everyone who walks through our door.'

✧ A respondent from one of the 18 TAFEs with a community obligation approach explained that, 'the approach is one where we want it [inclusiveness] embedded in the whole college and the whole culture, so effectively everybody has responsibility'.

TAFEs classified as having a community obligation approach commonly referred to 'capacity building', a 'learner centred approach', the importance of holistic community engagement and support to make sure that 'training is not in isolation'. They also reported their understanding of training as 'the vehicle that provides them with opportunity … [and] a concept of self'.

Identification of these three approaches has important implications for policy-makers. Clearly some TAFEs are driven to implement inclusiveness strategies by externally imposed targets. However,

these strategies are likely to be focused primarily at the front-end or access phase of the TAFE experience and on the particular groups targeted.

The majority of TAFEs (55%) reported that they were implementing inclusiveness strategies directly in response to their existing student cohort. While these strategies are important and may be highly effective in supporting successful participation, they place limited priority on identification and engagement of disadvantaged groups in the community who may be missing out on access to TAFE. These strategies focus primarily on the participation phase of the TAFE experience. Hence when this approach is taken by TAFEs, the responsibility for identification of disengaged disadvantaged groups and promotion of their engagement in TAFE rests with external authorities, with mechanisms such as target setting, inevitably delaying implementation of any responsive strategies.

The third category of approach which was identified by 31 per cent of TAFEs, the 'community obligation approach', sees TAFEs take an active community capacity building role. These TAFEs use a variety of community-oriented approaches to identify and support disadvantaged groups to undertake training. Such an approach utilises partnerships between the TAFE and a broad range of community agencies, other training providers and industry/enterprises. It is most likely to focus on the access, participation and outcomes phases of the TAFE experience, from identifying groups not yet accessing TAFE training, through to engaging and supporting them, not only in successfully participating but also in linking their training to employment opportunities. Implications for policy-makers include finding ways to promote such collaborative and community-oriented approaches within TAFEs and tap into the valuable information generated by the TAFEs about skills demand and supply at the regional level to inform broader planning. Collaborative inclusiveness strategies regularly involve agencies representing numerous state/territory and Australian Government departments. There is scope for policy-makers to play a role in providing coherent cross-departmental support and resources to facilitate this collaboration.

Identifying disadvantage and targeting inclusive practice

Logical precursors to providing targeted support and interventions for disadvantaged groups are identifying the people who experience disadvantage and understanding the impact of the disadvantage they experience on their capacity to access and complete training. Breadth, depth and accuracy were reported to be the most important elements of effective and reliable data. There were two types of information used to understand disadvantage—data about the characteristics of existing cohorts and data about the characteristics of broader catchments and community.

In identifying and understanding the existing cohort, a majority of TAFEs (91%) expressed concern that self-identification by students through the enrolment process was weak. Groups nominated as particularly reluctant to self-identify were Indigenous people, people with a disability and those with low literacy and numeracy skills. Further, TAFEs suggested that students who did not self-identify were also likely to be reluctant to acknowledge that they faced difficulties if these were brought to their attention by a TAFE staff member. As a respondent from one regional TAFE explained:

> The real problem comes where you think the student has an issue, but they are not prepared to admit that they've got the issue. So how do you go about addressing that?

Almost one fifth of TAFEs (*n*=11*)* asserted that the enrolment process, as an instrument for gathering information about student characteristics and disadvantage, sought only data about traditional equity groups and was problematic because it lacked a capacity to identify less obvious disadvantage. There was a trend among the smaller TAFEs, those with fewer than ten thousand students, to report some case management of the enrolment process. Such a process was reported to aid accurate identification of student disadvantage and additional learning and support needs. There was particular emphasis placed on the potential within the case management approach to recognise student characteristics that may negatively impact on a student's progress, but would not necessarily be identified as a traditional barrier or equity indicator through the enrolment form. Examples of such student characteristics included being a single mother, being a carer, having

particular (and potentially problematic) working hours or an ongoing health issue. One respondent from a small TAFE reported:

> We have a process which is sort of like a learner needs check list, which lecturers or whoever is handling the enrolment discusses with the student and will go through a series of issues that might impact on their ability to participate. There's an opportunity there to say, 'this person may have issues with literacy or they've had a low level of schooling [so] they may need a CGEA assessment or they may have personal issues or family commitments'.

While all TAFEs gathered AVETMISS data on student characteristics through the enrolment process, the use of this data varied greatly. Only a minority (*n*=17*)* of TAFEs reported any regular analysis or dissemination of their student characteristic data to teaching staff for the purpose of informing targeted support and inclusive practice.

Despite a general consensus among TAFE respondents that it is important to understand disadvantage and educational barriers beyond the TAFE, there was a great diversity in the extent to which TAFEs pursued this information. The most common approach reported was use of comparative AVETMISS and centrally produced demographic and labour market data. About one in five TAFEs (*n*=11*)* reported a very strategic approach to identifying disadvantage that included dedicated data gathering, use of research units, environmental scanning, formalised knowledge sharing with other stakeholders and regular analysis of both internal and regional indicators of disadvantage, such as school non-completion rates and proportions of students and the local population on income support.

Sharing knowledge of support needs and disadvantage with other stakeholders was reported to be particularly valuable in relation to youth, migrant and Indigenous cohorts. More than a quarter of TAFEs emphasised the need for community cooperation and communication to ensure effective holistic support for disadvantaged communities. As an example of the need for effective lines of communication, a respondent from a medium-sized regional TAFE recounted an instance when a large local employer was planning to bring a number of employees from a non-English speaking country into a relatively small regional town. Communication between the employer and community stakeholders, including schools, health and welfare services and TAFE, had been weak. The outcome of poor communication in this case was insufficient planning for the array of support demands, including English language training, of the new migrant group and their families. The important role that local government can play, as both a source of data and a provider of infrastructure, was acknowledged by a majority of TAFEs.

In describing their delivery and the characteristics of their students, several TAFEs reported an awareness of how the characteristics of their cohorts compared with other TAFEs within their system. A small number of TAFEs reported internal benchmarking with other Australian TAFEs and one TAFE reported benchmarking with an international education provider.

Barriers to accessing and successfully participating in TAFE

Respondents nominated more than fifteen different disadvantaged groups who, they perceived, faced potential barriers to both accessing and successfully completing training at TAFE (See Figures 2 and 3). By far, the most significant barrier that TAFEs reported in relation to accessing training was low literacy and numeracy skills (64%). In addition, a majority of TAFEs (72%) agreed that low literacy and numeracy skills posed barriers to successful completion of training. As one respondent explained, low literacy and numeracy skills make it '… quite difficult for [students] to participate in a lot of the programs that are already up and running'. Particular attention was drawn to the impact of low numeracy skills for the youth cohort entering apprenticeships and trade-related courses. 'Numeracy is just as difficult [an issue to deal with] as literacy and that forms significant barriers for young kids here who want to do a trade.' TAFEs identify literacy and numeracy proficiency levels using different assessment methods and there are varying degrees of formal screening or assessment for literacy and numeracy needs. The most commonly reported approach to identifying low literacy and numeracy was a combination of student self-identification, informal

classroom observations by vocational teachers and compulsory screening for all students enrolled in access and general education programs.

Figure 2   Main groups nominated by TAFEs as facing barriers to accessing training (% of TAFEs)
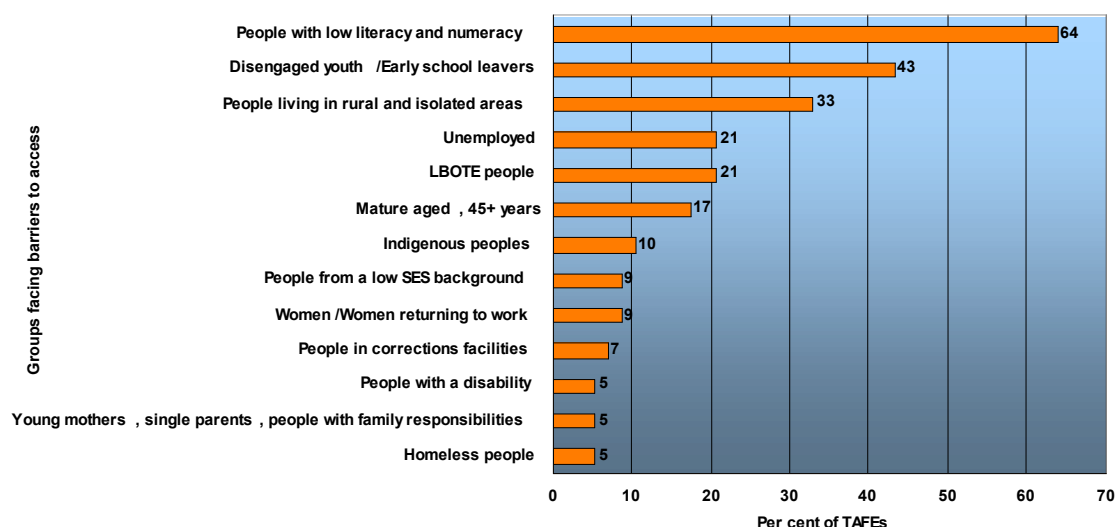
One jurisdiction required literacy and numeracy assessment of all students enrolling in TAFE and two TAFEs outside that system reported self-imposed compulsory literacy and numeracy screening for all students. Another two TAFEs described a grass-roots approach to dealing with the issues of low literacy and numeracy of apprentices and trainees. This localised approach contextualised literacy and numeracy assessment to be vocationally specific to the apprentice and trainee study programs.

