

# RESOURCE SHARING IN REGIONAL TERTIARY EDUCATION

**Final Report 2013**

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Judy Nagy

## List of acronyms used

AQF	Australian Qualifications Framework
HE	Higher Education
HEPPP	Higher Education Participation and Partnerships Program
HR	Human Resources
ICT	information and Communication Technologies
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
OLT	Australian Government Office of Learning and Teaching
SES	Socio-Economic Status
TAFE	Technical and Further Education
VET	Vocational Education and Training

# Executive summary

## Overview

The project sought to enrich student learning and regional student participation by identifying models of collaboration between the TAFE and HE that could provide the best opportunities for viable education provision in regional Australia.

## Approach

To achieve these aims the project:

- conducted an environmental scan to establish where collaborations existed across Australia
- obtained ethics approval for data collection at selected examples of collaboration
- identified and examined five examples of collaboration using semi-structured interviews to identify how the collaborations were perceived by staff and students in their respective institutions
- analysis of interview transcriptions to extract common themes.

## Key outcomes

The knowledge gained from these investigations has identified two existing models of collaboration, and numerous challenges and enablers to successful collaboration between the sectors. These are listed below.

Models of collaboration:

1. Loose informal collaboration through resource sharing
2. Specific collaboration with industry alignment.

Challenges to successful collaboration:

1. Restructures and politics
  - The time period for data collection over 2012/2013 occurred at a time of institutional restructures and changes in government policies, particularly in state government education and training. This meant that securing agreement for interviews was problematic and that at times the views expressed were impacted by emerging issues.
2. Absence of senior staff communication and commitment to collaboration
  - The lack of clear support and direction for collaboration from senior management with a tendency towards piecemeal personality driven initiatives, have hampered collaborations.

### 3. Competition between TAFE and HE

- Resourcing disparities
  - University resourcing was considered to be greater than TAFE entities with a correspondingly greater ability to act on initiatives for collaboration.
- VET entering the degree market
  - The ability for Higher education and TAFE institutions to compete in the same markets provides presents additional challenges for collaboration initiatives.

### 4. Pathway-related constraints

- Non-alignment of reporting systems and assessment criteria
  - There are different assessment processes between sectors with some overlap in curriculum content meaning that students may duplicate some learning.
- Capacity of VET to offer diploma-level training
  - The pathway to higher education may be blocked by virtue of no TAFE course availability from which to transition to university.
- Absence of practical pathways information
  - The lack of specific knowledge about across sectoral offerings, processes, procedures is an issue for collaboration.

### 5. Cultural differences between TAFE and higher education

- Cultural differences included staff attitudes, student perceptions and differences in student learning outcomes.

### 6. Perceptions about learning equivalence

- Student learning in TAFE tends to focus on practical compared with applied learning more common in higher education courses. TAFE staff may not have degree qualifications and be ill equipped, or be willing, to apply more theoretical perspectives to learning.

### 7. Co-location on one campus can create competition for resources.

- Sharing rooms and facilities can work well if available resources are not operating at capacity. Where facilities are more limited coalface staff may not always be collegiate.

### **Enablers of successful collaboration:**

#### 1. Local champions who build local relationships

- Local champions with well-developed networks in particular fields of study can be the catalyst for strong collaborations.

## 2. Recognition of sector strengths

- Recognition that TAFE provides English language studies for migrants and indigenous students to build competencies for work before more applied studies provides for a greater sense of a transitional journey rather a pathway.

## 3. Economies of scale and co-location

- Pooling student numbers may mean the difference between the provision of a service or facility for students, and no provision.

## 4. Role of industry

- Links with industry groups in the local area are important as avenues for work experience and employment support the value of learning outcomes at various learning exit points.

## 5. Effective communication, management and resourcing.

- Effective collaborations have strong engagement strategies supported by human resources to implement and coordinate the processes that are required to achieve the strategies.

# Conclusions and implications

The environmental scan and preliminary collaboration selection process indicated that numerous collaboration activities often had little depth with little suggestion of physical resource sharing. Of the case studies chosen for analysis with the exception of an exemplar model (Model 2) evidence supported the preliminary scan impressions that the two sectors have minimal success in sharing human resources. Model 2 could be considered as an exemplar model, with all identified enablers leveraged to deliver a world class outcome within an operational context that displayed a unified brand image, linking two institutions, each with strong reputations, who place a high value on their staff and who are both committed to making the collaboration work. However, the objectives of this study were concerned with regional higher education and as Model 2 relates to a metropolitan context, the ability to lever all the enablers may be limited.

Model 2 also featured:

- a discipline-specific context
- strong industry endorsement
- clear pathways with employability-aligned exit points.

# Dissemination

In addition to mobilising discourse around the project aims through assembly of an interdisciplinary project team and through communication with project participants, the initial findings were presented at the Heads of Campus Forum at James Cook University in July 2013.

The final report will be distributed to participants who have requested copies, and made available online.

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# Chapter 1 — Introduction

## Overview

This seed project investigated models of collaboration between TAFE and HE providers with a view to determining a model that may be used or adapted in regional areas. Data collection focused on:

- identifying examples of TAFE and universities collaboratively utilising human and physical resources to enrich student learning opportunities
- determining how models of collaboration are viewed by each institution, staff, students and university 'mother' campuses
- identifying issues that represented challenges or acted as enablers to working collaboratively.

## Project aims and objectives

The underlying project aims were to enrich student learning and regional student participation by identifying models of collaboration that provide the best opportunities for viable education provision in regional Australia. The economics of education provision can compromise government policies for raising student participation in higher education for rural and regional populations, areas that are significantly populated by individuals from low-socio-economic (SES) background. Regional satellite campuses are often faced with low population densities and small class sizes that can undermine efforts to offer students rich learning experiences and depth and breadth of study options. A potential solution to such challenges lies in forming strategic alliances that have depth and efficiencies to improve the effective use of regionally available resources.

To achieve these aims we investigated where collaborations existed across Australia and then selected a number of case studies to identify how the collaborations were perceived by staff and students in the relevant TAFE and university institutions. The knowledge gained has been used to form the basis for a larger funding application that seeks to progress strategies to reduce the sectoral divide and enrich regional student learning opportunities.

## Rationale for the project

Federal and state governments have expressed a desire to provide better and more opportunities for students, to experience seamless learning through VET to higher education (HE) and to facilitate participation and social inclusion. These current government policy domains are illustrated in the Integrated Articulation and Credit Transfer (IACT) Project (2011) carried out by the University of Southern Queensland (also known as the Queensland 3D articulation project). The reforms highlighted in this project illustrate the current government focus on pathways and low-SES student participation. They include:

- *'a single Ministerial Council for Tertiary Education and Employment;*
- *inclusion of VET in the Education Infrastructure Fund;*
- *formation of the Tertiary Education Qualifications and Standards Agency (TEQSA) for HE and the Australian Skills Quality Authority (ASQA) for VET, the long-term plan being to bring them together under one agency;*

- *programs to promote an increase in people from lower socio-economic backgrounds in tertiary education, particularly HE;*
- *review of the Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF) in order to facilitate articulation between education sectors.’* (Paez et al. 2011a, p.11).

The *Transforming Australia's Higher Education System* report (Australian Government 2009, p.43) states that tertiary education should be ‘a continuum of delivery, with better connections between sectors in both directions while avoiding one sector subsuming the other.’ State-based reports also articulate a desire for improved relationships between tertiary education providers. For example, the South Australian Government's five-year plan for skills and workforce development sets out similar priorities advocating ‘greater collaboration between TAFE SA and the State's three public universities along with adapting priorities for change in the delivery of tertiary education to support rapid responses within the SA economy’ (Training and Skills Commission 2009, 2010 cited in Paez et al. 2011b, p. 9)

Two reports from the National Centre for Vocational Education Research (NCVER) in January 2012, *Shaken not stirred? The development of one tertiary education sector in Australia* (Wheelahan et al.) and *Mixed-sector tertiary education: Research overview* (Moodie), draw conclusions that are particularly relevant in regional contexts where the current policies to increase regional and low-SES student participation are particularly significant. The reports identify the need to develop policy encouraging economies of scale to ensure collegiality for staff and rich learning for the students. It is also noted that if governments are not forthcoming with this support, it could be organised by institutions acting cooperatively (Moodie 2012, p. 4).

The discussion paper for the *New South Wales Tertiary Education Plan 2010* identifies the following key areas of focus for government to attempt to forge stronger linkages between TAFE institutes, universities and research agencies: better utilisation of co-located facilities; jointly developed and delivered programs; and identification of regional workforce needs that can be supported through targeted tertiary provision (New South Wales Government 2010, section 4.7).

