

Submission
No 242

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

Name: Ms Margaret Bamford

Date received: 14/08/2015

Partially Confidential

From: Margaret Bamford

I trained in TAFE in the 70s -80s doing the Pathology Technicians Certificate and Higher Certificate (four years and two years part-time) to qualify as a Technical Officer (Scientific). I found the standard very high and staff very dedicated. Even if we didn't have the most up to date technology we learned time management, accuracy, troubleshooting etc using older methods. I have found my training invaluable in my work in agricultural research, an agricultural college and a private pathology laboratory.

I have worked in TAFE at Granville in the 70s and from 1988 to present, preparing the practical classes for Science and Pathology/Biology students and consider myself a role model for the students as to my standard of work.

To enter the course when I trained, you needed a minimum standard of maths and science, so you all started from much the same starting point.

I chose the course because I have an interest in Science. I regularly see students who seem to have no knowledge of or interest in science, so are they doing the course because of parental pressure or Centrelink requirements?

I see students who have few skills such as literacy, numeracy, time management or problem-solving – can this be taught in the first weeks?

For students with insufficient maths and science can a bridging course be run?

With our cutbacks some of the subjects are being dumbed down instead of inspiring students to continue. I try to bring in as much of the real world as possible eg the names of our pretend 'patients' are not John Smith and Sue Jones but significant real people from many different countries eg Elena Kats-Chernin, Waleed Aly, Gelila Bekele, Sergei Lukyanenko.

I think a significant barrier to students getting jobs is 1. They don't know how to apply for a job – how to address selection criteria etc and 2. They are not prepared to apply for jobs outside their local area.

I think TAFE fees have become too expensive and the enrolment too complex.

In our science area we don't have competition from private providers yet this is the reason given for the cutbacks. I think quality is often lacking in the private providers – I had the training manager tell me that Blood collectors trained by training are hopeless.

I think it is very easy for the training to keep up with employers – just look at what the employers are asking for. I keep a jobs board for our students and notify teachers if employers are asking for a particular technique or software package.

The main thing that has seen TAFE run into the ground is expecting it to make a profit. Education and health should never be run like that. Sure it needs to be run in an efficient manner, but cost-cutting has become rampant in some areas to the detriment of quality eg frontline staff cuts, while money is wasted in other areas eg more layers of management, renovations being done when they are not needed, repairs not done when they are needed and money wasted on IT systems that work badly when they work at all (EBS) or run hugely over budget (LMBR). Over the years I have seen our class preparation time cut back and back, meaning we have no wriggle room when something breaks down, isn't available or doesn't grow as expected eg bacteria, but we still try our best for the students. The latest round of "business efficiency" will see our ten staff cut to three!

I would be happy to provide further information if required.

Sincerely

Margaret Bamford