Figure 3   Main groups nominated by TAFEs as facing barriers to completing training (% of TAFEs)
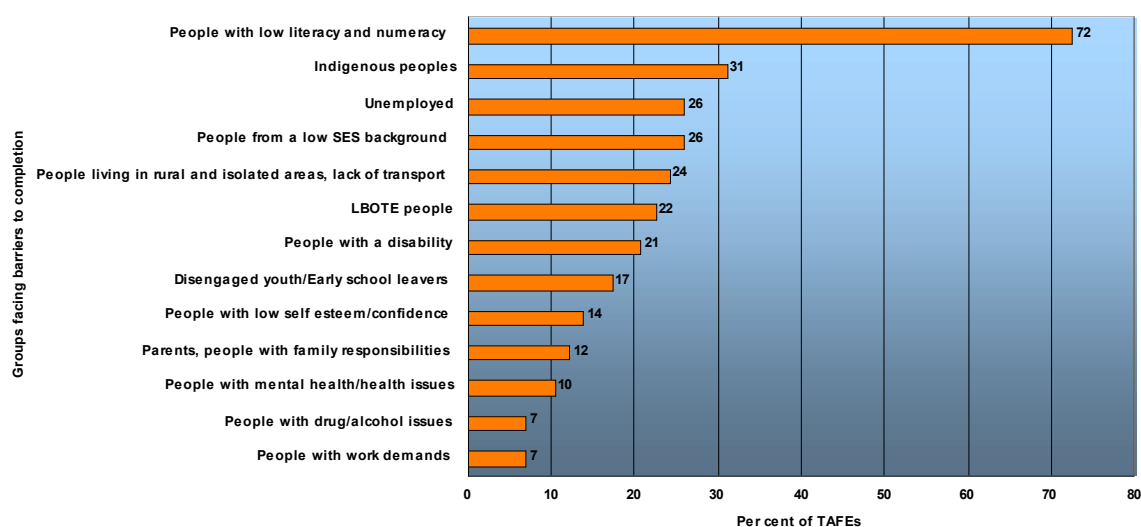
Almost half of TAFEs (43%) nominated disengaged youth and early school leavers as facing significant barriers to accessing training. Poor school system effectiveness and weak regional education networks were perceived to be factors which both contributed to and compounded the educational disadvantage of these groups. Young people not connected with a welfare or service agency were considered to be particularly difficult to engage. Lack of transport options, particularly in regional areas, lack of previous educational success, lack of social and cultural connection with an ageing TAFE workforce and poor potential employment options were identified as some of the factors that made facilitating access for disengaged youth problematic. Low self-esteem, lack of a

supportive home environment and being the first person in their family to attend post-compulsory and/or tertiary education were nominated as further barriers to successful completion.

Issues associated with '… family life backgrounds and a history of non-participatory schooling' were reported to be very significant factors in the participation of 'at risk' Indigenous youth. TAFEs reported increasing enrolments of the 15 to 19-year-old cohort. There was also anticipation amongst a majority of TAFEs that this demand would increase within the context of recent, pending and proposed changes to compulsory education in a number of jurisdictions.

Low levels of previous education were cited as serious barriers for mature-aged men and women, particularly women returning to work after a substantial absence and long-term unemployed men. A key issue reported for these groups was the lack of experience in a structured learning environment. One respondent from a TAFE with a sizeable mature-aged cohort commented:

> We run courses that are designed to bring them in: make them feel comfortable; fill up the gaps from their early education; get them to operate in a formal learning environment where they are expected to discuss, ask questions, be part of active learning. Most of them haven't experienced that.

A third of TAFEs (*n*=19), across both metropolitan and regional locations, emphasised the significance of geographic isolation as a barrier to participation at TAFE. In metropolitan areas, it was of greatest concern to outlying TAFEs, those servicing growth corridors and emerging urban fringe communities lacking existing transport infrastructure. While these TAFEs acknowledged that geographically isolated students did not make up a significant proportion of their overall cohorts, there was an argument that,

> because of the remoteness, they tend to be a client group we work with a lot, they require a lot of effort in delivery and we spend a lot of time trying to consult with, and developing strategies for, them.

Non-metropolitan TAFEs tended to report that geographic isolation was a compounding factor for already disadvantaged youth and language background other than English (LBOTE) migrant communities. Almost all non-metropolitan TAFEs emphasised their struggle to overcome the impact of poor public transport systems in regional areas. Several regional TAFEs described the strain placed on TAFE resources as they tried to respond to increasing demand for off-campus and remote delivery for geographically isolated students lacking transport options. Other social, economic and educational factors were also perceived to exacerbate the barriers associated with geographic isolation for some of these students:

> Social and economic circumstances that people in some of those very remote areas have, arise from long term unemployment, lower than average schooling levels and lack of alternative schooling opportunities. People have less choice so they have less opportunities to take advantage of things. These are products of distance and community.

Unemployment or disengagement from the labour market (21%) and low socioeconomic status (SES) (9%) were also reported to impede participation in training. Particular mention was made by TAFEs of the impact of intergenerational unemployment. This was reported to have a serious impact upon enrolled students, including through lack of financial flexibility, poor family support and limited capacity to exploit any skills and qualifications that were achieved. More TAFEs viewed low SES as posing a barrier to completion (26%) than posing a barrier to access (9%). Some respondents (28%) also suggested that disengagement from the labour market and low SES potentially contributed to family or community devaluing of education. One respondent sharing this view commented:

> Young people are coming from really quite disadvantaged backgrounds and they are not coming from a community that values education or sees any hope or any point in actually trying to break some of the cycle they are involved in.

Several TAFEs drew attention to what they described as institutionalised and systemic barriers facing their communities. A small number of TAFEs (12%) expressed concern about the 'overly bureaucratic nature' of the enrolment process. These TAFEs emphasised the potential of the enrolment process to exclude people with low literacy and numeracy skills, those without access to the internet and with low information and communication technology (ICT) capabilities. About a quarter of TAFEs cited fee structures as posing financial pressure on both students and TAFEs with large cohorts on concessional fees. These TAFEs were strong proponents of the importance of 'walk-up' enrolment processes and front-line inclusive practices, including the training of enrolment and administration staff to be aware of factors with the potential to exclude learners. A majority of TAFEs cited restrictive funding regimes as posing several barriers to TAFEs themselves being inclusive, particularly through lack of resources to provide necessary targeted support and customised delivery. The pressure to meet certain external targets was perceived to detract from the focus on responding to locally derived disadvantage and need. A majority of TAFEs expressed awareness of issues of multiple disadvantages and acknowledged that 'disadvantage escalates as you start to get multiplications of the different categories that [students] fit into'.

Emerging disadvantaged groups

In addition to identifying barriers faced and disadvantage experienced by traditional and currently recognised equity groups, TAFEs were also asked to nominate issues of disadvantage perceived to be emerging or not yet addressed. The most commonly nominated disadvantaged groups were refugees (nominated by 50% of respondents), people with mental health issues (24%) and older men with low levels of educational achievement (19%). Particular mention was made of African refugees and issues related to health and experience of torture and trauma that potentially hindered their participation in TAFE. Mental health issues were described as a *hidden problem* because of both difficulty in detection and the social stigma associated with self-identification. Older men, particularly those who were retrenched, long-term unemployed or who were suffering physical and mental health issues, were described as needing:

> personal development, [addressing of their] men's health issues … [and] a supportive environment where they feel comfortable to address some of the literacy and numeracy needs that they may have.

Another non-traditional equity group cited by six TAFEs was young people aged below 15 years, who fell outside the policy parameters of the targeted, 15–19 youth cohort. This group was described as made up predominantly of those excluded or disengaged from school and unable to access traditional alternatives of apprenticeships or traineeships because of their young age. While not a significant group in size, there is an ongoing debate about the best approach to supporting this most disadvantaged group:

> I think that one of the hardest groups to work with is probably some of these kids that are 12 and 13. They don't become eligible for programs like a TAFE skills program unless they are in year 11 so they've got a 3 or 4 year gap there in their formal education that's not being met. We are not able to keep them at school because they don't see the relevance but it's not seen as a TAFE role to work with them at 12–16 and TAFE's starting point usually is about that 15 to 16 year age group. So that's a group where we are just not able to meet the need and there is a lot of conflict in the community [about] whether they should be forced to stay at school.

TAFE management of inclusiveness

Across the 58 TAFEs that participated in the survey, there was considerable variation in the ways they distributed their student support staff and resources and managed their infrastructure in relation to inclusiveness. All TAFEs have some form of dedicated staff positions for support of Indigenous students and students with a disability. Beyond these two groups, the next student

cohorts most commonly receiving dedicated or targeted support were youth and LBOTE students. While each TAFE had a slightly different approach to managing their internal inclusiveness infrastructure, there were identifiable commonalities and trends. A typology of TAFE management of inclusiveness was developed, as shown in Table 2 below.

The two strongest themes stemming from the consultations, in relation to the management of inclusiveness, were the need for strong institute leadership and enthusiasm for the inclusiveness agenda, and the risk of marginalisation of inclusiveness if it was not embraced by mainstream staff. Overall, there was a consensus that the culture of an institute, strongly influenced by the historical role and position of TAFE within the community, has a substantial impact on a TAFE's capacity for and tendency towards inclusive practice.

