It’s almost 12 months since TasTAFE became a not-for-profit Government business. Much has been achieved in this time, with the core purpose of keeping our learners at the centre of our decision making and our communities and industries at the forefront of these decisions.

We have developed and released a new 10-year strategic plan - Reimagining TasTAFE. It outlines how we will become a future-focused and market-aligned leader in vocational education and training. We want TasTAFE to be a place of innovation, creating new ways of training, finding solutions, delivering differently and increasing access for all.

We have seen strong growth in - the number of students studying with us. In 2022 our enrolments were at 24,752, up on 2021 enrolments. There has been significant growth in the number of apprentices commencing their training with us, growing from 5,353 in 2020 to 8,762 in 2022.

Importantly, we have introduced a refreshed student support model to help students to successfully complete their studies and be successful in their work. This includes employing more Learning Support Tutors, introducing a Study Start Program, exploring transport options for students in regional and remote areas to access TasTAFE services, and introducing a range of activities to connect graduates with employment opportunities.

We have also made changes to how we deliver vocational education and training. Many courses and qualifications now are delivered via a mix of delivery methods including face-to-face, online and in the workplace. And we have also introduced new programs such as Certificate IV in Cyber Security and a cyber security awareness skill set.

Like many industries, the TAFE sector is also having difficulties recruiting staff due to the tight labour market. However, from January 2022 to December 2022, 48 new teachers joined TasTAFE. As a result of our current teacher recruitment campaign, we have also had in excess of 60 short-listed applicants. TasTAFE has been able to attract and employ more teachers under the new modern award put in place as of 1 July 2022, than under the previous conditions. We are now well on the way to meeting the Tasmanian Government’s commitment of 100 new teachers.

We have now commenced enterprise bargaining with teaching and non-teaching staff and remain committed to achieving a common set of conditions for all teachers in our teaching enterprise agreement that reflect the market. In conditions for both our teaching and non-teaching staff we want to see our people valued for their efforts, contribution and commitment.

Rethinking infrastructure is a key component of Reimagining TasTAFE. We have recently undertaken a review of our facilities state-wide and are developing a 10-year Facilities and IT masterplan to modernise our campuses, recognising that digital assets are just as important as physical.

This work, combined with a state wide services plan, will now be used to inform a state wide master plan for future infrastructure investment.

We’ve also completed our five- year digital strategy.  This strategy outlines what is required to ensure TasTAFE students receive a contemporary learning experience both on-line, on-campus and in the workplace.  Key aspects of the digital strategy need to include major upgrades to the student management system, delivery of the virtual campus strategy, improved business workflow, and delivery of student and employer portals.

Our strategic plan recognises the need to actively engage with industry to provide learners with job-ready skills and support economic growth. We are establishing five industry advisory/steering committees covering water and energy trades, tourism and hospitality, agriculture, the care industries and cyber security. This allows us to hear direct from industry around their training needs now and plan for the future.

We have two centres of excellence now close to completion with both expected to be offering training by the second half of 2023. The Water and Energy Trades Centre of Excellence at Clarence Campus will increase our capacity to train more plumbers and electricians in modern fit for purpose facilities. Our Agricultural Training Centre of Excellence at Freer Farm, Burnie will support the sector through the right skills and training and foster collaboration with industry.

Our Cyber Security Operations Centre at Campbell St Campus, Hobart is also nearing completion and the first taypani Learning Hub, bringing together a range of services and support for students under one roof, will be opening at the Clarence Campus shortly.

More than 800 TasTAFE staff play a key role in developing Tasmania’s future workforce. Whether they be a teacher, client-facing or working behind the scenes, every one of them is critical, playing an important part in supporting our learners. We want TasTAFE to be a great place to work where our staff feel valued and supported so that they can, in turn, support our learners.

TasTAFE has been through a significant amount of change and I’m extremely proud of the way our staff have continued to provide high quality training during this time. Change is inevitable and more of the same is never enough. We can support our industries and community with innovative and contemporary training that looks to the future.

TasTAFE is on a journey to becoming the leading vocational education and training provider Tasmania needs and deserves to ensure industry has skilled staff to support the state’s economic prosperity.

**Grant Dreher is the CEO of TasTAFE**