

**Submission  
No 154**

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

**Organisation:** Australian Education Union (Ryde TAFE Branch)

**Date received:** 13/08/2015

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The Director  
General Purpose Standing Committee No. 6  
Parliament House  
Macquarie St  
Sydney NSW 2000

14 August 2015

Dear Sir/Madam,

*Subject: Inquiry into Vocational Education and Training in New South Wales*

We thank you for this opportunity to make a submission to this inquiry which we hope will influence major political parties by focussing on the real impact of poorly informed Government policy in the Vocational Education and Training (VET) sector, and to start the debate about a viable future for TAFE in this current bleak landscape of privatisation, marketisation, budget cuts and 'change management'.

This submission has been prepared in conjunction with, and on behalf of, TAFE part-time, full-time and head teachers (members of the Australian Education Union [AEU], NSW Branch) in the NSW TAFE College of Ryde, part of the Northern Sydney Institute (NSI).

Rather than strictly following the published terms of reference for this inquiry, we have chosen to offer our views on the matters of

- Disadvantage to students,
- VET reforms and their effects on access to career pathways and employment for university graduates,
- Effects on access and equity areas, teachers, and staff,
- The effects of a competitive training market on teachers, students, and industry

We have also included an extensive list of our recommendations, and appendices

We represent over 150 TAFE teachers and Ryde College provide vocational education and training in such areas as Tourism, Events and Hospitality, and Environment and Horticulture. Quotes from colleagues have been included. However, names or contact details have not been provided because of realistic fears of adverse action by NSI management. Names and contact details can be provided on request from the committee, on the understanding that they will not be published on the Inquiry's website.

Kind regards,

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# **Inquiry into vocational education and training in New South Wales**

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL, GENERAL PURPOSE STANDING COMMITTEE NO. 6

## **Terms of reference**

1. That General Purpose Standing Committee No 6 inquire into and report on vocational education and training in New South Wales, and in particular:
  - (a) the factors influencing student choice about entering the vocational education and training system including:
    - (i) motivation to study
    - (ii) choice of course, course location and method of study
    - (iii) barriers to participation, including students in the non-government education and home schooling sectors
  - (b) the role played by public and private vocational education providers and industry in:
    - (i) educational linkages with secondary and higher education
    - (ii) the development of skills in the New South Wales economy
    - (iii) the development of opportunities for unemployed people, particularly migrants and persons in the mature workers' category, to improve themselves and increase their life, education and employment prospects,
    - (iv) the delivery of services and programs particularly to regional, rural and remote communities
  - (c) factors affecting the cost of delivery of affordable and accessible vocational education and training, including the influence of the co-contribution funding model on student behaviour and completion rates
  - (d) the effects of a competitive training market on student access to education, training, skills and pathways to employment, including opportunities and pathways to further education and employment for the most vulnerable in our community including those suffering a disability or severe disadvantage
  - (e) the level of industry participation in the vocational education and training sector, including the provision of sustainable employment opportunities for graduates, including Competency Based Training and the application of training packages to workforce requirements, and
  - (f) the Smart and Skilled reforms, including:
    - (i) alternatives to the Smart and Skilled contestable training market
    - (ii) the effects of the Smart and Skilled roll out on school based apprenticeships
  - (g) any other related matters.
2. That the committee report by Tuesday 17 November 2015.

## Overview

Over 1.06 million students were enrolled in TAFE colleges in Australia in 2012, many continuing to re-enrol in a range of courses with TAFE as their chosen educational provider throughout their entire working lives. For over 100 years TAFE Teachers have been providing a broad range of vocations, skills for work and underpinning knowledge, and providing up-skilling/re-skilling to existing workers, while also providing literacy and numeracy, counselling, library and student services' support to ensure all students have the best possible chance for success in their chosen field of study.

OTEN (The Open Training and Education Network) TAFE NSW, was the first and most successful, Award-winning 'distance education' and online provider enrolling 100,000 students annually, from the Australian States and Territories and internationally. A facility specifically designed for development and delivery of selected TAFE courses and commercial programs, specialising in accessible deliveries and quality support for geographically isolated students in remote, rural and regional areas, and those in Juvenile Justice Centres and other Corrective Service centres.

TAFE is a public institution that fulfils public policy objectives and is accountable to government and the public in doing so. It has always fulfilled well community and industry expectations by:

- providing a standardised state-wide service
- offering a broad choice of essential workforce-focussed courses
- providing inclusive services and universally designed educational programs
- delivering skills critical to the NSW and National economies
- leading quality, innovation and learner-focussed service delivery
- operating as a sustainable educational institution
- being an employer of choice

Associate Professor Leesa Wheelehan's research from 2013 provided evidence our TAFE organisation "... takes responsibility for anticipating, identifying, codifying, developing and institutionalising knowledge and skills needed for the future as well as for the present. It doesn't just work with individual students and individual employers; it considers emerging needs in communities and in industries and anticipates how they are changing. Its role and purpose is to serve the public good." Furthermore, "Commercial providers exist to make a profit in a market and while many may be committed to excellence, their accountability is to their owners or shareholders. The design of the market makes a big difference. In higher education there are only 173 higher education institutions. Direct public funding is restricted to public universities, and it isn't easy to become a higher education institution. VET in contrast, where private providers have access to public funding, it is too easy to be registered as a VET provider and there are over 5000 providers. This results in a market where the key driver is profits achieved by running programs cheaply and in high volume. Quality is sacrificed, and rorts and scandals proliferate."

[http://www.academia.edu/5973650/Wheelahan\\_Leesa\\_2013\\_Why\\_institutions\\_matter\\_why\\_TAFE\\_matters](http://www.academia.edu/5973650/Wheelahan_Leesa_2013_Why_institutions_matter_why_TAFE_matters) - Why institutions matter; why TAFE MATTERS, THE AUSTRALIAN TAFE TEACHER, p12 WINTER 2013. Leesa Wheelehan is currently with [University of Toronto, Ontario Institute for Studies in Education \(Higher Education\)](#)

## **Ryde and Meadowbank colleges**

These college campuses educate and train over 20,000 students annually, and form long term relationships with both students and employers. As with other TAFE institutes, NSI has a long tradition of giving people a 'second chance' at education, and the possibility of life-long education as well as expert training. TAFE educational institutes provide the necessary skill infrastructure that continues to support and reinvest into our communities. It is vital that we are adequately funded to continue to do this, especially for students from disadvantaged backgrounds, those with disabilities, and those from marginalised sectors of society.

TAFE NSW has been suffering from 'death by a thousand cuts' over the last 15 years. This has resulted in the loss of over 2500 professional TAFE staff and more than 80,000 students – huge budget cuts, depletion of courses and excessive student fee increases during 2012-2015. Barely maintained funding (in dollar terms) which equate to funding cuts of 40% (in real terms), competition and marketisation (aka contestability), a dramatic increase in casualisation of its teaching workforce, a dramatic reduction in essential support services, downgrading of teaching qualifications, and drowning by audits and compliance requirements, are the main 'wounds' afflicting TAFE. (Ref: EDUCATION paper, 27/07/2015. Maxine Sharkey, Assistant General Secretary (Post School Education))

There is no doubt in our mind that the sole aim of VET (and TAFE) reform is cost cutting. There was a time when the word 'reform' meant an improvement, or a change for the better. None of our members believe this now to be the case. June 2015, a day before National TAFE Day the NSW Budget was announced - TAFE funding was cut by \$122 million.

In 2006, The Allen Consulting Group researched the value of TAFE NSW. It concluded that for every dollar invested in TAFE in NSW, there was a benefit of \$6.40 to NSW (Ref: Allen Consulting Group, 2006, p49). Yet, the current and previous NSW Governments have wilfully interfered with TAFE. It is in this context we offer the following to this enquiry.

The LNP Government has now introduced 'Smart and Skilled' in NSW and this 'entitlement system' is privatisation by a different name. Course fees sky-rocketing, having increased exponentially. Cost cutting in TAFE has resulted in a dramatic reduction in opportunities and course choices for students. Government funding is being channelled away from courses for young people, career 'shiffters' and women re-entering the workplace, to instead fund courses run by private colleges that make large profits. (July 2013 Fact Sheet, AEU).

After the jobs spill in Semester 1, 2013 Northern Sydney Institute suffered the losses of over 60 teaching jobs (and resignations), and another 30 practical class support staff positions (directly related to the conduct of classes), as well as the loss of countless casual teaching and other class support jobs. The support staff job redundancies are ongoing and more job losses are expected. Subcontracting in such areas as maintenance is being done at considerable increased cost for much poorer outcomes. Since then, further job losses, course closures and the sale of Crows Nest TAFE campus have resulted from the policy of marketization.

Currently in NSI more rounds of redundancies of teachers are underway. Almost all faculties have proposals to reduce the size of their teaching staff. Some proposals are quite aggressive (50% of the teaching workforce in the section) others are extreme: the closure of entire teaching sections.

One example is in the commercial cookery sections where the permanent teaching workforce from three colleges will be centralised to one with the loss of 8 out of 16 teachers. Despite advice from head teachers in commercial cookery to senior management classes could not be serviced if those redundancies are implemented, astoundingly institute management is determined to proceed with these redundancies

At a meeting on 10 August 2015 the commercial cookery teaching staff were advised they: “...could not be declared excess to requirements because all teachers had a teaching program.” This statement contradicts management’s view that these teachers are not and will not be required in the foreseeable future. Currently all full time permanent commercial cookery teachers have a full or near full teaching program which leaves very little flexibility to account for any leave being taken. When long service leave, sick leave and other types of leave are considered the workforce will be left in deficit. Any concern of management about their ability to keep commercial cookery teachers meaningfully employed stem directly from the NSW Government’s cost cutting policies.