Table 2   Typology of TAFE management of inclusiveness

1 Nominal inclusiveness structures (25 TAFEs)	2 Moderate inclusiveness structures (25 TAFEs)	3 Embedded inclusiveness structures (8 TAFEs)
These TAFEs reported:	These TAFEs reported:	These TAFEs reported:
✧ no equity manager or manager responsible for equity/inclusiveness	✧ an equity manager at a low level within the TAFE hierarchy	✧ inclusiveness responsibilities embedded into a range of senior and management staff roles
✧ no identified unit responsible for access and general education delivery	✧ a small identified unit responsible for access delivery	✧ strategic responsibility for inclusiveness is taken at a senior level within the TAFE hierarchy
✧ support for disadvantaged and equity target groups is provided by general student support mechanisms & there are no specialised staff beyond Indigenous and Disability officers	✧ some specialised staff for equity groups beyond Indigenous and Disability	✧ there is a dedicated delivery unit for access and general education programs of equal jurisdiction as vocational delivery units
✧ no strategic focus for inclusive practice or community engagement staff position.	✧ no strategic community engagement staff position	✧ support units have institute wide jurisdiction and are not isolated
	✧ strategic focus for inclusiveness embedded into the role of one or more management roles.	✧ there is at least one dedicated staff position for community engagement.

Representatives of five metropolitan TAFEs commented that strong historical ties to industry impeded progress towards greater community inclusion as they tried to balance their economic/industry obligations with their social and community responsibilities.

All TAFEs reported conducting some form of professional development (PD) relating to inclusiveness or cultural awareness and more than half of TAFEs (55%) placed great emphasis on regular PD as necessary for a successful inclusiveness approach. Specially trained or expert staff were considered to be particularly important for working with Indigenous and youth cohorts. Interviewees emphasised the need for staff with particular skills, interest and dedication to work with disengaged and at risk youth. One respondent summed up the views of many by saying it was vital to have 'teachers who have an interest and a passion to work with young people, particularly young people from disadvantaged backgrounds and early school leavers'. Another respondent, also expressing a view shared by several participants, spoke about the need to provide specialist support in the mainstream setting:

> We find it's best to have people who are employed specifically for that group and that their skills match, rather than expecting teachers to be able to provide support and teach and manage the other components. So it's a separate focus. There may be, for example, issues that come up regarding accommodation or family life that a young person presents and they are not fit to be in a classroom. So the teacher can teach and there is someone else who can take that young person aside, deal with the issues and get them back into study straight away.

There was widespread agreement about the value of having experienced and well-trained staff, particularly with a capacity to navigate and exploit community networks and competitive funding resources. Three TAFEs, two metropolitan and one regional, spoke about the use of 'communities of practice' for spreading inclusive practice across the institute and mainstream teaching staff.

Community engagement and obligation

Four out of five TAFEs (81%) emphasised the role of broader community support mechanisms in TAFE inclusiveness strategies. It is evident from the consultations that community stakeholders play a significant role in facilitating and sustaining successful TAFE experiences. All TAFEs reported an increasing demand on them to provide non-educational responses to the barriers facing their cohorts and broader catchments. Respondents described intensified collaboration and expanding relationships with community stakeholders as necessary to address the increasing and more complex needs of their cohorts. A common acknowledgement by TAFE representatives was that TAFEs do not provide successful training experiences in isolation and that 'developing productive and effective relationships with other groups in the community' is vital to achieving effective provision for all cohorts, disadvantaged or not. While the nature and specific purpose of community engagement activities varied enormously across the Australian TAFE sector, there were three identifiable key drivers of engagement into which activities described by the TAFEs can be grouped:

✧ Community engagement for providing support networks;

✧ Community engagement for knowledge sharing; and

✧ Community engagement for partnered delivery.

Community engagement for providing support networks

The consultations supported the outcomes of AVETMISS data analysis reported in the previous section in indicating that many TAFEs are not only responding to relatively high densities of specific disadvantage, but also significant complexity of disadvantage across their student cohorts. This complexity relates not only to educational disadvantage but also to 'issues that are often external to the classroom'. While TAFEs reported collaborating with external agencies to provide support for a range of disadvantaged groups, the most common groups for which outside expertise was consistently being sought were Indigenous, migrant/refugee and young students, and students with a disability. Table 3 indicates the disadvantaged groups that were most commonly nominated by TAFEs as driving the demand for external support, the areas where that support was needed and the types of external agencies that were engaged.

Table 3   Most common groups nominated by TAFEs as requiring external agency support

Group	Issues requiring external support	Agencies commonly engaged
Indigenous	Housing issues, Financial support, Transport, Settlement issues for remote students studying in urban areas	Centrelink, Indigenous health, welfare and legal aid agencies, land councils, Indigenous community advocacy bodies
Migrants and refugees	Settlement issues, Health issues, Navigating community services, Cultural and social engagement for refugee youth	Migrant Resource Centres, Centrelink, local government youth agencies/services, Community advocacy bodies
Youth (15–19)	Housing, Financial support, Drug and alcohol, Justice and legal issues, Health	Welfare and adolescent health agencies, local government youth agencies/services, juvenile justice agencies, not-for-profit youth organisations, NGOs (e.g. Salvation Army, Brotherhood of St Laurence)
Disability	Housing issues, Transport issues, Social and community engagement	Not-for-profit community organisations, NGOs (e.g. Salvation Army, Brotherhood of St Laurance)

More than a third of TAFEs (*n*=21) reported engaging Indigenous community organisations to support Indigenous cohorts. These organisations were commonly engaged to help foster a culturally appropriate and welcoming learning environment and to establish Indigenous community validation of the TAFE and its delivery. Several TAFEs described the ways in which they had adopted community and elder mentor programs to support at-risk Indigenous youth.

The most commonly nominated reasons for engaging external support for migrant and refugee students were settlement, financial and health issues. One TAFE reported an on-campus Migrant Resource Centre that provided services to both students and non-student community members. Establishment of such a resource centre on campus not only provided immediate access to support for migrant and refugee students but also increased awareness of the TAFE and the opportunities it offered to the broader community visiting the resource centre. Several TAFEs described regular on-campus presence of personnel from Migrant Resource Centres and other migrant dedicated support agencies. One metropolitan TAFE with a large LBOTE cohort was addressing the settlement needs of young refugees through a program specifically aimed at promoting cultural exchange and connecting these young people with their new community.

Several TAFEs, mostly metropolitan, reported arrangements with community organisations, such as the Salvation Army and Brotherhood of St Laurance, to provide 'wrap around' support to 'at risk' and re-engaging youth in entry level and secondary school level programs. These TAFEs highlighted the importance of ongoing monitoring and support for this cohort, including financial aid, drug and alcohol counselling and housing support. The lack of capacity within existing funding structures to provide this level of adequate support within the TAFE was a concern for most of these TAFEs. One respondent articulated this concern by saying, 'you can't always do everything without funding, but if you work with the local agencies and they are referring their clients, they can provide that support'. At the other end of the spectrum was a small group of TAFEs (n=5) that cited the existence of community support services as a reason for not providing additional support mechanisms or resources within the TAFE, a minority sentiment illustrated by the comment, 'There's not a great deal [we do] because our community groups do that'.

Community engagement for knowledge sharing

Almost all TAFEs reported some degree of community engagement for the purpose of obtaining, distributing and/or sharing knowledge about industry trends, the needs of their student cohort and the broader community. The extent of the knowledge exchange and the value placed on the expertise and data of external stakeholders varied enormously between TAFEs. Reported knowledge sharing activities included collection of local government demographic and industry data, surveys of local enterprises, liaison with Centrelink to determine proportions of students who were welfare recipients, consultation with Migrant Resource Centres to plan for English language provision and facilitation of community and industry forums. One large metropolitan TAFE reported holding bi-annual community forums with up to a hundred stakeholder participants. Three TAFEs, each delivering across broad regional geographic areas, described using their relatively dispersed delivery locations to develop strong, in-depth local relationships and to act as a broker for regional collaborations. Almost half of TAFEs (47%) highlighted the role of TAFE as a broker for dialogue between various community stakeholders and link between their students and service providers. This response was particularly prevalent in non-metropolitan TAFEs. Across the 58 TAFEs, the most common examples of knowledge sharing were: referrals to and from support service agencies; arrangements with individual schools, school clusters and regional education networks; consultations with industry; and consultations with community representative bodies and advocacy groups

Community engagement for partnered delivery

Almost half of TAFEs (45%) reported some form of partnered delivery. The main reasons that TAFEs gave for engaging in partnered delivery were to create pathways to TAFE and for additional support. Both Victorian and New South Wales TAFEs reported significant levels of partnered delivery with community providers and there were varying degrees of partnership with private providers in the other jurisdictions. However, a minority of TAFEs (12%) reported some difficulty in determining and sharing ownership and control of delivery in partnered arrangements.

The three student groups for whom TAFEs most commonly reported providing effective partnered delivery were the youth, migrant and mature aged cohorts. A respondent from one

regional TAFE described a partnership between the TAFE, a building and construction employer and a local secondary school. The TAFE was delivering building and construction qualifications as part of the school's strategy to improve retention, while the employer provided access to a construction site for the practical component of the training. Similar tripartite arrangements were reported by eleven other TAFEs. One TAFE interviewee described their TAFE's planned response to issues of low SES and unemployment:

> At the moment we've got a project with the [high] school. They've got a problem with a very low retention rate and socioeconomic problem … a lack of opportunities for training that is appropriate. It's a very high male youth unemployment area … So, we've got a collaboration between us, the school and a private property developer that's developing in the region who provide us with facilities. And with another TAFE college, we provide building construction pre-apprenticeship training there.

