

**Submission
No 212**

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

Name: Mr David Briggs

Date received: 14/08/2015

Recommendations

Recommendation 1

Courses that are needed for the local economy and industries be provided by the nearest TAFE in order to prevent significant costs and travel times for students and apprentices.

Recommendation 2

Ensure high standards of tertiary education are delivered to ensure pathway and credit packages for TAFE to University will still exist before the higher education sector no longer offers credit or pathways due to the poor quality of tertiary education being delivered by private registered training organisations.

Recommendation 3

The same level of educational and minimal standards are adhered to by registered training organisations and TAFE to prevent worthless 'qualifications', to ensure the same high quality education being delivered and regular vigorous investigations to ensure compliance.

Recommendation 4

Ensure high quality of education is delivered in order to meet the future high demand for high quality training for disability workers for the numerous jobs needed under the National Disability Insurance Scheme.

Recommendation 5

Ensure that the minimum qualification to be a teacher/trainer/maker at TAFE and Registered Training Providers is standardised and that all providers delivering the Cert IV in Training and Assessment deliver this training package in a consistent manner to ensure high quality teaching and course content delivery to students and prevent teacher/trainer/makers from having only 8 days' worth of training.

Submission to Inquiry into vocational education and training in New South Wales

Dear committee members.

I would like to share with you my life journey and how TAFE has enabled me to have a second chance at engaging with education. Please bear with me and allow me to take you on a brief journey of my life thus far and how TAFE has enabled me to flourish as a person and go from a child who lived his life in Women's refuges escaping domestic violence, who developed School Phobia to someone who has been the first in my family to graduate from university, and is now studying a masters degree. After this short journey, I will address the terms of reference.

At the age of 7, my mother separated from my father after non-physical domestic violence become unbearable, my mother took me and my brother away from the family home. Due to my father being able to locate us through private investigators, we moved often and lived in women's refuges and rented accommodation whenever my mother could make ends meet. During that time and up until I was 16, I attended 12 different public and 'special' schools and 3 high schools. I become withdrawn, not wanting to attend school due to the constant moving and having to make friends all over again in addition to falling behind and thus I developed 'School Phobia' (now known as 'School Refusal').

During this time I had multiple visits from the School Truant Officer, senior Department of Education officials, Police NSW and the Department of Community Services (now FaCS). All of these experiences did not address the underlying issues and only made my phobia worse. I was also diagnosed with borderline Dyslexia which compounded with my School Phobia and falling behind making the school system a complete nightmare and an anxiety inducing environment.

I believe the education system failed me. It failed to address my underlying issues or taking into account my Dyslexia and rather placed me in 'special' schools for children with behavioural issues such as Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) where all attention was diverted to working with the behaviour of the other students rather than gearing the learning environment and content to a Dyslexic child. Placing an anxious withdrawn child without anger management issues into such an environment was not conducive to learning. I completely dropped out of the education system at the age of 14.

I become a disillusioned teenager and 'dabbled' with many unsociable behaviours desperately trying to understand who I was and how or if I fitted into this world and often contemplated taking my own life. Through deep soul searching and contemplation, I decided that I needed to fill that black hole within me and that black hole was my missed opportunity to gain an education. I decided I had to go back and face my innermost fears and finally go back to school and complete my education.

From this conviction, I have never looked back and I hit the ground running. I took up the opportunity to have a second chance at education. I went to TAFE to complete my high school equivalency, the Tertiary Preparation Certificate (TPC) in 2009 and scored 259/300 which is equivalent to an ATAR of 87.3, not bad for someone with Dyslexia who had no consistent formal education in their childhood! During my time studying TPC, I was the vice-president and then president of the Campbelltown TAFE Student Association, which now no longer exists due to funding cuts.

After this I went on to complete a Certificate IV in Community Services, a Diploma of Community Services and a Diploma of Community Services (Case Management) and achieving distinction grades in all of my subjects and graduated with distinction for both diplomas. Due to my high achievement, I was nominated for the Western Sydney Regional Vocational Student of the Year and was a finalist in addition to winning the Jenny Shylan and Mike Horne High Achievement Award.

After I completed the diploma courses, I went on to undertake a TAFE to university pathways program with Charles Sturt University (CSU) and studied the Bachelor of Social Science (Social Welfare) and was awarded the CSU TAFE to University Scholarship based on my previous academic merit and performance in addition to a textbook grant. I graduated 'with distinction' from the bachelor degree with a Grade Point Average of 6.63 out of 7.00.

