

AEU Responses to CIT's discussion paper: *Framework for Positioning and Growing CIT*

The AEU is engaged in ongoing consultations with CIT management about the final CIT structure and the implementation processes involved in staffing and resource allocation. The following is the AEU's response to the document "Framework for Positioning and Growing CIT".

GENERAL COMMENTS

The AEU understands that the changing global, national and local political, commercial, training and education environments have provided the impetus for a change of structure for the CIT. The rationale given for the restructure of CIT is not disputed by the AEU. At the same time, it is noted that the CIT has been identified as the ACT Large VET Provider for the year 2007 and is nominated in the top 3 candidates for the national award. This award is given for excellence in training and education delivery and is presented in recognition of CIT's performance in this regard. The AEU offers the following list of concerns and recommendations to ensure that excellence in education and training delivery continues as the focus of the CIT's development as the primary training organization in the ACT

The AEU is conscious of the many and various roles of TAFE in the ACT community and the important function of provision of second chance education and personal development opportunities for the more marginalised members of the community. Member feedback on the document "Framework for Positioning and Growing CIT" expressed concern about the diminished focus on 'equity' and 'diversity' and 'community needs'. The focus of the document appeared to some members to be skewed towards industry and commercial growth. Members raise concerns about the potential of an 'industry / market driven' process which may potentially limit CIT's range of publicly funded offerings to the ACT community.

Following the massive federal and local government funding reductions of the past decade the AEU notes that the day to day problems with delivering education and training at CIT are almost all related to a lack of adequate funding to operate programs with appropriate class sizes, resources, with a highly casualised work force and limited delivery hours. The proposed restructure does not provide additional funds to address these issues in the short term but it presents yet new issues for teachers to manage without addressing the major concerns of the present.

The present structure of the CIT contains a significant number of important cross CIT committees and boards (eg CIT Resources Board Academic Board etc). Such cross CIT bodies with their board representation and expertise need to be replicated in the new structure.

IMPLEMENTATION ISSUES

It is recognized that the CIT is a community based organization where students, teachers, staff and industry interface to provide for the needs of the ACT community. While the AEU does not dispute the general thrust which underlies the proposed new CIT structure it does recognize that the process of transition to the 'new' CIT will determine the initial effectiveness of the operation of the new structure more so than the actual structure itself. Hence, a smooth and morale boosting transition process will effectively guarantee the future success of the Institute.

However, the document "Framework for Positioning and Growing CIT" presents a vision for a restructured CIT and a time frame to achieve the transition but gives little indication of an implementation or transition plan while elucidation of mechanisms and resources to support the changes are lacking also.

In addition, the timeframe to implement the restructure is considered to be inappropriate as there is effectively no dedicated transition time provided for staff to implement any changes before the 1st January 2008 following the conclusion of the academic year in 2007. In addition, no implementation guide has been provided for staff, nor any programmed change management facilitation beyond the current information and consultation processes, has been outlined in the proposal to underpin the structural change process. Indeed, the stated 1st January 2008 deadline for commencement of the new structure has placed stress on staff to achieve changes which are, at best, vaguely outlined in the proposal.

Recommendation:

The AEU recommends that CIT consult and develop an implementation plan and strategies for managing transition issues that arise in association with the restructure process

The vision of a new CIT structure presented in the document "Framework for Positioning and Growing CIT" outlines numerous significant changes to the CIT structure. Many of these rearrangements of Departments within the Institute appear to fit reasonably well into the new Centre based structure which is outlined in the proposal.

Recommendation:

The AEU recommends that CIT management retain an open mind in the future if it becomes evident, in the light of practical application, that a new arrangement proves to be a miss-match or that inappropriate assumptions were used to underpin the Centre structure decisions in the plan.

A key factor impacting upon the realisation of the CIT restructure goals is the relationship between the Centres and CIT Solutions in realising commercial training opportunities for the Institute. Evidently, the current association between Faculties and CIT Solutions has produced less than optimum commercial outcomes for the Institute. Anecdotally, members identify that, in the past, staff often remain poorly supported for their time and effort in generating commercial activities through CIT Solutions.