These reports clearly identify a desire for more collaboration between the VET and HE sectors. However, reports and literature have concentrated on pathways opportunities and generally have a metro-centric viewpoint. Economies of scale and efficiencies in institutions located within metropolitan locations are often readily achievable, and it is common for each sector to have more than one provider, offering students learning choices. In regional locations economies of scale and efficiencies are more of a challenge and collaborations that are broader in scope have the potential to benefit students and communities and to generate savings from public funding for education. The introduction of VET FEE-Help from 2014 to assist with fees for studies that are at a diploma level or higher will also help to ensure that neither sector is disadvantaged.

## Chapter 2 — Project approach

The project team had members from both metropolitan and regional campuses, with staff from HE and TAFE in South Australia and Western Australia. These two states generally have lower student volumes to draw from and share the problem of providing opportunities to study locally in environments that are challenged by the economics of delivery. The inclusion of more than one state was considered important to give outcomes from the project wider currency. Early signalling of contextual issues that are potentially parochial and those that are more likely to be generic across state boundaries was also considered important for potential future grant applications.

The team members had significant knowledge within their jurisdictions of examples of collaboration that could be useful for data collection. At the first team meeting a preliminary list was prepared and tested to ensure selected collaborations warranted deeper investigation. From this process the team chose one collaborative example per state with five illustrations of collaboration selected as appropriate for the timeframes and budget in this project.

The data collection process included:

- an environmental scan across Australia for existing tertiary education examples of resource sharing (both human and physical) between TAFE and HE, to supplement knowledge available from team member networks
- ethics approval across sectors and state jurisdictional boundaries (Information for participants and consent forms as required for ethics approval are provided in Appendices B to E)
- identification and examination of five examples of collaboration including TAFE, HE and 'parent' metro-based institutions where possible (see Tables 1 and 2). Semi-structured interviews and focus groups were recorded and transcribed with 38 participants in total across all locations. This data collection sought to ascertain the nature of the collaboration and the views of staff, students and other stakeholders about the impacts of the collaboration
- a team meeting to discuss preliminary findings and to discuss the factors that were considered to contribute to the identified outcomes.

### Project methodology

### Project participation

Five collaborations between TAFE and HE providers were selected for the study. Of these two collaborations were investigated through a limited interview process as environmental scans information highlighted marginal activity after initial statements of collaborative intent. Interviews in these two cases were with key personnel only. These have been described as intelligence gathering cases.

Two of the three sites chosen for examination required data collection at regional and metropolitan locations resulting in data being collected in five states and seven locations.

At each of the three larger data collection illustrations participants included:

- lecturers, coordinators and executive-level administrators from collaborating TAFE and HE institutions from the main metropolitan campuses
- students from the HE and TAFE sectors
- community and industry stakeholder groups including employers, schools and community organisations.

At intelligence-gathering sites, a senior staff member from each sector (TAFE and HE) was interviewed about the specific collaboration their institution was involved in.

Site selection was purposeful and based on provider engagement with agendas the project sought to review.

Initial contact was with pre-identified senior staff at each proposed case-study location from which institutional consent had been obtained. The senior staff member provided names of persons to contact for interviews and focus groups. Potential participants were then contacted by email, with follow-up phone contact.

The introductory email outlined the nature and purpose of the project and provided a participant information sheet and consent form. The email and information sheet were followed by an invitation letter with a pro forma letter of institutional consent, advising of organisational consent for participation. Each participant was provided with an individual consent form to sign prior to commencement of the interview or focus group.

## Interviews and focus groups

Members of the project team conducted and recorded semi-structured interviews at five sites of collaboration, including two that were split across separate locations, obtaining the viewpoints of collaborating TAFE and HE institutions both in regional locations and in metropolitan 'mother' locations. The interview questions (see Appendix A) were designed to ascertain issues the collaborations attempted to address, how the collaborations were implemented, what impacts/outcomes were achieved, what workplace regulatory issues emerged and how they were resolved, and what impression staff at the 'coalface' had of the collaborative efforts. The interviews and focus groups were between 45 minutes and one hour in duration. A professional transcription service was employed to transcribe the interview tapes.

Interview and focus group questions are detailed in Appendix A.

Specific circumstances, especially lack of availability of students outside teaching periods, resulted in some variation to the planned composition of focus groups and interviews; however, the project team were able to obtain a broad cross-section of institutional, community, staff and student participants, with 38 participants in total. A complete breakdown of participants by site is provided in Table 2.

**Table 1 Data collection Summary**

<i>Collaboration site</i>	<i>Type of data collection undertaken</i>	<i>Location</i>	<i>Site Number</i>
One	Detailed data collection	A	1
Two		A	2
		B	3
Three		A	4
		B	5
Four	Intelligence-gathering interviews with senior staff	A	6
Five		A	7

**Table 2 Interview Data Participant Summary**

Participant	Sites						
	Detailed Data Collection					Intelligence-gathering	
	1	2		3		4	5
		Location A	Location B	Location A	Location B		
VET Staff	1	1	1	1	0	1	1
VET Students	2	0	0	0	0	NA	NA
Total VET participants	<u>3</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>1</u>
HE Staff	4	1	1	2	3	1	1
HE Students	0	0	4	0	3	NA	NA
Total HE participants	<u>4</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>5</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>7</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>1</u>
Community	NA	0	6		4	NA	NA
Subtotal participants by site	<u>7</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>12</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>10</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>2</u>
Total all sites	<u><b>38</b></u>						

**Notes:**

- All interview subjects were over 18 years of age
- Collaborations 2 and 3 were split across two locations each, resulting in a total seven sites
- Sites 4 and 5 intelligence gathering studies were designed to supplement data from sites one to three, rather than as full case studies
- The total number of project participants across five collaborative sites (seven total locations) was 38.

At each location a pre-planned set of interview questions was used (see Appendix A).

## Review and analysis

An independent researcher reviewed data from transcriptions of interviews and focus groups, using NVivo analysis to determine factors that were context- and location-contingent and to highlight challenging and enabling factors. The team reviewed the data and consolidated the evidence to form conclusions and determine the nature of future research.

## Critical success factors and challenges

The project team faced a number of challenges. These included:

- the cross-sectoral composition of the team, spanning state boundaries and including a government department. This mix of jurisdictions contributed to delays in securing ethical clearance and sign-off by all parties of the multi-institutional agreement. The delays meant that data collection could not be commenced when desired, necessitating a request to the OLT for an extension of time to complete the project and time pressures resulting in data collection during non-teaching periods.
- incorrect initial assumption that team members would be familiar with research practices and interview protocols for data collection. This assumption had to be revised as we became aware that the cross-sectoral team had varying levels of knowledge in this area. Additional support and guidance in social science interview practice was provided through a suite of detailed resources covering group composition and coding protocols, with pre- and post-interview checklists to ensure the project adhered to best practices at all times
- political and institutional sensitivities causing the withdrawal from data collection of one TAFE site. Securing an alternative site was not possible as data collection was location-specific and considerable other data had already been collected from that chosen collaborative example.
- students and staff making themselves available for interview. The originally-planned composition of interview groups had to be adjusted.

These challenges did not affect the project budget or outcomes.



## Chapter 3 — Data analysis

### Data limitations

Team members have an interest in models of collaboration and had a strong view that collaboration inherent within the group could provide valuable knowledge for the project. Though team members were stakeholders in resource sharing outcomes, independence for data collection was established by ensuring that data collection was conducted by team members from another state.

Responses of participants can reflect particular recognisable circumstances existing at the time of data collection. In particular, the period of data collection in late 2012 and early 2013 coincided with a transformation process experienced by VET/TAFE institutions across several states, with institutions either still awaiting knowledge of final funding and state based structural positioning within education policies or actively engaged in dealing with the consequences of change. This period of change and associated uncertainty may have influenced the staff and student attitudes and viewpoints, which therefore may not be representative of viewpoints from a different time period.

The collection of data at the end of 2012 may have also reduced the diversity within student focus groups, as most students had completed their studies for the year. Thus the data collected may not have been representative of the wider student population.

In addition, while the number of collaborative examples reviewed in this study was intentionally small, the limited number suggests caution should be exercised in generalising the information generated.

### Collaborative models

Analysis of the interview data revealed that staff interpreted ‘collaboration’ in two ways. The first interpretation focused on sectors, systems and pathways. The second focused on staff working together to provide better learning and employability outcomes for students. Participants described examples of various types of collaborations, including:

- internal collaborations
  - TAFE with TAFE
  - university with university
- external collaborations
  - TAFE with university
  - university with industry
  - TAFE with industry.

