

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

**Organisation:** Name suppressed  
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Partially Confidential

## **Inquiry into Vocational Education and Training in New South Wales**

I submit the following information to the Inquiry from the perspective of a full time NSW TAFE teacher. The issues which have detrimentally affected the operation of TAFE under the Smart and Skilled NSW Government policy are:

1. The IT system SALM introduced in October 2014 which is supposed to manage the enrolment and progression to conclusion of a student's qualification is a disaster. This IT system does not work: it cannot enrol, manage attendances, store competency outcomes or issue results. Students in Semester 2 2014 did not get results until well into Semester 1 2015. Semester 1 enrolments were chaotic as have been Semester 2 2015. Teachers have been working under shocking circumstances being told that they must get results and student progression details "into the system" with a non- functional IT system in use. These unrealistic demands by TAFE management have made TAFE a very stressful workplace. Teachers have reported to their Work Health and Safety Committee that there have been serious physical and psychological effects of excessive demands and workloads. This was never acknowledged by Institute management who confused the effects of change management in the workplace with the effects of constantly demanding employees use defective tools and hold them responsible when the outcome is deficient. Teachers have been abused by students and employers who never received results. International students who completed courses and need to enrol at university had no evidence of competency from TAFE to support their university enrolment. This situation caused one of my students to be one day off being unable to renew her student visa. Never once did TAFE close down the SALM IT system when it is totally apparent that it will never work and still does not. There needs to be an independent investigation into how the SALM IT system was purchased and installed for TAFE use. How can this happen with a cost of over \$600 million?
2. The Smart and Skilled system has seen TAFE hand all student vocational enquiries to customer service staff in TAFE to advise prospective students about courses. This has led to inaccurate and ill -informed

advice given to the public. The customer service staff have no qualifications to give students advice. The same customer service staff are also tasked with contacting students who have registered to enrol in courses at the start of each semester. It is a constant complaint from the public that they cannot get past the “register to enrol process” and are never contacted. Teaching staff have been instructed they have no role in contacting prospective students.

3. The rise in fees from January 1 2015 have caused students to be unable to continue in the course I teach. In semester 1 2015 my group went from 15 to 9 when the fees were calculated half way through their one semester course. In semester 2 2015 there were 15 students registered for the course I teach. They had never been contacted by customer service up until last week. These students had gone to other Registered Training Providers.
4. The lack of marketing skills in my Institute has been highlighted by the Smart and Skilled policy. The reliance on Choices Days has been an embarrassment. The last two Choices Days the public did not turn up. Using the same TV advertising rebadged for different TAFE Institutes is very lazy Marketing.
5. The low student numbers at my TAFE Campus have resulted in demands by Institute management that the teaching staff think of “creative solutions” to overcome financial loss three weeks into the student courses. Teachers were expected to tell students their courses were cut back by significant hours and with no opportunity to get a refund of the fees they had paid. Teaching staff have no authority to cut course hours or manage refund of fee issues.
6. My area of training is fully ASQA compliant. It has excellent Industry feedback. The failure of the SALM IT system under Smart and Skilled has

totally undermined the training I proudly deliver and the cost is so high that my students will find it difficult or impossible to pay. As a former business owner I have well found concerns that the lack of skilled people will cripple the economic growth of NSW. TAFE has a very enviable record of quality in the VET sector. I have had student after student come to my course with previous qualifications from other providers who have very little competency in skills required for Recognition. I find this to be very alarming.

7. Access to training by people with a disability is an important Equity issue. From January 1 this year it became very difficult for students who have a disability to get tutorial support to assist them in my course. In semester 1 2015 I had three students with serious learning disorders. They were given only 11.5 hours tutorial support for the whole semester between them. This was detrimental to them. The funding cuts to support for disabled students is a serious problem because teachers cannot keep taking on extra hours of support unfunded.