



QUEENSLAND  
FUTURES INSTITUTE



# BETTER IDEAS

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**WORKFORCE SKILLS & CAPABILITY -  
MEETING QLD'S CHANGING DEMANDS**

# Better Ideas

## Workforce Skills & Capability - Meeting QLD's Changing Demands

Thursday 12 May

7:30am – 9:00am

Customs House,

399 Queen St, Brisbane

### PANELISTS:



**Speaker**  
**WARWICK AGNEW**  
**Director-General**  
Department of Employment,  
Small Business and Training



**KAREN SPILLER OAM**  
**Chair**  
Independent Schools  
Queensland



**PROFESSOR CAROLYN EVANS**  
**Vice Chancellor and President**  
Griffith University



**PROFESSOR DEBORAH TERRY AO**  
**Vice Chancellor and President**  
The University of Queensland



**DENISE O'BRIEN**  
**General Manager**  
**International Education,**  
TAFE Queensland



**SHAWN WALKER**  
**Pro Vice-Chancellor (Engagement)**  
University of Southern  
Queensland



**PROFESSOR NIC SMITH**  
**Provost**  
Queensland University  
of Technology



**Moderator**  
**MICHAEL HILLER**  
**Queensland Chairman**  
KPMG Australia

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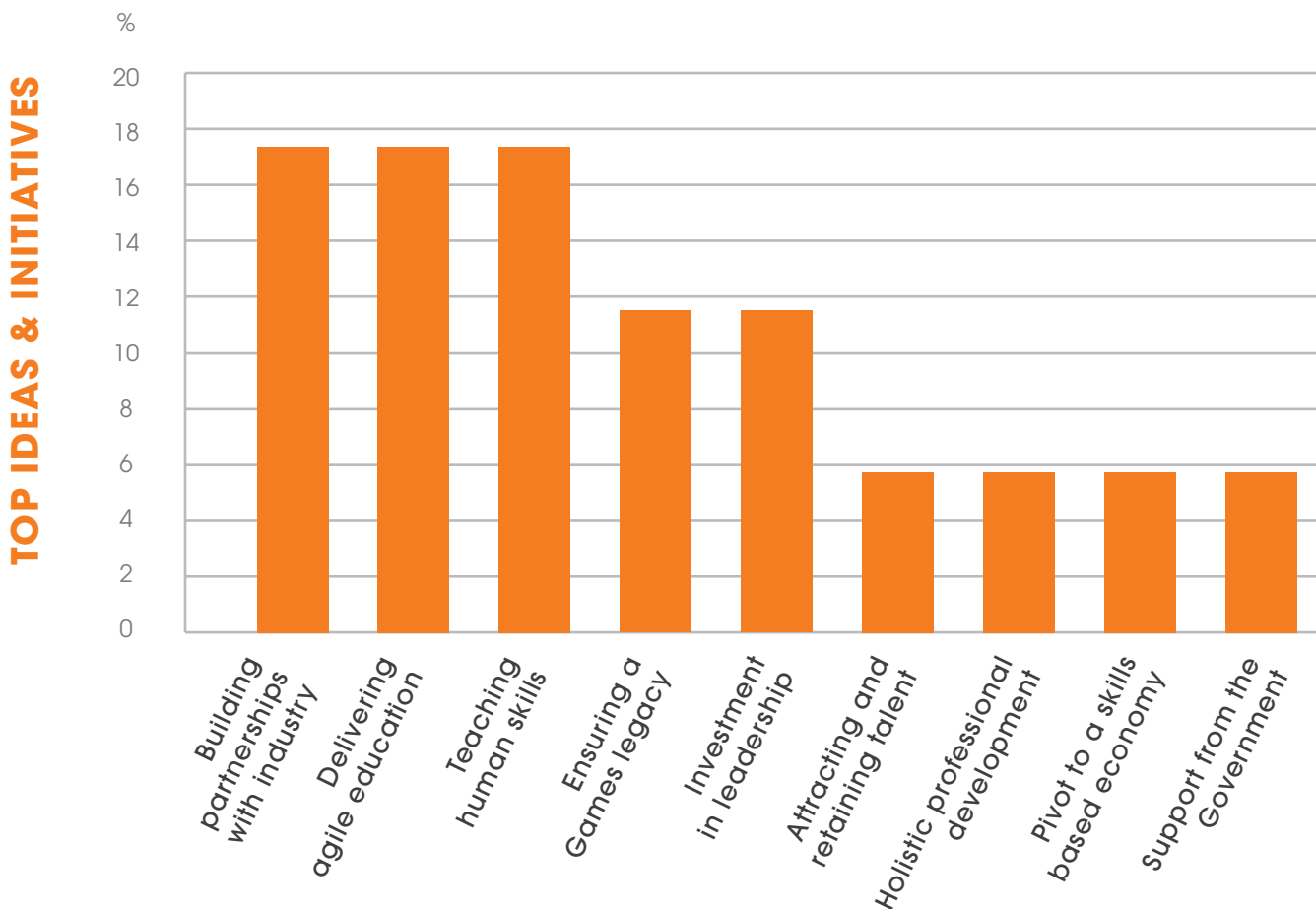