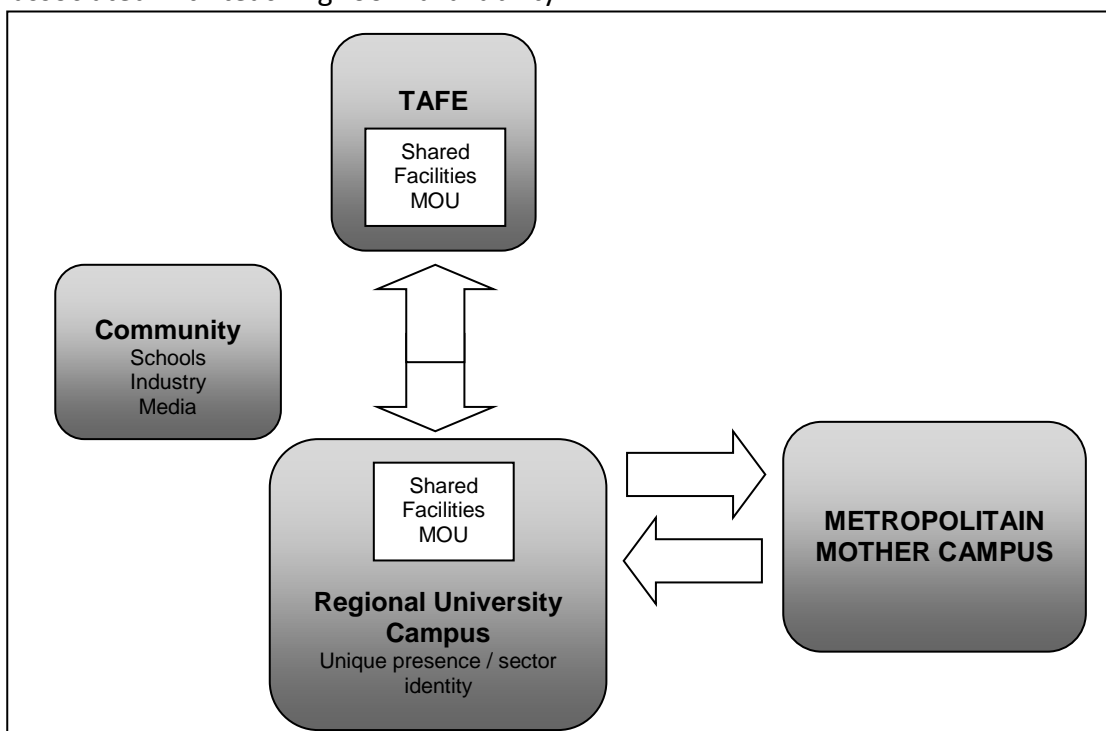
Whereas pathway discussions presumed students moving from VET studies to HE, there was also discussion of reverse articulation from HE to VET and integrated articulation pathways. The term ‘integrated’ referred to the co-enrolment of students in both VET and HE. The

integration may have been for foundation or remedial studies to enable the student to complete either their VET or university qualifications. However, integration or co-enrolment may also have involved a university student completing VET qualifications to enable para-professional employment while completing a university qualification.

Data analysis of the collaboration examples revealed two main types of collaboration. Five of the collaborations can be described by Model 1 (loose collaboration through resource sharing) and two collaborations by Model 2 (specific collaboration and industry alignment). Model 1 describes cases that are more general in nature, with interactions between the community, TAFE and university that are not structured around specific pathways. Four of the five collaborations were located in regional Australia and reported to a metropolitan university 'mother' campus. Model 2 describes two case-studies and relates to collaborations between either a TAFE provider or university, and a specific industry, to provide a range of VET and university-level qualifications. The collaboration hosted by a university in Model 2 is located in a metropolitan location and is an exemplar for transition pathways for students between VET and university.

### Model 1 — Loose collaboration through resource sharing

Model 1 collaborations (see Figure 1) can be described as relatively informal. Initial agreements about governance and pathway models involved a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) for the use of shared facilities. Sharing facilities with an established MOU requires ongoing communication between HE and TAFE institutions, contributing to the workload of teaching staff. This is exaggerated when the space and facilities are inadequate to cater for increased numbers of students, creating pressures and tension associated with teaching room availability.



### **Figure 1. Model 1 — Collaboration between TAFE and university featuring shared facilities with Pathway Advisors and Collaboration Manager**

The bringing together of diploma- and degree-level students often required constant planning and review, including opportunistic use of facilities during variable semester break times, with intensives and blocks of laboratory time scheduled when one of the collaborating partners was on semester break. However, the sharing of facilities provided daily opportunity for interaction, often in a café hub, providing economies of scale and allowing for regional students to have access to a greater range of equipment and facilities.

Access to library resources was identified as problematic in three of the case studies and was not included as a shared facility arrangement. Staff considered the maintenance of separate library systems in regional locations to be inefficient. A joint library was consistently identified as a means to increase student access to books, computers and a setting for study group discussions for all students, irrespective of affiliation.

Where there was a dominant collaborating institution, cohabitation was perceived as causing one of the collaborating institutions, including its staff and students, to lose its unique identity. From a student and community perspective, the distinction between university and VET became blurred. However, the economic advantage of shared resources and critical mass potentially makes adult learning options in regional locations more feasible. The disadvantages are cultural. Traditionally the VET and HE cultures are different, with VET being more workplace skill-based and the university more conceptual, with advanced expectations of independent higher order academic thinking. Pathways between the two are feasible but many students opt to choose the institutional culture that suits their individual style, entry-level capabilities and career objectives.

Staff member comment (HE):

*I certainly think that having our new building, a facility, we will have our own identity for a start. Whether that's ... it is certainly going to then reduce the anxiety of trying to fit in rooms, having to work around schedules for the use of a facility that we both need, and that's the skills lab. However, it may actually ... we may be somewhat removed then, because we'll be over in our new building, in our new facilities. I think then we will actually have to work a little harder at maintaining the links that we've got.*

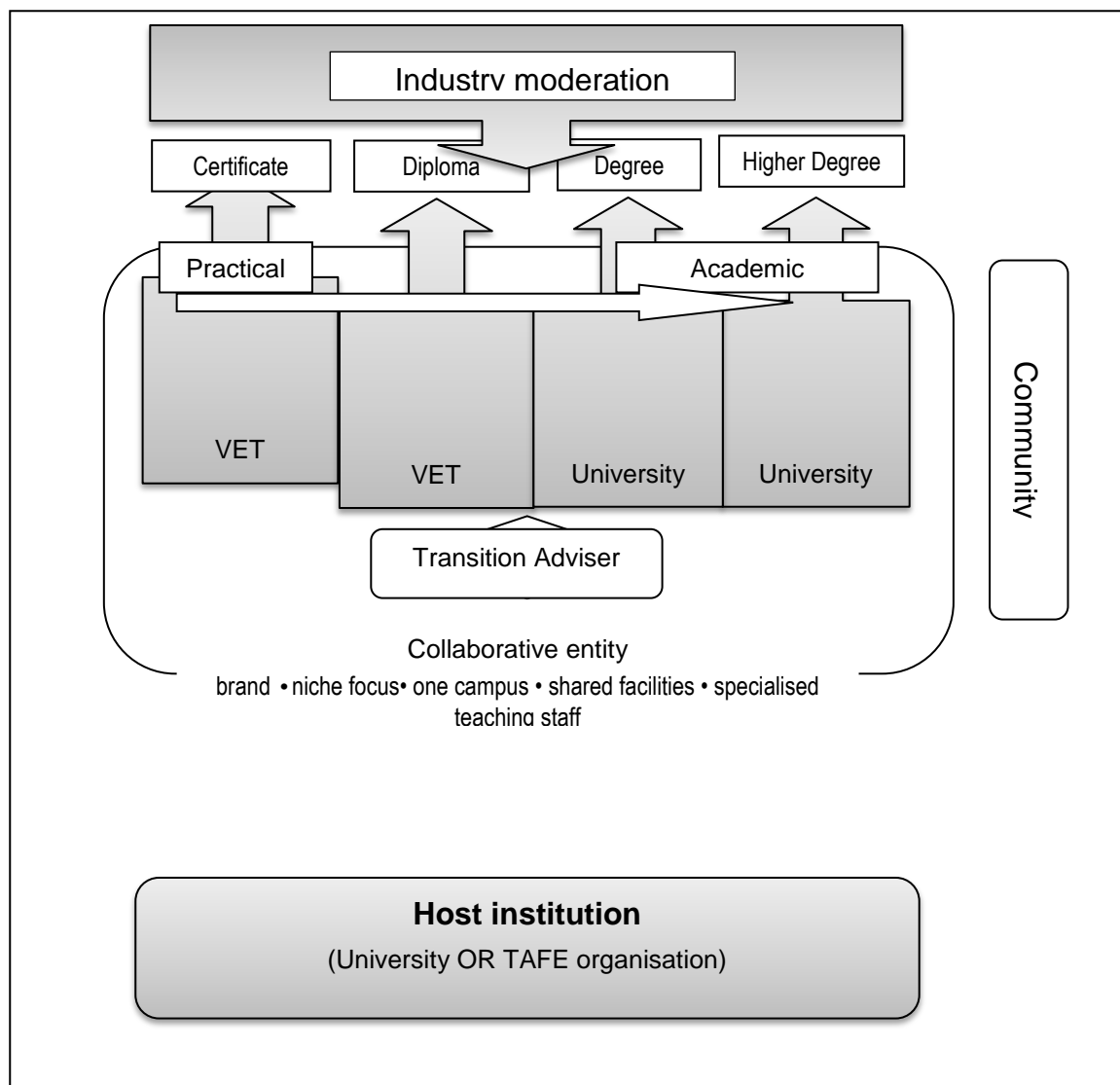
Although staff acknowledged a dual pathway, comments suggested that teaching practices appeared more tailored toward preparing VET students for university. There were examples of university academics being engaged to provide teaching at TAFE, but few examples of TAFE staff being engaged to provide services for the HE sector.

