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TAFE SA EVALUATION REPORT TABLED

Published 21 March 2023

Today the Commission's report of the evaluation of the practices, policies and procedures of TAFE SA was tabled in Parliament.

The evaluation assessed TAFE SA's vulnerability to corruption in a number of areas, including its management of human resources, procurement, assets and facilities and information. It also explored the corruption risks which arise from TAFE SA's commercial activities, industry engagement and interactions between teaching staff and students.

The Commission observed an agency that has endured in recent years significant scrutiny and change. However, Commissioner Vanstone believes TAFE SA 'has the resources to meet its challenges', noting that 'its people and their dedication to students are its principal asset'.

The Commission found that while TAFE SA has greatly improved its governance and strategic direction since 2017, it may underestimate fraud and corruption risks. The Commission has made 34 recommendations to assist TAFE SA to strengthen its awareness and management of these risks, which extend to its educational and corporate activities.

In order to maintain industry currency, TAFE SA lecturers work both as educators and skilled industry professionals. Although it is necessary for those staff to wear 'two hats' and interact with the private sector, this exposes them to greater risk than many other public officers. The Commission has recommended that TAFE SA implement policies and procedures regarding industry engagement and secondary employment so that it can better manage the conflicts of interest that might arise.

A particular risk to TAFE SA is the development of improper relations between teaching staff and students, including through requesting or accepting gifts and benefits. TAFE SA's pride in its teaching staff may cause it to underestimate the risk of lecturers abusing their positions of power for corrupt purposes. The Commission has recommended that TAFE SA centralise the management of complaints about teaching staff and better articulate the corruption risks in its policies and procedures.

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Corruption risks are heightened in settings where staff are not adequately supervised. Many of TAFE SA's Education Managers are responsible for supervising up to 60 staff in multiple campuses. The Commission has recommended that TAFE SA review its workforce structure to improve lines of accountability and strengthen supervisory relationships.

While some of the vulnerabilities explored during the evaluation are specific to TAFE SA and other educational institutions, the Commission notes that many will be relevant to all public authorities and public officers.

TAFE SA has welcomed the Commission's recommendations and has already taken action to implement a number of them.

The *Evaluation of the practices, policies & procedures of TAFE SA* is available on the Commission's website: <https://www.icac.sa.gov.au/evaluations-and-reviews/evaluation-of-tafe-sa>

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