At present, I am studying a Master of Social Work at Southern Cross University part-time and working part-time in the disability sector with adults who have an intellectual

disability and have just bought a house and soon will have a mortgage even in this expensive housing market.

I guess you can see the transformation. I went from being a withdrawn child with little hope for the future, escaping domestic violence, leading a life as a disillusioned teenager that may of led me down the path to the criminal justice system or ending my own life, but rather I took the other option, that is, the second chance that TAFE gave me which has enabled me to believe in myself and achieve many unbelievable feats given my background.

In addition, I am also the first in my family to complete their high school education, albeit not through the traditional method, attend and complete university and go on to a masters degree. All of these achievements would not have been possible without TAFE and the teachers who engaged me and instilled in me a passion for learning whilst providing me with the skills I needed to enter the work force.

I truly hope that TAFE will continue to be that place where disengaged young people of the future will be given a second chance and achieve their full potential regardless of the adversities of their childhood in addition to genuine vocational dreams being fulfilled.


With, Smart and Skilled, I am deeply concerned that a younger me today, or another fellow human being in their teens today who has faced significant adversity, would

not have the same opportunities today under Smart and Skilled as I had and that they would be lost and locked out of an opportunity for second chance education by costs, debt and dumbing down of tertiary educational standards.


I am more than happy to attend the inquiry in person, give oral evidence and to answer questions from committee members or to be contacted.

Sincerest regards,

David Martin Briggs JP.



I WANT YOU TO REMEMBER THAT TAFE IS BOTH A **SECOND CHANCE** FOR MANY AS WELL AS A PROVIDER FOR MANY IMPORTANT **GENUINE VOCATIONS AND SKILLS THAT NSW NEEDS**. SMART AND SKILLED WILL SHUT OUT MANY PEOPLE FROM **SOCIAL MOBILITY** DUE THE DEBT OF STUDENT FEES AND LOANS, AND IF THEY DO ATTEND TAFE OR A PRIVATE PROVIDER, THAT THEY WILL BE **BURDENED WITH DEBT** AT A TIME THEY ARE JUST GETTING THEIR LIFE ON TRACK, STARTING A FAMILY AND LOOKING TO BUY A HOUSE AND/OR MOVING OUT OF POVERTY.



“I AM DEEPLY CONCERNED THAT A YOUNGER ME OF TODAY, OR ANOTHER FELLOW HUMAN BEING IN THEIR TEENS TODAY WHO HAS FACED SIGNIFICANT ADVERSITY, WOULD NOT HAVE THE SAME OPPORTUNITIES UNDER SMART AND SKILLED AS I HAD, AND THAT THEY WOULD BE LOST AND LOCKED OUT OF AN OPPORTUNITY FOR SECOND CHANCE EDUCATION BY FEE COSTS, DEBT AND DUMBING DOWN OF TERTIARY EDUCATIONAL STANDARDS”.

a - the factors influencing student choice about entering the vocational education and training system.

a.i motivation to study

&

a.ii choice of course, course location and method of study

Richmond TAFE which is my local college, ceased offering turf management courses starting from the first semester of 2015¹. Given that the Hawkesbury is the biggest producer of turf in Australia and directly employs 240 people², having Richmond TAFE no longer providing these courses for apprentices and those wishing to go into will add a significant burden to apprentices who will have to travel further afield.

The nearest TAFE that that provides turf management courses is now Ryde TAFE, over 50.3 kilometres away. This adds a significant cost burden to apprentices who already work long hours 3-4 days per week with very limited pay (\$10.07 per hour, \$322.24 for four days work pay per week³) and have to pay for toll roads along the journey and for fuel costs⁴ which takes 46 minutes on a good day from Richmond TAFE. Public transport is not an option for those apprentices living the Hawkesbury as the transportation system here is very poor. It would take 2 hours and 7 minutes to get to Ryde TAFE by 9:00am leaving at 5:50am in the morning⁵.