Ongoing pressure to reduce course delivery costs, and as a flow-on, course duration continues. One example is the reduction of delivery hours in a Certificate III course of 62% in Semester 1, 2012. Senior management has also now decided there is no such thing as a class student to teacher ratio. Management insist squeezing as many students as they can in a workshop classroom and they (presumably) feel justified by quoting statistics showing low rates of injury. This view is purely based on barely meeting minimal Workplace Health and Safety legislation, and there is no consideration given to the fall in educational outcomes if a teacher has to closely supervise 12 students or 20 or 40 in a workshop. There isn’t a single workplace in Australia where one supervisor would have to train that many new employees learning new skills, and yet TAFE teachers are expected to do that every day.

Since the introduction of *Smart and Skilled* courses have already been greatly reduced – one from 5 semesters to 4 (with a reduction of 50% class attendance time in theory classes), and another reduced from 6 semesters to 4 this year! In 2013, one employer had already moved 20 of their apprentices out of Illawarra TAFE for shortening their study time – again directly attributable to the cost cutting measures demanded by the then imminent implementation of the *Smart and Skilled* funding model.

<http://www.illawarramercury.com.au/story/2090035/tafe-fail-employer-removes-apprentices/>

Worryingly, the ‘perfect storm’ resulting from the premature and undesirable implementation of *Smart and Skilled* coupled with an immature ‘off the shelf’ EBS software is accelerating the demise of TAFE. This branch seriously questions the political wisdom of wasting such a huge amount of public money on a grossly inferior product. Any software which cannot give appropriate information to students, teachers, and managers must not be allowed to continue to be used.

The threat of ASQA audits by management on teaching sections and staff has also had damaging impacts, creating huge workloads for teachers and head teachers to the detriment of class teaching and preparation. The elimination of essential monitoring within TAFE itself, fails to provide 'checks and balances' to meet quality education and training standards.

This is necessary for TAFE to stand out from the many unethical for-profit RTOs profiteering from Federal Government VET funds without providing adequate training. Students who had studied with private RTOs and are now choosing to enrol with TAFE have voiced their concerns in relation to the Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) option. Although this pathway provides the benefit of unit 'credit' to accelerate course completion they honestly feel less prepared and worried they do not have the underpinning knowledge and skills for units that RPL was granted.

The reforms indicate the delivery of high quality education and training is somehow unrelated to high quality teaching which is contradictory to what governments across Australia and around the world have proclaimed for many years. It is evident proposals will further deplete permanent employment by moving all positions onto limited term contracts through business reviews and restructuring. This approach denies the importance of permanent, secure employment as a recruitment and retention incentive. These reforms display a disregard for the importance of providing salaries and working conditions necessary for recruiting and retaining a high quality teaching workforce.

John Dixon, Branch Secretary and Gary Zadkovich, Acting Branch President, AEU NSW Teachers Federation (August 2015), describe TAFE cuts as engaging in "... a race to the bottom with private providers that put profits before the right of all citizens to gain high quality education and training at TAFE. This would be an abrogation of our responsibility as public educators to provide high quality education and training for students, for employers and industry, for local communities and for the Australian nation."

In 2013 further courses were axed in spite of recommendation of task forces – including Fine Arts at Hornsby and Brookvale TAFEs, one week before classes were due to begin.  
(<http://www.dailytelegraph.com.au/newslocal/the-hills/tafe-students-left-in-the-lurch-after-art-schools-closed-at-northern-sydney-institute/story-fngr8i1f-1226817673023>  
<http://www.dailytelegraph.com.au/newslocal/the-hills/local-artists-angry-and-students-question-enrolment-numbers-after-hornsby-tafe-course-cuts/story-fngr8i1f-1226824887828>)

The NSW State Government had decided that it was not a 'skills priority area' in spite of the evidence that the majority of graduates find employment after completion of their courses. Most people believe that this is a critical social, cultural, and economic area in our society and in the global market, a highly exportable skill.

John Kaye (Greens MP) says: "*The destruction of Fine Arts is the most visible symptom of the state government's decision to abandon TAFE (ibid)...and...turn it into a low cost business.*"  
(<http://johnkaye.org.au/fine-arts-axed-at-hornsby-and-brookvale-tafes/>)

In 2012, the then O'Farrell Government announced it intended to reduce the TAFE workforce by 800 over 4 years. In three years, more than 2500 TAFE employees have lost their jobs, and this number is growing quickly, with more than 60 more positions to be deleted in the next few months in NSI alone.

## DISADVANTAGING STUDENTS

With the recent introduction of the *Smart and Skilled* fully contestable funding model, NSW TAFE colleges are being asked to compete with thousands of RTOs. This can never be a level playing field, given the overheads of TAFE colleges who offer state of the art facilities and extra support from equity areas including Outreach, Disabilities Teacher Consultants, Counsellors, Library staff and Learner Support staff. All these areas are under extreme funding pressure, and more jobs are expected to be lost in these areas in the next 6-18 months. These value added extras are also essential services, only offered by TAFEs, are not costed into course offerings and will no doubt be considered too expensive to maintain. TAFE has proudly been the major provider of accessible pathways for disadvantaged and disengaged youth, students with disabilities (7% of VET students), students from Non-English-Speaking-Backgrounds, Indigenous students (4% of VET students), socially disadvantaged students (15% of VET students); apprentices and trainees. (Figures from Doyle, Leonie, on Parliamentary Library Blog *Australia's tertiary students – the latest snapshot*, 26 June 2012).  
[http://www.aph.gov.au/About\\_Parliament/Parliamentary\\_Departments/Parliamentary\\_Library/FlagPost/2012/June/Australias\\_tertiary\\_students\\_the\\_latest\\_snapshot](http://www.aph.gov.au/About_Parliament/Parliamentary_Departments/Parliamentary_Library/FlagPost/2012/June/Australias_tertiary_students_the_latest_snapshot))

In a statement released by COAG (2011:6), TAFE provision was highly regarded: *"...The key role of TAFE is the public provider in a competitive market, was (and has always been) recognised and supported including its delivery of high cost technical training, encouraging participants of disadvantaged students and offering services in regional and remote areas."*

Online courses are proposed without any real consideration to including the costs of computer literacy support models required for distance education into course offerings. These students in disadvantaged or marginalised areas need high levels of support to have the skills and confidence to ensure course completion.

Leesa Wheelehan, in her report to UNESCO stated *"...It is assumed institutional capacity to develop and teach courses, recruit and provide suitable student/learner support, can be mobilised and demobilised easily underplays the extent to which strong, enduring quality educational institutions such as TAFE are required to build knowledge and not simply transmit it."* (Ref [http://www.academia.edu/14310015/Public-Private\\_Partnerships\\_in\\_Higher\\_Education\\_and\\_TTVET\\_a\\_report\\_from\\_Australia\\_Paper\\_presented\\_at\\_the\\_UNESCO\\_Regional\\_Seminar\\_on\\_Public-Private\\_Partnerships\\_in\\_Higher\\_Education\\_and\\_TVET\\_and\\_Youth\\_Employment](http://www.academia.edu/14310015/Public-Private_Partnerships_in_Higher_Education_and_TTVET_a_report_from_Australia_Paper_presented_at_the_UNESCO_Regional_Seminar_on_Public-Private_Partnerships_in_Higher_Education_and_TVET_and_Youth_Employment))

Our educational colleagues at OTEN agree. These are teachers with additional and very specific expertise in distance education, online learning and technologies. Amongst them are Teacher-Consultants uniquely skilled and specifically provide support for distance students with disabilities, from Indigenous and other different backgrounds. It is well-known and acknowledged OTEN staff have a long history of successfully providing quality resources and student support services to those who choose to engage and have the capabilities to engage with these modes of learning. Staff have genuine concerns regarding assumptions that *all* students have the necessary skills, computer literacy, and particular learning styles suited to engage in these delivery modes – such assumptions stereotype and generalise learners, and even appear ignorant and discriminatory to those of Indigenous or other cultural background, and those without these necessary 'entry' skills or ability.



It is also incorrect to assume *all* programs/courses and training can be effectively delivered or assessed online. And it is again incorrect to assume that *all* trainers/teachers with Certificate IV level trainer qualification can easily and quickly adapt to distance and online deliveries; to provide sufficient and effective learner support with no specifically-relevant professional development, or additional human, technological or systemic resources. It is not cost-effective to continue replicating an already proven effective, specialist facility such as OTEN.

These assumptions continue and do not support the equity and accessibility charter.

We, with our OTEN colleagues, also share concerns that essential educational considerations and infrastructures at the community level (including reliable mobile phone and internet connections, NBN, costs of computer-related accessories and technical support), have been totally ignored, as revenue-making is now paramount, rather than education.

It has been (is) consistently demonstrated by our OTEN colleagues that thorough research is undertaken to first determine the potential issues, and student difficulties, establish whether ASQA and industry standards, legislative requirements can be met; infrastructure and resource requirements are sufficient; and considering cost effectiveness, technological platforms, maintenance and updates, and especially the evaluation of students achieving success. This exemplifies TAFE teachers' dedication and level of commitment to the learner-centred philosophy as professional educators.