The Model 1 collaborations were seen as an opportunity for TAFE and university staff to share their different areas of expertise and build upon the collective regional teaching capacity. At times this regional development focus was abandoned in favour of importing metropolitan-based academics despite the availability of local TAFE teaching staff. There were clear indications that the status of university teachers was perceived to be higher than

that of TAFE teachers. While concerns were expressed that many TAFE teachers do not possess the academic qualifications required to teach at university, no comments were made about the suitability of university lecturers for VET. In addition, university lecturers were seen to have access to more technologically advanced teaching equipment and be supported by a system that promotes innovation.

## Model 2 — Specific collaboration and industry alignment

In Model 2 collaborations (see Figure 2) either a TAFE provider or a HE provider had a strong link with a particular industry. There were two case studies that could be described in this way. In the first collaboration, hosted by a university, a collaborative entity was created that enabled students to secure both VET and degree qualifications, with staff from both sectors working together to promote pathways. In the second collaboration, hosted by a TAFE institution, the example with industry involved TAFE lecturers with business experience teaching into degree-level programs.



**Figure 2. Model 2 — Collaboration between industry with one host education sector to provide VET and university level education**

The TAFE -hosted collaboration was not an example of a cross-sectoral collaboration and is more an illustration of boundary-crossing than collaboration.

The university-hosted industry collaboration described in Model 2 comprised one campus, shared resources, and consistent management for staff and transitioning students. The 'collaborative entity' was industry-specific and provided a continuum of qualifications from practical VET to academic university-level awards. This flagship operation provided a branded vehicle through which students transitioned from VET-level certificate and diploma to university level-degree qualifications. Specialised TAFE and university staff were appointed to teach the different courses. All staff reported to a centralised management system to ensure a flow-through process with clearly articulated exit points.

A distinction was made between 'practical' and 'academic' components. The career goal determined the level of qualification being sought. In general, the more practical occupations resulting in students exiting with an advanced diploma and others transitioning to a bachelor or post-graduate-level qualification. Lecturers were assigned to separate parts of the pathway even though all staff were assessors for VET. Staff members were specifically allocated to support the transition students.

Staff member comment (TAFE):

*Because they have got to know our students, and they just think, my God, they're phenomenal and they don't put them down because they can't write and research. They've put a special unit in, with a wonderful teacher/lecturer who teaches them how to write, and they pick it up [click] like that and off they go.*

Common facilities and management structures appeared to promote consistency, with staff being able to keep track of students and provide ongoing advice. As the university was the driving host there was discussion of articulation to the higher degree, with clear exit points. The challenges associated with two sectors managing student reporting systems and credit transfers were diminished.

Staff member comment (TAFE):

*Our kids are encouraged from the day they arrive. We tell them about the BA transition, we tell them the pros and cons of doing it ... we're just going to sell it as a three-year BA, but with the diploma and advanced diploma embedded. Challenges for VET and university collaborations.*

## Challenges for TAFE and university collaborations

<b>Challenges</b>
1. Restructures and politics
2. Absence of senior staff communication and commitment to collaboration
3. Competition between VET and HE <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Resourcing disparities</li><li>• VET entering the degree market</li></ul>
4. Pathway-related constraints <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Non-alignment of reporting systems and assessment criteria</li><li>• Capacity of VET to offer diploma-level training</li><li>• Absence of practical pathways information</li></ul>
5. Cultural differences
6. Perceptions about learning equivalence
7. Co-location on one campus

**Figure 3. TAFE and university collaborations — summary of challenges**

### Restructures and politics

Case studies have highlighted that challenges to any collaboration may arise from decisions made either by senior managers or as a result of changes in political circumstances. These can affect the MOU and goals of collaboration. Restructuring in TAFE institutions owing to political and/or financial directives have implications for TAFE staff roles, staff numbers, subject choices and student numbers. As part of restructures and review of VET policies (including 'Skills for All') TAFE providers are operating in a new system of increased competition between VET providers as well as reduced financial resources. The TAFE restructure appears to have focused the attention of TAFE staff on internal issues, with little concern for cross-sector collaboration.

Staff member comment (TAFE):

*The hurdles that have arisen are specific to state elections, changes of government and reviews of the VET sector, more than anything else.'*  
*'One of the things that's quite difficult to manage is the VET training packages change so frequently that we've mapped something and by the time it's all gone through, six months and it's changed again.*

Staff member comment (HE):

*So we've actually had a very productive relationship with both [areas of the VET sector], or all. But I'd have to say it's been very difficult, not because they've been difficult, but because they've just gone through some ups and downs. And for them to commit, or not to commit, or to know even what courses they might have on offer, has made it very, very difficult for them.*

## Absence of senior staff communication and commitment to collaboration

There was a widespread perception amongst participants that a greater level of communication and senior executive commitment to collaboration were required to secure clear benefits. Collaborations that can be described by Model 1 generally relied upon local relationships and personalities that could change as people changed roles. The absence of formal institutional commitment from senior staff resulted in collaboration becoming ad hoc or stagnant. A sense of frustration was common across participating sites, and a clear call was made for a long-term commitment and recognition of local needs by 'mother' metropolitan institutions, with local systems and local management authority and responsibility. This in itself would require resource allocations and may be the reason why this form of commitment is lacking in the present climate of reduced funding from state and federal governments.

Staff member comments (HE – various sites):

*Yeah, I think so, and I think again it comes down to building personal relationships and that sounds simplistic, but I think in reality that can often be ... I guess, not problematic but difficult, in terms of again, unless you've got that significant reason to liaise or unless you have a fairly close relationship between campuses, then getting something established can be tricky.*

*But he has no directive from above saying, "You must work with the university on this" and I'm not totally sure that he's convinced that ... of the opportunities that we could achieve if we clicked.*

*What universities need to get away from is having a TAFE teacher talk to a lecturer and come up with a deal, or a university talking to a particular faculty and coming up with a deal, and having it more on an institutional-wide basis.*

*I think that if it's to work you need the management in both camps to have agreed before they start. The model that we started was: we looked at an opportunity to try and get something to work at ground level. It has had limited success. It could have had a lot more success, but we need the support from the highest ranks.*

Poor communication pathways have impaired collaborations. Misunderstandings have generated a level of resentment by TAFE staff toward the university, which has been perceived to have more operating resources. There was a case of shared facilities where the university was seen to be taking over facilities, even though there was evidence of under-utilisation by TAFE. In another case the timing of the collaboration was mistaken for a take-over and was a source of confusion and resentment by TAFE staff.

## Competition between VET and HE sectors

### *Resourcing disparities*

In some sites the resources devoted to the university's community engagement activities have been viewed with suspicion, despite increased numbers of students enrolling in both

TAFE and HE as higher education is promoted. In other sites, HE enrolments have been oversubscribed while TAFE numbers remain low. One HE staff member suggested that rather than viewing this as evidence that the university is serving its own needs, it is possible that the TAFE provider is poorly positioned to provide services that regional students need.

