

**Submission  
No 190**

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

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## VET FEE HELP and Diplomas

The restriction of VET FEE HELP (VFH) to mostly diploma level courses is a mistake. The only reason VFH is required is because of the massive fee hikes. Diplomas are 3 -5 times the cost they were a couple of years ago. I believe that the introduction and application of VFH is based on marketing. If you want to market a product the name is important. Diploma is much more saleable than Certificate II etc. The problem is that a Diploma qualification according to the Australian Qualification Framework is a management / technician level course. This level of education requires considerable on the job experience. RTOs are pushing these Diploma courses to anyone who will sign up. The RTOs have little regard for maintaining the rigour of course content required to match the qualification level set by the Australian Qualification Framework. It is my opinion that the managers of the Australian Qualification Framework have been negligent in their duty to maintain the integrity of our Australian qualifications as they have allowed this abuse of our qualification structure to mushroom out of control. I sent an email to the federal government body that administers the AQF expressing my concerns over a year ago. They denied negligence and sighted ASQA as the body responsible. This is the buck passing that has enabled this degradation of our qualifications. The high regard held of Australian qualifications around the world is in danger of being ruined and once brought into question will take some time to regain confidence.

A big sales pitch to promote Diplomas and so VFH was launched within TAFE. We were told that we had to meet the needs of Industry who we were told wanted workers with high level qualifications. Low level courses were not profitable and we are discouraged from offering them. At the same time we were told of the great success our competition was having with offering Diploma courses with no upfront fees and were encouraged to come up with Diploma courses to offer. When I pointed out that no industry representatives had asked for diploma courses and in fact the demand for diploma courses in most disciplines had been in decline for years I was brushed off. We were being encouraged to mimic our competitors and offer high cost, no upfront fee, VFH Diplomas with little chance of completion let alone finding a job.

It is a matter of record that our most successful, respected and most asked for courses in the trades are Pre-apprenticeships. Around 80% of students find work from these courses. This is far, far better than any diploma offered by TAFE or private providers yet we no longer offer these courses as under Smart and Skilled these Certificate II courses are discouraged as being too costly and not profitable.

We are ignoring successful courses in favour of almost useless money wasting VFH diploma courses.

VET FEE HELP must be stopped until the economic and social viability of courses it is applied to is assessed and proven to be advantages to the community. At the moment VET FEE HELP is designed to be and is highly successful in lining the pockets of shareholders in private companies with taxpayer's money. At the same time being a complete failure in enabling students to find employment. The money would be much better spent on entry level courses that lead to employment. Such as Pre-apprenticeships.