

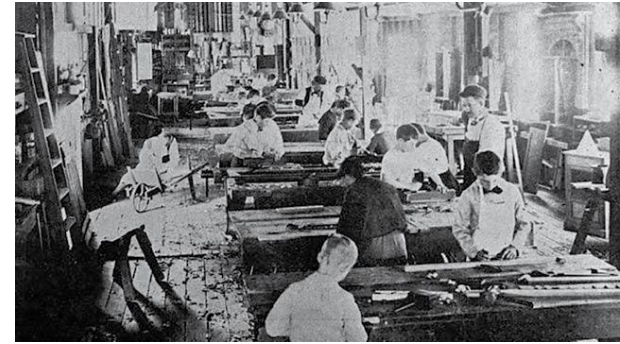
The VET Disability Practitioner: Then, Now and Future

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TAFE Queensland - overview

- Queensland's largest training provider – 135 years old
- Entry level certificates to bachelor degree
- 50 training locations across Qld
- 110,000 students each year
- 5,500 employees



Session overview

Then...Now...Future...

BYO

DISCLAIMER

In this session any names, characters, places and events are either the products of the author's imagination or used in a fictitious manner. Any resemblance to actual persons or events is purely coincidental.

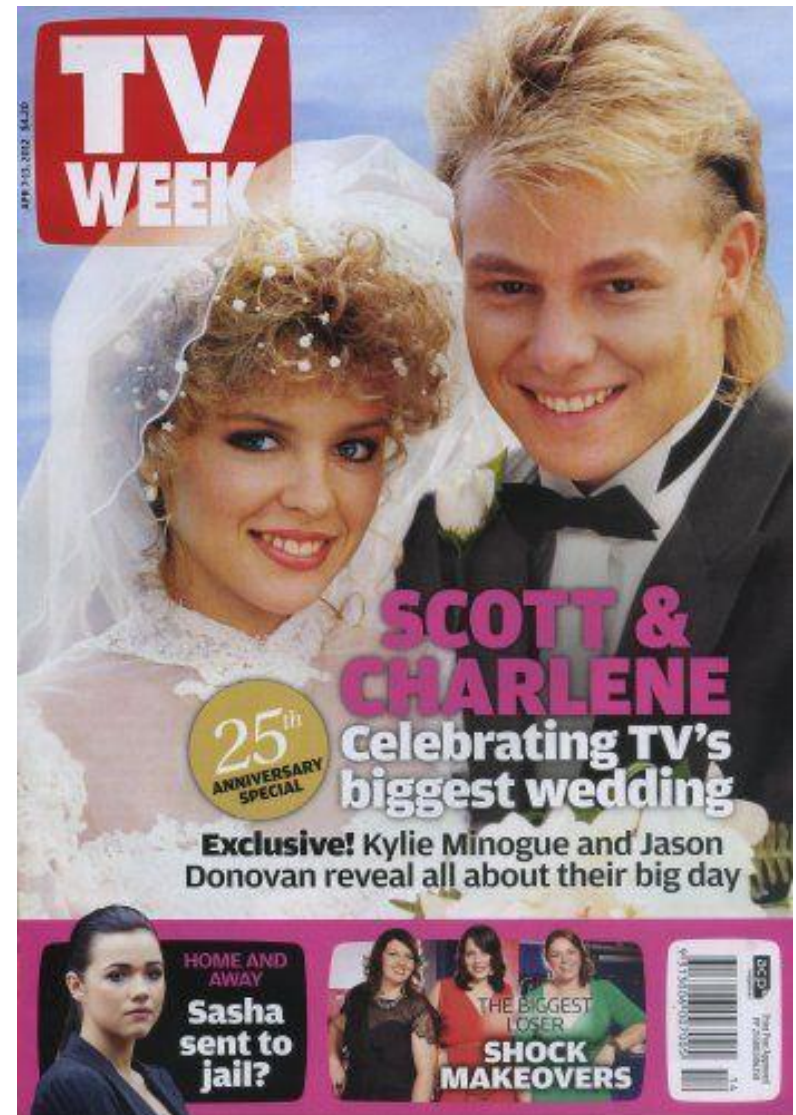


Then.... Access and ramps 1980s

- *Is the building accessible, is the room layout accessible, does the building have a lift – are there any height adjustable desks?*
- Dedicated courses for students with intellectual impairment - Life Skills courses – money skills, cooking a meal, low level literacy / numeracy
- Pre-Autism Spectrum
- Maybe some dyslexia
- Physical and/or sensory disability
- *You need to see the disability officer*
- The budget....how much will this cost?