Regarding the current economic situation of so many workers who are losing jobs - while the city of Sydney and surrounding area is recognised as one of eight tourism employment hotspots in Australia with a variety of workforce, employment and skills development issues these must be addressed if the sector's potential is to be fully realised. We appreciate that businesses are often having trouble attracting, recruiting and retaining good staff.

The Australian Government Department of Resources, Energy and Tourism (RET) contracted The Stafford Group to develop a Tourism Employment Plan (TEP) for Sydney with the support of NSW Trade and Investment and Destination NSW and is being driven by an industry-led Steering Committee, TAFE was invited to contribute. The aim was to discuss solutions to address employment gaps and up-skilling needs, to provide information on the workforce issues confronting local businesses, discuss potential workforce planning solutions, increase engagement of youth, mature-aged and Indigenous workers, and potential visa programs.

In contradiction to Indigenous reconciliation and constitutional amendments; TAFE budget cuts have resulted in the closure of OTEN's unique and specific Aboriginal Student Support unit - around 4,000 Aboriginal and Torres Island students have been referred to Mt Druitt college. These are distance students who have developed a trust and rapport with their OTEN teachers and the dedicated Aboriginal student support unit's Indigenous, university-qualified manager. Their comments of feeling let down by the government's tokenistic behaviour, and now unlikely to complete their course. How does this protect the students' interest and encourage them to engage with lifelong learning and self-improvement?

Reportedly there are still 800,000 unemployed, this is 6.8% unemployment (August 2015). Primarily due to a massive shift to casualisation and part time employment, which has increased the 'under-employment' rate, increased hardship, disempowerment and demoralisation, and thus resulting in increased social problems including higher reliance on government subsidies. Its particularly evident in places like Geelong – how can they afford the higher course fees to be retrained and/or, any new 'smart' jobs created, and without increased investment and support in TAFE and professional development of staff?

Christopher Pyne MP has announced an enquiry into the standard of teacher education and support (apparently in schools only) – why isn't this opportunity offered to TAFE and the investment in quality, professional teacher education? It is our strong view that the required teaching qualification in VET (Certificate IV in Workplace Training and Assessment) is vastly inadequate; and all States and Territories education jurisdictions *must* re-establish a requirement for university level teaching qualification for all full time VET practitioners.

In 2014 the slowing economy and a sharp increase in TAFE fees had been blamed for a fall in the number of apprentices and trainees in NSW at a time of high youth unemployment (close to 17%). (Anna Patty, SMH, 14 Oct, 2013) (<http://www.smh.com.au/national/tertiary-education/higher-tafe-fees-put-pressure-on-trainee-jobs-20131013-2vgnb.html>)

'NSW state budget 2015: TAFE reforms hit students hard' – it is clearly evident this has led to school leaver figures showing that Certificate III enrolments dropped by 18,073 students. For Certificate IV there were 10,568 fewer enrolments this year than last year.

It was reported in the Sydney Morning Herald, 23 June 2015 that the State government has conceded that *Smart and Skilled* has driven away students. Anecdotally, this branch believes around 80,000 fewer students are studying in TAFE in 2015 than 12 months ago. "Enrolments in 2015 reflect a lower than expected market response to *Smart and Skilled* reforms in the transitional stage since its start in January 2015" the budget paper says.

The opposition's skills spokesman, David Harris, said the marked decline in enrolments this year was a clear result of fee increases. "The result of the government hanging TAFE out to dry will be a massive skills shortage and further increases in unemployment." Mr Harris said. (Ref: NSW state budget 2015: TAFE reforms hit students hard 23 June, 2015. <http://www.smh.com.au/nsw/nsw-state-budget-2015-tafe-reforms-hit-students-hard-20150622-ghudqj.html#ixzz3hubJLKwV>)

## **VET REFORMS AND THEIR EFFECTS ON ACCESS TO CAREER PATHWAYS AND EMPLOYMENT FOR UNIVERSITY GRADUATES**

Tertiary Education and Training (2010) revealed that almost twice as many graduates of higher education turn to vocational education and training than VET graduates who move on to higher education. Most are doing courses in Management and Commerce and courses in Education. "That fact that students with a bachelor degree on their resume turn to vocational education and training to top up their skills is a selling point for a sector that is often seen as a 'second chance'!" (Doyle, Leonie, FlagPost 26/06/12, Parliamentary Library Blog) ([http://www.aph.gov.au/About\\_Parliament/Parliamentary\\_Departments/Parliamentary\\_Library/FlagPost/2012/June/Australias\\_tertiary\\_students\\_the\\_latest\\_snapshot](http://www.aph.gov.au/About_Parliament/Parliamentary_Departments/Parliamentary_Library/FlagPost/2012/June/Australias_tertiary_students_the_latest_snapshot))

While VET reforms have been more extensive than for higher education, both have led to more for profit private provider access to public funds.

The competition not only has dire effects on the TAFE system, it effects public universities and most significantly is intensifying competition with students. Students are only able to access enrolment in publically funded courses if they are upskilling to a higher level qualification. The upskilling requirement was implemented to ration government funding. This does not provide for those who obtained their original qualifications a long time ago and now need to retrain. Again, these are frequently women re-entering the workforce, those in declining industries (Australian manufacturing now moved off shore), or as Leesa Wheelehan's research identifies "...the over 20 year olds who made inappropriate decisions when they were younger." (Essential Services Commission 2011:19)

In her paper, presented at the UNESCO Regional Seminar 2011 Wheelehan provided evidence of private providers "...cherry picking courses that are high volume and cheap to run, while TAFE is left with responsibilities of running expensive, capital intensive courses."

(Ref [http://www.academia.edu/14310015/Public-Private Partnerships in Higher Education and TTVET a report from Australia. Paper presented at the UNESCO Regional Seminar on Public-Private Partnerships in Higher Education and TVET and Youth Employment](http://www.academia.edu/14310015/Public-Private_Partnerships_in_Higher_Education_and_TTVET_a_report_from_Australia_Paper_presented_at_the_UNESCO_Regional_Seminar_on_Public-Private_Partnerships_in_Higher_Education_and_TVET_and_Youth_Employment) )

While our TAFE colleagues are dedicated to this mission and have continually and successfully fulfilled these obligations, the response of various government community services for these and other associated obligations, has been that TAFE can be directly funded by government while keeping everything on a 'level playing field'. This undermines the role of TAFE institutes and public universities as important educational, social and economic resources, in addition to providing the recurrent services in competition with private providers. (Moodie 2011)

(Ref Moodie, Gavin (2007) Improving Transfer from Vocational to Higher Education: Lessons from Abroad. 4<sup>th</sup> International Conference, Centre of research in Lifelong Learning)

Partnerships between TAFE institutions and universities provide evidence of high level of collaboration with memorandum of understandings and other initiatives. These respectful, educationally astute partnerships provide pathways for students from VET to higher education and have led to the development of combined programs to meet social, economic and industry needs.

## **EFFECTS ON ACCESS AND EQUITY AREAS, TEACHERS AND STAFF**

In the first round of position deletions, in this institute, several teachers and head teachers of Language, Literacy and Numeracy, and Outreach, continue to lose their jobs – with further job losses planned for Teacher Consultants, Counsellors and Library and Administration staff, and depending on the continued availability of other sources of funding, perhaps English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) teachers.

The loss of the Adult Migrant Education Program (AMEP) to Navitas (a for-profit RTO), in Victoria in 2011, meant that the NSW Adult Migrant English Service (AMES) all but ceased to be a teaching organisation, now reduced to delivering a few commercial English language services and providing online products.

The same has happened in NSW, with Navitas undercutting the publicly funded AMES-TAFE consortium, “...with students suffering from larger class sizes and less technology in the classrooms...” (Ross, J. The Australian 14/11/11).

Since 1951 NSW AMES has taught English to over 1.5m people, with a teaching staff of 150. Almost all teachers took voluntary redundancy, with a few joining TAFE NSW. “Many skills, not to mention the dedication and corporate culture developed over the last sixty years, will be lost”, says George Campbell, president of the AMES Teachers Association (ibid). The same sense of loss of culture and dedication is happening to teachers in all our TAFE colleges, with morale at its lowest ebb ever. “The reality is that the success of private providers is made possible by their ability to undercut the award pay and conditions of AMES and TAFE teachers” (Snelgrove, A. 2013).

The ‘playing field’ is not, and can never be, level when TAFE has to cover costs of infrastructure, high quality facilities and their maintenance, and value-added, yet essential student support services.

Research carried out (Cocks & Thoresen, 2013) into the financial and social outcomes for people with disabilities who have completed an apprenticeship or traineeship reported that the most common barriers, across both graduates with and without disabilities, were related to a lack of resources. Common challenges cited were poor training wages, the cost of equipment or tools required for training, and lack of time (often due to family commitments). Support was the most important factor facilitating course completion among the research participants with disabilities. This support was often provided by, amongst others, primarily TAFE institutes including OTEN; the employer and informal support. There already is a shortage of skilled and experienced Language, Literacy, and Numeracy (LLN) practitioners and this will be exacerbated by the ongoing spills and position deletions. This shortage will increase as the 55+ age cohort of teachers moves into retirement. Those who simply complete the LLN unit of competency as part of the Certificate IV in Training & Assessment do not have adequate knowledge and skill for students with these needs.