TAFEs involved in partnered delivery emphasised the benefit of engaging students through a provider that they were already comfortable with and the need to bring students into the TAFE environment or onto the TAFE campus for at least part of the partnered delivery. For example, one large metropolitan TAFE described an arrangement with a community provider targeted at young people who had self-identified as being uncomfortable with the idea of going to TAFE. The TAFE delivered an automotive training module in conjunction with the community provider's self-esteem focused program. The arrangement included bringing the group onto the TAFE campus for two days to work in the automotive workshops. The aim of this program component was 'to make them realise that they *do* belong here [at the TAFE] and it is not a threatening or scary place for them to come'. This sentiment was echoed by several other TAFE respondents who suggested that a significant barrier to engagement was 'the whole self-esteem and confidence issue'. Another example of partnered delivery, a variation of which was described by more than a third of TAFEs (40%), was delivery of English language training to refugee women in migrant resource centres or similar community support providers. TAFEs highlighted the benefit of well-established rapport and trust between the students and the migrant resource centre staff, the importance of familiar surroundings and the availability of appropriate child care and interpreters.

A small proportion of TAFEs (7%) suggested the need for increased community discussion about 'appropriate delivery locations' for some disadvantaged groups and the 'inappropriateness of TAFE' for some cohorts. Some respondents, from TAFEs delivering to self-described thin markets in regional areas, highlighted the need to consult with employment services and other training providers so as to be 'not competing but working together'. They placed great emphasis on the needs for TAFE courses to flow on from or be an effective extension of those being run by other providers and for reducing overlapping delivery. The intensity and formality of community engagement activities and the value placed on community engagement varied from TAFE to TAFE.

Drawing on the consultations with the 58 TAFEs, a typology of community engagement was developed, as detailed in Table 4. This typology illustrates the divergence in practice between those TAFEs that reported no community engagement and those that described a two-way dialogue and holistic connections with their community.

Table 4   Typology of community engagement

1 No community engagement (11 TAFEs)	2 Informal community engagement (24 TAFEs)	3 Formalised two-way engagement (23 TAFEs)
These TAFEs reported:	These TAFEs reported:	These TAFEs reported:
✧ no community engagement activities ✧ small amount of VET in Schools delivery	✧ small number of informal community partnerships, relationships and referrals to support service agencies ✧ no formalised consultation or advisory mechanism beyond Indigenous community consultation ✧ small amount of partnered delivery ✧ VET in Schools delivery and auspicing.	✧ at least one dedicated staff position for management of community engagement ✧ community consultation and engagement embedded in a range of senior teaching and staff positions ✧ formalised community consultation processes and MOUs covering a range of disadvantaged groups ✧ partnered delivery with private providers, community providers and industry ✧ two-way referrals with a range of support service agencies ✧ VET in Schools delivery and auspicing

Strategies for inclusiveness

Different groups in the community face different barriers to successfully participating in and completing training and experience disadvantage at different stages of the TAFE journey. It is this complexity and diversity of disadvantage that leads to such a variety of TAFE responses and approaches to inclusiveness. The consultations identified the ways in which TAFEs facilitated access, supported student progress and completion, and promoted positive post-completion outcomes.

Facilitating access

Very few TAFEs (10%) reported no targeting of groups in the community for the purpose of aiding or facilitating access. The trend reported among this minority was towards marketing to the general population. This included mail-outs and advertising in the print media and on radio. All other TAFEs (90%) reported that they targeted particular groups within the community to facilitate access. Numerous innovative and reportedly effective examples of strategies and methods for facilitating access were described by respondents. Some predominant types of strategies emerged from the consultations and a majority incorporated one or more of the following elements:

✧ Customisation of curriculum, assessment and/or length of delivery

✧ Contextualisation of delivery

✧ Flexible and blended modes of delivery

✧ Alternative, flexible and/or off-campus delivery environments

✧ Consultation with community and industry.

Examples of customisation of delivery were reported for almost all nominated equity groups. They ranged from additional literacy and numeracy components for existing training packages, to fully customised access and enabling programs that were dedicated to particular equity or disadvantaged groups. Customisation included changes to curriculum and content, alterations to processes and timing of assessment and the addition of non-educational support components, such as access to childcare or funded transport – providing the necessary 'scaffolding' for each group. The most common example of customised assessment was provision of extra time through allocation of additional student contact hours (SCHs).

Several TAFEs cited the 'TAFE isn't for me' attitude among some disadvantaged groups as a significant difficulty that needed to be addressed in promoting engagement and participation. Contextualisation of vocational programs within a life skills area was perceived to be an effective approach to overcoming this problem. Examples described included delivering a childcare training module for refugee mothers or an automotive training module for disengaged young men that involved building a car. This approach attempted to engage reluctant participants by making learning outcomes relevant and tangible and presenting viable learning pathways and ongoing possibilities.

There was considerable support for multiple, blended and flexible delivery modes and more than half of the TAFEs (52%) suggested these strategies were necessary for facilitating access and participation. A small number of TAFEs (16%) suggested that single modes of delivery were no longer appropriate and that all programs in their institutes incorporated some degree of blended delivery. There appeared to be a strong reliance on community consultation in the development of customised curriculum, including with industry. While not seen as a significant issue, there was some concern among a small group of respondents (12%) that customisation of AQF level certificates could sometimes lead to their devaluation by industry, and for this reason industry consultation and involvement were vital for the ongoing credibility of customised programs. On-line delivery was reported to be continuing to grow in all jurisdictions, but it was not regarded to be one of the most effective modes of delivery for severely disadvantaged groups. More popular as flexible delivery modes for disadvantaged groups were off-campus delivery in community settings, workplace delivery incorporated into work placements and discrete classes, particularly for Indigenous groups.

Listed below are some examples of strategies utilised for facilitating access that incorporate most of the above elements:

✧ *Literacy enabling programs for LBOTE people and migrants*: often facilitated through a migrant resource centre and involving basic English language training contextualised for settlement purposes. Some particular examples were: English for budget shopping for Sudanese refugee women; English for driving for recently arrived migrants; and other programs designed to improve English proficiency for filling out forms and negotiating government service providers.

✧ *Customised skills based traineeships for Indigenous youth*: involving additional student contact hours for completion, an Indigenous culture module and literacy and numeracy components; there were seven TAFEs who reported this type of program as being very successful.

✧ *Literacy and enabling programs for unemployment, mature aged men*: with names such as Blokes in the Shed and Men and Boats, these programs involved workshop or 'shed' based activities to provide a social connection with other men and alleviate the stigma attached to engaging in a literacy program. These programs were developed in response to the emergence of older men as a new equity group.

✧ *Literacy and child care skills for young single mothers*: with names such as Babe with Babe and Young Mums, these programs provide enabling literacy skills together with a vocational module to provide pathways to employment, and often incorporate provision of child care or allow babies in the classroom.

✧ *Programs for women returning to work*: the most common enabling programs reported were those promoting information technology (IT) literacy. A common theme was to contextualise computing skills with a vocational area to both 'hook' potential students and provide a visible, relevant pathway to further study.

✧ *Providing embedded non-educational, holistic support in senior secondary certificate programs*: students engaging in TAFE as an alternative study location to high school were acknowledged as often doing so because of a range of social, economic and educational factors. TAFEs reported that the most important elements for this type of provision were: brokerage of links to support agencies; a positive relationship between students and at least one TAFE staff member; and access to industry through work placements.

Several TAFEs reported that implementation of recognition of prior learning (RPL) was very problematic for most of the key equity groups. There was a consensus among most TAFE interviewees that more work needed to be done in developing strategies for and explaining RPL practice to staff and students. RPL was perceived to be particularly problematic for LBOTE cohorts who have overseas qualifications and/or skills but either their qualification is not recognised in Australia or they lack proof of their award. There was also a reported ambiguity as to where delivery to people in corrections facilities sits within overall VET policy and priorities.

Supporting progress and completion

The consultations indicated that student learning and other support needs varied considerably across student groups and across geographic regions. The key support elements reported were:

✧ Socially and culturally appropriate support

✧ Literacy and numeracy support

✧ Provision of in-house non-educational support or referral for provision by external agencies

✧ Strategies for connection to TAFE and community.

Socially and culturally appropriate support was reported to be particularly important for Indigenous, LBOTE and youth cohorts: necessary for sustaining a positive relationship between students and the TAFE. TAFEs that nominated such support as being important tended to have either a specific response unit or staff position (e.g. Indigenous unit, multicultural officer, youth officer) charged with the responsibility of monitoring student attendance, providing opportunities for cultural celebration (e.g. Harmony Week, NAIDOC week) and liaising with mainstream staff.

Literacy and numeracy issues were cited by a great majority of TAFEs as being the most significant barrier facing their cohorts and almost half of TAFEs (48%) described an approach dominated by discrete tutorial delivery with some targeted concurrent or team teaching. Two in five TAFEs (41%) provided only tutorial or workshop literacy and numeracy support. While some TAFEs made use of literacy assessment and screening processes, they reported minimal analysis or dissemination of the gathered data other than for the purpose of assigning support. A small minority (10%) described attempts at universal provision of literacy and numeracy support, dissemination of literacy and numeracy data to teaching staff, concurrent or team teaching, one-on-one and group tutorials and contextualisation of literacy and numeracy support within vocational areas.

Several non-metropolitan TAFEs (*n*=11) spoke about the increased visibility of their institutes as the sole tertiary provider in their area and the demand on them to play a role brokering links with government and support agencies for students. The most common examples of brokerage activity included referrals to Centrelink, accommodation/housing services, juvenile justice, disability support agencies and counselling services.

Fostering connectedness to TAFE was considered to be important not only in the process of facilitating access but also for promoting participation and completion. Mentoring models were reported to be particularly effective for Indigenous and disengaged youth cohorts. Building self-confidence and connectedness to community were also identified by a third of TAFEs (34%) as being important elements for maintaining participation of these cohorts. One regional TAFE described a strategy implemented with Indigenous youth that involved: proactively bringing students to the TAFE campus; using meals to promote health and concentration and as an incentive to stay around; and monitoring their attendance.

