

Submission
No 163

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

Name: Name suppressed

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Partially Confidential

SUBMISSION TO THE NSW INQUIRY INTO TAFE

Positive experience of TAFE

It was my study at TAFE NSW that started my new career as a mature age student. I attended TAFE 5 days per week from 9a.m. to 5p.m. daily. TAFE provided me with practical and theoretical knowledge. Myself and other students participated in substantial practicum in a range of services within the profession related to my course.

The unique value and benefits of TAFE

Today I am a Teacher with TAFE NSW. As I visit students to assess their practical skills in the workplace I meet a range of service providers and managers who started their careers with TAFE. These same providers and managers say that they will only employ TAFE trained workers because they know that students of TAFE are properly trained and assessed.

Our teaching section / faculty offers a range of courses from Certificate II to Diploma. We use the special expertise of individual teachers to provide course outlines, assessments and resources that are validated, reviewed and maintained to ensure the requirements of the training package are addressed. Throughout this process consistent, extensive, consultation with industry experts ensures currency and that industry expectations are addressed.

Our teachers are not only trained in their field but, as a requirement of employment at TAFE, must have substantial experience in the profession or industry. We participate in annual compliance training to update our knowledge on child protection, conduct, ethics (including harassment free) and workplace health and safety. We are also required to update our training and assessing qualifications with the most recent including language, literacy and numeracy component.

I am a strong advocate of the public education system and I am very proud to be a TAFE Teacher, knowing that I am using my professional experience, research and current knowledge to train future workers in my professional field. I manage student groups and provide support for individuals, including those with learning disabilities and language and cultural difference. Our student consultants ensure that support mechanisms are individualised ensuring each student has the opportunity for a successful outcome without prejudice. These mechanisms can include language support, adult learner support, tutorial support and study groups.

TAFE stands apart from other RTO's, providing a valuable library service which caters to courses being offered, student support for Aboriginal Students and multicultural support and student counsellors who will assist students with careers counselling, support with specific study needs and pathways of study.

Negative experiences with private providers

Several years ago I was preparing a group of students of a Certificate IV course, for their workplace assessment. I explained that a TAFE Assessor would visit each student in the workplace to assess their practical skills. With this, one student became agitated. He held a Certificate III in the same industry achieved with a private provider. He said that he has never had an assessor visit him in the workplace. The training package requires on the job training and assessing. TAFE would never send

a student into the workplace with adequate support and assessment provided by one of their qualified and experienced teachers.

Last year we enrolled a student into the diploma. The student planned to claim credit for units achieved with a private provider. Two weeks into the course the student asked to be enrolled in those same units. She did not have the required knowledge and understanding to prepare her for the more difficult, higher level units.

Impacts of *smart and skilled* on TAFE

The introduction of smart and skilled has proven to be stressful for students, teachers and administration staff. We are being told, after years of providing high quality education and student support, that many of those services are being cut or reduced. Whole teaching sections have been closed and in many cases courses are being offered at one campus only, making face to face study for distant students impossible.

Teachers are being forced to deliver lessons in less time and the average full time course now includes only 16 hours approx. of face to face teaching. Some classes are being cancelled and many are being delivered as external / online only, with little or no face to face. The learning styles of individual learners are not being considered with large volumes of information being delivered through readings and little discussion.

The increase in fees has resulted in a drop in enrolments. In my class I find that only students on benefits or with a disability can afford to enrol in the course. Applicants who do not qualify for a concession or exemption are deciding not to enrol because they don't want a debt or cannot afford to pay such high fees for a qualification which results in a moderate income. I understand that tertiary education has a role in assisting long term unemployed or people with disability to gain qualifications and employment, but it is unfair that those who have a source of income, large or small, are finding tertiary education out of their reach.

This semester, a student, who is re-training for a new role within his newly acquired business, was advised that his fees for a 6 month certificate III course was going to be \$6,000 because he already held a Certificate IV in a different field.

Another student, who has been enrolled in a full time course has now decided she would like to transfer to OTEN. Unfortunately for this to happen, the student will have two debts for the same course. She will need to pay for the current course and pay again to enrol through OTEN.

In the past, if a student failed, they had the opportunity to return for another semester for a second attempt, now if a student fails on the first attempt they will need to re-enrol and pay a fee per unit at a commercial rate.

Smart and skilled is taking away the choice for many learners. It is removing the opportunity to be multi skilled, holding several qualifications over a range of disciplines. This is not the Australian way. Regardless of age, gender, culture and abilities, we have always had choices. If I was starting out today I don't believe I would have the education that I have and therefore, would never have enjoyed the fantastic employment opportunities and experiences in my profession of choice.

Public education must be available to all. It is a valuable asset to the country and its people. I am fearful for the young people and the future of our country where education opportunities and choices are limited and unaffordable.

I am at the end of my working life. I am hoping to retire in a few years. I write this submission not to save my job or that of my colleagues. I write this submission in an attempt to secure a quality, public education for my grandchildren and their children. I fail to understand why a government of this country would not feel the same way. Any government that refuses to listen to the people and support public education will never get my vote.