



To whom it may concern:

I am responding to the questions below as CEO of The Outdoor Education Group. www.oeg.edu.au We are a Not for Profit provider of outdoor education to 300 schools across Australia. We turn over just under \$30m and employ over 400 staff, mostly younger than 30 and the majority in rural areas: Eildon, Marysville and the Rubicon Valley in Victoria; Finniss in SA; Karridale in WA; Moss Vale in NSW and Jabiru in NT.

I firmly believe there are not only vast opportunities to expand options for study in Regional and Rural areas but that we are missing these opportunities by not coordinating with employers like The Outdoor Education Group. Our organisation has massive under employment, despite agreeing a sector leading Enterprise Agreement last year. We pay our staff well and provide fantastic training and employment terms. The simple answer is that TAFEs and Universities are not training people with the skills we need for employment. In fact Holmesglen in Victoria has just dropped its Diploma in Outdoor Recreation as it costs too much to run.

We have partnerships with TAFE NSW and Victoria University to train students for our workplace but each of these is still constrained by cost. In order to subsidise and attract recruits to the TAFE NSW cert III and IV we employ and pay the students each year whilst they are training.

I have spoken to numerous TAFEs and universities across multiple states and they will not listen to employers. They have a set curriculum that suits their needs or their staffing constraints. The quality of the training that students receive varies massively and some students require significant retraining after graduation, where other are absolutely work ready.

The end position of this lack of coordination is that we recruited 45 new Group Leader staff this year, against a target of 60 and over 50% of them are from overseas. We still have 15 Group Leader positions unfilled as we start our busiest time of year. The impact of this is an inability to grow any more, especially in Victoria, a short term staff team on 12 or 24 month stays and a similar recruitment problem for next year.

We are currently considering dropping all TAFE programs and concentrating on Sport Governing Body Qualifications and our internal training. We are convinced this is the only way currently that we can ensure that our staff are well trained to deliver potentially high risk activities to young people.

There are huge opportunities to encourage education providers to base themselves in rural areas. We allow Vic Uni to use our training rooms in Eildon free of charge. However, they need to build the partnerships with employers to achieve this.

Accommodation for students when they are training is vital but in our sector, all the providers have huge amounts of beds in their camps. These are usually accessible in the winter periods.

Success is currently not measured by employment outcomes. If you were to offer me 50 staff a year who were well trained and work ready, we would employ them immediately on three year contracts. The TAFEs and Universities should be measured nit on output of students but by numbers in employment in the field of training and the number that sustain work in that field beyond three years.

So, employers need to be consulted and actually listened to. The educational providers need to have the financial constraints lifted based on KPIs vs employment outcomes. I am sure there are other rural industries that feel the same way.

Richard

Richard Thornton

Chief Executive

THE OUTDOOR EDUCATION GROUP
REAL WORLD READY ▲

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The Outdoor Education Group acknowledges the Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the first inhabitants of the nation and the traditional custodians of the lands on which we live, learn and work.