# Snapshot

The key theme from the 2022 Queensland Futures Institute Workforce Skills & Capability - Meeting QLD's Changing Demands Forum was the need for building a strong, diverse, resilient and adaptable workforce through new approaches to education and training. This must be achieved through education providers adapting their delivery of skills and training, focusing on holistic development and partnering with industry and government to build the future workforce.

## Summary of Comments

- Over the next 10 years in the lead up to the Olympic Games, there will be a strong need for meaningful education and training. This must be delivered via adaptable approaches which consider human skills and a global perspective and be accessible across communities and regions.
- Government and industry will also play a critical role in enabling education and training, through partnerships with education providers and investment in the future workforce.
- In the context of this increased focus on people and partnerships in education looking forward, it is also important to consider how industries are changing and the shifting economic environment which will see Queensland industry advance, particularly after the Games.



# Summary from Speaker



## **Warwick Agnew, Director-General, Department of Employment, Small Business and Training - Overview of QLD Workforce Skills Agenda**

- Queensland faces unique and unprecedented circumstances in which the labour market is extremely tight; the unemployment rate is the lowest since December 2008; employment in Queensland has risen to more than 2.7 million people; Queensland currently has 55,900 vacancies advertised online, which is also the highest level since November, 2008, and labour force participation is currently at 66.6%, which is higher than pre-COVID levels.
- The effectiveness of the State's response to COVID-19 has laid foundations for our strong economic recovery; our economy is 6.3% larger than before the pandemic, with stronger growth relative to other states. This is a reason why the labour market is the tightest in recent history.
- There are many other drivers of this market, such as global and interstate competition for skills. High demand for housing across Queensland is a key constraint to attracting labour. Reduced levels of international migration, including students, working holiday makers and skilled migrants have also impacted the market.
- Current research has projected an almost 11% increase in the overall employment through 2024/25 – which is more than 280,000 new jobs in Queensland.
- There is a clear need for government planning to support industry, education and training to alleviate some of these workforce pressures and critically to ensure that we capitalize fully on the opportunities that lie ahead for Queensland.
- The recently convened Queensland Workforce Summit brought together over 350 leaders across industry education and training to develop practical solutions needed to support workforce development. The key themes which emerged from these discussions were partnerships between communities, employers and government, the need for businesses to focus on people and attraction and retention of talent, and data and communication with stakeholders to inform planning and decision-making.
- There will continue to be strong demand for a skilled workforce and a need for degree-qualified and VET- qualified workers across health, social, education, engineering, technical and digital workforce sectors. There will also be demand for entry-level workers in service sectors, including tourism and hospitality.
- The Queensland Government is focused on developing the workforce through education & training and ensuring opportunities and development pathways for all Queenslanders, particularly those with untapped potential.

# Comments from Panel

## **Question One - From your viewpoint, how do you define the skills challenge for the State - what are you thinking about and focusing on to help ready the future workforce?**



## **Professor Carolyn Evans, Vice Chancellor and President, Griffith University**

- There are challenges across different time frames which industry faces requiring cooperation across communities, education providers and employers to solve. These solutions require collaboration across the whole workforce, ensuring diversity and equal opportunity, and with industry to provide effective and practical outcomes.
- Thinking about the longer term and the trend towards automation, there is a strong need for building human skills that add value and cannot easily be automated. These will ensure the adaptability and skill base required for continuous learning needed to address issues which arise in the future.

