

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

Name: Ms Mary Hicks

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To Whom it May Concern,

My experience with TAFE has always been an inspirational learning environment with rewarding outcomes. The teachers have been professional and coherent and very present. Each time I have had to upgrade my skills due to either leaving school or long absences from years of travelling in my late teens and twenties, to becoming a mother in my thirties and then each time returning to the workforce a course suited to the times and my area of interest would always be available and so this is where I would immediately go to for the essential upgrades for life's evolution. My motto was if in doubt and you cannot find work go back to TAFE! The fact that it is affordable has always returned me back to the work force in a timely manner. I can be a productive citizen sooner with many opportunities available. As a single mother this has now become a difficulty. I find at my age of 48 there wasn't going to be much of a future for long in my past experiences of employment which was mainly hospitality due to the 12 years of travelling abroad and working in resorts, it is impossible with three children to care for, two of whom are my foster sons, being in hospitality with its necessary hours of nights and weekends and the office jobs are very scarce in this area. I therefore have followed a long awaited dream and took a sizeable loan to embark on this dream to do hairdressing & beauty at TAFE. I am near completing my course in Cert 111 hairdressing and have loved this course and all the teachers who help us passionately. I lately wanted to take up a course to extend my prospects and add Nails Cert 11 to my resume, however I was not eligible for this course due to a Cert 1V in Web design and IT I had done five years previously, which I will add that there was not any work available in our small area of Nambucca, however what this course did give to me was an upgrade of knowledge on how to use the latest software in computers so I could navigate around and help my children which it has done so well that I can help them with their assignments and school work, and I am grateful for this knowledge however I now have inadvertently been exposed to these new changes of Smart & Skilled to the TAFE system and am no longer eligible for a Cert 11 course that would compliment my Hairdressing, and at my age give me better prospects of employment compared to the many younger girls entering the industry, I cannot afford any more for courses after paying \$12,000.00 for my commercial course of Cert 111 in Hairdressing and to pay another \$4000.00 for only a Cert 11 in nails is not possible it also is ridiculously expensive when some of my peers will only have to pay \$160.00 because they are eligible for the subsidy. So now knowledge is my curse not empowering. I see no sense in this. I have paid a lot of money for a course and clearly the Cert 1V IT computer course would no longer be relevant due to the 5 year time frame since I studied that, with the advanced changes in the computer industry every month leaping forward that is, what I learnt then is now completely out dated and would not be relevant anymore anyway. I am worried that if I do not obtain work, I will not receive the industry experience that I now need to polish my new skills, if I cannot offer a little more. And I will now no longer be eligible for affordable study of any kind, I will of put my family in debt for nothing and my aspirations for a great future and to help my children through their higher education will be impossible. With homelessness rising it makes me very alert to how easily this could happen to regular families so therefore without TAFE the fear is for our people the public and the next generations to come, there will be more crime, excessive homelessness and more small community social issues with people just desperate to survive. These rural communities rely on these services, we do without so much as it is, we travel far to obtain many services, I drive a three hour round trip on the Pacific Highway

which is a hazardous daily journey in itself with daily problems of Highway construction delays and many terrible accidents to attend TAFE so clearly I am committed, please think wisely before taking this iconic institution of education away which offers unbiased, equal opportunities for each and every one of us.

TAFE not only generates employment it employs people.

My Tafe experiences: Leaving school in 1982 - Secretarial course at Brookvale TAFE, NSW
(I then worked for Developmental Disabilities
for Mona Vale Hospital as Clerk Grade 1)

1983 - Word processing course at Brookvale TAFE
NSW. (still at DDS, employment graded each
time I did a course)

1991 - Medical terminology course at Tweed Hds
TAFE

2010 – Information technology, digital media @
Macksville TAFE

2013 - Hair & beauty Cert 11 & 111 @ CoffsHarbour
TAFE (still attending)

2014 - RSA OTEN TAFE

Sincerely yours,

Mary Hicks