> We've got buses here that go around and pick up the kids in the morning, we give them breakfast and lunch. It's one of our ways of making sure they turn up. We've got a great retention and module completion rate over a number of years in the Indigenous area.

Promoting post-completion outcomes and pathways

Promotion of post-completion outcomes and pathways, including the promotion of employment outcomes and further study, is an area of inclusiveness practice still being developed and this was evident from the consultations. While all TAFEs reported providing work placements as part of most vocational training delivery, more than a third of TAFEs (36%) commented that facilitating employment outcomes for disadvantaged groups was not a focus of their inclusiveness activities. TAFEs that did report actively promoting employment outcomes tended to identify general student support mechanisms as their main activities. Other than work placements, the most commonly identified activities were job clubs offering resume writing and interview techniques, and guest speakers. In almost all cases described, these activities were available for student self-selection and did not provide targeted or specialised support for disadvantaged student groups.

One in five TAFEs (19%) reported integrating employability skills, resume writing and interview techniques into all targeted equity programs, most commonly for youth, Indigenous and migrant cohorts. Links with disability and Indigenous employment agencies were also described as providing beneficial expertise to support these groups. Five TAFEs (9%) reported post-completion follow-up activities for specific student groups that were funded through special grants or linked with the requirements of a pilot program. While all respondents spoke about the importance of links with industry and employers, only seven TAFEs (12%) described formally engaging employers in multiple stages of the TAFE process – to inform curriculum, negotiate work placements and as guest speakers – to effectively build and exploit student employment opportunities.

A majority of TAFEs reported articulation agreements with higher education institutions and two jurisdictions had documented standardised arrangements for articulation to higher education across all TAFEs and universities. However, there were very few examples of strategies reported for promoting further study that were targeted to particular student groups.

The next section will explore the impact of the reported TAFE inclusiveness strategies.

Impact of inclusiveness strategies

This chapter will investigate whether there are any patterns discernable in the distribution of reported levels of inclusiveness practice or connections evident between levels of demand for inclusiveness and TAFE inclusiveness practice. It will also explore any evidence of impact of the reported inclusiveness strategies. All data in this section refer to the 58 TAFE institutes that were surveyed.

To facilitate such analysis, a score representing the level of development of inclusiveness strategies was determined for each TAFE on the basis of self-reported data provided in response to the telephone survey. Firstly, the three typologies introduced in the previous section of this report (approach to inclusiveness; TAFE management of inclusiveness and community engagement) were used to allocate a value of 1 to 3 for each, with the higher values indicating more highly developed strategies. Secondly, TAFE representative descriptions of the extent of their: strategies for identifying disadvantage; facilitating access, supporting progression and completion; providing literacy and numeracy support; and promoting post-completion outcomes were similarly coded with a value of 1 to 3. Thus, all TAFEs were allocated a value, across the seven dimensions named above, leading to a total score. The maximum score possible was 21, although the scores ranged from a low of 8 to a high of 19. TAFEs were then ranked according to the level of development and sophistication of their self-reported inclusiveness approaches and strategies. Clearly, allocation of these codings and ranking depended on the data that TAFE representatives were prompted and chose to make available during, and in some cases subsequent to, the telephone interviews.

Where does the most developed inclusiveness practice in TAFE occur? Firstly, analysis of the mean scores for level of development of inclusiveness strategies of TAFEs for each state and territory shows that there were differences between and within states/territories as Figure 4 below indicates. As Tasmania and the Australian Capital Territory each had only one TAFE and the Northern Territory only two TAFEs, these states and territories are shown grouped together in Figure 4 in order not to reveal the scores of individual TAFEs.

Figure 4 Mean TAFE scores for level of development of inclusiveness strategies by state/territory
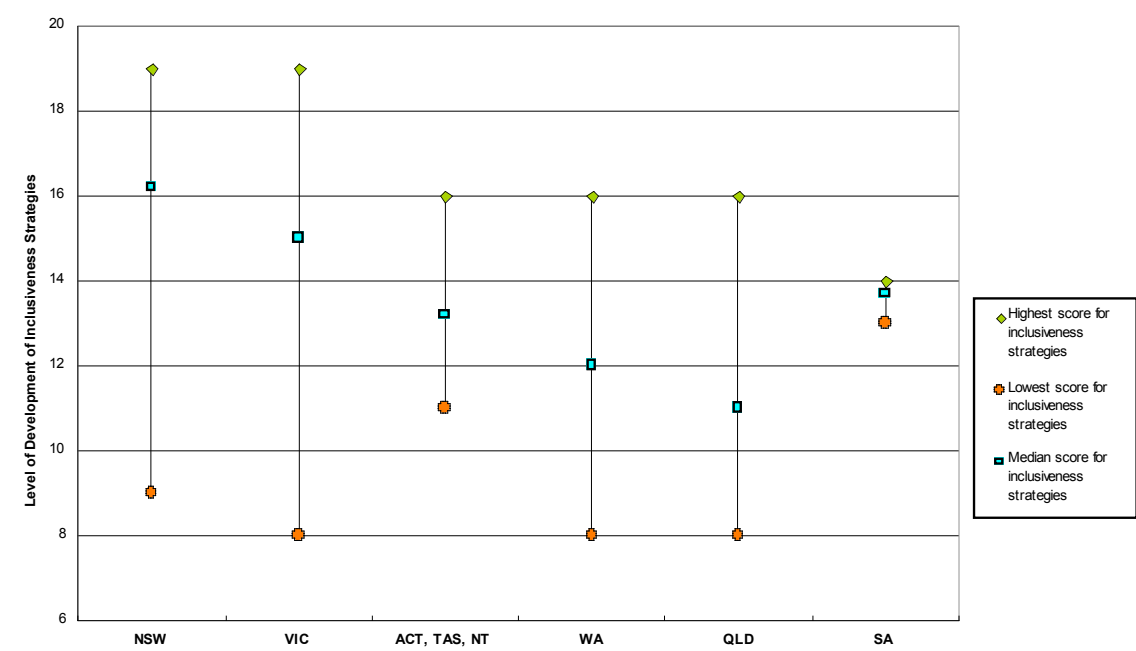
There were also differences evident between large and small TAFEs. To explore this aspect, TAFEs were ranked according to size and then into five (almost) equal bands (quintiles). Figure 5 below shows the scores for the level of development of inclusiveness strategies for the 12 largest TAFEs and for the 12 smallest TAFEs.

Figure 5 Level of development of inclusiveness strategies by size of TAFE
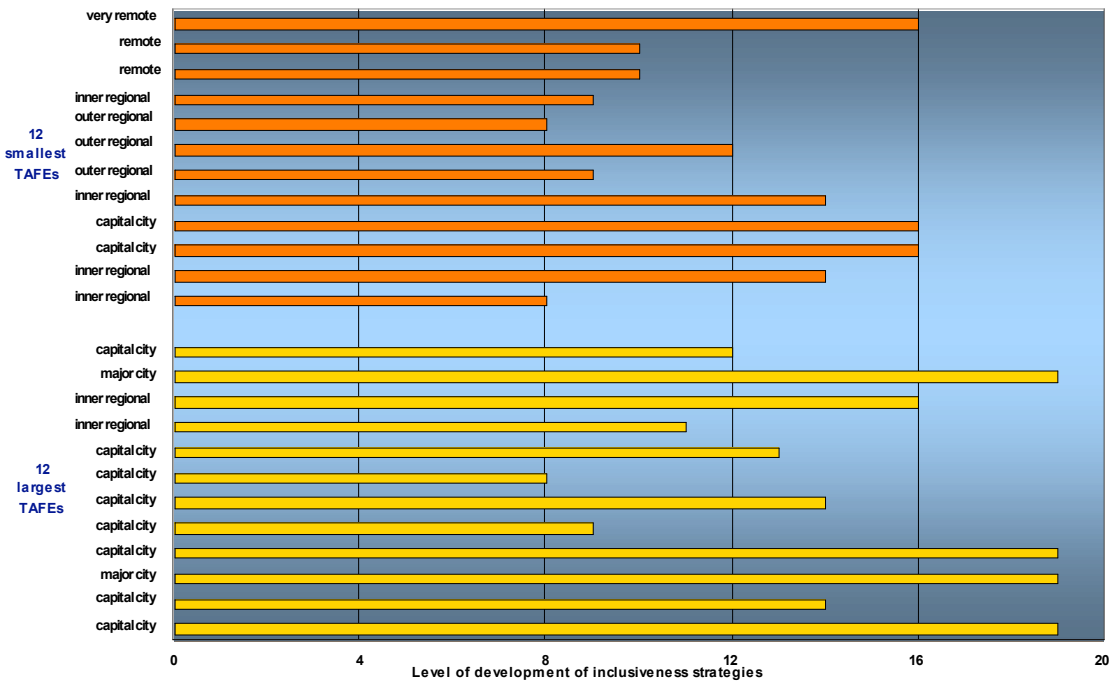
The largest TAFEs were more likely to have well-developed strategies than the smallest TAFEs. Large TAFEs have the benefit of greater resources and a larger infrastructure. However, they also commonly have multiple campuses and so face the challenge of ensuring that inclusiveness strategies

Impact of TAFE inclusiveness strategies

are not dissipated across campuses and are relevant across all campus localities or regions. Well-developed strategies were reported across urban and regional locations, as shown in Figure 6 below.

