

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

Name: Name suppressed

Date received: 13/08/2015

Partially Confidential

Just this week I have had three students with babies return to complete their education. One of them had given birth four days previously. All of these students were 'second chance education', all had not completed year 10 at school for various reasons: behaviour issues, mental and physical health issues, pregnancy, alcohol and other drug issues of themselves or family members, isolation, money issues. These students cannot go to school. TAFE gives them the support to get the education that is going to change not only their lives but their children's life. Education is a basic right for every person. TAFE provides this without judgement. We have, before Smart and Skilled, been able to provide these students with additional help with Learner Support; Disability support; Language, Literacy and Numeracy support; Library services and Counselling. I went the accountant this week to find she was an ex-student of mine. She came to TAFE to do a women's course which she completed, went out to do Accounting and is now earning an income as an accountant. She was a single parent on a Centrelink benefit who has improved the lives of herself and her children and now is contributing to society, paying taxes to help others on Centrelink, education and health. I live in a rural area where the only option if school doesn't work is TAFE. The private RTO's don't offer the breadth of courses that TAFE does. The private RTO's don't have to offer the Learner Support; Disability support; Language, Literacy and Numeracy support; counselling and Library services that TAFE does. TAFE doesn't supply staff with company cars and does not make profit so money can be spent on the students that need our help.

There are not many work opportunities in my area. TAFE can provide the training that will make the students more employable.

Our area is a refugee resettlement area and TAFE provides the ESOL classes to support these students. Once these students have finished their English language class entitlement they often still need additional support. Pre S&S TAFE could provide additional support to these students to complete the vocational courses they enrol in and gain employment. We no longer have funding for Learner Support for these students.

TAFE saves lives. I will list stories of some of my students to show this. These are typical TAFE students.

A mature aged man in his 50's who although had worked his entire life never really knew how to read or write. This student was with us for years. He started off doing a Language, Literacy and Numeracy course. When he was confident in his abilities he completed his year 10 equivalent and was a great role model for the younger students. Upon completion of his year 10 he enrolled in and completed the year 12 equivalent course.

The single mother who did a Women's course, then year 12 equivalent, university and is now a local Lawyer.

A young female student, over 18, was working as a prostitute. She completed year 10 with us and went on to do a vocational course and opened a café.

An early school leaver who when first came to TAFE would have been unemployable. She completed year 10 with us and is now working part time at KFC.

Sometimes these students disappear as their messed up lives hit chaos again. They know they can come back to TAFE and we will accept them and they can continue their education. I have had students always in trouble at school for being out of uniform or always being late to school. The reality for these kids are that their parents, if they are still around, don't care, they don't have a school uniform or they have to take younger siblings to primary school before getting themselves to school. TAFE will welcome them into the classroom regardless of what they are wearing or how late they are. The youth at risk who after completing year 10 with us went on to do a Welfare course and ending up getting a job as a youth worker working with kids just like her who never had family support.

The kids who have become homeless but always turn up to TAFE because it is the one stable thing in their lives and because there are teachers who take an interest in them personally, know their name, know what is going on in their lives, who don't judge them, know where to send them to get help and who will educate them to better their lives, and often feed them as well.

The funding cuts to TAFE have increased class sizes. Second chance learners need smaller class sizes because of the additional needs of these students. Classes that previously could be funded with 8 students now need 19 students to break even. The institute is taking 47% of the funding to maintain TAFE buildings, support, and equipment. This money used to go to the section to run classes. The private RTO's don't have the same running costs as TAFE. They don't offer the expensive courses that TAFE does. TAFE needs additional funding to maintain campuses and classes and save lives. Course hours have been cut. We have to run courses at 65% of actual course hours. This makes it difficult for students, especially those who are disadvantaged, to be able to learn and course complete.

Many TAFE jobs have been lost, and continue to be lost, due to S&S. The money earned in these jobs will no longer be spent in the community. Yes the big supermarkets Coles and Woolworths will survive. The many smaller businesses in rural area who employ our kids won't survive. Gift shops, clothing, and cafes? The essentials will hopefully be paid first, the necessities, but not the non-essentials.

TAFE needs to have its funding maintained to provide the support we do to our students, to maintain the quality of education, to maintain the campuses and expensive courses. Where will the tradies be in a few years' time? Trades are expensive courses to provide, the private RTO's do not do these course or if they do it is with reduced hours and RPL.

In the US the size of the prisons are directly related to the funding and size of local schools. TAFE changes lives for people who may have ended up in the prison system. It is cheaper to educate people than to imprison them.

TAFE teaching staff are expected to have good qualifications to be required to teach. TAFE staff are professional. You get what you pay for and TAFE teaching staff are worth what they are paid.