¹ <http://www.hawkesburygazette.com.au/story/2772828/turf-course-cut-back-at-tafe/>

² <http://www.turfaustralia.com.au/professionals/turf-growers-association-new-south-wales>

³ <http://calculate.fairwork.gov.au/CheckPay/Summary>

⁴ <https://www.google.com.au/maps/dir/The+Northern+Sydney+Institute+Ryde+Campus,+Blaxland+Road,+Ryde,+New+South+Wales/Western+Sydney+Institute,+Blacktown+Road,+Richmond+NSW+2753/@-33.728768,150.7957909,11z/data=!3m1!4b1!4m13!4m12!1m5!1m1!1s0x6b12a5b0b0b57225:0xd5c481573de9395c!2m2!1d151.1042271!2d-33.8070504!1m5!1m1!1s0x6b1282a7cc5c60ab:0x9845244613d7dcc8!2m2!1d150.7548461!2d-33.6104055>

⁵ http://tp.transportnsw.info/nsw/XSLT_TRIP_REQUEST2?language=en&type_origin=poiID&name_origin=33950:95323031:-1&type_destination=poiID&name_destination=33934:95352012:-

Here are some quotes from students affected by the cessation of turf management courses at Richmond TAFE as reported in the local paper, the Hawkesbury Gazette:

“Three students said to continue studying turf management, they would have to commute daily to Ryde TAFE.

“I live in Glenmore Park; I’ll have to travel an extra hour or hour-and-a-half to get there,” Scott Lane said.

“It’s so inconvenient; we had a good set-up here.”

Zac Watkins, who also lives in Glenmore Park, said Richmond TAFE was “convenient and close by”.

“It’s a blow to me, but it’s also bad for people in the Hawkesbury and Blue Mountains who won’t have the opportunity to go to a local TAFE that supports this industry”⁶.

This clearly shows that TAFE needs to be providing what the industries in the area need, not sending students to TAFEs far away from the adding significant travel time and costs to students and apprentices for extremely low wages.

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⁶ <http://www.hawkesburygazette.com.au/story/2772828/turf-course-cut-back-at-tafe/>



RECOMMENDATION 1

COURSES THAT ARE NEEDED FOR THE LOCAL ECONOMY AND INDUSTRIES BE PROVIDED BY THE NEAREST TAFE IN ORDER TO PREVENT SIGNIFICANT COSTS AND TRAVEL TIMES FOR STUDENTS AND APPRENTICES.

b. the role played by public and private vocational education providers and industry

b.i educational linkages with secondary and higher education

&

d. the effects of a competitive training market on student access to education, training, skills and pathways to employment, including opportunities and pathways to further education and employment for the most vulnerable in our community including those suffering a disability or severe disadvantage

As you can see from my personal story above, it is clear that TAFE has a role to play in providing linkages with higher education. I believe that I would not have been able to attend university without attending TAFE. TAFE gave me the skills I needed to

succeed at university and I am concerned that under Smart and Skilled, such opportunities will no longer be provided.

Because I never completed year 8, I lacked academic skills, study skills and missed a substantial amount of important foundational educational concepts and knowledge. By going to TAFE and completing the TPC course, I was able to address this. TPC gave me more confidence in myself and gave me the skills I needed to further my education.

If it was not for the TAFE pathways program to university, I believe I would not have undertaken university studies because my life scripting told me I couldn't do it. I lacked confidence, however, due to teachers at TAFE believing in me and instilling me with the skills I needed to go on to university through a TAFE pathway program, I succeed.

There are a number of TAFE pathway programs and credit packages for TAFE graduates. For example, The integrated TAFE and Charles Sturt University Bachelor of Social Work is one example of a successful TAFE pathway program in a rural area⁷.

⁷ http://www.csu.edu.au/courses/undergraduate/social_work_dubbo/course-overview

When students are provided with the supportive environment that TAFE offers, students are able to gain confidence and skills they need to transition to the workforce or to higher education.

The following industries have credit package and pathway program arrangements with various universities.

- Agriculture, Horticulture and Natural Resource Management
- Architecture, Building and Construction, Surveying
- Business, Financial Services and Accounting
- Communications and Interpreting
- Community Services and Health
- Cultural Industries
- Design
- Hairdressing and Beauty
- Horse Industry
- Information and Telecommunications Technology
- Manufacturing, Engineering and Electrotechnology
- Retail
- Sport and Recreation
- Tourism, Hospitality and Events
- Transport, Logistics, Aeroskills and Aviation, Automotive⁸

⁸ <https://www.tafensw.edu.au/courses/study-options/tafe-to-university>

This clearly shows that attending TAFE can help one attend university through various credit package arrangements. The government needs to ensure that these credit packages and pathway programs will still exist because under the current dumbing down and poor enforcement of standards, universities may no longer offer credit or pathway programs due to the poor and inconsistent quality of tertiary education.