**Figure 6   Inclusiveness strategies by level of remoteness**
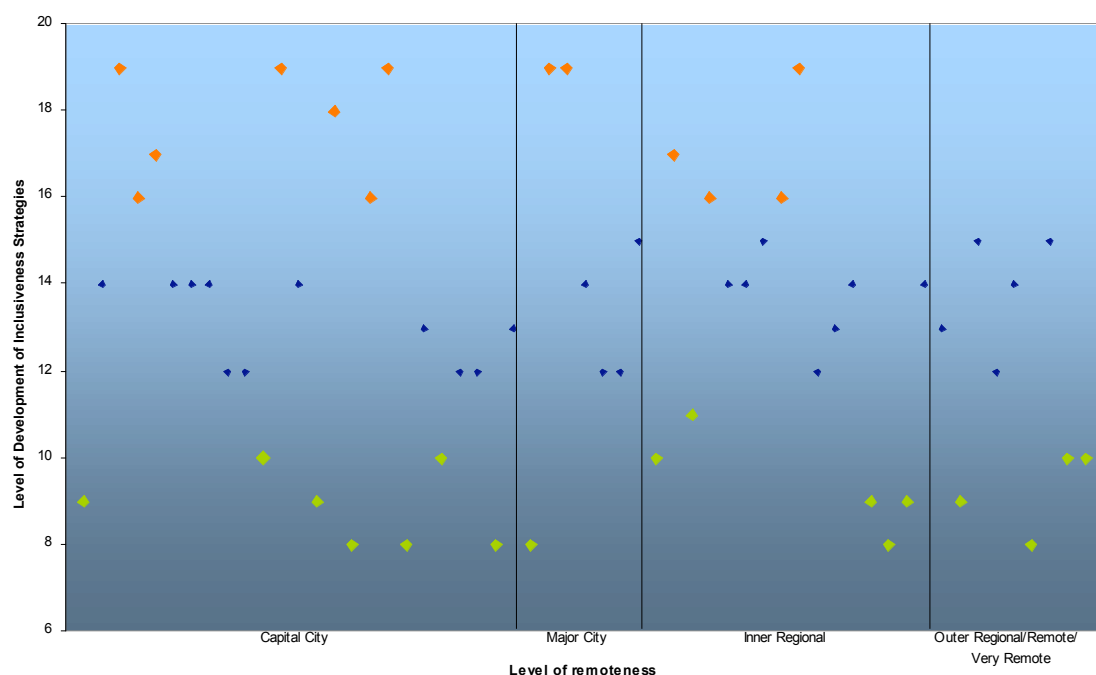
Source: 2004 AVETMISS data, NCVER, ABS 2001

Outer-regional, remote and very remote TAFEs were grouped together in this figure to prevent identification of individual institutes. We can examine the scores in three equal bands: most developed strategies – scores 16–19; moderately developed strategies – scores 12–15; and least developed strategies – scores 8–11). An observation that can be made is that, while capital and major city and inner regional TAFEs were evenly distributed across the whole range of scores, outer-regional, remote and very remote TAFEs were more likely to have moderately or less well-developed strategies.

We can explore whether there is any correlation between the presence of high complexity of disadvantage among a TAFE's cohort and the level of development and sophistication of its self-reported inclusiveness strategies. Figure 7 below shows the levels of development of inclusiveness strategies for TAFEs according to the complexity of disadvantage of their student cohorts. TAFEs have been ranked by complexity of disadvantage with the median shown. TAFEs on the right side have higher than the median complexity of disadvantage and those on the left have lower than the median complexity of disadvantage. The vertical axis shows the score for the level of development of inclusiveness strategies, divided into three equal bands, with the top band indicating the TAFEs with the most developed inclusiveness strategies.

**Figure 7   Inclusiveness strategies and complexity of disadvantage**
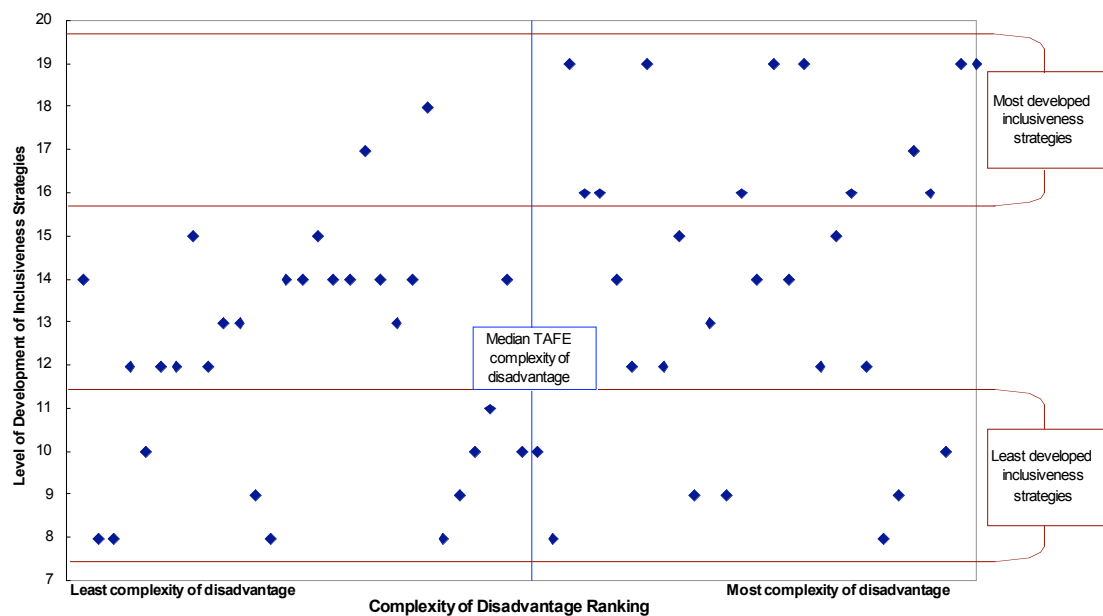
Source: 2004 AVETMISS data, NCVER, ABS 2001

TAFEs with higher than median complexity of disadvantage are more likely to have well-developed inclusiveness strategies (12 TAFEs: 41% of those with higher than median complexity fall into this category) than those with the lower than median levels of complexity of disadvantage (2 TAFEs: 7%). However, what cannot be deduced from this analysis alone are to what extent well-developed TAFE inclusiveness strategies are facilitating access to a student cohort with high complexity of disadvantage and to what extent TAFE strategies have been developed in response to an existing highly disadvantaged cohort.