This is in spite of the Federal Government’s push in the ***National Foundation Skills Strategy for Adults*** (2012 Report) to address the 7.5m workers “who do not have the literacy and numeracy skills needed to participate fully in today’s workforce” (Sen. Evans, ibid, Ministerial Foreword). The Federal Government’s reform means that it is imperative that more Australians are able to access quality training to improve their LLN and employability skills. This won’t happen with continuing retrenchments. The target is “that by 2022 two-thirds of working age Australians will have the LLN skills to take full advantage of opportunities afforded by the new economy... one of the top priorities will be to enhance the quality of foundation skills training on offer and build the workforce that delivers this training.” (ibid). TAFE has a very significant role to play as a ‘safety net’ for those whose schooling didn’t deliver the expected LLN skills.

Instead of band aid measures, we need to train more teachers specifically experienced in the Australian Core Skills Framework (ACSF) levels, to assist vocational teachers unpacking their training packages and explaining units of competency needed, and help students with identified LLN skills gaps to increase course completion rates.

The action, by the Innovation and Business Skills Australia (IBSA) industry skills council, of including a LLN unit in the new TAE qualification for VET practitioners merely demonstrates an abrogation of responsibility by governments in terms of education. This will simply add to the already unmanageable workload of TAFE teachers and continue to push them into the realm of 'Jack of all trades and master of none' and will do very little to help students in need of support with Language, Literacy, and Numeracy.

<https://www.ibsa.org.au/projects/tae-embedding-new-requirements/tae-embedding-validation>

Finally, the attractiveness of teaching as a career is limited by increasing casualisation of employment opportunities offered to new teachers. Part-time casual and contract teachers do not have access to paid professional development opportunities to keep their skills current. These are common concerns.

**A food and beverage/hospitality teacher writes:**

I am a teacher of hospitality of over 20 years. I am currently teaching a group of students Certificate 2 and 3 in Hospitality. Certificate 2 is operational [employees at this level require supervision], while Certificate 3 is Supervisory level [or at least work autonomously]. While most students are capable in the group I have at least half the group has some form of learning difficulty or disability.

- I have 2 students with ADHD who need extra attention and tuition
- 2 students who are matured aged from NESB and have little or no literacy or computer skills
- 2 students... have learning difficulties
- 1 student who is suffering from severe anxiety when stressed
- 1 student who is suffers from bouts of depression and suicidal tendencies

While I try to accommodate these students it is negligent and irresponsible and to the detriment of other students that support staff and Adult Education [LLN teachers] has been basically discarded and the onus of coping with the blended classes is left to the teacher who does not have the counselling or educational skills to meet the challenge of a blended class. If the success of education is based on cost effectiveness and completed courses, then heaven help those students who will be forced to take entitlements to enrol in hospitality courses under contestable funding, and heaven help the teachers who will lack any support services and have to battle away being teacher/ mentor/ counsellor/ tutor/ administrator! Who would want to be a TAFE teacher in this environment?

## THE EFFECTS OF A COMPETITIVE TRAINING MARKET

Over the past 15 years programs to help Australians to improve themselves and their life and employment prospects have been savagely affected by budget cuts. Greens MP John Kaye (The Australian, 13/06/12) said that the cuts to TAFE equate to over \$1 billion in real terms since 1997. The NSW government's recent \$800 million cuts from TAFE, as part of a \$1.7 billion cut to the education budget, have meant that all TAFE institutes are being forced to cut 800 staff over four years, more than 5% of the full-time equivalent workforce, and this doesn't include the part-time teachers who have also lost their jobs over the past few years. Already our institute has deleted around 60 teaching jobs, and those teachers and support staff who remain after the positions have been deleted will be doing the work of those who are retrenched, or retire because they don't want to go through the *change management process* and apply for jobs they've been doing passionately and successfully for many years, and for some, for decades.

In brief, management adopted a process to identify how to meet the NSW Government's political goal of getting rid of 800 teachers and support staff. This was done by declaring vacant all positions in certain sections, and getting all teachers to reapply for their existing position. Several teachers refuse to submit a Résumé and an Expression of Interest (EOI), or attend interviews because they are so demoralised and fearful of the new fully contestable/commercial world of training.

*"TAFE courses that do not fill skills shortages and directly lead to jobs will no longer receive state funding, threatening their affordability and future."* (Patty in SMH 23/10/12).

This means that there is no guaranteed funding for TAFE colleges after 2014, and depending on the *Smart and Skilled* recommendations, no guarantees which courses will or won't be funded. TAFE Institutes will have to compete with private colleges and other TAFE Institutes for students, because government funding will go to the college in which students enrol, whether public or private. Under this model, TAFE colleges will no longer receive block funding from the state government. (Ref: NSW Education & Communities *Smart and Skilled: Draft Quality Framework*, 2013)

In 2013, TAFE students were faced with increased fees of **9.5%**, or having to pay commercial rates, as do the Fine Arts students since funding was dramatically cut earlier this term, and teachers retrenched.

In 2007 Andrew Stoner (NSW Nationals leader) said:

*"But for TAFE students who usually work part time and study at TAFE struggling with the normal cost of living... it is a very difficult time, and the government has not helped by increasing these fees by some 9%, which is well and truly above the CPI. The impact of the fee increases has been that enrolments in TAFE are falling, and that is a real shame because TAFE has been a great success story in this State, especially at a time when we have a skills shortage."* (NSW TEFED Media Release, 12/09/12)

TAFE colleges are being asked to compete with hundreds of RTOs and (as exemplified previously) it can never be a level playing field, given the overheads of TAFE colleges who offer state of the art facilities and extra support from equity areas including Outreach, Disabilities Teacher Consultants, Counsellors, Library staff and Learner Support staff. All these areas are under the *change management plan*, (the process by which TAFE NSW Institutes identify the teaching positions to be deleted, but more accurately, which teachers will be sacked), and more jobs will be deleted in the future (second and third rounds of) deletions. These essential value-added extras, only offered by TAFEs, are not costed into course offerings and will no doubt be considered too expensive to maintain. How will this lead to a smarter and more highly skilled NSW and country?

TAFE teachers in NSI have been told the job losses are the result of competitive funding and in preparation for and since the implementation of *Smart and Skilled*.

The Daily Telegraph of February 8, 2013, highlights "*Packer College brings \$10 million in jobs to west.*" Andrew Carswell states: "...he [Jamie Packer] personally wanted to offer an opportunity to western Sydney, where high class training avenues are seldom found..." "...can be utilised." We are appalled that Nepean college of TAFE (specialist Hospitality facilities 'Events Academy') was discarded from this process and large amounts of tax payer funded money directed towards this private opportunity. This reflects on the distorted model of vocational education delivery in which private, at all costs, is perceived to be superior to public vocational education.

We must learn from the mistakes in such states as Queensland and Victoria where savage funding cuts of hundreds of millions of dollars have decimated and/or closed many TAFE colleges and institutes and their course offerings, where fees have been increased by up to 80% in some areas, where skills shortages have not been addressed, where thousands of workers have lost their jobs, and where the state government has ended up with a massive budget blow-out by funding RTOs which have delivered poor quality training and alienated many industries.

## **EFFECTS ON TEACHERS**

The unmitigated disaster that has been and continues to be, the implementation of the new Educational Business System has been nothing short of crushing for teachers and head teachers. The EBS is supposed to manage the TAFE educational institute as a business, and the learner 'lifecycle'...What is actually is: A \$500 million 'lemon of a system' that has created an astronomical increase in administrative tasks, previously completed by educational support staff, has now been imposed on teachers and head teachers. It now seems that teaching and class preparation have become *voluntary* activities that teachers attempt once they have completed the endless list of EBS data entry.

This software has driven students away from TAFE in droves and have destroyed teachers' ability to perform their educational responsibilities. Almost 10 months after its implementation, EBS has not come near the point where its purchase price can be justified.

Furthermore there is no indication this software will ever become a useful tool. On top of the expense incurred by purchasing the software and endless list of fixes, TAFE has spent huge amounts training staff and certainly in NSI releasing head teachers from teaching duties. This has effectively rendered NSI head teachers the most expensive data entry clerks in Australia.

The head teacher role has changed dramatically over the past ten years, with new systems for electronic rolls, online enrolments [without any face to face guidance when selecting courses], financial budgeting, financial system, online platforms, etc. adding to the huge workload of HTs who still teach 10-14 hours a week with little or no clerical support.

In 2014 the Human Resource departments in Institutes have been severely reduced, with approximately 90% of their functions being devolved to already over worked Head Teachers, with minimal training in the new online system. Much valuable 'innovation' and 'educational planning' time is lost through the constant demands of compliance administrative duties, and it is the students who suffer. The future prospects for head teachers is to become a manager of contract teachers with only a Certificate IV in Training and Assessment (TAE40110 or TAE10 for short) which does not make them a teacher. This is a compliance model, not an educational one.

While clerical officers and administrative assistance have also been targeted in cost cutting activities, to help cope with the huge increase of administrative duties teaching sections have been forced to employ temporary agency staff. These are 'temps' and therefore do not have the same invested commitment as those directly employed as full or part time TAFE staff. This has resulted in an unstable, unreliable support workforce that leave when they get a better offer.

**A horticulture teacher writes** (please see Appendix A for full teacher quotes):

Teacher qualifications: The NSW Government has recently been talking about ensuring the QUALITY of School Teachers, by upgrading the qualifications of new teachers. What do they do for TAFE Teachers? Insist that new teachers do a Certificate IV in Training & Assessment. This makes a mockery of the time & effort most of us had to put into getting a DEGREE in Education. Also, the level of support for new teachers (to study & learn) has been drastically cut. The recent process to identify positions to be deleted (in other words: which teachers would lose their jobs?) required teachers and head teachers to re-apply for their job, and the selection criteria (see Appendix B) did not match those stated in policy documents (see Appendix C) which were heavily weighted towards commercialism and leveraging industry.