Student comment (TAFE):

*The university seems to know exactly what's happening here and there... the TAFE isn't exactly sure.*

Staff member comment (HE):

*No, it'll just be university and industry. But we will have to, the TAFE unfortunately ... poor so-and-so's, they're in no position to put any money on the table at this stage. So my portfolio will put money on the table; industry will put money on the table.*

### *TAFE entering the degree market*

In addition to providing student choice and catering for the perceived need for 'applied learning', there are financial incentives for the VET institutions to provide higher education degree-level qualifications. Alternatively, universities may opt for collaboration as an alternative to competition.

Staff member comments (TAFE):

*I think one of the critical factors for the TAFE sector is looking at the access to Commonwealth Supported Places funding, and I think that's the elephant in the room that is not being talked about. The dollar amount for the contact hours for a higher education-supported student, whether it's under FEE-help or whether it's under the HECS Commonwealth Supported Places, is greater than what we're currently seeing coming behind our diploma and our Cert IV students who make up so much of our market.*

*Once this organisation had announced that it was going into arrangements to do the on-campus delivery of degrees, the universities have taken a very different pathway, and it's quite noticeable. Some of them are coming up with very innovative ways ... and trying to jump the gun getting in with them before the [other universities] get in and grab the market on them.*

Therefore it appears that fear of competition from TAFE institutions is the motive for some universities to collaborate with TAFE, to ensure a transition to higher education degree-level qualifications.

### *Pathway-related constraints*

#### *Non-alignment of reporting systems and assessment criteria*

The pathway from VET to university is not always easy and students reported finding the academic adjustment difficult. One collaboration was of a state-wide agreement and the packaging together of VET and university programs. Secondary students nominate the



packaged program, which represents a transition from a VET diploma to a university degree. This 'dual award' is a tangible collaborative outcome. However, there were pathway problems. The university reported concern that the poorly calibrated systems may result in poor tracking of students. Another issue related to uncertainty about the point at which the university can record the student on its system.

The provision of a seamless pathway for students between VET and university was consistently reported to be the goal of all collaboration partners, though this remains elusive in practice.

Staff member comment (HE):

*In terms of having a seamlessness between the work that students do within the VET system and in the higher ed system, there hasn't been that seamlessness. What we found is that students are having to repeat themselves in some aspects when they come to university.*

### *Capacity of TAFE to offer diploma-level qualifications*

Concerns were expressed in some regions that advanced diploma-level qualifications were not being provided and, as this is considered as a base-level pre-requisite for entry to university, this inhibited pathway collaborations.

The incentive to complete an advanced diploma or university degree was perceived to have lessened. Historically a university education was expected to result in a better socio-economic-status and income potential, but staff no longer perceived this to be the case. Trade qualifications and mining resource employment provide both income potential and job security and challenge the financial motive for a person to study at university. Further research is needed to establish whether or not completion of an advanced diploma increases VET students' interest in transitioning to university.

Staff member comment (HE):

*Most of the students that go to TAFE would not consider going to university. They're going to TAFE because they're going to get a particular set of skills and a trade, particular qualifications that's going to enable them to have a job, and they wouldn't see university as giving them that.*

Student comment (HE):

*We believed that a university degree would set us up for a better job for life. Well if you're talking financially that's no longer true.*

Where low numbers have resulted in courses being discontinued because they are deemed unviable regional students who do seek pathways from VET to university have fewer course options. Students who wish to take popular courses are faced with the reverse issue: numbers are capped because of funding limitations. Constraints on funding also affect TAFE's ability to pipeline students where pathways to HE may exist. The significant increase in costs of VET programs mooted for 2014 is also likely to influence student program selection.

Staff member comments (HE):

*We could have put a lot more emphasis into the education or quality of the advanced diploma and streamlined. It's all there and it's being lost. There were subjects that were specifically designed to bring people out of the advanced diploma into the university... They're not being taught or rolled out anymore.*

Staff member comments (TAFE):

*The other challenges you do get, and it's in some teams and its personality based and it's experience based. You will get from some of the VET staff, a resistance to adding on a higher level product on campus.*

### *Absence of practical pathway information*

Pathway advisors require the VET and university sectors to agree upon and document details relating to how students can transition, how VET and university subjects and courses relate to each other, what paperwork needs to be completed and what costs will be incurred. There were examples of collaborations appointing pathway advisors and managers to promote collaboration between TAFE and university partners. These appeared to be relatively new appointments, with roles that include a community engagement element along with the provision of advice to staff and students. There are indications that a jointly appointed TAFE/university pathway advisor who routinely visits all partner sites and engages community (schools) may be required.

Comments from a student (HE) who is also a staff member (HE):

*We don't have a formal system of doing that so we don't for example give each other's brochures out or anything like that. Now one of the issues is that as soon as you give somebody information like this you're saying "I know about it" and I can't counsel someone about what they should do at TAFE.*

Staff member comments (HE):

*Well my role in dealing with the university and TAFE sector is really looking at articulation agreements and creating articulation agreements between TAFEs, all registered training organisations and [university]. We're looking at redefining the process at the moment because there doesn't seem to be a streamlined process as such ... We will map pathways for diploma-and-above students, so students studying diploma or advanced diploma, into undergraduate degrees at university.*

*There needs to be more emphasis put on the transition for the student. At the moment it's a bit like you're there and then you're with us, there and us. We need to get them early before they left there and speak to them and hold their hand as they come in.*

### Cultural differences

Cultural differences for students and staff were identified as challenges for collaboration. Focus groups of students from different sites, from both sectors, identified TAFE and HE as

having different focuses based on a continuum from practical applied skills to the focus upon critical thinking and conceptual thought.

Staff member comments (HE):

*The culture in TAFE is much more guarded ... need to get many more permissions to be able to say or do things, whereas the universities where we've got that intellectual freedom, and sometimes those cultures clashed.*

One focus group spoke about the distinction between education and training and another focus group considered the difference between critical thinking and problem-solving. There was a call for both education and training to be united within government portfolios in the hope that it would simplify processes and reduce political avoidance and blame. However, one collaboration involving the amalgamation of a secondary school with VET studies resulted in the conversion of practical workplace-based methodologies into book- and classroom-based methodologies. The need to preserve applied VET options was apparent.

Other cultural issues included perceptions about the higher status of university studies, and attitudes of superiority that surface in university staff and students at times of change. Clashes between TAFE's bureaucratic environment and the 'freer' university culture were reported as causing difficulties.

## Perceptions about learning equivalence

Do collaborations between VET and university have the potential to develop a sense of equivalence for applied VET training and academic university education? In two collaborations the TAFE institution or, more specifically, VET-trained staff, were providing degree-level education. An example was given of a pathway that permitted a student to be granted a degree after completing two years of VET and one year of a university-level course. Traditionally it takes three years for a university student to develop the level of critical thinking that is required for graduation, and both TAFE and HE staff questioned whether this same level of capability can be achieved through the VET degree program. There was a suggestion that the motive of attracting students must be tempered by the need to maintain standards, with credit-transfer policies ensuring that competencies and capabilities are not confused.

Staff member comments (TAFE):

*So that's one thing I found really frustrating is you're teaching students who came from that VET sector, through group work. They actually passed everything and they probably got a reasonably good result, but then in the third year, because it's very theoretical — and also if you look at the design of the competencies in the VET sector and the higher education sector, it's very different.*

*My major concern for our program is, very few teachers in our program have a higher than bachelor degree ... they came from industry — which is good, but came from industry, that industry experience is highly recognised in the VET sector; it's not really too relevant to the higher education sector.*

## Co-location on one campus

A consequence of co-location is the potential loss of the uniqueness of one of the providers. In one participating site the university entered into an MOU and a lease arrangement to use existing TAFE buildings and facilities. Although internal customers were aware of the university presence, there was a perception that the absence of a prominent university building had undermined the university's community standing and the community recognition of a regional university presence.

## Enablers for TAFE and university collaboration

Enablers
1. Local champions who build local relationships
2. Recognition of sector strengths
3. Economies of scale and co-location
4. Role of industry
5. Effective communication, management and resourcing.

**Figure 4. TAFE and university collaboration — summary of enablers**

### Local champions who build local relationships

The case studies provided numerous examples of local champions who brought together multiple university and VET programs with the shared vision of supporting students and assisting local communities to grow and develop. Despite a general lack of support from metropolitan-based decision makers, in both TAFE and university institutions local champions worked through obstacles to secure desired outcomes.

