

Submission
No 111

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

Name: Name suppressed
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Partially Confidential

Why public funding for TAFE needs to continue

Slashing of TAFE funding has led to the diminution of support positions in access and equity, counselling and library services across NSW.

These positions service government, industry, community organisations, TAFE management and teaching sections and most importantly, a large cohort of learners.

The inquiry needs to consider how TAFE will continue to meet legislative requirements for learners with intellectual, learning, physical, neurological or psychiatric disability or with hearing or visual impairment who are supported via:

- support in the enrolment process to access appropriate courses
- individual & flexible programmes to meet the diverse needs of learners with intellectual, learning, physical, neurological or psychiatric disability or with hearing or visual impairment
- expert advice and provision of assistive technology such as augmentative and alternative communication devices to encourage growth of independent learning
- scaffolding for learning to overcome anxiety and resistance to completion, often due to a past history of “failure”
- ongoing support and advocacy through workplace training, tutoring and team teaching to meet individual learning styles & AQF standards
- effective promotion of courses to industry, community organisations, job services providers, school career advisers and families to provide appropriate TVET courses, post-school transition & work placement & labour market opportunities
- an environment for learning, where students are encouraged to participate and are guided to success through qualification completion
- developing a learning partnership to create a strong personal connection to learning which is the most significant predictor of success in education

The continuation of student support structures in TAFE ensures that these obligations are met with a degree of expertise and experience, which, if lost, would be regrettable.

This is part of a complete package of quality education and training. These services must be promoted and contrasted with the “education and training” received at private training organisations:

Senator Birmingham last week announced audits of 23 colleges to investigate “allegations of unscrupulous marketing and other practices intended to exploit” the VET FEE-HELP system.

In its [submission to the Senate inquiry](#), the Redfern Legal Centre highlighted the case of one of its clients, ‘John’, a Disability Support Pensioner who lives in public housing in Surry Hills in inner Sydney. John is from a non-English speaking background and suffers from acute mental illness, including schizophrenia and trauma-related illness.

“In early 2014, a door-to-door marketing agent, acting on behalf of a [registered training organisation], knocked on John’s front door,” the Centre wrote.

“The marketing agency was very pushy and kept telling John he would receive a free laptop and tablet — all he needed to do was sign up for this ‘free government funded course’.”

According to the Centre, John was enrolled in two different ‘business management’ style courses with two separate RTOs. With the help of his social worker, John found a few months later that he would be liable for more than \$10,000 in course fees.

“John’s story highlights the impact of misleading and deceptive marketing practices, which target and exploit vulnerable consumers,” the Centre wrote. “Unfortunately, John’s case is far from uncommon.”

<http://www.news.com.au/finance/work/business-diploma-gold-rush-private-colleges-sign-10000-students-up-to-90m-worth-of-loans/story-fnkgbb3b-1227244619950>

This story is repeated all over NSW and in Western Sydney in particular. College, Penrith, for example, recruited to a Diploma of Management course, a Commercial Cookery student with an intellectual disability by offering a free laptop. The student was overwhelmed and unable to complete either course and now has a debt for the course. Another student obtained a Certificate III in Early Childhood “qualification” from a private RTO at Granville and was unable to find employment—every early childhood service recognised this qualification as bogus. The student reports that her “education” consisted of a worksheet and an answer booklet, so that she could “pass” every assessment. These students have been discouraged from finding educational opportunities and employment. These students have been disadvantaged, but so too have the people of NSW, who funded these bogus organisations.

Cuts to TAFE funding and the consequent diminution of leadership, teaching and administrative roles cannot be efficient, cost saving or address the skills needed for the future.

Attempts to cut costs are a shortcut to disaster, both for individual students and NSW as a whole.