**A head teacher of hospitality writes:**

New PTC (part-time casual) teachers or trainers are *not* trained and adequately equipped for teaching, the TAE10 is not a relevant certification for a new teacher to be equipped to walk into a classroom and deliver a class. This then takes further time from head teachers, full time or more senior and experienced teachers to support and equip these teachers for classroom readiness.



Another head teacher, who has achieved a Quality Teaching Award and also a member of The Australian College of Educators (ACE) agrees it also emphasises other issues relating to suitable delivery strategies, most effective lesson sequencing, and recognition of students with (often undisclosed) special needs, student management and discipline strategies; and the ethical student-teacher relationships. Being a good chef does not equate to being a good teacher. ACE supports this having consistently argued, it is absolutely essential to ensure quality teacher preparation to ensure consistency of good practice across all courses and providers, all programs must be held to the same high and stringent standards and demonstrate solid evidence of meeting those standards and to raise the status of teaching profession. (Ref: Australian College of Educators NSW Branch, ACE Newsletter, May 2015).

The fact is that we have lost many experienced and industry expert part-time casual teachers over the past ten years due to budget and course cutting (these figures are ignored in the 800+ job losses). It is difficult to think about succession planning when we can't offer teachers enough work hours to support a family. In NSW the proposed implementation of the inexperienced 'Tutor/Assessors' category will further add to the increasing casualisation of the TAFE workforce and ultimately on our society with the obvious long-term adverse economic effects in terms of financial stability.

In NSW the current TAFE teaching job losses, caused by the drastic budget cuts, means that head teachers will be asked to do the jobs of two, over multiple colleges. Teachers' workloads have increased along similar lines, with inordinate amounts of time spent to ensure regulatory compliance – with ongoing assessment validations, industry logs, pre and post assessments in the workplace, unpacking new training packages etc. They are expected to teach courses ranging from Statements of Attainment to Degree programs, for the same salaries, and at the same time are expected to be marketing experts and entrepreneurs seeking commercial revenue.

**Another head teacher of hospitality is concerned about the workload of those who are successful in keeping their jobs, and about the low morale pervading all sections. She writes:**

Recently many of my Head Teacher colleagues were required to apply for their positions with some of them likely to lose their jobs. They were faced with a range of questions at interview which were so far out of the realm of the Head Teacher position, they returned from their interviews more distressed than before they went in. They were faced with questions related to sales and marketing, promotion, growth of business, we are highly skilled **trade** teachers who have moved into an administrative and teaching role, again with minimal training to perform this duty, are we now expected to be marketing experts?

**It is difficult to see how TAFE can survive this latest onslaught, according to one horticulture teacher:**

Overall decimation of TAFE: It seems to be a goal of current government(s) to wind down TAFE to such a stage that it can no longer perform the long-held roles it has performed for over 100 years - "*.... education should not only strengthen job prospects – it should enrich society.*"

**He also comments:**

We need this inquiry to ask and answer some fundamental questions about TAFE, its role in society and how it will look in the future. We are dealing with the **education of people** (as well as training); something the economic rationalists seem to forget! Educational quality cannot be measured simply by numbers and certainly not by dollars.

**And adds:**

Reaccreditation and compliance: We seem to be spending more & more time doing less & less important tasks (like having to redo a Certificate IV - [my third version] on top of a Teaching Degree) leaving less time to get on with our PRIMARY role: TEACHING students. I was not employed for my computer skills or budgeting abilities. I was employed to teach Trade skills to Students (Apprentices). Once upon a time there were Data Entry people to process enrolments, and Office Assistants with Admin skills that enabled us to focus on our "core business" (ie TEACHING). In NSI's first round of job losses, 2 out of 4 head teacher positions have been deleted in Adult Basic Education (ABE), and two teacher positions were due to be deleted before two teachers decided to retire early. This could well be a trend, leading to further shortages of highly skilled experienced teachers.

**A Language/Literacy/Numeracy teacher from ABE writes:**

It makes no sense to cut TAFE funding or turn vocational education into a private, for-profit business. I fear especially for the disadvantaged, marginalised and disabilities students in future. I also worry about the shortage of qualified language, literacy and numeracy practitioners over the next few years, since many will be retrenched, or take early retirement because of the stress and uncertainty of the commercial and contestable future. This is especially hard for us because our courses have always been fee exempt, since we believe that every Australian has the right to free literacy education. *"Given the fact that 7.4m Australian workers cannot function adequately in the workplace in terms of Language, Literacy and Numeracy (LLN) this doesn't make sense!"*

Current Federal Government policy is to reduce numbers of people receiving the Disability Support Pension, and aim to integrate many of these into the workplace. How can this be done with cuts to courses and the disadvantageous effects of the *Smart and Skilled* legislation?

Section 12 of the **Disability Discrimination Act 1992** – (Commonwealth) states (in part):

*It is unlawful for an educational authority to discriminate against a student on the grounds of the student's disability:*

(A) *By denying the student access, or limiting the student's access, to any benefit provided by the educational authority; or*

(B) *By subjecting the student to any other detriment*

*2a it is unlawful for an education provider to discriminate against a person on the ground of the person's disability:*

(C) *By developing curricula or training courses having a content that will either exclude the person from participation, or subject the person to any other detriment.*

Disabled students are often precluded from using keyboards without additional support because of cognitive and/or neurological deficits. Our colleges are delivering material on-line in lieu of classroom or other methods of flexible delivery.

Without support from specialist teachers the completion rate of such students will not meet targets with the resulting adverse effect on funding. The SI Group (software licensing reseller used by NSI) who supplies subsidised software at minimum cost for students and staff is unable to list 'Dragon Dictate' (voice activated software) at a subsidy. One disabled teacher was able to purchase this software from Harvey Norman cheaper than this company could offer the product.

This breaches anti-discrimination legislation in the area of provision of education.

The recent proposed job losses of Commercial Cookery teachers were temporarily put on hold after a high number of recent enrolments, and after head teachers pointed out to management that if there were to go ahead with the proposed deletion of positions, new casual teachers would have to be recruited to teach the classes of sacked teachers, with the prospects of management facing claims of unfair dismissal. Other areas were targeted in the areas of Food and Beverage Service, and Hospitality.

***A head teacher of commercial cookery writes:***

I believe it is demoralising to see a "*select group*" of TAFE teaching staff that I have worked alongside for a long time being treated very poorly by management. These permanent teachers have to reapply for their positions as though they have been dismissed. Due to this the atmosphere and culture of the workplace has changed from one of being positive and energised to a place where staff feel threatened with the slash and burn management style. Lack of trust in both management, and now, in many cases in each other, causes even more anxiety.

The looming contestable funding model which we will be operating under next year leaves NSW TAFE colleges at a great disadvantage because it isn't a level playing field. TAFE has to provide accessible pathways for disadvantaged youth, students with disabilities, students from non-English speaking backgrounds, Indigenous students, apprentices & trainees, addressing skills shortages and running high quality training in a wide range of industries. We can't compete with 'training' companies who can deliver out of the back of a truck, using TAFE syllabuses and cherry-picking the cheapest, easiest courses to deliver. TAFEs provide realistic vocational pathways, and TAFE qualifications are more than just pieces of paper.

## EFFECTS ON STUDENTS

There is great concern amongst TAFE teachers that over 5,000 private RTOs (many are small or medium businesses) are able to offer watered-down courses for Certificates and Diplomas in one or two semesters (or less as we have become aware), with no quality outcomes or scrutiny over these companies. We know there are not sufficient numbers of auditors to ensure quality delivery by these often fly-by-night companies whose bottom line is profit driven. So these RTOs remain unmonitored and continue to issue nationally-accepted qualifications. We do not believe the Australian Skills Quality Authority (ASQA) has the ability to appropriately regulate the plethora of for-profit Registered Training Organisations (RTOs), and it appears ASQA concentrates its efforts on regulating the largest RTOs: TAFE Institutes.

There is also serious concern regarding the mismatch between skills and qualifications, as well as the deployment of skills in the workplace. TAFE teachers have been and/or are still industry employers and employees and remain committed to their industries and the workforce.

We urge Skills Australia and other developers of national Training Packages to ensure that Training Packages and selected skills sets are not primarily focused on profits for businesses, rather it needs to increase the focus on the workforce development strategies for a strong and versatile skill base. In fact it is our strong view that VET should immediately move away from the competency-based training model ('monkey see-monkey do') to a proper educational model which gives graduands a much broader range of skills, abilities and knowledge. The underlying principles and theoretical knowledge are simply forgotten or ignored in the competency-based training model.

**One of our colleagues, a hospitality teacher, concerned about the then impending implementation of an entitlement system which will give funding to the RTO students enrol in, writes:**

Education should not be about making a profit and when the entitlement system is introduced, many students will go where it is easier and quicker to get a qualification= lack of skills and knowledge of trades, which Australia is severely short of. TAFE is committed to providing all-round quality education as well as vocational training; including VET in Schools programs (TVET) which give secondary students vocational options and which are at risk. Many TAFE teachers have expressed concerns about the problems of VET programs delivered in High Schools and the competencies achieved.

