

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

Name: Name suppressed

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Partially Confidential

TAFE NSW Submission

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In 1969 my family emigrated from Ireland and settled in Blayney NSW. The abattoirs in Blayney was the major employer, and for unskilled migrants was an easy entry into the workforce. I was the second youngest of the seven children who arrived with my parents. Over eleven years, as a child, I watched each of my older brothers and one sister leave school at the earliest opportunity to start labouring at the abattoirs. This early transition from school to the workforce without a sound education sealed their fate and from that point on, they were all destined to a life, as unskilled labourers. Over the years they have all spent numerous years on benefits of various forms, as they looked for work, or recovered from work related injuries.

In contrast, in 1980 I completed my school certificate, the first in our family. My father passed away a year earlier and knowing the burden I would place on my aging mother I elected not to continue at school or attempt to study at university.

In 1981 I secured an apprenticeship as a fitter machinist. I attended TAFE where I was able to enrol free of charge. I believe if it had not been for that I could not have studied at TAFE. I completed my apprenticeship, became a tradesman, and as a result I have been employed continuously for the past thirty five years.

I have learned the value of education. In my lifetime have completed several TAFE courses including: Certificate III in fitting and machining, welding fabrication, Fluid power, Fluid power control, Word processing, digital photography and Plan, conduct and deliver training. Each of these courses helped me to keep my job, gain a pay increase, or move on to a better job.

Over the years I developed a keen interest in TAFE to the point where I pursued a career in TAFE teaching. I studied at Charles Sturt University as a distance education student while I was working on the tools at a manufacturing company. As a result, I was successful at gaining employment as a casual TAFE teacher in 1999. After five years as a part-time casual I was finally employed as a full-time temporary teacher, two years later I was transitioned to a permanent position.

I am currently employed as a full time TAFE teacher of fitting and machining and I believe it is one of the best jobs anyone could ask for. I see many students each year commence their studies as children fresh from school, many of them in circumstances not dissimilar to my own when I started my working career. TAFE gives them a pathway to a skilled career, where they develop as people to become valuable contributors to our community.

The recent changes brought about by Smart and Skilled have been devastating. Staff morale has been decimated. The uncertainty that has been created by course cuts, and course discounting in the name of trying to make a profit, has been ridiculous. The current strategies employed by middle management at TAFE institutes has already created a reduction in quality of many courses. We now deliver what we can afford, not what we need to cover. Older staff who are ready to retire are rethinking their plans in the hope of redundancies. Younger keener staff are becoming disgruntled by the need to compromise their delivery and the never ending cuts and lack of funds for basic consumables. Last weekend I was contacted by one such person to act as a professional referee, as he will soon be leaving to pursue a new career. We can't afford to lose good people like this.

We are becoming a joke to our students, as we can't afford to present realistic training experiences. Because we are constantly compromising methods in the name of cost reduction. Whoever is directing us, is preparing our market for private providers to walk in and take over.

We desperately need a better funding model. Without it TAFE NSW will be soon be finished.

Please consider this submission thoughtfully as it is honest and heartfelt.