

Submission  
No 174

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

**Name:** Name suppressed

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Partially Confidential

## NSW INQUIRY INTO TAFE

TAFE is a catalyst to enable people from all levels of society to obtain work and a good future. It really is too valuable to lose but that is what is happening. The TAFE that we know is changing dramatically to become focused only on its financial survival and not focused on quality of service and teaching and providing an equitable chance for all to gain a livelihood. It can be seen that TAFE NSW is going in the same direction as the Victorian TAFE system which was reduced from over 80% to only 27% of the vocational education and training market.

The policies of Smart and Skilled urgently need to be amended to enable disadvantaged people to have a future and to be able to afford to train for work. Precluding prospective students from training by having such high fees is extremely short sighted as it leads to increased unemployment and all the negatives that come with this such as poverty, increased crime rate etc. It also costs far more in the long run as less people will be productive and pay taxes and there will be a greater burden on the welfare system.

People who are permanent residents or on humanitarian visas or outside the age range (15 to 30) of the fee free scholarships yet on Centrelink benefits are especially disadvantaged. All of these excluded people still have the same living costs and need to work and cannot afford very high fees.

Due to the high fees for some courses especially for the above mentioned prospective students there has been a great decrease in student numbers at TAFE. Many prospective students have been very motivated to study but are extremely disappointed when they find out the course may cost them \$5K or \$7K and even with pay by instalments there is no way they can afford this. I know of many students who are unable to afford to eat properly so when told of these new fees become very despondent.

Some prospective students come to TAFE after signing up for a course at one of the private colleges after high pressure sales and finding they are committed to an expensive government loan to do a course they are not capable of doing due to their low level of English. While some private colleges are good, at some of the dodgy colleges applicants haven't understood what they were signing for due to limited English or understanding.

The Counsellors/Career Advisers (who are psychologists and yet paid less than 1/3 as much as psychologists) at South Western Sydney Institute have been cut by more than 50% to an average of one counsellor for each campus. All of our Senior Counsellors who have invaluable experience have been deleted and some other institutes are looking at following this model. There appears to be a plan to replace the current Counsellors with Student Support Officers with only a Year 10 qualification. 7 of these have been added to the South West Sydney Institute of TAFE's corporate plan when the Senior Counsellors were deleted.

Counselling and Career Advice is a unique benefit of TAFE. It not only helps prospective students to find the right course at the right level but helps often vulnerable students overcome any barriers to completion so they can continue and complete their courses. TAFE helps students in this most disadvantaged area who have anxiety, depression and other psychiatric conditions, those who are suicidal or who have been bullied or harassed for example to enable them to complete their courses and have a future. Counsellors are needed for the many crisis situations in TAFE where duty of care for safe campuses for tens of thousands of students are involved.

Please advocate to keep Counsellors and specialist equity staff in TAFE to give all students the opportunity to complete their study and gain a future.

Please save TAFE and amend Smart and Skilled so that disadvantaged students can afford to train for work for our state's future and not become dependent on welfare! Thank you.