INQUIRY INTO VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING IN NEW SOUTH WALES

Name: Name suppressed

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I have been a part-time (casual) teacher at TAFE for approximately 16 years, and teach English as a Second Language. As much of our funding is currently under the federally funded AMEP program, we are not as dramatically effected as many other sections under *Smart and Skilled*.

Smart and Skilled changes none the less impact on our students, most of whom are refugees from war-damaged countries, who are desperately trying to make their way in a new country – 'the land of hope' as many of them say. What *Smart and Skilled* does for them, is to narrow their options: courses have become unaffordable: students are unable to repeat certificate levels, irrespective of their learning skills or disadvantage; students with overseas qualifications are required to pay full fees, even though they cannot use their qualification to work in Australia; and support services are under pressure.

Case study 1: X was a doctor in Syria and would like to ultimately practise in Australia, but there are many hurdles he must overcome and first, he must lift his level of English, which he currently doing in an Academic English class. At the same time, and in recognition of his limited computer skills, he enrolled in a night course – a Foundation Skills Certificate 2, and because of his overseas qualification (which he cannot use for work here) was asked to pay $3,000, a fee he simply cannot pay.

Smart and Skilled judges students with qualifications they cannot use, as being equal to students with qualifications that can be used in Australia, thus significantly disadvantaging the those in greatest need.

Case study 2: Y became a refugee from war in Eritrea at the age of 9. Her parents were missing, so she spent 8 years with her siblings in a refugee camp in Ethiopia – 8 years with NO schooling. After arriving in Australia at age 17, family disfunction lead to her becoming homeless, spending time in a youth refuge and then in supported accommodation. <u>At the same time</u>, Y continue her English classes with excellent attendance and improvement, working toward her goal of becoming a nurse. After completing English for Academic Purposes, she wanted to complete a Diploma in Nursing at TAFE, a traditional pathway for many students to enter a Bachelor Degree at University. Unfortunately the fee for the 18 month Diploma has risen to $17,000 under Smart and Skilled, more than the equivalent first year of the bachelor degree would cost. Young, alone in a new country, and from a poor background, those fees became overwhelming and Y is now looking for unskilled work.

Case study 3: Z, from Thailand, was studying English under the federally funded AMEP program, whilst on a spouse visa – in this case the student is sponsored by her Australian spouse for 2 years until permanent residence is granted. Prior to Smart and Skilled Z, who was an excellent student, could have progressed to further English or a work preparation course, such as

Hospitality at TAFE. However now, under *Smart and Skilled*, Z would have to pay the same fee as international students. Her husband, on a Disability Support pension, was unable to pay.   She is energetic and keen to learn more and to work.

Case study 4: Many of our students have traumatic backgrounds, resulting from terrible experiences of torture or loss. Their ability to focus and achieve quick outcomes is often diminished and they may need to do a particular English or other course more than once in order to achieve the outcome they need. Now, under *Smart and Skilled*, the fee for these students to repeat, increases dramatically, and we, the course providers, are not paid for any units that already have an outcome, even if it was not a pass.

Case study 5: TAFE student numbers are dwindling quickly under *Smart and Skilled* and many sections (in fact whole campuses – Dapto TAFE) are reducing or closing. The significant resources, the equipment, the skilled teachers are wasted. There is no saving of government funds with this waste.