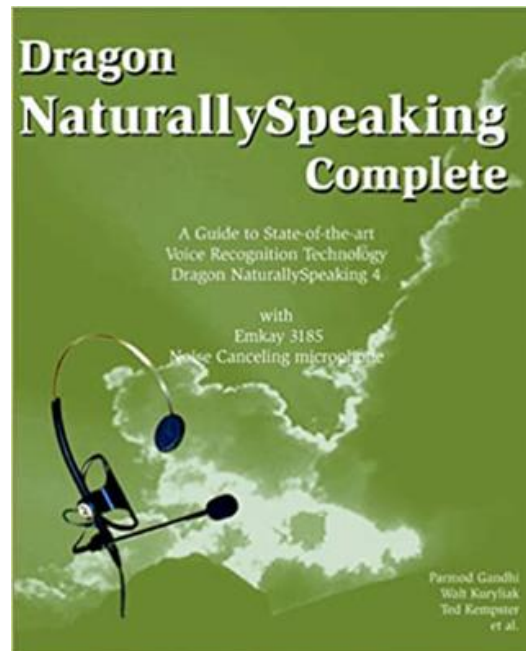


Then.... 1980s

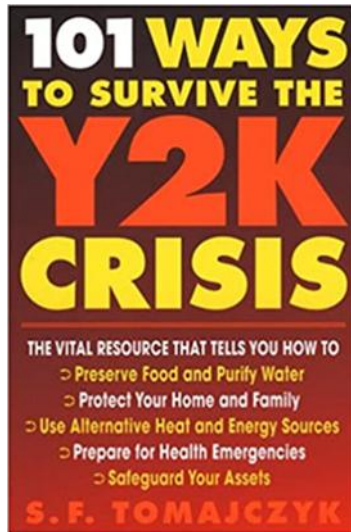


Then.... 1990s

- The Disability Discrimination Act 1992
- The World Wide Web
- The introduction of new software



Then...1999



Then... 2000

- Cathy Freeman lit the Olympic flame during the opening ceremony and went on to win Gold in the 400m



- Over 50% of our VET students were not yet born
- Others were attending kindy
- Physical access issues remain
- More dyslexia
- Asperger's high-functioning
- ADD / ADHD
- PDD-NOS



Then... 2000 onwards

- DSM research agenda
- Mass expansion of the internet
- 2004 'The Facebook' launched (2.7 billion active users)
- 2005 The Disability Standards for Education
YouTube launched
- 2007 DSM task force
- 2008 iPhone released in Australia



Recent years...

- 2010 release of the iPad
- Apps
- Instagram

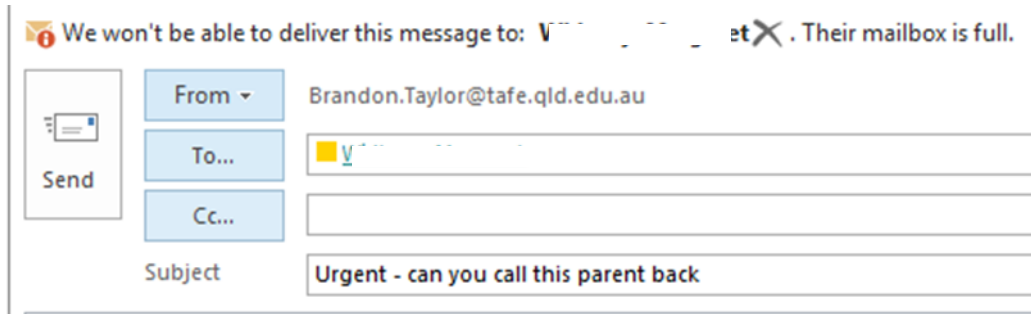


- 2013 DSM-5
 - Massive changes to VET sector funding
 - Huge increase registered training providers, course offerings and options
 - VET students able to access student loans
 - Reduction in face-to-face teacher contact time
 - Less time to learn, develop and practice skills
 - The budget



