

**Submission
No 277**

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

Name: Mr Sean O'Shannessy

Date received: 13/09/2015

To the Inquiry,

I attended the inquiry hearing today and two members asked me to make a submission now so I respectfully ask that you accept this submission.

I am a student at Wollongbar TAFE studying Horticulture and my 16 year old son is studying a Cert 1 in mechanics there too . My course is directly threatened with serious disruption by the current attack on TAFE. Our excellent teacher who has over 20 years teaching and industry experience is slated for "deletion" mid next term. There is no conceivable way that this can be done without major negative impacts on all enrolled students.

TAFE is one of Australia's great democratic institutions. Free public vocational education and training is fundamental to improving productivity and social mobility. For generations now it has been the place that working Australians have come to get a start in life. Just about every Aussie could name a family member who has improved themselves and our society by learning productive skills at TAFE. In your travels I ask of you that you ask every witness how many they can name?

TAFE has been the benchmark for excellence in training for generations. What will set the benchmark when it is destroyed? Like any great institution it acts like a keel on the ship of state keeping us upright and on course. If some bright spark on a ship decided "we don't need all that dead weight, let's sell the keel off for a quick buck" you'd throw them over board. There maybe a few quick bucks to be made in killing TAFE and selling off its corpse but the windfall will come and go quickly and then what? If we squander the decades of invested expertise and infrastructure that TAFE is home to they are unlikely to simply spring anew from a culture of short term profit. I ask of you that you enquire of your witnesses what counterbalancing institution do they foresee replacing TAFE to exemplify and defend the standard of training for all Australians?

My fellow students and I fall into two broad categories, young men and women taking their first steps into the workforce and mature workers who for various reasons need to retrain. What we all have in common is that all of us want to make a productive contribution to our country and our world. None of us are rich and none of us are likely to get rich from our endeavours. How could we afford to pay private providers for the training we need? How could private RTOs make a sustainable profit out of us? I ask of you to question your witnesses on who among the private sector is going to run courses that are essential to building our nation but do not turn a profit?

Once upon a time conservatives worked to protect our institutions and traditions. Now those who call themselves conservative seem determined to profit from their demise. TAFE has already been cut to the bone over the past couple of decades. There is no fat left to trim. Transferring funding from TAFE to the private sector will enrich a few profiteering training providers at the expense of the rest of NSW. It is hard not to conclude that there is an unstated agenda to create chaos in TAFE to weaken it for the final blow. When it dies there will be a short party for a few operators and then we will be left with no options for skilled workers except 457 visa holders. This suits those with their snouts in the troughs but will be disastrous for Australia's prosperity and independence. Please do not succumb to the temptation to pander to those who would sell our nation down the river. I submit that we must all stand firm against being herded over that cliff.

Thank you for the good work you do to find the truth in this important inquiry. You serve the people of NSW well in seeking sustainable and equitable solutions to fostering a skilled workforce and I appreciate it.

Sincerely

Sean O'Shannessy