We can explore in more detail, the link between complexity of disadvantage and level of development of inclusiveness strategies by considering the quartiles (25%) of TAFEs with the lowest and highest complexities of disadvantage, as shown in Figure 8 below. Among the TAFEs with the highest levels of complexity of disadvantage, those TAFEs located in capital and major cities and inner-regional areas reported the most well-developed strategies. A connection was also evident between the level of development of inclusiveness strategies and the mean socioeconomic status (SES) of a TAFE's cohort.
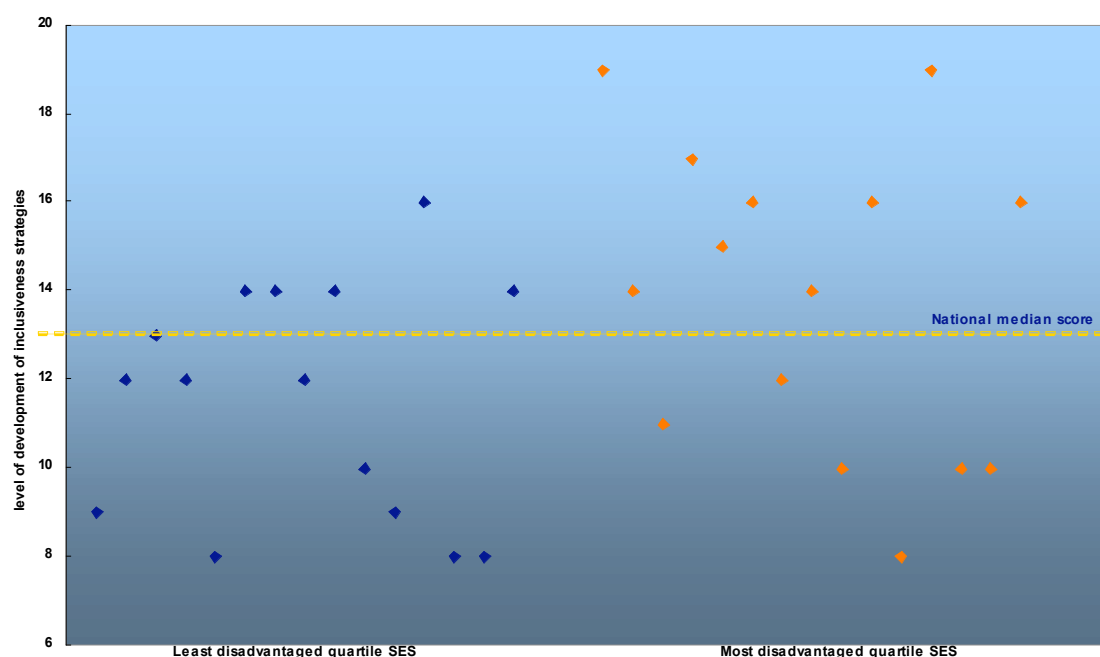
Figure 8   Inclusiveness strategies by complexity of disadvantage (high and low quartiles)
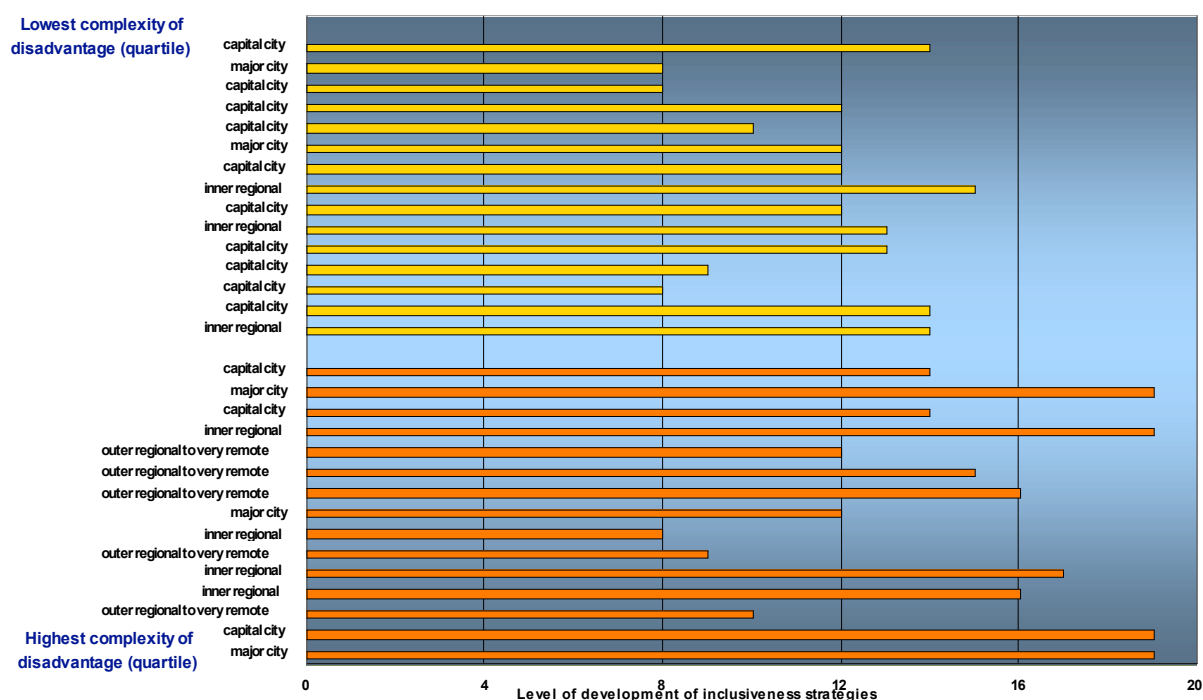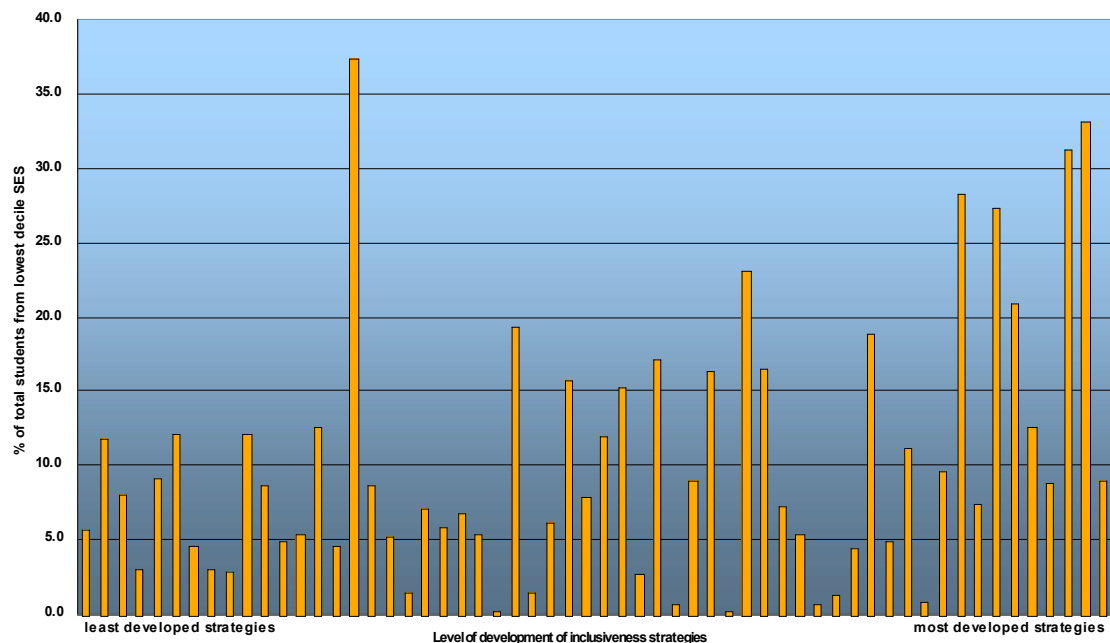

Source: 2004 AVETMISS data, NCVER, ABS 2001

As Figure 9 below illustrates, if we consider the quartiles of TAFEs with the highest and lowest student socioeconomic disadvantage (as measured by mean TAFE SES), the TAFEs with the most socioeconomically disadvantaged cohorts were more likely to have reported well-developed strategies (60% scored above the median value of 13) than those with the least disadvantaged cohorts (only 33% scored above the median value). We can also explore whether TAFEs with reported well-developed strategies accommodated people from the most disadvantaged groups in greater than average proportions.

Figure 9   Level of development of inclusiveness strategies by mean TAFE SES

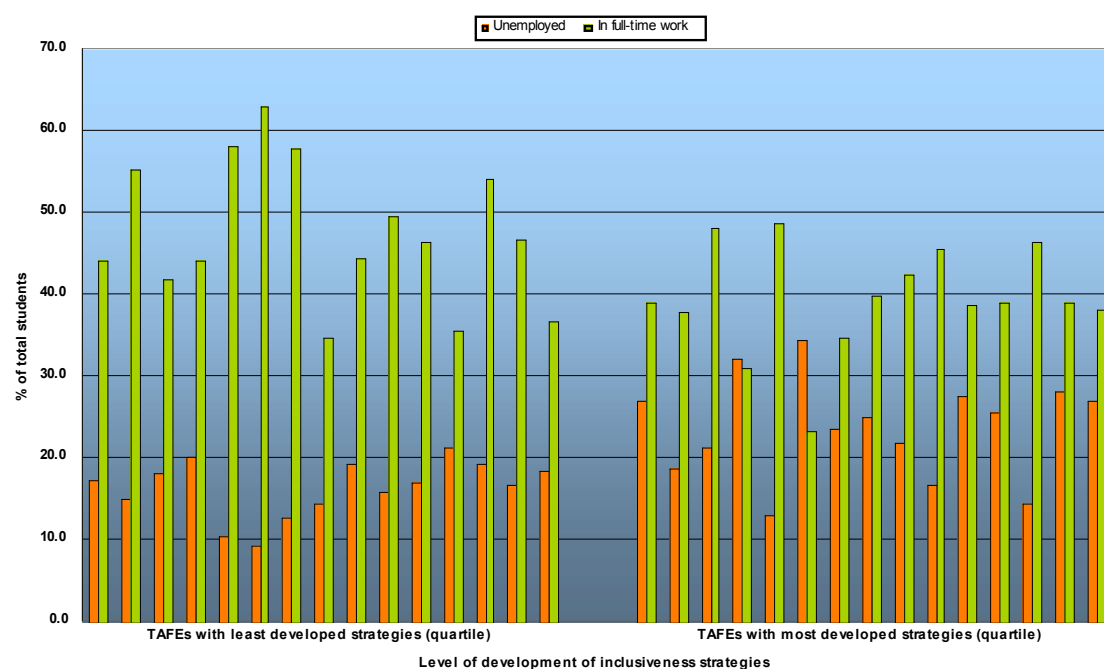Source: 2004 AVETMISS data, NCVER, ABS 2001

Figure 10 Percentage of students from lowest decile SES by TAFE level of development of inclusiveness strategies

Source: 2004 AVETMISS data, NCVER, ABS 2001

If we rank the TAFEs according to their respective levels of development of inclusiveness strategies, we can explore the extent to which the poorest group of students is participating in each TAFE. Figure 10 above shows the proportions of students in the lowest decile SES for the ranked TAFEs: from the ones with least developed strategies on the left to those with the most developed strategies on the right. With the exception of one TAFE with less developed strategies but with the highest proportion of lowest decile SES students (located in an outer-regional, remote or very remote area), a clear pattern emerges: TAFEs with more highly developed strategies tended to have greater proportions of the poorest students. A similar pattern emerges for the TAFEs located in capital cities.

Figure 11 Full-time employed and unemployed students by level of development of TAFE inclusiveness strategies (quartiles)

Source: 2004 AVETMISS data, NCVER

Impact of TAFE inclusiveness strategies

We can explore the differences between participation rates of full-time employed people and those who were unemployed by considering just those TAFEs that were scored within the highest and lowest quartiles for inclusiveness strategies. Figure 11 above shows that unemployed people were enrolled in greater proportions in TAFEs that reported well-developed strategies. Conversely, people who were in full-time employment tended to participate at higher rates in TAFEs that reported the least well-developed strategies. Full-time workers are more likely to participate in workplace-based training and/or campus-based training that is supported/funded by their employer.

Table 5 below details the mean participation rates for students from the key disadvantaged groups for the quartiles of TAFEs with the least and most well-developed inclusiveness strategies, as self-reported through the interviews. It is clear that TAFEs with the most developed strategies had greater proportions of people engaged from these disadvantaged groups.