Hello, is that IT? Can I increase the size of my mailbox?

- The advance of email



- Increasing Autism & SpLD
- Increasing number of those with diagnosis
- Increasing disclosure without diagnosis
- Growth in student mental ill health
- Significant increase in presenting complexity and co-existing concerns

Where are we now...

- Time spent with the student versus time spent on administration related to that student
- More appointments, enquiries, email.... is this sustainable at an individual level
- The number of clients or appointments are not an indicator of the actual work or time required with & for students:
 - differing support needs
 - a wide diverse background of experiences
 - varying ability and confidence at the start of study

Where are we now... cont'd

- Student / parent expectations - *Fix this!*
 - Demands & challenges to personal integrity
 - Your organisation (you) should do this...*
 - We've paid for this course why hasn't he passed?*

The personal challenge for parents

- years of meetings and battles to get a fair go
- *helicopter parents* when the practitioner can see that the student wants to speak and come out of the shadow

The DDA is 30 years old

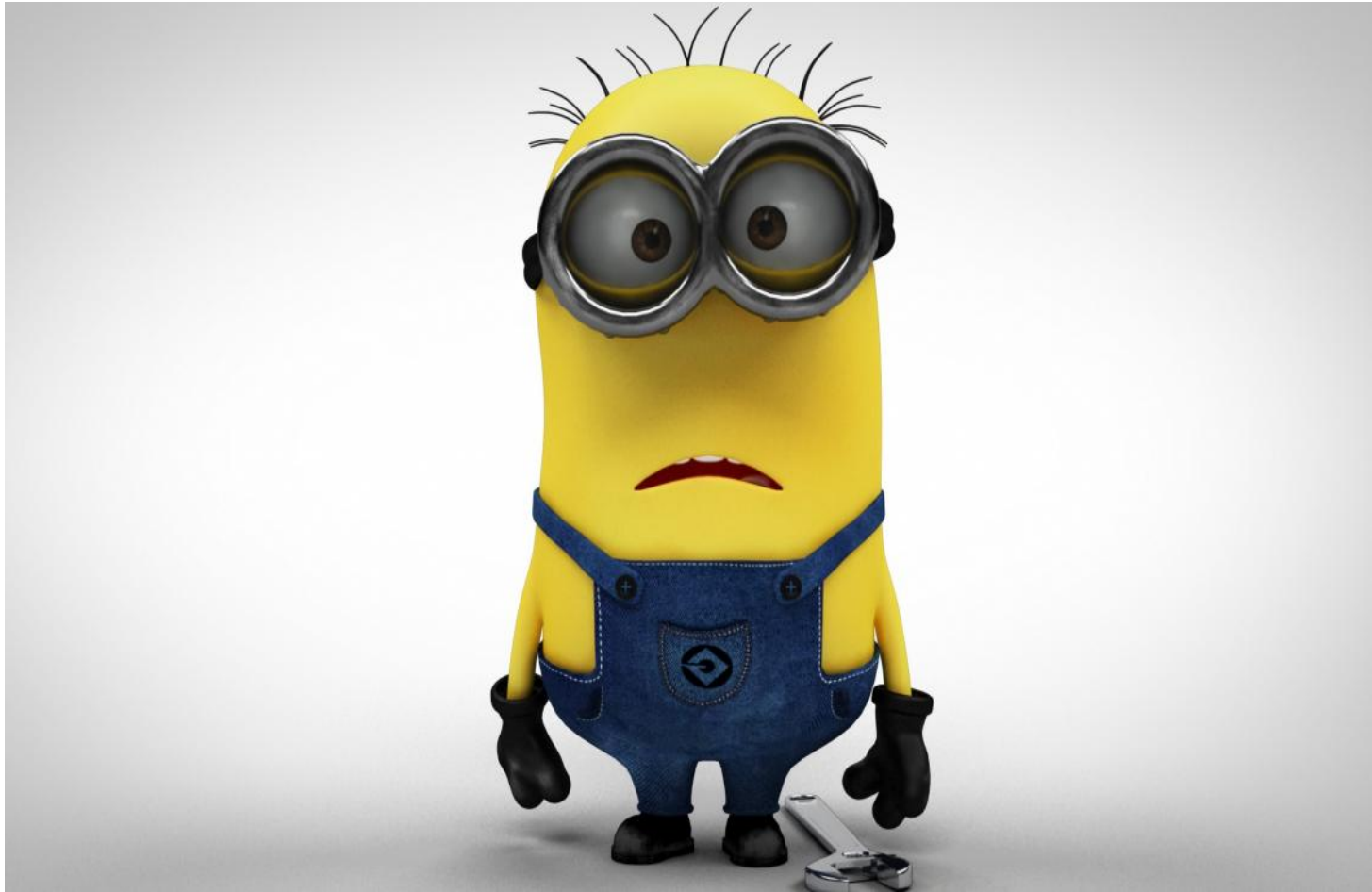
- It pre-dates all the technology we have today & every policy and procedure in the VET sector
- Approximately 80% of VET students in Australia were born after the DDA came into legislation
- The overarching legislation despite much more recent state-based legislation