**One (recently retired) hospitality teacher with over 25 years' experience states:**

When certain of these students arrive in more advanced classes with recognition of TVET skills for introductory units it is a common practice for the Recognition Co-ordinators to be rebuked by their colleagues for granting such recognition as, particularly in subjects like Cookery because of their lack of pre-existing knowledge and skills. Some students are considered to be so incompetent that they are a danger in the class room or kitchen. The Recognition Co-ordinators are powerless when students present with a nationally recognised qualification which, in these cases, is worthless. It then becomes necessary to overly rely on Learning Support Sections to address the gaps in student knowledge if the individual is not prepared to repeat the subject in which they are clearly not competent.

**A second hospitality teacher states:**

Students coming to TAFE from HSC TVET in their high school and having been marked as competent in their practical skills quite often find the reality of their 'competency' is not up to standard and they end up repeating those practical units therefore that been a waste of time in school. [Members of this branch are dismayed at the introduction of school-based apprentices as part of the *Smart and Skilled* roll out, should apprentices be the responsibility of HCS, TVET secondary teachers]

**Course hours have been cut to save costs, and a teacher of hospitality adds:**

My teaching hours have been cut dramatically to align with the head teacher's job to save money. This challenge has me teaching/facilitating the same amount of content and assessing those students in a much smaller number of hours. From the students' perspective this has caused results to suffer as evident so far....

Training packages qualifications are being watered down to enable more people to become qualified quicker at the detriment of the quality of the qualification at hand. Due to this the underpinning knowledge and skill is being assessed rapidly and yet the concept of solid learning is being dismissed as there is little time for practice or contextualisation. This is especially an area of concern in Food Safety & Work Health & Safety (WHS)...

I facilitate and assess 8 units in Cert IV in Commercial Cookery. The nominal hours for this course are 230 hrs in total...or 9 hours per unit... At present I have 18 hrs to cover the lot so it is down to only 2 hours per unit.

**Budget cuts will impact on the learner support levels currently offered to all students, including those with learning difficulties and disabilities. One head teacher of ABE adds:**

We have no guaranteed funding for our Learner Support Study Centres in Semester 2, 2013 and beyond, which is appalling considering the decades of hard work we've put into developing this wonderful resource for all students, boosting course completions and maximising opportunities for further study.

**Budget cuts have adversely affected the support staff and quality of facilities offered to students, as one horticulture teacher laments:**

... the Parks & Gardens section are losing 4 of 8 teachers and we are losing support staff which means that the teachers in the horticulture sections will need to do a lot more work in setting up practical work exercises etc. Something that I feel really needs a mention is the general lack of maintenance that needs to be done around the grounds and the buildings...It is all a symptom of the general wind-down of funding for TAFE over the last 10 or so years.

**A hospitality teacher writes:**

Stripping funding = reduction in quality of teaching and resources....

And... without government support regarding TAFE fees, many students will not be able to afford to train.

Budget cuts in student support areas have also impacted on vocational completions, and the above teacher says: *"Staffing cuts in Adult Study Centre means there is more pressure on teaching staff to assist with these students of NESB, LOTE & special needs in our classes."*

*“However we do not have the time to do this. Students also in some instances not given options in relation to their learning i.e. to be facilitated online whether this is their choice or not. It is all about being competitive on the training market but what about the learners and their learning.”*

The **Racial Discrimination Act** (Commonwealth) 1975 is also breached when appropriate support is withdrawn (for short-term funding considerations). TAFE is the educational provider where the marginalised, Non-English-Speaking-Background (NESB) and disabled students enrol. Private providers have the ability to build such costs into their fee structure and/or appropriate government funding. Those disadvantaged are unable, in general, to seek enrolment in private colleges. TAFE cannot compete in terms of this value-adding costing.

Courses such as Fine Arts have had funding removed and now students have to pay up to \$8,000 for their course, even those who had nearly finished. This is in spite of the recent findings of the NSW Government’s own ‘creative taskforce’ which recommended reinstating funding for this highly successful course in terms of vocational outcomes. (SMH article, 19 March 2013)

The decision to impose full fees and loans for art courses at TAFE will deny students seeking a second chance or women returning to education, an opportunity to participate in regional and rural areas. Students participating in these programs often articulate from art into other courses and pursue successful careers in education, graphic design, photography etc. (NSW TEFED Media Release 12/09/12).

There is an enormous financial barrier for young people who can’t afford to commit to an apprenticeship because of the poor status and financial reward associated to apprenticeship - ironically, their employers are receiving government subsidies for hiring apprentices, already very ‘cheap’ employees. So, these young people have the choice of taking up an apprenticeship and living below the poverty line (this is a very unattractive prospect), or working and maybe learning on the job without gaining the necessary skills or qualifications. Any fee increase will further discourage young people from training in a trade area and completing an apprenticeship. (<http://www.smh.com.au/national/education/tafe-cuts-threaten-apprentices-hopes-to-qualify-20140208-328kk.html>)

A disappointed Hornsby Fine Arts student with a disability said she was unable to move to Meadowbank (which was the only NSI college now offering this qualification), *“... because it doesn’t have accessible bathrooms, an elevator, even flooring...”*

This student had already paid \$9000 in the past two years to complete her Diploma of Fine Arts. She states: *“...I don’t go there to paint pretty pictures, I am following this as a career path. I need these qualifications.”*

Students and staff alike found out about the axing via Facebook! The above student said: *“I am absolutely gutted!”* NSW Industry Training Advisory Board speaker (Oct 2013) stated that 5% workers are in the creative industries & 40% work in NSW. Fine Arts is part of a broader definition of creative industries (NCVER) but this clearly states that there are very high employment outcomes for people with qualifications in this field. (Rosen, Dan in Ford, Allison report).

Former Hornsby Art Society president Linda Baranov comments that the cuts would have a detrimental affect (sic) on the local arts scene. *"I just think it's crippling for the arts in the shire because it (Hornsby TAFE) has been a real hub."*, she said (ibid).

<http://www.dailytelegraph.com.au/newslocal/the-hills/job-cuts-feared-at-hornsby-tafe-after-fine-art-department-axed/story-fngr8i1f-1226818803167>

Patricia Karvelas quotes Jenny Macklin Labor MP as saying the Coalition's plan to divert people with mental illnesses away from the disability support pension (DSP) is: *"... a cruel cash grab from a government that doesn't care about vulnerable Australians."*

Latest figures show an increase of 90,000 DSP recipients with a mental illness over the past 10 years. (The Australian, 22/02/14 <http://www.theaustralian.com.au/national-affairs/policy/jenny-macklin-says-coalition-dsp-plan-may-worsen-mental-health-issues/story-fn59nokw-1226834548754>)

We believe people with disabilities need intensive support if they are to be denied payment (DPS). The article also comments that the huge numbers of workers losing their jobs in companies like Holden, Ford, Toyota etc will probably suffer transient mental illness and need intensive support and the chance to retrain and reskill. We maintain that TAFE is the only organisation best placed to address this need to reintegrate people into the workforce because (at present at least) we still have the support services to aid people living with psychological illness to be retrained effectively, sustainably and successfully.

## EFFECTS ON INDUSTRY

Our TAFEs have been caught up in the impasse between Canberra and the eastern states. Major, crucial changes have been made without public discussion and agreements or indeed common sense. The neo-liberal approach to VET training under the Howard government was a disastrous embarrassment (hundreds of millions of dollars wasted on Australian Technical Colleges which simply replicated the already established TAFE facilities), but was embraced and expanded by the then Federal Labor government of Kevin Rudd and Julia Gillard. It is not surprising the states with conservative Governments feel at ease with facilitating enrichment of RTOs with questionable quality at the expense of students, employers, industry, and society.

The disastrous experiences in Queensland and Victoria prove that skills shortages have not been addressed under the new entitlements system, thousands of workers have lost their jobs and employers have complained loudly that thousands of private RTO-trained students do not have the necessary skills. The Victorian state government ended up with a massive budget blow-out by funding these RTOs which have delivered poor quality training and have alienated many industry bodies.

With over 5,000 private providers delivering training in Australia and more than half of these publicly funded, taxpayers are even funding large corporations like McDonalds and Crown to train their staff!

It is a devastating blow to TAFE that Crown has entered into a joint venture with Penrith Panthers Leagues Club to build and staff a \$10 million hospitality training facility to “... *create pathways for students to complete school-based traineeships and apprenticeships.*” (Carswell, A. theTelegraph.com.au, 08/02/13). However this is no guarantee of quality in the training provided, and our regulatory systems are inadequate to cope with the huge increase in these RTOs. Our Colleges have been individually called upon to address the needs of International Students from collapsed private providing colleges at additional cost to the specific sections.

Tony Morrissey (one of the sacked 2500 TAFE teachers), writes: “NSW Premier Mike Baird’s record budget \$2.1 billion surplus at the cost of destroying TAFE in favour of supporting private providers who are running to the banks to deposit the federal government’s VET FEE-Help (VFH) monies flooding in, courtesy of the taxpayer. Under the ‘Smart and Skilled’ reform a Certificate IV in Engineering now costs \$20,000, while the fee for a trade certificate is \$11,830 – and 95 per cent of TAFE colleges can no longer afford to offer the Certificate IV in Engineering.” He reports “...this extraordinary increase in TAFE fees has resulted in a drop of 30,000 student intakes – and consequently the sacking of 2500 TAFE teachers.” (Ref: EDUCATION 27/07/15 p16-17, ‘Mike Baird, History-Making Gone Wrong letter).

