

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

Name: Name suppressed

Date received: 13/08/2015

Partially Confidential

TAFE SUBMISSION – New Smart and Skilled fee structure

Dear Sir/Madam

We were disappointed with the introduction of the Smart and Skilled fee structure in 2015 by the NSW Government. It is effectively going to destroy the TAFE system and make it almost impossible for students to become skilled. How is this to affect unemployment?

Not to mention the continuing students who are now caught mid-way through a qualification and have no choice but to come up with the escalated fees.

The introduction of this new fee structure at the Hunter TAFE has been a nightmare for students, as they have been kept in the dark as to the new fees and whether their course was to be covered under the Smart and Skilled subsidy. Many continuing students received their invoice this year from the TAFE on Friday 27th February and it was to be paid by Tuesday 3rd March. This was the FIRST notification of the actual fee cost. Not much notice!

Fees have hiked up to at least double the cost of last year (even with the subsidy). And for those courses not subsidised (full-fee paying), the fee has escalated up to ten times or more the cost of last year's course fees.

The TAFE has always fulfilled a pivotal role in further education and now, it appears, it will be gone.

How can this be a good and fair system?

1. Our Positive Experiences of TAFE

As a student, and now parent, TAFE has been beneficial in filling an educational need in the community.

My experience at TAFE was during my working life, where I did Certificate courses to further my career prospects. I completed the course/s at night and worked during the day. These courses were affordable and of good quality. My husband completed several Adv Diploma level courses at night when first beginning his career at BHP as part of a traineeship and later in his working life completed a Cert IV in Business (marketing) and then an Adv Diploma of Business Management.

My son is now completing an Industrial Design Diploma and will follow through with the Advanced Diploma with the intention of continuing with the final year at University to complete the Bachelor Degree. The teachers are experienced and professional. This course is not available in many institutions in Australia and we are lucky to have it

available here in Newcastle. Not quite so lucky anymore as the cost is rather high for the students now.

Newcastle and the Hunter region have relied heavily on TAFE as an educational institution and it has served the region well until the introduction of Smart and Skilled.

2. The Unique values and benefits of TAFE

The TAFE has, until the introduction of Smart and Skilled, provided education for a broad cross-section of the community – school leavers, job seekers, workers.

TAFE, as it was, provided affordable and effective training. Now, it doesn't seem to be affordable and with the cutting of hours and teachers in courses, perhaps not as effective either.

Now, we have concerns about the development of skills in the region.

3. Negative experiences with private providers

Private provider experiences

As student and instructor in the private sector, courses are not as accountable as they are at TAFE. Employers do not give the prospective employees with private provider qualifications as much credibility as those who have qualifications from TAFE. It has long been recognised in the workforce, that employees who have come from TAFE have a broad variety of knowledge and skills, both practical and theoretical to bring to their workplace.

Costs are far too high in the private institutions, with courses being offered over a short timeframe at a high cost to students.

One must question the training standards, quality of courses, lack of appropriate training and assessment offered with the private providers and the monitoring of these.

4. Impacts of Smart and Skilled on TAFE

Staff numbers, lack of courses, minimal hours.

The new Smart and Skilled system has basically reduced staff numbers and hours in TAFE which impacts directly on the students. Many courses are not running any more, giving limited options to students.

Actual Costs

I will make a comparison of costs of a particular course below, under the old TAFE payment system and the new Smart and Skilled system.

DIPLOMA INDUSTRIAL DESIGN

The actual amount paid for the year in 2014 - $\$757 \times 2 = \1514.00

Actual amount paid this year with Smart and Skilled Subsidy 2015 - $\$3119.74$

Smart and Skilled Full fee 2015 (no subsidy) - $\$5070$.

ADVANCED DIPLOMA INDUSTRIAL DESIGN (continuation from Diploma)

Quoted figures from S&S document 2015 below with subsidy as a 2nd qualification - $\$6320$.

Smart and Skilled Full fee (no subsidy) - $\$13580$.

These S&S figures are from the Smart and Skilled Fees 2015 document available on www.trainingnsw.gov.au

Under the new Smart and Skilled regime, the cost of the Diploma in 2015 with the subsidy has doubled from the previous year. The new Smart and Skilled full fee cost has more than tripled.

Under the new Smart and Skilled system, the Advanced Diploma costs with the subsidy will be more than 4 times the cost under the previous payment system. The Smart and Skilled full fee cost will be 9 times the cost under the previous payment system.

These costs are quite outrageous and will make education and qualifications unobtainable for most.

Some students are already caught mid-way through the course (my son) and have little option but to continue through with the new fee structure. It was completely unfair to change the fee structure for existing students in the middle of a course.

All of this leads to a loss of confidence in the future of TAFE.

We would like to see a more affordable TAFE fee structure and not the Smart and Skilled fee structure that we have had thrust upon us this year.