

Submission
No 259

**INQUIRY INTO VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND
TRAINING IN NEW SOUTH WALES**

Name: Miss Sammantha Saxton
Date received: 11/08/2015

Partially Confidential

Dear chairman,

Please find below an accurate copy of my letter sent to Aqsa in 2013. I hope this highlights my awful experience regarding my lack of education and experience with The Australasian college Broadway.

I hope this submission is of use to your committee.

Regards Sammantha Saxton

In June 2011, through a girl friend of mine, I was introduced to the "The Australasian College" (TAC) I went to their web site at the time <http://www.australasiancollege.com.au/> to have a look at what they offered.

At the time the site was purple in colour and had a rotating advert at the top indicating, "Do you want to become a hairdresser, phone this number". I believe it was a free Phone number. It also stated on the web page, "Enrol now and receive a free laptop".

I made an enquiry and filled out the form on the site. A short time later I was contacted by a lady called _____, who made an appointment for me to visit the college. She stated it was their policy not to discuss Courses or course prices over the phone and they would like me to come in.

I later attended the college in person and was invited to inspect the college before finally sitting down in an office with _____. I stated I was interested in a Cert III in hairdressing as my dream was to become a hairdresser. _____ stated that this was possible and the certificate III was available and the cost was somewhere in the region of \$17,000.00 and I would need a \$4,000.00 deposit if I wanted to enrol. I am a single mother and I did not have that kind of money and made that clear to _____.

_____ then offered me a chance and an alternative to keep my dream alive, which would in fact cost me nothing that day. _____ stated that I could enrol in a Certificate III, Certificate IV & Diploma of Business in Hairdressing, which could all be funded by the government for \$27,500.00.

I stated I did not want to do the business part, as I am not great at writing. _____ Stated that the Business Diploma Section was only half a day a week for the duration of the 52 week course and the rest was Hairdressing Training and on completion I would be a fully qualified hairdresser who could run my own business.

_____ explained that I could try the course out for 28 days, could withdraw at no cost and would only pay the government back via my tax, when I started earning. I thought this was brilliant, so I signed a contract there and then, I have never received a copy. To my surprise I was taken straight to a classroom in the college and introduced to an educator called _____. The classroom was full of students who had just started the week prior and were all studying the same three qualifications as me. I was given a dolly head, hairdressing tools and kit and began My Cert III in Hair. I was never given a form induction and to this day have still not received a copy of my contract.

About a month later I began to notice that the students were unhappy and like myself were turning up to classes where the educators did not know what they were supposed to be teaching us. There was no structured timetable or roll call and we would leave our hairdressing equipment at home as we were told we would be doing theory. We would then be told to go into workshop and sent home for not having our tools. This happened on a number of occasions and I wasted complete days and ended up frustrated.

All of my class complained verbally at first to educators about the situation and educators tried to get senior faculty heads to come and see us. No one came and eventually I went to see _____, who stated to me “Don’t worry, everything, would be sorted and she was on to it.”

Another month passed and everyday without fail there were dramas and complaints from students in class. It was not a pleasant place to be and on some occasions students became aggressive. I was feeling stressed and frightened, my mother and father told me to put something in writing and to get out of the college, as I was wasting my time and learning nothing.

I subsequently went to the staff room in or around November 2011 and stated to _____, I wanted to leave and withdraw from the course. She stated that complaints and withdrawals had to be in writing, she told me she would sort everything personally and I should wait and not to worry.

I wanted to withdraw so I decided there and then to put something in writing, so I wrote on a piece of A4 paper that I wanted to withdraw from the course and signed it and gave it to personally. I felt intimidated as I gave her the letter as she told me to put it down on her desk and turned her back on me. I left the staff room embarrassed and humiliated.

I later approached _____ and asked her about my withdrawal, she was abrupt and stated that I needed to fill out a form and it would be posted to me in the mail. A teacher later told me that _____ had put my letter in the bin. I have never received the form and was too frightened to approach _____ again.

I was between a rock and a hard place and had no one to turn to or advise me and I believe educators were encouraged not to talk or to engage with me. I decided to carry on learning what I could from the simulated hairdressing salon until the matter was sorted out and I could withdraw.

However, this too became a problem when there was very little colour or chemical products in the salon environment. Also in the salon hairdryers connected to workstations were dangerous and one girl was electrocuted. All complaints were ignored and even staff members became frustrated at the lack of senior management intervention.

Eventually, all I wanted was my certificates and a reason to leave, so I asked for my Cert III, Cert IV and Diploma and the laptop, which I was originally offered when enrolling. I was sent round in circles from one office to another being told, the certificates were not ready, come back next week, someone else has not filled in a form. I rang the college on a regular basis and staff even stopped answering or returning my phone calls.

On one occasion, when I was upset at work, my boss who owns and runs a salon rang the college and asked to speak to _____ and wanted to know why I couldn’t do things that had been signed off as competent. My boss spoke to _____ who stated she was busy, _____ took my bosses number and has never returned the call or mine since.

I left with a Certificate III and Diploma of Business and believe I was totally ripped off and was sold a course that was totally misrepresented to me and did not need. I cannot perform skills that I have been signed off for and in fact I have been signed off for skills that I was never even taught. My certificates are useless.

I have now enrolled at TAFE to redo Certificate III and my boss is helping me through it. I believe the TAC, have wasted a considerable amount of my life and time and I am now in debt for \$27,500.00 to the government.

I Believe I have exhausted all avenues in trying to make myself heard at TAC and have given them ample opportunity to resolve my issues. I have no faith in their grievance procedure and have also made a complaint with Trading Standards.

As I have stated previously, I am not great at writing and I am lucky that I have met friends who are willing to write this and help me tell my story. I am hoping that TAC will be held accountable for the unethical practices and have their business shut down to stop other young venerable adults being conned.