This is yet another prime example of cost cutting resulting in deskilling of our workforce and long term negative impacts on what could potentially become ‘exportable end products’ to boost the State and national inbound revenue.

**A hospitality teacher states that she:**

... interviewed students from Meridian College several years ago who were doing a dual qualification – Certificate III or IV in Commercial Cookery and a Diploma in Hospitality. They were in the invidious position of having their practical cookery classes closed by order of the liquidator one week before their final assessment was carried out. In other words, these students had completed 16-17 weeks of study and were in the position of having to repeat those subjects (at significant cost). After pain-staking liaison with the Commercial Cookery Section at Ryde TAFE College these students were assessed (both practically and theoretically) - successfully saving them substantial fees and dissipating the overwhelming frustration they felt. They, in this case were competent. That required teaching and support staff to be made available with no ability to cost recover from the private provider through the liquidator. It is what was expected of TAFE but the private provider (and the liquidator) walked away ‘scot free’. On the other hand, TAFE colleges are constantly being audited internally and externally, and a great deal of effort is currently being put into the enormous demands for an upcoming ASQA audits of NSI in August.

**Another teacher in hospitality, concerned about the pressure from specific industry and their needs, writes:**

There is the expectation amongst some employers that TAFE should be their enterprise’s training and development department, and will teach the narrow range of skills required in their specific organisation. Current management would not be able to refuse a commercial brief to teach narrow skills sets because of the desperate need for commercial funds.



However it is TAFE's role to provide both broad-based education as well as training, giving students wider career path opportunities to seek further employment or promotions when the opportunity arises. This means teaching transferable, generic skills and is a much broader definition of 'education and training' than many industries allow.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS: How to build and maintain a strong public TAFE system into the future**

1. Abandon the *Smart and Skilled* contestable funding model until there have been real public discussions and consultations, all stakeholders have been able to contribute to the process, and design features and impacts have been tested and found both reliable and viable. Any proposal needs to be evidence based, and in favour of education.
2. Learn from the mistakes in such states as Queensland and Victoria and redress these by reinstating funding to TAFEs as the leading and pre-eminent provider of public education. Australians have this right to a world-class TAFE system and equity of access.
3. Abandon the chronically unsuitable EBS software and replace it with tools which actually support training and education rather than just compliance.
4. Move away from competency-based training. This training system is fast de-skilling NSW's workforce by oversimplifying trades and professions, and will ultimately fail.
5. Ensure TAFE assets remain in TAFE hands. These valuable assets which are publicly owned must not be handed over to TAFE's competitors.
6. Provide transparency in TAFE funding and keep TAFE's 'full-service provider' funding.
7. Engage the public in discussions about TAFE before making crucial changes.
8. Recognise that TAFE institutes cannot compete with for-profit providers – It is NOT a level playing field when private, for-profit RTOs 'cherry-pick' popular, 'cheap-to-run' courses, don't provide educationally-sound student support and can deliver courses 'out of the back of a truck'.
9. Recognise that TAFE colleges provide realistic vocational pathways, and that their qualifications are more than just pieces of paper, with ethical processing and genuine assessment of units submitted for recognition of prior learning.
10. Recognise that TAFE's 'bottom line' should never be profit and that funding education and training is an investment, not a cost.

11. Abandon the artificial barriers of TAFE Institute silos and get them working together to save duplication of services and infrastructure. To that effect, we recommend returning to one TAFE system in NSW (centralised) with the re-establishment and appropriate funding of central support services.
12. Re-implement a requirement for university level teaching qualifications (program that includes relevant level LLN knowledge and skills); and support TAFE teachers to upgrade qualifications from the current requirement of a Certificate IV in Training and Assessment. This lower qualification is a compliance model, not an educational one.
13. TAFE should be quarantined from any marketisation and contestability of funding. TAFE has to provide accessible pathways for disadvantaged youth, students with disabilities, students from non-English speaking backgrounds, Indigenous students, apprentices & trainees.
14. Provide funding for TAFE-employed clerical support (not agency 'temps'). Compliance-heavy issues overwhelm teachers and head teachers, reducing time spent on quality delivery and face to face teaching time with students.
15. Provide funding to support online delivery and maintenance. This means funding for employment of relevantly skilled teachers with expertise in online learning and delivery to prepare quality learning material, including initial and ongoing computer literacy and technological support without duplication.
16. Redress the trend towards further casualisation of all teaching, and create more full-time positions through adequate funding.
17. Subsidise apprentices and trainees rather than subsidising employers of these workers so young and/or unskilled people who can't afford apprenticeships/traineeships and are living under poverty line have a real choice to break the generational unemployment cycle which affects so many families in this situation.
18. Continue to fund equity and support services including libraries, computers, learning support including specific Indigenous and NESB student support and counselling. These are vital services to TAFE students.
19. Allow students to make informed choices between TAFE colleges and approved training organisations by ensuring only high quality RTOs (are registered), and are offered subsidised training. This will require a significant increase in the funding of ASQA.
20. Build the workforce that delivers core foundation skills training so we can have a chance at reaching the 2022 Australian Government target where two-thirds of working ages Australians will have the LLN skills needed to take full advantages of opportunities afforded by the new economy.

21. Abandon models of individual entitlements and recognise that students will choose those RTOs offering certificates and diplomas in 6 months as opposed to being educated and trained thoroughly by TAFE for over two years, with full learner support.
22. Ensure TAFE continues to meet critical skills needs for disadvantaged learners by committing funds to TAFEs to supply the 'community and social obligations' entitlements for Certificate I and Certificate II courses in LLN.
23. Establish a body of auditors in NSW to investigate and act upon private RTOs who are not delivering quality educational and training services. Provide negative sanctions where necessary, including fines.
24. Recognise that TAFE provides essential qualifications in every area of the economy – nurses, mechanics, engineers, childcare workers, artists, writers, plumbers, electricians, language/literacy/numeracy and so on... Australia needs TAFE!
25. Allow and encourage TAFE and TAFE Managers to be in the business of education, not the business of business.
26. Ensure the survival and thriving of our TAFEs across Australia, and the hundreds of campuses spread across regional, rural and metropolitan areas.
27. Keep TAFE affordable and accessible to all. Then we'll truly be moving towards a clever, smart and skilled country with sustainable economic growth.
28. Develop a planned model that ensures the needs of industry and community are met.

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# APPENDICES

## APPENDIX A – Teacher comments

### 1. HEAD TEACHER HOSPITALITY:

The role of a head teacher has change dramatically over the years, there is very little provision for training. There is an abundance of new systems put in place with, little or no training and if there is training, it is often very poor e.g. SAP.

Systems such as MEVI (online enrolments) were put in place to make the life of the student easier and enrolment more flexible, this is true, however, I believe it has increased the workload of a head teacher by at least 50 hours at each enrolment time. Enrolment is no longer a couple of weeks per year it is now several months. In some areas enrolment is very straight-forward and in other areas complex (managing RPL [recognition of prior learning] and class placement) which is very time consuming. Enrolments are now taking place from late October to early March for semester 1 and late April to early August for semester 2.

Teacher support for the majority of this time is limited as they have returned to the classroom and are unavailable for assistance. Each individual enrolment requires an individual response (usually from the head teacher) this in turn often ends up in a dialogue taking further time.

MEVI and TIPA (budgeting planning software) has bought forward all timelines for planning and preparation of classes for the upcoming semesters, again increasing pressure on the head teacher for earlier deadlines.

I have noticed my Head teacher colleagues under an enormous amount of pressure to meet deadlines based on systems and deadlines on top of this workload there are audits, validation, new training packages, TAE10 (CIV Workplace Training & Assessment) updates for themselves and staff. Then there's the looming *Smart and Skilled*, is anybody ever going to break this to us? A disaster in public education how to deskill a nation!!

New PTC (part-time casual) teachers are not trained and equipped for teaching, the TAE10 is not a relevant certification for a new teacher to be equipped to walk into a class room and deliver a class. This then takes further time from head teachers and teachers to support and equip the teachers for classroom readiness.

Recently many of my Head Teacher colleagues were required to apply for their positions with some of them likely to lose their jobs, they were faced with a range of questions at interview which were so far out of the realm of the Head Teacher position, they returned from their interviews more stressed than before they went in. They were faced with questions related to sales and marketing, promotion, growth of business, we are highly skilled **trade** teachers who have moved into an administrative and teaching role, again with minimal training to perform this duty, are we now expected to be marketing experts?

The role and of a head teacher has changed so much over the years with **no** recognition of the increased workload, while we are on teaching conditions of **10 – 14 hours teaching per week, 16-20 hours RD and admin + 5 hours off site**, I am rarely able to enter a classroom prepared for class, work many hours above what is programmed to ensure customers' needs are met, management deadlines are met, basic administrative duties are met.

Each week I leave the workplace with a long list of essential tasks still not complete. Electronic communication has increased workload immensely, the culture of immediate response and the pressure to provide “quality customer experiences” places great demand on the head teacher, while still teaching classes and attending meetings all in 30 hours on site IMPOSSIBLE.

In a recent discussion with a Head Teacher colleague I was told they are not permitted by their MTL (Manager Teaching Learning) to record the hours they have worked on their TPD. Additional hours are not paid to head teachers, however if they are not able to record additional hours worked nobody will be able to be alerted to this increase in the workload. They are getting around displaying the hours they work (approx. 50 per week or 30% additional to 35 hrs.) by putting in lunch breaks of 3-5 hours so they are able to display start and finish times. This is a Head Teacher who is about to have 2 positions in the college reduced to 1. Hm m m m m I guess they will soon be working 100 hours per week, I have never heard so many people say they are “at breaking point”.

