

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

Name: Name suppressed

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Partially Confidential

I studied a TAFE Diploma of Communication and Media at a regional Australian TAFE in 2007 & 2008 when my 2 children were in primary school. I was an unemployed single parent at the time, so my course was heavily subsidised by the government, but even then the cost was almost prohibitive: I was already struggling to cover our most basic needs on the single parent benefit. I had to borrow money from family to pay for the course, and will be eternally grateful for their help in securing the opportunity and the fact that it was accessible to me at that time, because of what has since eventuated. Towards the end of my course, I participated in work placement (a requirement of the course) and after I had graduated with my TAFE Diploma, this led to an offer of full time work with the company, which I gratefully accepted. I actually cried with happiness at the time. No longer on single parent benefits, the increase in income meant a raise in living standards and opportunities I could provide my children. It meant I could afford to take them to the doctor, provide a home where we didn't all have to sleep in the same room and we could have the heater on during winter. Six years later, having gained skills, knowledge and experience in the field, I've landed a great job with a much bigger income and am now part way through a University degree, with credit for my previous TAFE study. I've been able to take out a mortgage on a house, buy a car and take my family on holidays. The number of opportunities now available to us, as well as our quality of life, has improved immeasurably. None of this would have happened had I not been able to take that first step on the journey in getting my TAFE Diploma.

History (and academic studies) show that women are often left behind when it comes to establishing their careers, as they have been relegated to the home to raise children instead of being able to work. I am just one of a great many women in Australia with this very story. If you make it harder for women whose situations resonate with my own to learn the skills and knowledge they need to participate in the work force, you are doing nothing to facilitate equality. Women (in particular single parents) need to be supported to participate in the work force so that they can earn decent incomes and superannuation, thereby not becoming a tax burden on future Australians.

Please don't stick with a system where the cost to participate is prohibitive, particularly for those who are low income or unemployed. You will be doing the future of Australia a great injustice, in both the short term and long term.