

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

**Name:** Name suppressed

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Partially Confidential

## Submission to TAFE INQUIRY NSW

I have worked at TAFE in a regional area for 15 years. There have been many changes but nothing as disastrous as SMART and SKILLED. I work in the Education Pathways department and most of our classes consist of students who are disengaged from education and have just left High School or have been out of education for years and have usually had negative experiences with the Education system. The majority of our students receive Centrelink payments and come from disadvantaged families. For years we have offered these students a second chance (or even a third or fourth if they needed it) and our success stories would fill several books. Unfortunately this type of student does not bring with it the big bucks. They are usually enrolled in a certificate I or II course because most want to achieve a year 10 equivalence and would not be ready for a higher level course. Since there is not much money to be made from these courses we are actively discouraged from running them which means leaving lots of students out there with nowhere to go. This will create a class of disengaged, disadvantaged people which will place an enormous burden on our town. Not only financially but also in terms of crime and vandalism. I can guarantee that by attending TAFE we have saved quite a few young people from Juvie. Soon there will be nowhere for them to go and we will probably have to expand our Juvenile Justice Centre.

We also cater for students who would like to gain a HSC equivalent. We offer an alternative to the HSC in a two year program which last year would have cost those on Centrelink benefits \$100 for the year. Now it will cost \$320. Not a huge difference but still a problem for a lot of students. Full fee paying students are even worse off. Our first semester course used to be free but is now \$320. Our second semester course used to be \$370 and is now \$1310. So instead of having to pay \$370 for the year they now pay \$1630. And this is for a course that only runs 2.5 days per week because we cannot afford to give them more face to face time. So pay more for less quality. Needless to say that numbers are falling. Even our full fee paying students are not rich. \$1630 is a lot of money for parents considering they are not even at TAFE for 5 days a week.

In all, since smart and skilled we have lost staff and lost students and as a result most of the staff is under program and very worried that this will have consequences and they might lose their job.

On another note, Smart and Skilled forces educational staff to only consider the bucks at the cost of education. We are told not to withdraw students if they stop turning up but to fail them so we get money for them. This is unethical and wrong. But we do it because we need our jobs. I wonder what more is happening around the TAFEs and certainly around those private RTO's that advertise with slogans like "Pay nothing now!" I know of people who have enrolled with a private RTO in a Business Management Course (that seems to be the most flogged one) only to discover after they signed up that they now had a considerable debt. That debt stays even if the course is not completed. Most of our students would fail an online course because they would miss the support and that is why most students who sign up for these course will never complete. These private RTOs don't care because they get money for them anyway.

Education should not be a business!!!