RECOMMENDATION 2

ENSURE HIGH STANDARDS OF TERTIARY EDUCATION ARE DELIVERED TO ENSURE PATHWAY AND CREDIT PACKAGES FOR TAFE TO UNIVERSITY WILL STILL EXISTS BEFORE THE HIGHER EDUCATION SECTOR NO LONGER OFFERS CREDIT OR PATHWAYS DUE TO THE POOR QUALITY OF TERTIARY EDUCATION BEING DELIVERED BY PRIVATE REGISTERED TRAINING ORGANISATIONS.

Concerns about quality of private providers

There are major concerns with the outsourcing of tertiary education to the private sector registered training organisations (RTOs). The previous federal inquiry into Technical and further education in Australia in 2014⁹ heard that some students undertaking motor mechanic courses did not spend any time under the bonnet and could not perform an oil or brake change once they completed the course. One

⁹ http://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/Senate/Education_and_Employment/TAFE

particularly concerning case was a school VET program run by a private provider teaching students how to use mechanical tools with pictures and that they never touched nor handled any tools¹⁰.

It is also extremely concerning some childcare centres are now 'blacklisting' graduates from certain private providers and will not allow them to work at their childcare centre because the training is so inadequate. Childcare is an industry that works with a vulnerable population that requires a certain skill set in order to meet a child's care, early educational and psychosocial needs, and child protection training¹¹. We cannot have poor quality training for those who work with vulnerable populations.

Additionally, as will be stated below in more detail, a Cert IV in training and assessment can be completed in 8 days and for as little as \$350¹². This is the qualification needed to be a teacher/trainer at TAFE and private providers.

If the NSW government does decide to continue down the path of further privatisation with Smart and Skilled and an increased market share by provide providers, it needs to ensure that the same level of standards provided by TAFE pre Smart and Skilled are delivered and adhered to, otherwise students will have worthless 'qualifications' that they have paid a significant amount to study or are in debt for and are unable to obtain employment with. Without such safeguards, NSW

¹⁰ <http://www.heraldsun.com.au/news/victoria/students-are-gaining-worthless-certificates-through-dodgy-courses-a-tafe-and-private-training-inquiry-reveals/story-fni0fit3-1226891556664>

¹¹ <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2014-09-10/childcare-centres-blacklist-organisations-over-poor-training/5732270>

¹² <http://www.yorkcollege.nsw.edu.au/certIV-training-and-assessment/online-cert-iv-tae> - viewed 14/08/15

will become poorly skilled and will not be equipped to provide the skills needed in skill shortage industries such as childcare, electoral trades panel betterers, construction trades, hairdressers, and bakers to name a few which are listed on the NSW skill shortage list¹³.



RECOMMENDATION 3

THE SAME LEVEL OF EDUCATIONAL AND MINIMAL STANDARDS ARE ADHERED TO BY REGISTERED TRAINING ORGANISATIONS AND TAFE TO PREVENT WORTHLESS 'QUALIFICATIONS', TO ENSURE THE SAME HIGH QUALITY EDUCATION BEING DELIVERED AND REGULAR VIGOROUS INVESTIGATIONS TO ENSURE COMPLIANCE.

¹³ http://docs.employment.gov.au/system/files/doc/other/skillshortagelistnsw_2.pdf

- b.ii the development of skills in the New South Wales economy &
- b. iii the development of opportunities for unemployed people, particularly migrants and persons in the mature workers' category, to improve themselves and increase their life, education and employment prospects

The Disability Sector

TAFE would be able to train the future workforce needed for the National Disability Insurance Scheme. As there will be 110,000-130,000 shortage of skilled workers in the disability sector to provide the services of the NDIS, TAFE would be able to play a unique role and train the future NDIS workforce¹⁴.

The NSW government is privatising disability services and the Department of Ageing, Disability and Homecare (ADHC) will be closing in 2016. This closure will also mean a two year gap between the full roll out of the NDIS and when ADHC closing, possibly leaving many people with disability without services for two years. As a result, of both the increased need for disability workers and the closure of ADHC, there will be a high demand for high quality training for disability workers. With the change in the model of how disability services will be delivered under the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS), significant safeguards need to be put in place.

¹⁴ <http://www.smh.com.au/federal-politics/political-news/shortage-of-workers-may-put-disabilitycare-at-risk-20130528-2n9in.html>

Disability workers will need to have high quality training, not just in how to provide 'care' but also right attitudinal outlooks. TAFE is in a prime position to train the skill shortage area as it has both the reputation and capacity to deliver high quality training. People with disability are a vulnerable group in society.