# Comments from Panel



## **Shawn Walker, Pro Vice-Chancellor (Engagement), University of Southern Queensland**

- The COVID pandemic has resulted in many challenges and opportunities for industry. Despite this, there remains need to consider a holistic approach to education beyond technical training and focusing on professional and work life skills. Emotional intelligence, communication and leadership skills are as important as ever and moving forward, adaptability and resilience will become increasingly critical for the workforce. This is true for the shift towards remote and hybrid working for example.
- There is also a strong focus on remote learning needed to provide quality education to those in the regions, as well as full-time professionals who cannot attend post-graduate education on campus. There are opportunities for collaboration with other universities and organisations to deliver this.



## **Karen Spiller OAM, Chair, Independent Schools Queensland**

- Preparing school students for later life remains a key focus for parents, communities and education providers. However, there is a challenge around preparing students for future careers which are not invented yet. The pandemic has stoked digital disruption and resulting in new ways of working and learning is continuing this trend which will enable adaptability to these future challenges.
- Teaching and encouraging a global perspective and experiences will also support people skills and diversity in knowledge required no matter the direction of future jobs. Other human skills like creative thinking, teamworking, communication, and ICT skills will also be pivotal to develop the skills of the future.



## **Denise O'Brien, General Manager, International Education, TAFE Queensland**

- We must ensure we have access to the right people with the right skills at the right time in the context of a global talent squeeze we are currently seeing. Long-term partnerships between industry, universities, vocational education training providers, communities, governments and schools is critical to ensuring we attract and retain talent within Australia and Queensland.
- Skills development will continue to become increasingly critical. Current research shows that 9 of the top 10 high growth jobs are underpinned by vocational training and skills either as a pathway directly into work or as a pathway to higher education. This requires partnerships and vocational education to support industry, communities and individuals in roles from trades to healthcare.
- TAFE is currently developing facilities to enable new skills in cyber security, blockchain technology, advanced manufacturing, robotics, green hydrogen and electrification of vehicles. These future industries are clearly a focus for skill development.
- It also remains critical to provide access to skills for First Nations, regional and remote communities, and those that are living with disabilities, in order to support a diverse workforce.



## **Professor Nic Smith, Provost, Queensland University of Technology**

- In a future where automation will play a significant role in addressing the skills shortage, skills in data science, robotics, clean energy, digital media, policy and future of healthcare will be critical. However, there needs to be a human element combined with these in order to address the social issues for cities, Queensland and Australia, and deliver positive economic and social outcomes across industries such as healthcare, sustainable agriculture, and address broader health and education needs. Transformative technologies and the future skills discussed above must be leveraged to do this.
- These critical skills must be channelled through inclusive leadership to facilitate change for the Federal Government.



# Comments from Panel



## **Professor Deborah Terry AO, Vice Chancellor and President, The University of Queensland**

- A skilled workforce is key to our future economic and social prosperity. To achieve this, we need to provide a strong suite of offerings which enable students with digital capabilities which will be critically important.
- The delivery of these skills must be balanced between ensuring strong discipline knowledge as well as a breadth of soft, human skills which are essential for collaboration and agility.
- It is important to ensure an agile workforce given the future need to upskill, reskill and cross-skill within evolving and dynamic industries. The delivery of education must change to support this.
- UQ is currently reassessing the delivery of their short courses, unlocking courses in its CBD campus for example to enhance its post-graduate offering.
- Finally, it is important to provide opportunities for education, training and upskilling to all parts of the community, particularly disadvantaged people and rural and regional communities. There are opportunities to partner with regional universities to deliver remote learning and break down the geographical barrier to education.

**Question 2 - Let's look back from a position of success ... let me take you to 2032 ... Brisbane (and Qld) has just hosted the greatest ever Olympic Games, lauded by all the experts. Queensland has also experienced a golden decade of growth. A key to our preparedness was decisions made 10 years earlier about the skills needed for the future. What decisions did we make? What did we change? What did we get right?**



## **Professor Deborah Terry AO, Vice Chancellor and President, The University of Queensland**

- We need to leverage the benefits that that will be derived from the Olympic Games and Paralympic Games and create a legacy similar to Expo 88.
- To do this, investment and planning is required to deliver growth in the next 10 years across key sectors of the economy such as infrastructure, knowledge-based industries, agriculture, tourism and education. We need to focus on scale and strengthening the value chain in these areas leading up until the Games.



## **Professor Nic Smith, Provost, Queensland University of Technology**

- The fundamental value proposition of the Games is how Queensland pivots from natural resources into a skills-based economy. The Games will be the catalyst of this.
- To do this we must also leverage and further encourage social cohesion to deliver a shared purpose of the Games. Education will play a key role in this. We will also need a diverse workforce for which we must attract international talent.
- Finally, investing in a comprehensive research infrastructure will bolster Queensland's ability to react and to be resilient into the future. This will require a strong capital base and early investment.



