

Submission
No 5

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

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Partially Confidential

Submission about TAFE – Corrina Baird

I would like to make a submission about TAFE following my positive experience of TAFE and the way my learning life has changed for the worse since Smart and Skilled.

Positive experiences

First, my son, _____ has studied five qualifications at TAFE, one incompleted in sound engineering, one certificate 4 in youth work and three in fitness: certificate 3 and 4 and diploma. He is a child who never did well at school. The prospect of his going to university one day was completely out of the question.

His experience at TAFE was so positive – and so nurturing – that _____ is now in his third year of university studying exercise science. He mostly gets distinctions and is keen to do postgraduate qualifications in teaching, maybe at TAFE. Thanks to TAFE, he discovered he could become good at something because he was interested in it and his teachers saw his potential.

Unique value of TAFE

_____ had passionate teachers, working in the field of study, who kept him on the path and inspired him to keep going. Not only that, we as parents paid a nominal fee for him to achieve five different qualifications. Because he was receiving Centrelink benefits as a student, his fees were tiny compared to the massive benefit he received – a pathway to university.

_____ says one thing he loves about TAFE is the fact that it attracts students of all abilities and backgrounds. It particularly attracts kids who haven't done well at school – or not had access to good schools – and it gives them an opportunity to shine again. _____ is a late shiner, but he will be a fantastic role model for other kids one day.

Negative experiences with private

This experience is my own. I looked into the possibility of being a mature student and decided I would like to pursue pattern-making or, if possible, fashion design. This was a subject I had always been interested in but never pursued because I was warded off it as a possible career when I was young.

When I looked into the cost of doing the lowest qualification, Certificate 4, I was shocked at what it was going to cost. I was expecting the type of low fees that _____ paid. I was looking at fees in the thousands – even just for a one-year course. If I looked at two years, it was twice as much. Just for a Diploma! Private schools also demanded all kinds of extras for their training, such as equipment, books, computer packages, which would have put the costs up further. Many did not even offer student loans. How on earth would I find thousands of dollars for this kind of training? Especially given that I never expected to make a career as a fashion designer at this age.

Smart and Skilled

Unfortunately, when I looked into doing fashion design at Ultimo TAFE, the story was the same, thanks to Smart and Skilled! My son could hardly believe how much fees have jumped since he was at TAFE. He was indignant that precisely the value TAFE provides – opportunities for kids of less privileged backgrounds – is no longer available to them, unless they are really poor. For the majority in the middle, Smart and Skilled has made TAFE impossible to afford.

Thanks to Smart and Skilled, has been told not to bother wanting to be a teacher at TAFE - there is no longer much work at TAFE for any teachers.

I have given up on the idea of fashion design at a private college or TAFE – purely because of the cost.

I cannot emphasise enough what a different child has become, thanks to TAFE, and how shattered he is about what has happened to it. He knows how much he has benefited and he wants to share it. The loss of TAFE as he knows it, has to some extent dented his faith in Australia to bring out the best in its youth.

Kind regards

Corrina Baird