Recommendation:

The AEU recommends that teachers receive workload recognition for their time spent researching, developing initiating and delivering new programs. This action will serve to encourage teacher initiative and reignite teacher enthusiasm into the development of future commercial opportunities for CIT

The AEU also recognises that many CIT teachers have come to teaching from a diverse range of professional backgrounds and have varying levels of experience in and capacity to undertake commercial activity. The AEU encourages CIT management to permit individual Band 1 teacher some flexibility in the level of personal engagement in the development of new commercial training and education opportunities in the future. Such management action should promote efficiencies in both the maintenance of existing training goals and the development of new commercial training outcomes.

Whilst there seem to be minor initial impacts on Band 1 teacher facilitated teaching and learning in the new structure (at least in the short term), many staff remain unconvinced that the administration procedures, that are necessary to underpin the process of change, will be in place by the commencement of teaching in 2008 to permit a smooth transition for staff and students to the new structure. The CIT has operated in the past by allowing administration procedures, accounting processes etc to evolve within each Faculty / Department so that there is much variation across the Institute with regards to application of these processes. It is clear that the extent of this variation was unquantified until recently. There remains significant administration issues to be resolved before a smooth transition process can move forward (eg enrolment problems, student support processes, Banner access issues, accounting procedures, ordering procedures, administration support for individual Centres etc). The AEU cautions against undue haste to drive these aspects of the restructure, before their due time, as this action may undermine the achievement of the very changes desired in the process.

STAFFING ISSUES

Currently, the position descriptions for Band 1, 2, 3 & 4, AST and STP teachers are relatively clearly defined and delineated as they are based on a traditional hierarchical structure. The proposed restructure may impact on these role definitions which have the potential to become blurred. The AEU seeks agreement with the CIT in definition of the roles of all teaching positions and views the Promotions Position Review Working Group as the appropriate body to oversee the definition of teacher roles and responsibilities.

The AEU and CIT jointly recognize that the educational leadership role at CIT is particularly the domain of the Band 2 teacher and this role is crucial to the success of the operations of the Institute in meeting the education and training needs of the ACT community and industry. However, definition of this educational leadership role in the proposed new structure is unclear at this time. The AEU seeks clarification that the Band 2 position within the new structure will retain the educational leader function within CIT.

Recommendation:

The AEU recommends appointment of Centre Directors who are professional leaders in the fields of their administration. Their credibility with industry, the community and within the profession are all important requirements for the CIT restructure to succeed.

Recruitment of sufficient numbers of suitable, capable and experienced teaching staff is a concern for many CIT managers who attempt to address the teacher shortages by promoting job security for casual and contract teachers at CIT. The document "Framework for Positioning and Growing CIT" presents a modified structure for the CIT but provides little guidance as to the potential impacts of changes to the teaching positions within CIT. Significant losses of more vulnerable teaching positions (including casual and contract teachers) has been a characteristic of recent and past CIT structural rearrangements and the potential fate of their vulnerable colleagues is of concern to teachers and their managers in the current restructure, despite the fact that this restructure is presented as cost neutral.

Recommendation:

The AEU recommends that the CIT continue to pursue ongoing commitment of the conversion to permanency of teaching staff.

Likewise, recent and past CIT restructures have generally resulted in a reduction of the numbers of administration staff at CIT and a consequent devolution of administration responsibilities and student support services to teaching staff. The AEU supports the concept of centralized student services on each campus but teachers remain concerned about the efficiency of these services if they are to be staffed by personnel who traditionally have a reasonably high rate of

turnover and who do not have access to the necessary information to address student enquiries (eg enrolments, course advice, fee payments etc) as not all of the necessary information is currently 'on-line'. Consequently, teaching staff are concerned about a further devolution of administration loads to teaching positions. Teachers are eager for the current and any additional administrative workload to be quantified and recognized as contribution towards their teaching workload.