What do we know...

- Technology has changed how we all communicate, interact and behave
- Practitioners have many emails
 - educators are also flooded with emails and have Faculty and program priorities that must be attended to
- The pace of change in all our lives, activities, newsfeeds, has been rapid – it will continue
- Mental ill health is increasing across society
- There will always be a budget



So..... how are you feeling today?



What are the skills and attributes of a VET practitioner?

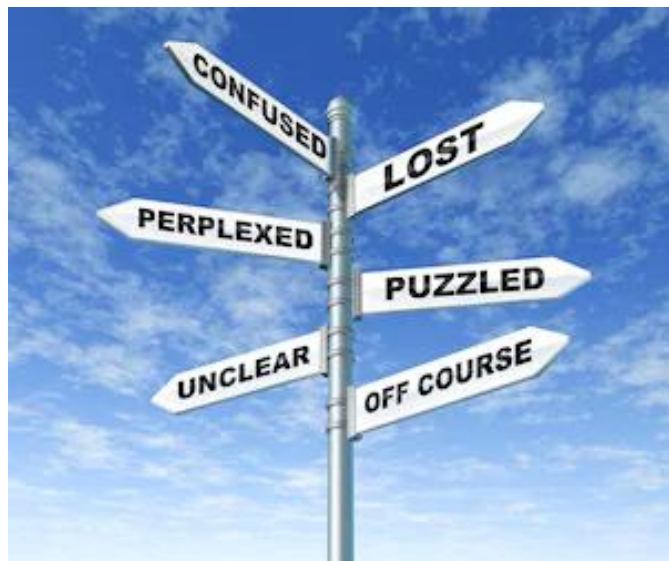


Gen Z.....

Regardless, of technological advances or environmental changes our students will always have to learn to drive and navigate through their VET course

- They are on their 'L' plates (as are many of the parents)
Learning Management Systems, USIs, assessment and unit guides, assessment criteria, what is the difference between a unit, course or program, etc
- We must not overlook the basics of how to study
how to create a weekly study schedule; print out assessment due dates; this is a Unit Guide and this is what it is for and what you need to know
- We can't ask *'do you know what to do?'*
- We need to ask – *Show me how you will do this?*
Tell me how you will do this?





