

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

Name: Name suppressed

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Partially Confidential

TAFE Submission. My Story

14/8/2015

Dear Director

I wish to make a submission to the vocational Education and Training Enquiry.

I am an Enrolled Nurse (EN). I am currently employed in a non-clinical role and write this submission to provide information in regards to the importance a TAFE education has had on my life and how it's impacted on my employment, career opportunities and quality of working life.

My submission will particularly relate to Sections (a), (b) and (c) of the terms of reference which I have highlighted in red.

Background.

I grew up on a rural property near Kempsey in country NSW. I had a difficult time at school having come from a dysfunctional family. I believe this environment had an impact on my ability to learn.

I was average in grades in my first 2 years of high school and because of this as soon as I was old enough my father decided that I should leave school and pursue a career on the family dairy farm. I didn't want to leave school but had no choice. I knew that farming was not for me and after 4 years we ceased dairying and I was unemployed.

My mother had been a Registered Nurse (RN) and I had always wanted to nurse but this was out of the question for me as I had not even completed year 10.

Importance of TAFE Education

(a)(i),(ii) I was unemployed and heard about a course at Kempsey TAFE for adults aimed at school certificate level education. I enrolled and found it was fantastic as there were many others just like me in the class who had left school early but had future employment and career goals.

(b)(iv) This course provided me with the confidence I needed to prove that I could actually recommence study and pass subjects. The teachers were fantastic and really worked to instill a feeling of self belief in our class of mature aged students.

(b)(iii) Attending TAFE gave me the big push I needed and in 1991 the new found confidence and motivation helped me to gain fulltime employment in retail in a local business. After 2 years this business closed and whilst I found casual employment in retail I was once again in a situation of needing to rely on unemployment benefits on and off to make ends meet.

(a)(i) I still had dreams of one day becoming a nurse but didn't feel I had the confidence or skills to ever apply.

In 1992 I saw an ad in the local paper for a **Cert 3 TAFE Course in Working With Older People** in Port Macquarie which was an hour and half drive from my home.

(a)(i),(ii) I enrolled and began to commute 3 evenings a week, often not getting home till midnight. This TAFE course really started to open a world of discovery for me and I can still remember how passionate the communications teacher was and the confidence that teacher instilled in me was immeasurable. I found myself submitting assignments with more confidence than ever and my personal growth and development took a huge leap forward.

(b)(ii),(iii) Even before I had completed this course I had gained employment in an aged care facility close to home working as a Personal Care Assistant. I was now earning an income in a job I loved. I completed this course in 1993.

This TAFE course was my catalyst for change. I had been unemployed on and off for years and trying to secure employment in a small country town and with very little skills was difficult.

This course gave me the start I needed. It kick started my career and I can honestly say I have never been out of work since. **(c)** I have these TAFE courses to thank for this as apart from an admin fee these courses were free. I would have struggled to have afforded to enroll, had I have had to fund them myself and my life many have taken a different path.

I began to apply to the local hospital to do my Enrolled Nurse (EN) training. This was very competitive with only a handful of places offered at the local hospital each year.

(a) I applied several times for a few years and was about to give up when I decided to call the Director of Nursing to see what I could be doing better in my applications. She encouraged me to keep applying as there were always way more applicants than positions offered. Finally in 1996 I gained an interview and was successful in gaining a place in the Trainee Enrolled Nurse program.

(a)(ii) Enrolled Nurse Training was conducted via the local Area Health Service with Newcastle TAFE College teaching the theoretical component. In a class of approximately 25 the majority of us were mature aged students. Many were mothers who were re-entering the workforce. Some that I am aware of are still working as EN's and some have become RN's.

(c) I was employed by the Area Health Service whilst I studied. Had I have been faced with today's costs to an enrolled nurse education; I may not have looked to pursue my EN training in fear of having that type of study debt.

TAFE though its high standards and quality teachers provided me and many others with the theoretical training, skills and confidence we needed to be competent and proficient practitioners on completion of our course in 1997. On graduating, I received The Most Caring Enrolled Nurse Award for that year from my hospital.

(b)(ii) Since this time, I have done many courses and furthered my education to enable me to keep up with the ongoing changes within the profession.

I have worked in many areas of nursing in both country and tertiary referral hospitals in NSW, in areas including general medical, surgical, cardiology, rehabilitation, enablement and oncology. I have assisted in setting up an aged daycare service within Community Health and i worked in several aged care facilities and have a passion for aged care.

I have also worked in staffing and rostering, assisting the After Hours Nurse Manager in a large category A hospital.

I have spoken at conferences on the topic of Empowerment for Enrolled Nurses and on recognizing the role they play as an important part of the healthcare team.

(b)(i) In 2000 I enrolled in an open foundation course at the University of Newcastle to give me a TER score to commence university study and gained an equivalent score of 85. This would not have been possible if I had not had done the previous TAFE courses to develop me to study at this level. Today I work in a non clinical role but still use and rely on my enrolled nurse knowledge every day.

Summary:

I believe access and affordability to vocational education and training in NSW is paramount to ensuring people like me are able to pursue education and career opportunities post high school education. TAFE provides the opportunities for school leavers who may not wish to enter tertiary education as a first option.

TAFE also provides re entry education opportunities for many mature aged students who may wish to re skill or change career paths. This in turn opens up employment opportunities that otherwise may not be achievable, accessible or affordable as in my case.

TAFE colleges in regional and rural locations offers opportunities for country people as in my case that may not have access to universities or be able to easily relocate to study.

I will be forever grateful for the education TAFE NSW has provided me and for the access to affordable education that has no doubt enabled me to have a fantastic

career in nursing. TAFE education and training has afforded me employment stability, fantastic personal and professional development and an improved quality of life.

Yours Sincerely