For students that go on to study diploma and advanced diploma level courses, their lifetime earnings would increase by \$400,000 (\$10,000 a year) with an average weekly income of \$1000 compared to year 12 leavers alone who earn on average \$800 per week¹⁵. Therefore, students will have lifelong benefits upon completing diploma and advanced diploma level studies, with increased skills, this will help the business community overcome skill shortage difficulties and enable disadvantaged students to gain better access to quality training.



¹⁵http://www.dpmc.gov.au/publications/skills_for_all_australians/chapter4_reduced_upfront_costs_for_students.html#p4_2

c. factors affecting the cost of delivery of affordable and accessible vocational education and training, including the influence of the co-contribution funding model on student behaviour and completion rates

& f. the Smart and Skilled reforms

The reason why teaching costs are higher at TAFE is due to the high quality of TAFE teachers, however, this is being eroded. At present, NSW TAFE requires teachers to at least have a qualification greater than that which they are delivering to students as a way of ensuring that teachers at least have some knowledge in the area they are teaching. However, no statutory regulation requires RTOs to follow this same measure, the only legal requirement is that assessors have a Certificate IV in Workplace Training and Assessment, and the minimum requirement for 'teaching' is that teachers are under the supervision of someone who holds a Certificate IV in Training and Assessment and the assessments to be assessed by this supervisor¹⁶.



RECOMMENDATION 4

ENSURE HIGH QUALITY OF EDUCATION IS DELIVERED IN ORDER TO MEET THE FUTURE HIGH DEMAND FOR HIGH QUALITY TRAINING FOR DISABILITY WORKERS FOR THE NUMEROUS JOBS NEEDED UNDER THE NATIONAL DISABILITY INSURANCE SCHEME.

¹⁶ <http://www.rmit.edu.au/policies/tafeteachingcompetency>

A Certificate IV in Training and Assessment (also known as TAE) course can be completed within only 8 days¹⁷ from some RTOs and at as low as \$350.00¹⁸ (lowest I could find by a NSW private RTO) via an on-line course. Undertaking the same TAE course at OTEN online of TAFE costs \$ 1,960 and takes 12 months to complete. This highlights that the quality of courses is significantly different across private providers and TAFE as completing a TAE in 8 days rather than 12 months is likely to be of a significantly lower quality.

This essentially creates a two tiered system wherein VET students are second rate and perhaps it is assumed by the government and regulators that VET students do not need highly qualified teachers. Effectively, students in the VET sector may be taught by ‘teachers’ who have had only 8 days’ worth of training. If we expect our toddlers to be taught by university trained Early Childhood Educators, primary and high school teachers which must have at least a bachelor to teach and often a masters, why are VET teachers delivering class content on 8 days’ worth of training?

This highlights that not only is funding being cut, but the international reputation and quality of Australia’s VET sector is being dumbed down due to low teacher quality standards under the guise of market rationalism. The education ‘market’ is not regulating itself and strongly enforced regulation is needed to increase the minimum

¹⁷<http://mci.edu.au/trainer-academy/certificate-iv-in-training-and-assessment-workplace-training-certificate-TAE40110>

¹⁸ <http://www.yorkcollege.nsw.edu.au/certIV-training-and-assessment/online-cert-iv-tae> - viewed 14/08/15

standards to be a teacher in the VET sector and ensure quality courses are being delivered.

With this marketization of the VET sector, it has changed TAFE and VET training to a purely business operation rather than a quality public education institution. In a response to the “Skilling Australia for the future”, one TAFE lecturer wrote that;

“The notion of tendering also changes the nature of training from a public good to a commercial activity and in doing so threatens the transformative nature of education concentrating more on training as a commercial activity.”¹⁹



RECOMMENDATION 5

ENSURE THAT THE MINIMUM QUALIFICATION TO BE A BE A TEACHER/TRAINER/MAKER AT TAFE AND REGISTERED TRAINING PROVIDERS IS STANDARDISED AND THAT ALL PROVIDERS DELIVERING THE CERT IV IN TRAINING AND ASSESSMENT DELIVER THIS TRAINING PACKAGE IN A CONSISTENT MANNER TO ENSURE HIGH QUALITY TEACHING AND COURSE CONTENT DELIVERY TO STUDENTS AND PREVENT TEACHER/TRAINER/MAKERS FROM HAVING ONLY 8 DAYS' WORTH OF TRAINING.

¹⁹<http://www.innovation.gov.au/skills/SkillsTrainingAndWorkforceDevelopment/ProductivityPlaces/Documents/RESPONSE%2064%20Individual.rtf>