Recommendation:

The AEU maintains its strong position in opposition to additional devolution of administration tasks to teachers without formal consultation.

Recommendation:

The AEU seeks the establishment of a process that allows teachers to refer administrative tasks to centralized student services.

Through engagement in the AEU Sub Branch consultation process several cross Faculty / Department teacher Band 1 positions have been identified at CIT. These positions are not identified in the restructure proposal which has not provided confirmation about the future location of these positions within the new structure

Recommendation:

The AEU recommends the urgent identification of any teaching position that is not contained within a single Centre and that action taken to clarify the status of these positions.

CENTRE RELATED ACADEMIC CONSIDERATIONS

AEU members identified the generic term 'Centre' in the document "Framework for Positioning and Growing CIT" as inadequately identifying those Centres which have a specified educational function. Other terms such as 'Teaching Center' or 'School of...' or equivalent name might be more appropriate to prevent confusion within the CIT and wider ACT community.

Recommendation:

The AEU recommends that Centres engaged in educational delivery be granted the capacity to determine their name to reflect their role in education and training.

One apparent key underpinning the success of the restructure process is the increase in 'flexibility' of teaching delivery based on the development of and further e-learning delivery opportunities through out the Institute. The AEU cautions against an overemphasis on this mode of delivery when considering that a significant proportion of students at CIT are not computer literate and frequently engage in VET, international programs and 'second chance' education. Hence, imprudent reliance on 'on-line' student course applications, enrolments, education delivery and assessment etc will necessarily exclude this cohort of students from engaging with CIT and potentially impact on CIT's community service profile.

CENTER MANAGEMENT CONSIDERATIONS

The AEU suggests that several new Centres will be best placed to achieve the desired synergies and cost efficiencies if members of these Centres are co-located.

Recommendation:

The AEU recommends that CIT prioritise plans and timetables to facilitate co-location of appropriate Departments within the new Centres.

The document "Framework for Positioning and Growing CIT" refers to a role of Executive 'mentoring' Centre Directors. The relationship between the Executive members and Centre Directors appears to be complex such that the AEU is uncertain whether this definition of 'mentoring' includes 'advisory' and/or 'supervisory' aspects reflecting Executive assistance of the Directors to reach their specific targets.

Recommendation:

The AEU recommends that CIT clarify lines of accountability and responsibility of Centre Directors.

While the AEU is cognizant of the need to restructure the Institute in order to maximize commercial potential for the future growth and development of the CIT members believe that this development will be best be achieved by encouragement of Centre Directors as professional leaders who have specific focus on the quality of teaching and learning in addition to other responsibilities. To aid in this process, and in the interests of maintenance of appropriate work / life balance for all Centre staff, the AEU recommends that existing administration processes at CIT need to be carefully examined for efficiency, relevance and effectiveness as part of the process for allocating performance targets for Centres to achieve.

The AEU notes that some existing Departments / programs at CIT benefit from indirect cross-subsidization from more commercially successful and often highly profiled programs. Instances exist at CIT where administrative support for more poorly funded/profiled sections of CIT may be provided by staff who are employed in a Department which has both commercially successful as well as more poorly funded programs in its profile. The proposed new CIT structure effectively isolates some of those more marginal areas which will consequently be less able to generate funding from commercial sources (eg disability areas, Access Ed., servicing Departments etc). These areas may then remain static or decline in profile with variations in future government funding, cyclical enrolment patterns etc. Meanwhile, commercially viable Centers will grow with demand and increased exploitation of commercial opportunities.

Such a situation has the potential to establish a 'two tier' Centre structure at CIT based on variations in enrolments due to cyclical enrolment patterns and variations in commercial opportunities for Centres. The potential exists to disadvantage the less commercially profiled sections of CIT which, none the less, provide essential education services to the ACT Community. Centres with limited commercial opportunities and cyclical enrolment patterns will therefore need to be adequately supported by CIT into the future during any 'lean' times.

