

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

Name: Name suppressed

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Partially Confidential

Honorable Committee Members,
please accept this my submission as to why TAFE needs to be better funded and protected to meet the needs of our community.

I am currently employed as a TAFE Head Teacher with over 30 years experience with TAFE which has required me to maintain close contact with the trade based industry which we serve. I have worked at a range of TAFE Colleges including one country College.

My Learning History:-

My own learning history after HSC was:-

- * industry based apprenticeship (supplemented by TAFE day release training)
- * post trade TAFE Mechanical Engineering Certificate at night (equivalent to the current Diploma Courses so I could be promoted by my employer)
- * further higher skilled trade related Certificate courses to enhance my capabilities with my employer
- * some years later as a career change, I undertook a Diploma then Bachelor Degree in Education at University related to my new TAFE teaching career
- * I have since undertaken 2 off Cert IV's in Workplace Assessment & Training relevant to my TAFE teaching and a range of other in-service short courses.

Each course has added to my existing work related knowledge making me a more rounded and flexible worker.

Relevance of TAFE Training to the workforce and NSW economy:-

My own career and study path is analogous of the worth of TAFE to the community in that each and every qualification has been specific to a logical progression along a clearly defined but flexible career path. In short my TAFE training made me adaptable with transferable skills.

Unlike University training, TAFE training is workplace specific with solid measurable employment outcomes i.e. TAFE graduates get jobs. In contrast many University graduates undertake double degrees so they can get a job - this suggests that the first degree was non-vocational aka a "hobby course". In contrast, a TAFE trained electrical, plumbing, or engineering apprentice would not concurrently study cake decorating or librarianship in case they did not get a job from their first TAFE course. The value to the community for well funded TAFE courses then is that TAFE graduates become skilled workers who immediately pay tax because TAFE trains students to assist them in their current employment, and adds to their skills so they can progress further in their chosen career.

Worth of TAFE training to industry:-

Industry employs people who pay taxes and create wealth in the economy. Industry's core business is making money and product; training is a secondary activity and in many cases, industry is not equipped with the necessary facilities and/or staff to train well. It is therefore cost effective to use TAFE because TAFE teachers in trades areas must have full trade qualifications, minimum 5 years relevant industrial experience and currency with industry before they are employed by TAFE. TAFE is therefore staffed by industry specialists. By concentrating such expertise in TAFE, industry's workers have the opportunity to mix with workers from other workplaces so TAFE allows cross pollination across workplaces rather than in-house insulated training, which is good for the economy as it creates informal networks of knowledge which can be drawn upon later.

TAFE delivery meets guidelines set down in National Training Packages which are written and monitored by industry bodies, so TAFE delivery is relevant to the industry it serves, and is delivered by TAFE teachers with relevant industry experience.

One final advantage to industry and the economy is that TAFE can offer cost effective and realistic workplace simulation for large and small businesses alike. There are real dangers in hands-on training of inexperienced workers. This is why the aircraft industry uses flight simulators not actual flight in initial training. Similarly fire-fighting, machine operation and any other hands-on skills where danger is involved are best taught in controlled simulated environments. As an extreme example of what can go wrong, it has been suggested that the Chernobyl nuclear reactor disaster in the Ukraine occurred when an on-the-job training exercise to demonstrate that same emergency situation got out of hand during the training. Clearly it is more cost effective to fund simulated workshops in TAFE than to disrupt industry and risk damage to equipment and life.

Smart & Skilled pricing:-

Due to Smart & Skilled under funding, some of our final year apprentice trade students returned in 2015 to an 11 week cut to their final 36 weeks of TAFE training despite them having agreed Training Plans with TAFE for a full 3 years of course delivery. Had IPART Smart & Skilled pricing included the cost of delivering high skill level Units of Competence in their pricing model for this Certificate III qualification this would not have been necessary.

It would be prudent to have IPART reassess its pricing models for Smart & Skilled pricing of high skill / high cost trade (Certificate III & IV) and Diploma level Units of Competence with the view of price revisions for these Units of Competency in 2016 NOT 2017 as is currently the plan so if there has been an error it can be corrected 12 months earlier. If this is not done the risk is that high skill level training essential to industry will be lost as TAFE will not be able to afford to continue to offer it and for-profit private providers will not go there as the profit margins are too low.

EBS Systems:-

The new systems introduced into TAFE have reportedly experienced implementation difficulties mainly due to the complexities related to the diverse range of courses that TAFE offers and need to dovetail each with State Training Services systems for determining fees under Smart & Skilled pricing guidelines. In comparison to companies such as Toyota, Hewitt Packard, Microsoft, banks, etc TAFE has a far wider range of diverse products it must control, monitor, meet compliance requirements etc. Is it cost effective to complicate this by implementing different fees for each and every course / product? The old fee system had minimal fee structures based on the level of qualification. Has the new systems saved any money collecting fees?

I thank you for your consideration.