## **Denise O'Brien, General Manager, International Education, TAFE Queensland**

- Collaboration is key to a successful Games. Early planning and coordination of partnerships between universities, vocational providers, schools, employers and communities is needed to facilitate a comprehensive skills agenda. This will be needed to deliver in the key areas of infrastructure, logistics, the arts, hospitality and tourism which will underpin a successful Games.
- Leveraging the legacy and learnings from the 2018 Commonwealth Games will also benefit Queensland in the lead up to the Games.
- A comprehensive skills agenda will support a diverse workforce needed to deliver a successful Games - this will be enabled by attracting international students, investing in our TAFEs, universities and schools.
- Finally, we must ensure everybody who participates in the Games will have a pathway to further their learning or employment. A successful Games will ensure everyone benefited - economically, socially, and culturally - from their participation and ensure that no one will be left behind.

# Comments from Panel



## **Karen Spiller OAM, Chair, Independent Schools Queensland**

- Collaboration and agility will be key across all levels of industry and the economy, from leadership and across the workforce. This may result in new approaches to leadership to better share intergenerational experience.
- Regulatory flexibility and a more agile public service is needed in order to deliver this for industry, from a policy and regulatory perspective and through leading by example.



## **Shawn Walker, Pro Vice-Chancellor (Engagement), University of Southern Queensland**

- To cement Brisbane's international reputation, we must get partnerships right. This is particularly true for the education sector and the siloing against industry which it is currently challenged by. The next 10 years will provide an opportunity to provide more innovative approaches to learning in order to maximise the value in key sectors relevant for the Games.



## **Professor Carolyn Evans, Vice Chancellor and President, Griffith University**

- In order to seize the opportunity around partnerships over the next 10 years, we need a deep, rich, multifaceted transformational approach. This will require valuable collaboration between industry and education providers to occur.
- This is the key challenge over the next 10 years. Government will play a critical role and must develop better policy frameworks and directly invest into partnerships to ensure these prosper.
- If this occurs by 2032, many areas of the economy will work more effectively together, resulting in major synergies and delivering a successful Games.

# Audience Questions

**While collaboration, diversity, depth and inclusivity are important in the workforce, there is an increasing trend towards the casualisation of the workforce, particularly in universities. How should the university sector deal with this to ensure that nobody is left behind?**



**Professor Deborah Terry AO, Vice Chancellor and President, The University of Queensland**

- The social license to operate and what universities contribute in terms of public good – through research, teaching and education is essential to enrich communities and support the workforce.
- Both academic and professional staff are increasingly looking for more flexible working arrangements after the pandemic. Universities must act to support this and provide for all parts of their workforce.



**Professor Carolyn Evans, Vice Chancellor and President, Griffith University**

- Casualisation is not inherently bad – it is a critical part of the workforce. At Griffith, between a third and half of the casual workforce are students. This is an invaluable experience to offer students and allow them to gain experience. Another segment of the casual workforce is industry professionals who are looking to contribute back to universities on a casual basis.
- Universities have faced increasing financial pressure – and this has driven up the casualisation of the workforce. Adequate public funding for universities will remain critical to support all segments of the workforce and allow universities to continue delivering positive outcomes.

**In the context of a shifting global geopolitical landscape, and noting the role that indigenous knowledge can play, what should be changed to enable the sector to continue driving positive societal development?**



**Professor Nic Smith, Provost, Queensland University of Technology**

- In an increasingly global and data-rich environment, the evolution of skills and work is advancing at an increasing rate; universities can no longer assume they are a key holder of valuable knowledge. The role of education providers must now be focused on facilitating an environment of interaction with the world and others, to expand world views and provide intellectual stimulation and provocation - not necessarily to be directly educated.
- Looking at the role of indigenous knowledge, it is a very important part of the educational system, particularly connecting the needs of the individuals with the needs of the community both now and in the future.



**Denise O'Brien, General Manager, International Education, TAFE Queensland**

- Supporting the role of Indigenous knowledge systems, TAFE Queensland has just launched its second reconciliation action plan which was informed by First Nations people. There is a strong need to make this meaningful through formalisation and very conscious roadmap planning to ensure positive and authentic outcomes.



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