

**Submission
No 128**

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

Name: Ms Melissa Field

Date received: 9/08/2015

My name is Melissa Field and I am a new scheme teacher in the NSW Public Education System. I recently completed my Bachelor of Technology Education (Hons) degree specialising in Food Technology/Hospitality/Textiles/Design and Technology and am currently in my second year as a public high school Technological and Applied Studies teacher with the Department of Education. A mandatory requirement of my teaching degree was to undertake a Certificate III in Applied Fashion and Design, Certificate III in Hospitality, Certificate II in Hospitality (Kitchen Operations) and Certificate IV in Training and Assessment through TAFE NSW.

At university I learnt the theory behind teaching, programming, curriculum and assessment. At TAFE I learnt the hands-on skills and real life application of both the design and hospitality industries, skills and knowledge that I now use in my everyday teaching and am passing on to my students. In order to fit my TAFE studies around my uni degree I was required to commence my studies at TAFE three months prior to my first semester at uni. I was, at this time, unemployed and not eligible for the Centrelink youth allowance and was required to pay for the first term (of my first TAFE course) up front: \$348, not including the required equipment/stationary/fabric purchases (\$475). This is an enormous amount of money for someone trying to improve their life and that couldn't be put on HECS. Thankfully I started receiving youth allowance one week before Term 2 and this brought my course fees down to \$55 per term for the remainder of my TAFE studies. Had I not been eligible for the fee reductions I can say with absolute certainty, I would have been unable to study at TAFE and therefore unable to continue with my university degree. Without the contribution of my TAFE studies to my teaching, I wholeheartedly believe that I would now be lacking the in-depth knowledge and practical skills that are required to sufficiently teach and assess the Vocational Education and Training in Schools (VETiS) subject of Hospitality (Food & Beverage/Kitchen Operations).

Now that I am teaching I often reflect on my ability as a teacher and what I could do to improve, this leads me to thinking about my TAFE teachers – how did they explain tricky cooking techniques, how did they present their cooking demonstrations before we cooked, how often did they do demonstrations of techniques, how did they help me understand when I felt I had no hope of achieving that presentation method/technique level, how did they structure our practical cooking lessons, how did they structure our theory lessons, what did they do to help students with learning difficulties, how would they react when someone in the class just couldn't understand what or how we were to do something and they had to explain it over and over again. These are the mentors I think about and reflect on when I'm having difficulty in my practical lessons at school - not my uni lecturers/uni practicum teachers/colleagues – but my TAFE teachers because these are the people who helped shape and develop my design and hospitality skills.

Many of the friends I made at TAFE were people who had come from high school because they hadn't achieved at high enough UAI or had left in year 10; or were from disadvantaged backgrounds. All were there to learn new skills to get them into the workforce or to change careers so that they could improve the quality of their lives. Cutting TAFE funding and bringing in the Smart and Skilled program results in reduced courses offered, reduced TAFE teachers, reduced support services, reduced quality face-to-face skill development, reduced opportunities for universities and TAFE to work together; but it does increase the number of expensive, highly funded, private providers that are more concerned with business profitability than people. By continuing with TAFE cuts the government is lowering the opportunities of people with disabilities, those from low-socio economic areas and every day working Australians to improve the quality of their lives and make a substantial contribution to society. This is effectively destroying a branch of the public education system that is world class and world renowned for its educational equality and skill development and will be a detriment to Australia's future.