### Recognition of sector strengths

TAFE has well-developed programs to support students who speak English as a Second Language (ESL), Aboriginal people and migrants from diverse cultures. These sectors of the population experience a social barrier to employment and education and are sectors that VET has historically served. This was widely recognised by participants of this study.

Staff member comments (TAFE):

*I can remember when I was young, if you went to TAFE or whatever it was, it just meant that you weren't bright enough to get into university, but it's actually not the case.*

Staff member comments (HE):

*The benefit of the types of collaboration that we do is that students get the practical skills from the VET sector, and the theoretical skills from the university sector which makes them far more employable. It makes them really attractive to employers because they are work-ready.*

## Economies of scale and co-location

There is an expectation that regional students and staff will have access to facilities and services that are equivalent to those provided to metropolitan students. Regional locations, however, have fewer students than metropolitan areas, and strategies that increase critical mass and the economic feasibility of providing facilities of a standard that is equal to metropolitan campuses are a challenge for TAFE and universities alike. While there appears to be a need to preserve the unique identities of both TAFE and university, there are advantages to pooling the number of students to create a sufficient critical mass to justify the provision of services or facilities. Students expressed a desire to remain separate; they were proud to be enrolled in either TAFE or university, but benefited from the presence of a greater number of people on campus and access to more learning resources.

Staff member comment (TAFE):

*The involvement of the university enabled us to get equipment and things in the lab that we normally wouldn't have stocked in there and therefore, I guess, it's given those students an opportunity to see some things that we don't necessarily have to teach our students, but they see it, because it's in.*

Shared facilities are not sufficient to generate collaboration between TAFE and university staff or students. However, they do provide a physical opportunity for introductions and potential collaboration, and reduce the sense of isolation that can occur in a regional location.

Staff member comment (TAFE):

*Conversations are primarily around lab and class revenues. We haven't really been able to extend it any further as to, "Are you teaching something similar to we're teaching? Could there be something?" We don't have those sorts of conversations.*

Future planning may seek to physically align TAFE and university campuses so they are neighbours or co-located, with shared social and educational facilities. The appointment of a facility manager to oversee shared TAFE and university facilities could support teaching staff in the collaborative sharing of physical resources.

Just as securing the benefits of economies of scale through collaboration can provide important resources for use, so can successful collaborations create resource pressures that lead to resentment. An example of co-location that now requires more resources has allowed regional leaders to drive capital works to build a larger physical presence. The plans are for a new university building that will provide more classrooms and separate facilities, thus eliminating timetabling problems for a campus that is operating at capacity. This development is presented as also positioning the institutions in readiness, both physically and in principle, for an escalation in the collaborative partnership. Such changes inevitably generate shifts in power and status, and while this can be seen as exciting, there was awareness amongst staff in both sectors that separation of physical resources will require additional collaborative efforts.

## The role of industry

All sites reported the importance of including industry as a partner. Examples included business and professional bodies moderating TAFE courses, providing teaching staff and negotiating with TAFE to provide industry staff with professional development to up-skill their workforce. The relationship between universities and business was presented differently. Motives were explained as more commercial, with research and graduate employment opportunities being the main motivation.

Comments identified that students from both TAFE and HE benefit from industry engagement as part of the learning journey, as well as through the securing of work experience and ultimate employment, which contributes substantially to regional relationships.

## Effective communication, management and resourcing

The university-sponsored Model 2 collaboration illustrates that communication within the sector and between sectors is necessary to ensure that all staff and students are aware of collaboration goals. A within-sector strategy to ensure that internal collaborations are prepared to meet the challenge of external collaborations was estimated to require between six and twelve months. The establishment of the flagship collaborative entity provided clear evidence of collaborations between industry and the university, as well as marketing opportunities.

Staff member comments in exemplar collaboration (TAFE):

*Implementation strategy had included extensive communication at various levels throughout the organisation ... all the library and student services, they'd already be well and truly on board by the time we started. We had HR fully conversant with the HR requirements ... finance who'd already done modelling ... our marketing people working with the other partners ... ICT collaborating in that space ... teachers collaborating ... So we had that head start and I'd say that was actually critical... You're probably looking at a 12-months process of engaging each of the support areas that exist, as well as the actual delivery teams getting the engagement and commitment.*

In other interviews comments called for commitment and policy support from senior institutional staff. While the link between these factors and a need for investment of funding to put such processes into place was not highlighted, any savings or resource efficiencies that may accrue would need to be balanced against the costs of managing the collaboration. Clear governance and administrative boundaries with a shared view of collaborative processes requires time and resourcing. Relying on local goodwill is transient and provides poor foundations for long term change.

## Conclusions

In a preliminary assessment of potential collaborations it was evident that, beyond the surface rhetoric and stated intentions, collaborations do not always result in significant substance. Evidence collected from the collaborations selected for review, highlight that, although collaborators (Model 1) may have shared physical resources, there appeared to be very limited success in any sharing of human resources in their collaborative endeavours. Although the reasons for limited success are perhaps unsurprising, evidence suggests that the challenges and enablers highlighted were common across state boundaries.

Model 2, hosted by a university, could be considered an exemplar model for collaboration and represents a specific niche focused on one particular discipline. The model operates in a metropolitan city and illustrates how the contributions of each sector to student learning are valued and also how industry values skills at each exit point in the pathway. Processes and outcomes demonstrate how some of the challenges and enablers to collaboration previously highlighted have combined in a single entity to produce outcomes that are world class. The success of the collaboration has benefited from a strong commitment by senior staff, an effective communication process, clear pathways, and cooperation rather than competition. Features of the operational context included:

- clear discipline-specific focus
- collaborative entity with a national and international reputation
- student outcomes with strong and specific industry endorsement
- alignment of learning with employability at each pathway exit point
- clear sense of appreciation by staff in both sectors
- commitment by both TAFE and HE to making the collaboration work
- passionate advocacy for the collaborative entity
- unified brand image
- proven sustainability over a number of years.

Figure 2 suggests factors that contribute to successful collaborations, and the exemplar model demonstrates many of the key characteristics that other collaborative examples did not possess.

It would be useful to investigate the exemplar model in greater depth to gain an appreciation of how work practices are managed and the specific state government support that has made the collaboration workable. However, while this model has clearly been successful in a metropolitan context, it has limited possibilities in regional contexts.

Students in regional areas often have few financially realistic choices for tertiary learning and have limited social capital enabling them to facilitate, manage and navigate learning pathways. Students from low-SES backgrounds predominate and there are significant numbers of mature-aged students who are more likely to have family financial obligations. In order to raise aspirations and change perceptions of the relevance of higher levels of study for regional low-SES students, it is necessary to remove and reduce perceived barriers and build possibilities and choices.

Thin markets in regional communities generally mean that there are few (and often only one) HE providers in a particular regional context, although there may be a number of registered training organisations competing in the VET space. Regional communities have an

expectation of access to a range of discipline studies and tertiary education providers cannot realistically be highly specialised.

The visibility this small project has given to the challenges and enablers of collaboration has provided sufficient evidence to support the preparation of subsequent grant proposals to engage in new forms of cross-sector collaborations. Because regional tertiary institutions cannot hope to provide the same breadth of programs as metropolitan locations, they must look to other solutions. The success of the more strategic focus adopted in Model 2 suggests that a hybrid or blended model has potential. However, it would be important that regional collaborations between HE and VET providers work with local communities and industry groups when developing potential 'flagship' programs. Such programs need to reflect regional strengths in employment while still providing more broad-based learning opportunities for all students.



## Chapter 4 — Outcomes

The outcomes proposed in the funding application included:

1. Mobilising the discourse about collaboration between sectors in tertiary education
2. Cataloguing and investigating examples of avenues for cooperation
3. Identifying and reporting barriers for cooperation in regional contexts in a discussion paper
4. Presenting findings to various stakeholder groups
5. Preparing subsequent OLT grant applications.

Project deliberations, data collection and outcomes have been enriched through the addition of new team members. The first team meeting highlighted that the team would benefit from increasing the representation from Western Australia. The addition of Dr Coral Pepper from Edith Cowan University's Bunbury Campus (funded by ECU) for part of the project and Dr Derek Juan Swats of the Central Institute of Technology in Perth (funded by the Central Institute of Technology ) introduced additional perspectives.

The data collection and analysis phases of the project achieved Outcomes 2 and 3 and have been documented in this report. At the time of reporting, outcomes have been presented at one HE conference and other appropriate dissemination opportunities will be determined with the completion of the discussion paper.