## 2. HORTICULTURE TEACHER (1):

Change to working conditions: Possibly the major attraction to TAFE teaching. To have our conditions of employment altered so much, without real consultation is "bully-boy" tactics. We have already lost staff and will continue to do so. Also, the new proposals (Tutor / Assessor) will make TAFE teaching much less attractive as a profession.

Teacher qualifications: The govt. have recently been talking about ensuring the QUALITY of School Teachers, by upgrading the qualifications etc of new teachers. What do they do for TAFE Teachers? Insist that new teachers do a Cert. IV in Training & Assessment. This makes a mockery of the time & effort most of us had to put into getting a DEGREE in Education. Also, the level of support for new teachers (to study & learn) has been drastically cut.

Reaccreditation and compliance: We seem to be spending more & more time doing less & less important tasks (like having to re-do a Cert. IV - [my third version] on top of a Teaching Degree) leaving less time to get on with our PRIMARY role : TEACHING students. I was not employed for my computer skills or budgeting abilities. I was employed to teach Trade skills to Students (Apprentices). Once upon a time there were Data Entry people to process enrolments, and Office Assistants, with admin skills that enabled us to focus on our *core business* (ie TEACHING).

Overall decimation of TAFE: It seems to be a goal of current government(s) to wind down TAFE to such a stage that it can no longer perform the long-held roles it has performed for over 100 years ".... *education should not only strengthen job prospects – it should enrich society.*" - ([https://www.tafensw.edu.au/about/our\\_history.htm#.UU-0XhnXEK](https://www.tafensw.edu.au/about/our_history.htm#.UU-0XhnXEK))

We need this this enquiry to ask (and answer) some fundamental questions about TAFE, it's role in society and how it will look, in the future. We are dealing with the **education of people**; something the economic rationalists seem to forget! Educational quality cannot be measured simply by numbers and CERTAINLY not, by dollars.

### **3. HORTICULTURE TEACHER (2)**

... the Parks & Gardens section are losing 4 of 8 teachers and we are losing support staff which means that the teachers in the horticulture sections will need to do a lot more work in setting up practical work exercises etc.

Something that I feel really needs a mention is the general lack of maintenance that needs to be done around the grounds and the buildings...It is all a symptom of the general wind down of funding for TAFE over the last 10 or so years.

### **4. HOSPITALITY TEACHER (2)**

Without Government support regarding TAFE fees, many students will not be able to afford to train. Every strong country needs a good education system.

Stripping funding= reduction in quality of teaching and resources. Though I do agree there is ... money wasted at TAFE, management does not seem to want to listen to the opinion of industry professionals, especially hospitality industry ones who are used to working to budgets.

Education should not be about making a profit and when the voucher system is introduced, many students will go where it is easier and quicker to get a qualification= lack of skills and knowledge of trades, which Australia is severely short of.

### **5. LANGUAGE LITERACY NUMERACY TEACHER**

Two out of four head teacher positions have been deleted 3 colleges in the area of Adult Foundation Education, leaving the remaining 2 HTs working in 3 colleges with a much greater workload. This includes an increase in workplace LLN teaching for commercial and contestable funding which involves hours and hours of compliance documentation and testing, while unpacking a new training package and trying to map outcomes to ACSF (Australian Core Skills Framework) levels as per the federal government's policy. With no educational support, so much of our work involves troubleshooting new software that doesn't talk to other software systems as touted, and dealing with deadlines & administrative matters. Most of these revolve around compliance issues and reporting so that ultimately it is our teaching that suffers, and hence our students... and we're supposed to provide best practice role models to our staff! Everything is geared towards passing the ASQA audit in second semester.

We have no guaranteed funding for our Learner Support Study Centre in Semester 2, 2013 and beyond, which is very depressing considering the 20+ years of hard work we've put into developing this wonderful resource for all students, boosting course completions.

It makes no sense to cut TAFE funding or turn vocational education into a private, for-profit business. I fear especially for the disadvantaged, marginalised and disabilities students in future. I also worry about the shortage of qualified language, literacy & numeracy practitioners over the next few years, since many will be retrenched, or take early retirement because of the stress and uncertainty of the commercial and contestable future. This is especially hard for us because our courses have always been fee exempt, since we believe that every Australian has the right to free literacy education. Given the fact that 7.4m Australian workers cannot function adequately in the workplace in terms of LLN this doesn't make sense.



## 6. COMMERCIAL COOKERY TEACHER

I believe it is demoralising to see a "select group" of TAFE teaching staff that I have worked alongside for a long time being treated very poorly by management. These permanent teachers are having to reapply for their positions as though they have been dismissed. Due to this the atmosphere and culture of the workplace has changed from one of being positive and energised to a place where staff feel threatened with the slash & burn management style. How is this even legal?

My teaching hours have been cut dramatically to align with the head teacher's job to save money. This challenge has me teaching/facilitating the same amount of content and assessing those students in a much smaller number of hours. From the students' perspective this has caused results to suffer as evident so far.

Students coming to TAFE from HSC TVET in their high school and having been marked as competent in their practical skills quite often find the reality of their "competency" is not up to standard and they end up repeating those practical units therefore that been a waste of time in school.

Staffing cuts in Adult study centre means there is more pressure on teaching staff to assist with these students of NESB, LOTE & special needs in our classes. However we do not have the time to do this. Students also in some instances not given options in relation to their learning ie to be facilitated online whether this is their choice or not. It is all about being competitive on the training market but what about the learners and their learning.

Training packages qualifications are being watered down to enable more people to become qualified quicker at the detriment of the quality of the qualification at hand. Due to this the underpinning knowledge and skill is being assessed rapidly and yet the concept of solid learning is being dismissed as there is little time for practice or contextualization. This is especially an area of concern in Food Safety & WHS.

*"I facilitate & assess 8 units in Cert IV in cookery. The Nominal hours for this are 230 hrs total. Prior to 2013 I have had 4hrs/week over the semester =72 hrs to cover.*

*72 hrs/ 8 units = 9 hrs per unit.*

*At present I have 18 hrs to cover the lot. So it is down to 2 hours per unit."*

## 7. FOOD AND BEVERAGE/HOSPITALITY TEACHER

I am a teacher of hospitality of over 20 years. I am currently teaching a group of students Certificate 2 and 3 in Hospitality. Certificate 2 is operational, while Certificate 3 is Supervisory level. While most students are capable in the group I have at least half the group has some form of learning difficulty or disability:

- 2 students with ADHD who need extra attention and tuition
- 2 students who are matured aged from NESB and have little or no literacy or computer skills
- 2 students who are slow learners and have learning difficulties
- 1 student who is suffering from severe anxiety when stressed
- 1 student who is suffers from bouts of depression and suicidal tendencies

While Adult Education (and the Study Centre) has been fantastic in trying to accommodate these students, unless they are registered as having a disability they cannot receive the proper support they require. With the advent of *Smart and Skilled* and the push towards *eLearning* and the cutting of the budget and job losses especially in Adult Education and support staff especially in my College, I would like the government and DEC to consider the following:

- a) The 2 students who are matured aged from NESB and have little or no literacy or computer skills yet are deemed not to have a disability. What they do have is a learning problem as they require tuition on how to access and use computers and complete assignments and written assessments. Without support this is left to me on top of the other teaching duties I have such as time for the other students, who become frustrated at the pace of the learning because I have to spend time on these students. Part of the resources and ability to complete these units is to use programs such as Didasko and Sakai. These students really struggle. Has there been any thought as to the needs of these students?
- b) The other students need extra attention and again the fast learners become frustrated and bored because I have to spend time with these students as support service are either overloaded or under-staffed.
- c) If the people in charge of education thought that eLearning is the way to go it maybe for the students who are computer savvy but the students we are getting at TAFE seem to be who have been pointed in the direction of hospitality because it is perceived as an easy option. This is not the case and over the years I have seen students enrolled in these courses who are either from disadvantaged backgrounds, dysfunctional families or who have disabilities or behavioural problems.
- d) In addition to this teachers are expected to complete their administrative work i.e. TPDs [Teacher Program Diaries], lesson preparation including on-line delivery, student enquiries, reply to emails received and so on.
- e) A unit of the course is *Apply Hospitality Skills in the Workplace* (work or work experience). While most students can work enough hours to complete the hours required, some students don't have a job or in the case of one student I have she was doing Accommodation Services and is trying to get work in a Hotel in the front office. She said she was not having much success. I directed her on to "Careers Connect" – an NSI website in which the student tenders their details and hopes for a position. There is no personal contact and on the site no category for Accommodation Services, only Hospitality, so any job opportunities that she receives are not suitable as it is not the right area of hospitality.

Although I try to accommodate these students it is negligent and irresponsible and to the detriment of other students that support staff and Adult Education [LLN teachers] has been basically discarded and the onus of coping with the blended classes is left to the teacher who does not have the counselling or educational skills to meet the challenge of a blended class.

If the success of education is based on cost effectiveness and completed courses then heaven help those students who in 2014 will be forced to take entitlements to enrol in hospitality courses under contestable funding and heaven help the teachers who will lack any support services and have to battle away being teacher/mentor/counsellor/tutor/administrator. Who would want to be a TAFE teacher in this environment?