Table 5   Comparison of student characteristics across TAFEs with least and most developed inclusiveness strategies

Mean participation rate	Female	With disability	Indigenous	LBOTE	Lowest decile SES	Full-time employed	Un-employed	Below Yr 10 educ.
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Least developed inclusiveness strategies (quartile)	44.1	5.4	8.3	9.5	9.5	48.4	16.0	8.7
Most developed inclusiveness strategies (quartile)	47.7	8.7	9.3	17.5	15.1	40.2	25.3	9.8

The clearest indication of the longer-term impact of inclusiveness strategies could be gained through analysis of comprehensive course and module completions and outcomes data for each TAFE, which have not been available for this research. Without outcomes data for these cohorts, it is not possible to assess the specific impact of these inclusiveness strategies on completion rates and on employment outcomes. However, higher participation rates of disadvantaged groups do tell us that these TAFEs were able to engage and enrol more people from these groups into their programs than TAFEs with less developed strategies.

We can remove the factors associated with remoteness by looking at TAFEs from just one location type – capital cities – to investigate whether there were similar differences evident between their cohorts. Prospective students in capital cities generally have a greater capacity to select a particular TAFE than those who are located in regional areas where there may be only one TAFE institute that is accessible. Therefore, the presence of higher proportions of students from disadvantaged groups in capital cities could be considered to be an indicator of TAFE inclusiveness strategies that are working effectively to create awareness of available programs and to encourage and facilitate access for disadvantaged groups. As for all TAFEs, capital city TAFEs with the most well-developed inclusiveness strategies tended to be larger in size and had a student cohort with a lower mean SES than capital city TAFEs with the least well-developed strategies. Further, as Table 6 below shows, TAFEs with the most developed strategies had higher proportions than those with the least developed strategies, of students who were disadvantaged.

Table 6   Comparison of student characteristics across capital city TAFEs with least and most developed inclusiveness strategies

Mean	Female	With disability	Indigenous	LBOTE	Lowest decile SES	Full-time employed	Un-employed	Below Yr 10 educ.
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Least developed inclusiveness strategies (quartile)	42.2	5.2	1.6	15.3	7.1	47.4	17.3	5.6
Most developed inclusiveness strategies (quartile)	46.3	7.2	0.9	34.2	22.3	37.4	24.9	7.8

Implications

Raising the extent to which TAFEs are engaging disadvantaged people is a matter of crucial importance—as are the relevance of their courses and the level at which they undertake them—if TAFEs are to effectively fulfil their multiple roles of responding to industry skill needs, addressing individual skill needs and promoting community strengthening. However, there is strong variation in the capacity of TAFEs to engage learners from disadvantaged backgrounds. In addition, major challenges for the TAFEs that are attracting high proportions of disadvantaged learners remain—engaging these disadvantaged cohorts in training that provides skills in demand by industry at sufficiently high enough AQF levels to lead to sustainable employment and to provide an effective range of support mechanisms to ensure successful study outcomes, including higher-level study and employment.

There are observable and fundamental differences in the approaches that TAFEs take to inclusiveness. The culture of an institute, influenced by its historical role and its perceived place in the community were reported to impact on its approach. The bottom line for those TAFEs not driven by any internal inclusiveness agenda was compliance with externally set targets and requirements, but these targets in themselves were not sufficient to promote broader engagement with the inclusiveness agenda. For some TAFEs, there remain tensions in striving to achieve a balance between meeting economic/industry obligations and their social/community responsibilities. Yet, TAFEs with the most well-developed inclusiveness strategies based these on a *community obligation approach* and implemented cohesive, community (including enterprises/industry) oriented strategies that connected individual capacity building with industry needs and experiences, and addressed learner support needs using community resources and advocacy. Key importance was placed on the need for strong institute leadership and enthusiasm for the inclusiveness agenda; there was the risk of marginalisation of this agenda if it was not embraced by mainstream staff.

The TAFEs that reported the most well-developed inclusiveness strategies as determined against the seven dimensions, Approach to inclusiveness; TAFE management of inclusiveness; Community engagement; Strategies for identifying disadvantage; Facilitating access, supporting progression and completion; Provision of literacy and numeracy support; and Promoting post-completion outcomes were more likely than TAFEs with less-developed inclusiveness strategies to be larger than average; be in capital city, major city or inner-regional locations; have cohorts with higher than median levels of complexity of disadvantage; have the most socioeconomically disadvantaged cohorts; have higher proportions of unemployed and lower proportions of full-time employed students and to engage higher proportions of students who had a disability, were Indigenous, from a language background other than English, and early school leavers who had not completed Year 10 study.

As commonly acknowledged by TAFE respondents to this study, TAFEs do not provide successful training experiences in isolation, particularly for people from disadvantaged groups. This study highlights the importance of TAFE institutes engaging in strong and broadly based community partnerships to: provide reliable data about industry demand for skills and changing community demographics, support networks and partnership arrangements for training delivery; promote education pathways from schools and other VET providers into TAFE; and foster employment outcomes. Effective inclusiveness practice can occur within both strongly market-driven and community-based models, provided the necessary conditions exist. However, as TAFEs face an increasing demand on them to provide non-educational responses to the barriers facing their

cohorts and broader catchments, intensified collaboration and expanding relationships with community stakeholders are necessary to respond to the increasing and more complex needs of these cohorts.

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Appendix 1: TAFE provider consultations

Table 7   TAFE consultations

State	Capital city	Major city	Inner regional	Outer regional	Remote	Very remote	Open learning	Total
ACT	1							**1**
NSW	4	2	3	1				**10**
NT				1		1		**2**
QLD	5	2	3	2	1		1	**14**
SA	2			1				**3**
TAS			1					**1**
VIC	9	1	7	1				**18**
WA	4		2	2	1			**9**
Total	**25**	**5**	**16**	**8**	**2**	**1**	**1**	**58**

Note: One regional Queensland TAFE and one regional Western Australian TAFE declined to participate.

State	Provider
Australian Capital Territory (1)	Canberra Institute of Technology
New South Wales (10)	Hunter Institute of TAFE
	Illawarra Institute of TAFE
	New England Institute of TAFE
	North Coast Institute of TAFE
	Northern Sydney Institute of TAFE
	Riverina Institute of TAFE
	South Western Sydney Institute of TAFE
	Sydney Institute of TAFE
	Western Institute of TAFE
	Western Sydney Institute of TAFE
Northern Territory (2)	Batchelor Institute of Indigenous Tertiary Education
	Charles Darwin University TAFE Division
Queensland (14)	Barrier Reef Institute of TAFE
	Bremer Institute of TAFE
	Brisbane North Institute of TAFE
	Cooloola Sunshine Institute of TAFE
	Gold Coast Institute of TAFE
	Logan Institute of TAFE
	Moreton Institute of TAFE
	Mount Isa Institute of TAFE
	Open Learning Institute of TAFE
	Southbank Institute of TAFE
	Southern Queensland Institute of TAFE
	Tropical North Queensland Institute of TAFE
	Wide Bay Institute of TAFE
	Yeronga Institute of TAFE

State	Provider
South Australia (3)	TAFESA Adelaide North
	TAFESA Adelaide South
	TAFESA Regional
Tasmania (1)	TAFE Tasmania
Victoria (18)	Ballarat University TAFE Division
	Bendigo Regional Institute of TAFE
	Box Hill Institute of TAFE
	Central Gippsland Institute of TAFE
	Chisholm Institute of TAFE
	East Gippsland Institute of TAFE
	Gordon Institute of TAFE
	Goulburn Ovens Institute of TAFE
	Holmesglen Institute of TAFE
	Kangan Batman Institute of TAFE
	Northern Melbourne Institute of TAFE
	RMIT TAFE
	South West Institute of TAFE
	Sunraysia Institute of TAFE
	Swinburne Institute of TAFE
	Victoria University TAFE Division
	William Angliss Institute of TAFE
	Wodonga Institute of TAFE
Western Australia (9)	C.Y. O'Connor College of TAFE
	Central Institute of TAFE
	Central West Institute of TAFE
	Challenger Institute of TAFE
	Great Southern Institute of TAFE
	Kimberley Institute of TAFE
	South West Regional College of TAFE
	Swan TAFE
	West Coast TAFE

Appendix 2:
Skills consortium publications

The following is the complete list of titles produced by the National Institute of Labour Studies, Flinders University and the Centre for Post-compulsory Education and Lifelong Learning, University of Melbourne, through the research project, A well-skilled future: Tailoring VET to the emerging labour market.

Forecasting future demands: What we can and cannot know
Sue Richardson and Yan Tan

Future skill needs: Projections and employers' views
Diannah Lowry, Simon Molloy and Samuel McGlennon

Demographic impacts on the future supply of vocational skills
Yan Tan and Sue Richardson

Skill acquisition and use across the life course: Current trends, future prospects
Bill Martin

What is a skill shortage?
Sue Richardson

Changing forms of employment and their implications for the development of skills
Sue Richardson and Peng Liu

Changing work organisation and skill requirements
Bill Martin and Josh Healy

Social area differences in vocational education and training participation
Richard Teese and Anne Walstab

Participation in vocational education and training across Australia: A regional analysis
Anne Walstab and Stephen Lamb

Current VET strategies and responsiveness to emerging skill shortages and surpluses
Jack Keating

Matching supply and demand: International perspectives
Jack Keating

Impact of TAFE inclusiveness strategies
Veronica Volkoff, Kira Clarke and Anne Walstab

A well-skilled future
Sue Richardson and Richard Teese

Support document details

Additional information relating to this research is available in *Analysis of TAFE provision: Support document*. It can be accessed from NCVER's website <http://www.ncver.edu.au/publications/ 2002.html> and contains:

✧ Analysis of TAFE provision

✧ Factors impacting on TAFE inclusiveness: Case studies of three Australian regions