Project outcomes have generated an unexpected outcome in the form of a Higher Education Participation and Partnership Program (HEPPP) proposal focusing on constructive alignment between sectors in regional locations. The proposal involved partnership between three states (South Australia, Tasmania and Western Australia), with each state having representation by VET and HE, the South Australian Government and two professional bodies.

The HEPPP proposal aimed to build a more integrated tertiary system across the HE/VET sectors by providing proactive transition pedagogy focused upon learner needs rather than sector boundaries, thereby improving:

- higher education participation and employment outcomes for low-SES and Indigenous students, particularly in regional areas
- student progression and knowledge/skill acquisition for flexible employability.

It proposed that by focusing on systemic change in engineering and early childhood education, a cross-sectoral team would utilise the AQF to develop and implement occupational pathways designed to meet regional employment needs that are demand- rather than supply-driven, and underpinned by a comprehensive student transition support program.

## Chapter 5 — Project Linkages

### OLT Priority areas

The project addressed the following OLT Priority Areas:

- Improving tertiary pathways
- Maximising the outcomes for students engaging in transition between the vocational education sector and the higher education sector.

While pathway improvements were not an underlying objective of the project, workplace changes are likely to have positive impacts on pathways by allowing more programs to be offered through the creation of synergistic learning opportunities. Identifying avenues to improve the economics of regional tertiary learning provision has implications for policies that aspire to raise student participation rates and widen the skills base in regional communities.

### Cross-disciplinary and Institutional linkages

Disciplinary diversity of members was considered to be a particular strength of the project team. Disciplines and backgrounds included business, education, philosophy, human geography, government, information technology, and HE and VET management. In addition, the collaboration across sectors, institutions, states and the inclusion of the South Australian Government has contributed to rich discussion and alternative perspectives in deliberations. While outcomes from this project have identified that progress towards deeper and more coordinated resource sharing between sectors is still limited, the team have already identified new avenues for further collaboration.

## Chapter 6 — Evaluation

As a seed project, the short timelines and nature of the project did not require the establishment of a reference group. Instead, the aims and objectives of the project were assisted by expanding the team membership to allow for more diverse views to influence project deliberations.

Knowledge provided by team members from different tertiary sectors (particularly in relation to the position of dual sector institutions in Victoria and the amalgamation of TAFE sites in Queensland) allowed for a richer deliberation process to inform action. The space in which this project is situated is dynamic and the information provided through this wider representation proved valuable for assessment of the need for additional sites to gather further intelligence.

There was also an increase in the number of team meetings through the use of video conferencing to bridge the geographic distance across several regional areas in South and Western Australia. These more frequent team meetings allowed team members to discuss challenges and changes arising within the project and recommend strategies and actions to overcome the challenges.

## Chapter 7 — Dissemination

### Audience involvement

The project identified senior academics and administrators from the HE and VET sectors as a potential audience with a high probability of utilising any findings (Research Utilization Support and Help [RUSH] 2001). The diversity of institutions that committed to involvement in this project, and the evident commitment of the team members to working together, provided a strong sense of purpose.

This proved to be an effective initial dissemination strategy. Initial findings were shared among project team members at regular intervals via in-person and video-conference team meetings.

Telephone and email contact with participants, together with provision of comprehensive participant information sheets outlining project goals, provided a further avenue for dissemination. This contact promoted access to project findings (Research Utilization Support and Help [RUSH] 2001), with participants able to provide email and postal details for distribution of the final report.

### Forum presentation

Presentation of initial project findings at the Australian Universities Heads of Campus Forum (James Cook University Cairns Campus, 11–12 July 2013) attracted national interest around potential application of collaborative models. The presentation was titled ‘Investigating resource sharing in regional Higher Education and VET institutions to improve the student learning experience’.

### Website

Additional specific dissemination activities included construction of a website, outlining the project’s goals. A copy of the final report will be made available on this website.

### Distribution of final report

Distribution of the final report will be via email.

For those participants who have requested a hard copy of the report, written directions to the website will be included with the printed material.

### Higher Education Participation and Partnerships Program

The project discussion significantly informed the HEPPP proposal ‘Collaborative constructive alignment in regional tertiary education to meet workforce needs’, submitted 3 June 2012. Despite an unsuccessful outcome for the HEPPP bid, the complexities involved in preparing such a significant proposal have continued to mobilise the discourse of collaboration between project partners. The work done on this bid has provided significant resources for a subsequent OLT grant application.

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# Appendix A Interview and focus group questions

NB: Participants were asked the same questions at both one-on-one interviews and focus groups.

## Overview

1. What are the issues around collaboration at your site?
2. Why did you undertake the collaboration
3. Who took part in the collaboration?
4. Could you outline your experience of this relationship?
5. Are there third parties operating in this context?

## Governance

1. What kind of collaborative model do you have in place?
2. How does it work?
3. What is your organisation's culture?

## Challenges

1. What challenges did you face?
2. What barriers to implementation did you experience?
3. What did you do to work through the challenges?

## Enablers

1. In addition to barriers to collaboration, who or what were the enablers of collaboration?
2. Was there a tipping point where people decided to proceed?
3. What are the community multipliers?

## Outcomes

1. What are the outcomes?
2. How would you expand your model?
3. Is it scalable?
4. If you could offer suggestions to someone who was going to step into this area, what suggestions would you give?

# Appendix B Participant information sheet



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Dear \_\_\_\_\_

We invite you to participate in the Regional Tertiary Education Project. The project, funded by the Office of Learning and Teaching, is a joint research endeavour between the University of South Australia, TAFE SA Regional, and the South Australian Department of Further Education, Employment, Science and Technology (DFEEST), Edith Cowan University and the Central Institute of Technology (Western Australia).

## Research Purpose

The project aims to investigate and identify innovative models of resource sharing between the Vocational Education and Training (VET) and Tertiary Sectors in regional South Australia and West Australia. It is anticipated that identification of new models will allow both VET and tertiary providers to offer more courses and maximise available human and physical resources for the benefit of students.

## Participation

Participation in the project is voluntary

Involvement will require your participation in a one hour in person interview with a researcher at a time and place you nominate as convenient.

## Possible risks and inconveniences

Apart from one hour of your time, the research team does not foresee any risks to you in participating in this project. Involvement in the study is voluntary and you can withdraw at any time. Refusal to participate or withdrawal will not affect your relationship with University of South Australia, TAFE SA Regional, and DFEEST, Edith Cowan University or the Central Institute of Technology.

## Management of your information

All information collected as part of the study will be retained for five years in both physical (paper) and electronic form in secure storage at the University's Whyalla Campus.

- Only members of the research team will have access to identified data and this will remain confidential.
- No information which could lead to identification of any individual will be released.
- All data will be coded in a de-identified manner and subsequently analysed and reported in such a way that responses will not be able to be linked to any individual. The data you provide will only be used for the specific research purposes of this study.
- A research report and publications will be released at the end of this study, but no individuals will be identifiable in published material.

## Obtaining a copy of the research

If you would like to be provided with either a copy of the final research report or a summary of the research findings, please contact Project Manager, Caitriona Murtagh 08 8647 6016 or [caitriona.murtagh@unisa.edu.au](mailto:caitriona.murtagh@unisa.edu.au)

## More information

You may contact any of the researchers or project staff involved in the project at any time with questions about the project.

In the first instance, please contact:

**Caitriona Murtagh**, Executive Officer, Centre for Regional Engagement (Project Manager)  
t. 08 8647 6016 f. 08 8647 6088 e. [caitriona.murtagh@unisa.edu.au](mailto:caitriona.murtagh@unisa.edu.au).

