

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

Name: Ms Maria Jose Lopez Alvarez

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To the Upper House Committee.

Firstly, I would like to express my appreciation for the present inquiry, since it gives the community an opportunity to express how the current changes to TAFE are directly affecting their lives. It is my hope that it will guide future decisions in a fair and equitable manner.

There are several reasons why I believe that having a stable and well funded public education system is of paramount importance.

Firstly, Australia is a party to seven core international human rights treaties. The right to social security is contained in article 9 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR).

The right to social security requires a social security system be established and that a country must, within its maximum available resources, ensure access to a social security scheme that provides a minimum essential level of benefits to all individuals and families that will enable them to acquire at least essential health care, basic shelter and housing, water and sanitation, foodstuffs, and the most basic forms of education.

The UN Committee on Economic Social and Cultural Rights has stated that social security, through its redistributive character, plays an important role in poverty reduction and alleviation. It has also stated that social security prevents social exclusion and promotes social inclusion” (Attorney General’s Department).

Hence, if we sacrifice publicly funded education as a society, we are actually promoting segregation and exclusion and further impacting on the lives of those most disadvantaged in society (acquiring debt at a young age will happen to the vast majority of the population, while those already in advantageous positions will not suffer the consequences, thus perpetuating and, more importantly, enhancing, the hierarchy of power in an increasingly more distinct class society).

Secondly, one of the disadvantages of a highly competitive educational market is that it places more importance on how to market more effectively (often aggressively) and how to reduce costs to maximise profit at the expense of quality of education.

And finally, this sense of insecurity also affects staff, with a concomitant decrease in permanence and effectiveness.

Therefore, I urge you to consider providing extensive funding and support to TAFE, for a fair and equitable future for all Australians.

Yours faithfully,
Maria Jose Lopez Alvarez