Apps... *the quick and easy solution*

Apple App Store 2.2 million & Google Play Store 2.8 million

Apps tend to work for those people who already know what they are doing or are already motivated, persistent and able

Apps that claim to support study, planning or engagement are often misleading

- Gen Z tend to use devices in a very passive, non-engaged manner that requires little or no participation or engagement, instantly forgettable content, so to shift online requires a shift in approach and engagement at both ends of the teaching and learning experience.

Are students using it and giving really great feedback? If yes – promote it



Future... *what can you influence*

- ✓ Use positive language and emotions to set the scene (re-frame other people's expectations)
- ✓ Change the position of who owns a process, task or activity – it is an integral part of the students transition process
- ✓ It is OK to constructively challenge people
 - not just what they are going to own but in instances of repeated failure – what are you going to do differently and lets identify what that could be
- ✓ Provide practical examples.
 - ✓ This is what a successful student does
 - ✓ In this course a successful student does this.....

(it is difficult for a student to refuse the success you are presenting)

Future... *Stop apologising*

We often apologise when we hear someone say that something didn't go well or work out – even though that had nothing to do with us

If it was an historic issue – acknowledge but don't apologise

If it is a current issue but not your or your organisations responsibility - acknowledge but don't apologise

'We had to wait a week for an appointment'

'That's actually really good at the start of semester'



Effective communication is based on relationships

Some educators, due to workload or previous experiences, will see the practitioner as, 'oh no!', they are bringing me a problem or more work to do

Communication that results in positive actions and outcomes is based on relationships

Sending an email is not an action - only when a person reads it, understands it, feels it is important in their context, can see the value in it and are then motivated to positive response has an email been actioned



Future...invest time in relationships

- ✓ Spend time getting to know the teachers
- ✓ Wherever possible, do this face-to-face, in their space, ask what is taking place, exhibitions, projects, what are students working on, after all, this is their passion and is why they teach

These relationships will always achieve more than email alone



Future...invest time for greater returns

- We must play our part in organisational culture and progression for SWD
- Staff training to influence the culture – case studies (demonstrate how easy it is)
- Attend team meetings to confirm processes and what works but also listen to the challenges and demands that teachers face
- Positive, open and inclusive language – people are worried of saying the wrong thing and being accused of discrimination, this still applies to disability and particularly in relation to mental ill health



Why you should actively look after yourself!

- In 2001 the World Health Organisation predicted that depressive disorders would rank 2nd only to heart disease by 2020
- One in seven Australians will experience depression in their lifetime
- One in four will experience an anxiety condition in their lifetime
- One in five Australians have taken time off work in the past 12 months because they felt stressed, anxious, depressed or mentally unhealthy
- Support-seeking is growing at a rapid rate
- Despite the nature of some mental health illnesses the recovery rates and return to wellbeing are very good for those who access support



Why you should actively look after yourself!

- Practitioners often support students with complex, co-existing disabilities & mental ill health
- Position your mental health and wellbeing in the same way as your physical health
- De-brief – can be very informal – how's your day, time out, catch up & coffee – away from your desk!
- Employee Assistance Programs exist for a reason
- If mental health training is not in your recent experience – it needs to be - take that as an action today



Get better at highlighting and celebrating successes!



'I'm only doing my job'

