Globally and locally, the world of work is changing. Technological disruption is creating new jobs and industry is evolving at pace through automation and digitisation. Our industries and communities must be supported with training that looks to the future, understands the challenges and embraces change.

As Tasmania’s publicly owned training provider, TasTAFE contributes to the prosperity of the economy, supporting industry and providing individuals with skills for employment. We train people for jobs in key industries, including, health and community services, building and construction, and agriculture.

Every employer and industry body I speak with wants TasTAFE to be successful, but the majority have emphasised a need for us to change, have greater relevance and be more agile, we agree.

On 1 July, TasTAFE will transition to a not-for-profit government business. This is an exciting opportunity for TasTAFE and, I believe, for Tasmania. Moving out of the Tasmanian State Service will empower us to respond to the changing environment in which we operate. We need to be able to ramp up our training in high demand and emerging industries and attract quality trainers from industry on more flexible working arrangements. We will have the ability to directly employ our people, build our own culture and apply our capability when and where it is needed.

Come the 1 July, we will not suddenly be transformed. These changes will require time to meet their intended purpose. This year and next are about laying the foundations for future innovation and growth.

Re-shaping public vocational education and training isn’t something we can do alone. Success relies on a two-way relationship with industry and the community.

We need industry to support the bigger picture. This might be encouraging people to consider teaching, providing work placements for our learners, or access to equipment or expertise.

We have a long-term plan for change that will give more Tasmanians access to flexible training and better support industry. We have developed a 10-Year Strategic Plan: Reimagining TasTAFE. This is an ambitious, future-focused plan that sets out where we want to be in 2032 and how we will get there. It recognises we need to lead the way with innovative solutions, and new, more accessible training models. Importantly, it has been informed by the many conversations and interactions we have had with industry, communities and learners.

At the heart of our plan is a new learning model. “How we learn at TasTAFE” will shape how we teach, how our learners learn and how our campuses look in the future. It’s about providing authentic and relevant learning experiences to prepare people for the future world of work. It aims to offer more flexibility, better access and an improved study-life balance.

We will achieve this with dynamic, modern approaches to training that are fit for Tasmania. Learning will include more opportunities outside of the classroom, including online, in the workplace and virtual classes supported by on-campus delivery where it is appropriate and effective. There will be a focus on accredited skill sets and short courses and a greater emphasis on digital literacy and skills. We want to provide a wider choice of learning experiences, modernise our locations and facilities and encourage the adoption of a range of technologies. Our campuses will need to look different over time and will evolve through this process, to deliver an improved learning experience.

At the centre of this will be increased opportunities to use hybrid learning models that combine face-to-face practical learning with digital learning supported by technology. This is already happening in some courses. An example is our Diploma of Nursing. Students now participate in online tutorials guided by our teachers, complete elements of theory online when it suits them, and then consolidate their learning on-campus in our simulated hospital wards. This model is more accessible for learners with family commitments or people living in regional and remote areas.

The development of a TasTAFE Virtual Campus will support these new learning models. It’s not about replacing our practical on-campus or worksite training, which will always be an important part of what we do, but providing learners from all over Tasmania with greater access and more flexibility to achieve their career and training goals.

TasTAFE’s future is supported with $114 million of new Tasmanian Government investment to support the Virtual Campus, digital and physical infrastructure upgrades, and 100 new teachers. Centres of Excellence in Water and Energy Trades (Hobart) and Agricultural Training (Burnie) are also under construction with planning for the Care Industries centre in Launceston underway.

This is an exciting opportunity for TasTAFE to be more flexible, more accessible and better aligned with industry needs. A stronger TasTAFE means stronger industries and communities and a more engaged TasTAFE where industry get the type of training they need when they need it.

**Grant Dreher, TasTAFE CEO**