SPECIFIC 'NEW CENTER' CONCERNS

- Approximately 6 staff are currently engaged in e-learning / innovative learning, flexible and on-line learning within the Flexible Learning Solutions Group in the current CIT structure. It is evident that these roles will be separated into two new areas; the Learning Centre and the Centre for Education Excellence. Staff are concerned about the loss of synergies with this proposed model and the manner in which the staff will be appointed into the new Centres

Recommendation:

The AEU recommends that separation of staff between Centres be based on nature of service provided. Flexible learning support for staff is a teaching and learning support function and would appear to be best retained within the Centre for Educational Excellence, whereas flexible learning support for students could be provided by the learning centre.

- The AEU recommends that CIT engage in further consultation with members of the current Departments of Engineering and resource sciences and Electrotechnology to avoid loss of synergies (eg between staff, resources, teaching material etc) with the separation of Engineering into different Centers (ie mechanical and civil engineering). Such a separation is said to be counter to the needs of industry who request multi-skilled engineers. Similarly it is believed that further synergies could be gained by combining Electronic Trades with the Electronic Engineering training area.

Recommendation:

The AEU recommends further consultation by CIT with teaching staff in these areas of Electrotechnology, Electronic Engineering and Electronic Trades to maximize opportunities within the new structure.

- The AEU suggests further examination of the proposed repositioning of CURVE into the Marketing and National Positioning Centre. It is identified that optimal synergies for education based research and dissemination of 'best teaching practice' models to contemporary CIT teaching delivery would be achieved by the co-location of CURVE within the Centre for Education Excellence. This arrangement would in no way diminish the benefits that could be achieved through close cooperation between CURVE and the Marketing and National Positioning Centre at CIT but would expand on the benefits derived from CURVE to CIT.

Recommendation:

The AEU recommends that CURVE to be located within the Centre for Education Excellence.

- The AEU has identified that, within the new structure, some Centers will have delivery areas across several campuses. This situation may present many unidentified difficulties that will require special consideration by CIT management to facilitate transport and to enhance communication between staff located on the different campuses.

Recommendation:

The AEU recommends that CIT provide compensation for traveling time be made available for staff who are impacted by restructure.

- Members have suggested that the Centre of Health and Wellbeing has significant opportunities for synergies but also that these opportunities are less likely to be fully realized in the short term because the two major Departments within the Centre operate on two distinct campuses and are unlikely to co-locate in the near future.

Recommendation:

AEU recommends the creation of two separate campus based Centres (at Southside and at Bruce) until co-location under one Centre is possible. It is clear that these two Centres can engage in closer cooperation without being encumbered with the complexities of imposition of a uniform management structure, diverse Student Support Centres, variable campus facilities and associated management variabilities until collocation is feasible.

- The AEU, in response to member feedback, requests that re-examination of the location of the Furniture Design program in the new structure which may be placed in the Centre for Creative Industries rather than the Building and Environment Centre, given the creative design nature of the course content.
- The current Department of Business Services and Technology has identified that, in the past, it demonstrated significant initiative in identifying, developing and delivering innovative programs in Public Service training programs which have since been seconded to CIT Solutions. It is understood that these programs will remain in the profile of CIT Solutions and that the new Centre for Business Skills will have a limited market to operate within the ACT as it will be in direct competition with CIT Solutions in this domain. Members wish to understand how this perceived conflict of interest between CIT Solutions and the Center for Business Skills in developing commercial opportunities will be managed so as to permit the Centre to maximize commercial opportunities in Public Service training programs for its own growth and development.

Recommendation:

The AEU recommends that the relationship between CIT and CIT Solutions be the subject of ongoing scrutinization with the aim to maximize potential for cooperation with Centres in developing commercial opportunities which benefit the Institute as a whole

Further recommendations:

The AEU recommends that the CIT provide specific funding to support the transition process including Professional Development and other appropriate activities to develop and cement new teams.

The AEU recommends that the CIT establish formal consultative arrangements at a Centre level to ensure teacher and other staff input into identification and resolution of issues around the strategic planning and resourcing of the new Centres.