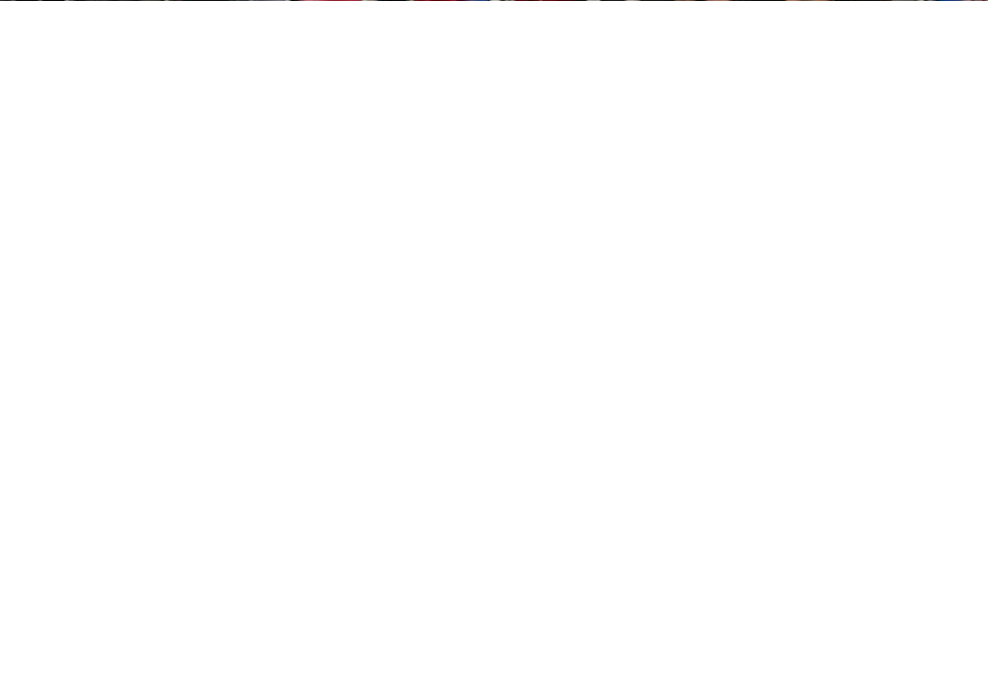
- ✓ Tell people what is working well & flag outcomes with your Manager and Senior Leadership
- ✓ Highlight and share good news stories in internal newsletters or intranet, student profile stories
- ✓ Raise the awareness and understanding of what you and your team do

Another reason...

**'Hey you!
Look at this!'**



Continuous transition of others...



I'm too busy...

- Recognise that it is the nature of many roles
- Review your processes and methods of working
- The personal challenge
- First Class or Economy



Not all practitioners are the same...

- ✓ We will have differing working styles and knowledge bases in exactly the same way as our students have varying learning styles and experiences – also some general similarities
- ✓ The difference in our skill-sets and experiences are enormous beneficial to our colleagues and networks where we can jointly problem-solve, share best practice and support each other
- ✓ Virtually, every situation has been experienced before by another practitioner, who worked through and addressed the issues, so support and participate in practitioner networks both formal and in-formal because at some point practitioners lead the way for other practitioners no matter what their experience

Opportunities, secondments, projects...

- Disability practitioners tend to dismiss career opportunities, secondment or projects
 - I don't have the skills*
 - Who will do my job?*
- The role you are in doesn't define the future but rather how you approached and completed tasks, activities and responsibilities
- What did you do and what was the outcome? What is the candidate's aptitude and are they solutions focused?
- ✓ Always better to employ the right aptitude and outlook
 - employ the 'will' before 'skill'*

Where is my passion...

- ❖ Have you ever had someone ask you what you do for a living and you say *I'm a disability officer* and they respond *'that must be rewarding'*

It is easy to become run-down and bogged in the day-to-day administration tasks when you don't have the up-side motivators that satisfy you on a personal level

- ✓ Find or re-discover your passion, what excites you, what is the meaning and value in what you do that gives you personal satisfaction

Was there a previous initiative or activity that you really enjoyed?

What aspect did you enjoy?

Our lives are busy.... but remember

No-one has ever looked back on their working life and said...

“I wish I’d sent more emails...”

When we look back...

..... we rue the missed opportunities and moments not taken both personal & professional

..... we smile when we remember the stand-out moments where we changed direction or did something away from the norm that was satisfying on a personal level



What is your takeaway for the next 12 months?

What will you do to support your Mental Health & Wellbeing?

What would you like to achieve?

- **Self** - *I would like to...?*
 - **Process** - *Why don't we do this better?*
 - **Role** - *I want to start...?*
 - **Student or teacher related** – *Could we do this...?*
-

Opportunities are made – they don't just happen

You have to invest time to make any change or achieve an outcome

You will make the time... if it is important enough to you