## Researchers

**Associate Professor Judy Nagy** Associate Dean: Teaching and Learning, Centre for Regional Engagement University of South Australia (Project Leader)  
t. 08 8302 8910 f. 08 8302 8951 m. 0417 694 381 e. [judy.nagy@unisa.edu.au](mailto:judy.nagy@unisa.edu.au)  
UniSA Mt Gambier Regional Centre Wireless Road West Mt Gambier SA 5200



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*Professor Guy Robinson* Director: Centre for Regional Engagement, University of South Australia  
t. 08 8647 2005 f. 08 8647 6088 m. 0434 181 279 e. [guy.robinson@unisa.edu.au](mailto:guy.robinson@unisa.edu.au)  
UniSA Whyalla Campus 111 Nicolson Avenue Whyalla Norrie SA 5608

*Professor Lynne Cohen* Executive Dean Education and Arts, Edith Cowan University  
t. 08 9370 8459 f. 08 9370 6664 m. 0417 956 807 e. [l.cohen@ecu.edu.au](mailto:l.cohen@ecu.edu.au)  
Edith Cowan University Mount Lawley Campus 2 Bradford Street Mount Lawley WA 6050

*Dr Coral Pepper* Senior Lecturer Faculty of Regional and Professional Studies, Edith Cowan University  
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585 Robertson Drive Bunbury WA 6230

*Dr Ruth Schubert* Director Strategy & Business TAFE SA Regional  
t. 08 8735 1520 m. 0438 422 877 e. [ruth.schubert@sa.gov.au](mailto:ruth.schubert@sa.gov.au)  
PO Box 1425 Mount Gambier SA 5290

*Mr Graham Gum* Senior Education Manager: Business, IT and Service Industries, TAFE SA Regional  
t. 08 8522 0321 e. [graham.gum@tafesa.edu.au](mailto:graham.gum@tafesa.edu.au)  
43 High Street, Gawler, South Australia, 5118

*Dr Deborah Keighley-James* Principal Policy Officer Tertiary Policy  
SA Government Department of Further Education, Employment, Science & Technology  
t. 08 8207 8715 m. 0423 823 658 e. [deborah.keighley-james@sa.gov.au](mailto:deborah.keighley-james@sa.gov.au)  
GPO Box 320 Adelaide SA 5001

*Dr Derek Juan Swarts* Director of Higher Education Strategy  
Central Institute of Technology  
t. 08 9427 1220 m. 0432 757 957 e. [derek.swarts@central.wa.edu.au](mailto:derek.swarts@central.wa.edu.au)  
L 7, 25 Aberdeen St Northbridge WA 6003

#### **Complaints and concerns**

This project has been approved by the University of South Australia's Human Research Ethics Committee. If you have any ethical concerns about the project or questions about your rights as a participant please contact the Executive Officer of this Committee, Vicki Allen, t. 08 8302 3118; e. [vicki.allen@unisa.edu.au](mailto:vicki.allen@unisa.edu.au).



# Appendix C Letter to participating institutions



**Project Office**  
Caitiona Murtagh  
Project Manager  
Ph: 08 8547 6016  
Fax: 08 8547 6088  
Mob: 0411 648 664  
E: [caitiona.murtagh@unisa.edu.au](mailto:caitiona.murtagh@unisa.edu.au)  
111 Nicolson Avenue  
Whyalla North SA 5608

Dear [Name]

Re [Institution Name] Invitation to Participate in Regional Tertiary Education Project

I would like to extend an invitation to [Institution Name] to participate in the Office of Teaching and Learning funded Regional Tertiary Education Project.

The project will examine collaborations between regional TAFEs and Universities with the aims of improving staff working relationships, enhancing the environment for student learning and the student learning experience. It is anticipated that such improvements will contribute to improved students study options and may encourage students to study locally.

Participation will add to knowledge about collaborations between the two sectors, provide data to inform the development of new models for collaboration and potentially provide benefits for the whole sector.

Over the course of the project, researchers from the University of South Australia, TAFE Regional SA, The Department of Further Education, Employment Science and Technology, the Western Australian Central Institute of Technology and Edith Cowan University, will conduct interviews at participating sites between November 2012 and February 2013. It is anticipated that individual interviews and focus groups will last approximately one hour.

At each participating location, staff from both regional and metropolitan campuses, as well as students and industry/community stakeholders at regional campuses will be interviewed. Staff will be interviewed individually, while student and community/industry interviews will be conducted in focus groups of six each.

If [institution name] agrees to participate in the project, we ask [Institution name] to assist by nominating two staff members from its regional campus, two staff members from its metropolitan 'mother' campus, together with six students, and six community/industry stakeholders from the regional campus to take part in the project.

Each individual participant will be contacted by the research team and provided with information about the project and an individual consent form to complete and return before any interviews or focus groups take place. All participants will have the option of receiving copies of the published research, which will be submitted to the Office of Teaching and Learning in June 2013.

The Project Team would greatly value the participation of [Institution Name] in this research.

Please review the attachment Consent Forms and Participant Information Sheet and if you are willing to take part, complete the attached acceptance/consent letter. We would appreciate it if you could respond by [deadline date] and send the completed consent letter to the project officer.

Should you have any questions regarding the project or participation, please do not hesitate to contact me on 0417 694 381 or at [judy.nagy@unisa.edu.au](mailto:judy.nagy@unisa.edu.au).

Sincerely

Associate Professor Judy Nagy

Enc 1 Acceptance proforma  
Enc 2 Participant Information Sheet  
Enc 3 Individual consent forms



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# Appendix D Acceptance letter from participating institutions



**Project Office**  
Caitiona Murlagh  
Project Manager  
Ph: 08 8547 6016  
Fax: 08 8547 6088  
Mob: 0411 646 664  
E: caitiona.murlagh@unisa.edu.au  
111 Nicolson Avenue  
Whyalla Norrie SA 5608

Name  
Title  
Institution  
Address 1  
Address 2  
Address 3

[date]

Associate Professor Judy Nagy  
Associate Dean Teaching and Learning  
Lead Researcher OLT Regional Tertiary Education Project  
c/- Project Manager  
Regional Tertiary Education Project Office  
111 Nicolson Avenue Whyalla Norrie SA 5608

Dear Associate Professor Nagy

## Re [Institution Name] Confirmation of Participation in OLT Regional Tertiary Education Project

I confirm that [institution name] will take part in the Regional Tertiary Education Project, led by the University of South Australia and involving researchers from Edith Cowan University, TAFE SA Regional, and Western Australian Central Institute of Technology.

I have read the provided Participant Information Sheet and reviewed the individual consent forms.

I understand that [Institution Name] will be asked to nominate two staff from its metropolitan campus, two staff from its regional location, six students, and six industry/community stakeholders to take part in interviews lasting approximately one hour, to be conducted by researchers between November 2012- February 2013.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signed

\_\_\_\_\_  
Witnessed

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Print Signatories Name)

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Print Witness Name)

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Print Signatories Job Title)

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Print Witness Job Title)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date



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## Appendix E Individual consent form

		<b>Research and Innovation Services</b>		<b>Human Research Ethics Committee</b> <b>CONSENT FORM</b>	
<i>Use this consent form when taped materials, photographs or original works are to be retained</i>					
<i>This project has been approved by the University of South Australia's Human Research Ethics Committee. If you have any ethical concerns about the project or questions about your rights as a participant please contact the Executive Officer of this Committee, Tel: +61 8 8302 3118; Email: <a href="mailto:Vicki.Allen@unisa.edu.au">Vicki.Allen@unisa.edu.au</a></i>					
<b>SECTION 1: CONTACT AND PROJECT DETAILS</b>					
<b>Researcher's Full Name:</b>		Associate Professor Judy Nagy, Associate Dean Teaching and Learning, Centre for Regional Engagement, University of South Australia			
<b>Contact Details:</b>		t. 08 8302 8910 m. 0417 694 381 e. <a href="mailto:judy.nagy@unisa.edu.au">judy.nagy@unisa.edu.au</a> c/- UniSA Mt Gambier Regional Centre Wireless Road West Mt Gambier SA 5200			
<b>Protocol Number:</b>					
<b>Project Title:</b>		Regional Tertiary Education Project			
<b>SECTION 2: CERTIFICATION</b>					
<b>Participant Certification</b>					
In signing this form, I confirm that: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I have read the Participant Information Sheet and the nature and purpose of the research project has been explained to me. I understand and agree to take part.</li> <li>• I understand the purpose of the research project and my involvement in it.</li> <li>• I understand that I may withdraw from the research project at any stage and that this will not affect my status now or in the future.</li> <li>• I understand that while information gained during the study may be published, I will not be identified and my personal results will remain confidential.</li> <li>• Data will be retained for five years after publication, in line with UniSA's Ownership and Retention of Data Policy (Section 4) to allow reference to the material by other researchers and interested parties, in accordance with the Australian Code for the Conduct of responsible research.</li> <li>• I understand that I will be audiotaped during the interview.</li> <li>• Electronic copies will of the audio recordings and the transcripts will be stored in a secure / restricted access location on a UniSA intranet site.</li> </ul>					
<i>I would like to receive a copy of the published research</i>					
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes  <input type="checkbox"/> No	If yes:	<b>Email Address:</b>	OR	<b>Postal Address:</b>	
<b>Participant Signature</b>					
<i>Participant Signature</i>		<i>Printed Name</i>		<i>Date</i>	
<b>Researcher Certification</b>					
I have explained the study to subject and consider that he/she understands what is involved.					
<i>Researcher Signature</i>		<i>Printed Name</i>		<i>Date</i>	