

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

Name: Name suppressed

Date received: 13/08/2015

Partially Confidential

Dear Sir/ Madam,

I wish to make a brief submission for the Upper House Inquiry into TAFE.

I currently live in Wagga Wagga, NSW having moved from Tumut, NSW in 2010. I am 51 years old and have found the need to retrain as there is no work suitable to my former profession of Mechanical Design Draftsman in Wagga. I was laid off from interim employment in late 2012 and as there was no employment prospects, decided to retrain. I desire to become a teacher of the Visual Arts to high school students as this rich cultural area is of great value to me.

The Riverina Institute of TAFE NSW offered a program integrated with Charles Sturt University. The program required the completion of a Certificate IV in Visual Arts before continuing with both a Diploma and Advanced Diploma in Visual Arts whilst undertaking subjects at the university to complete a Bachelor of Arts (Fine Art). I have been aware of this program for more than a decade and I welcomed the opportunity to undertake the integrated course as it offered the chance to restart a career as well as providing a practical base towards instruction of students. Once completed, I was to undertake a post-graduate Diploma of Education. (The Board of Studies have since requested a minimum of two year Masters Degree.)

In February 2013, I attended an information meeting about the Visual Arts program where the 'new' course costs were disclosed. Prospective students would need to pay full commercial fees, and in the case of the Certificate IV in Visual Arts, the fees would have to be paid upfront before enrolment, without any VET Help assistance. Now as I had been laid off and had received a small redundancy payment, I had just enough to cover this initial cost. This provided for limited materials and students were expected to supply much of their own. The Certificate IV was also compressed from a 12 months into a six month course, of which much of the content was reduced.

The Certificate IV commenced with six teachers and only eight students due to the prohibitive course costs. It was well instructed and I finished with a special commendation award.

The Diploma of Visual Arts, for our class, commenced Semester 2 of the same year and this Semester proceeded well. All was to change though and there was staff cuts that would occur before 2014 classes commenced. For us, the loss of the teacher who established this integrated course would prove to greatly impact our studies. Of the remaining teachers, we had one deliver units for two different areas, normally not problem but this led to much confusion for both the teacher and our class as information for one area would be discussed during the other area's time. This led to stress and conflict between students and teacher. We were also required to attend extra curricular life drawing classes and produce more work. Whereas our counterparts at the Albury campus did not. I am aware that the general moral among my classmates was low as rapport with the teacher was not of a reasonable level. It is also evident that the teaching staff were not pleased with our class as no awards were issued to any of our class at the correlating graduation ceremony, where as other classes all had two special awards.

The Advanced Diploma of Visual Arts commenced mid 2014 again with reduced staff to cover multiple areas. Following the previous year, we braced ourselves for more unrest. I even decided to take a leave of absence from my university studies for a Semester to ensure that I finished well. Still plagued by communication issues with a particular teacher we pushed on to the end. Also, despite having already completed the requirements of our drawing units, we were told that we were still required to attend the extra curricular life drawing classes, further impacting on our energy and time. I think that by the time we finished the course, we were much relieved to finish the ordeal.

Both the Diploma and Advanced Diploma attracted the high fees and VET Help assistance was available. I am concerned that I have finished these courses with a large debt, by about five times over, and being no closer to employment. I have also expressed concern and repeatedly asked the head teacher about the double charging of particular units. Let me enlarge on this point. The Diploma and Advanced Diploma, although can be integrated with other studies at Charles Sturt University towards a Bachelor of Arts (Fine Art), also stand on their own for anyone who desires to undertake them without going onto University. All students in these courses are required to undertake Art History units. They may be done at TAFE, included for the same fees. However, if they are undertaken at TAFE, those attending university can not receive credit towards their degree and would have to complete further Art History subjects at university. They may, however receive credit for Art History subjects undertaken at the university. All members in my class did this. Therefore, they were not required to complete Art History subjects at TAFE. TAFE did not supply a teacher resource for the Art History subjects for my class but did so for both classes ahead and behind us. Our course fees were not reduced accordingly. In other words, we were charged by both TAFE and the university for the Art History subjects, having completed them at the university. My question to the head teacher, to this day has not been adequately answered.

I have previously written to the Minister for Education with an appeal about the high costs as I receive no financial assistance from any government agency and am totally dependent on my wife. His response was to say that Visual Arts is not a growth area. Now it was my intention to head towards Education but he has ensured that my level of debt will be un-managable once I return to the workplace in my new career.