

**Submission
No 18**

**INQUIRY INTO FUTURE DEVELOPMENT OF THE NSW
TERTIARY EDUCATION SECTOR**

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On a personal level, I had my opportunity in life through a mature entry scheme to university which enabled me to become a far better participant in society, my community, and gave me economic opportunities as well.

University broadened my outlook well beyond a simple career path for economic purposes. That is one of the hallmarks of a civilised society, and a universal education. My entry into university also did not burden me down with an enormous debt, It was in the Whitlam era university access when it was free. However I have contributed enormously to the taxation base of this country ever since, as well as to society and the community

Universities are where we make knowledge, critically interrogate the world and ask big questions. They are places that must not be controlled by economics above all else. Years of funding cuts are the major threats to our universities, and recovery from COVID demands investment in the higher education sector as a major employer, source of income, and fundamental institution in our democratic society.

It was also an era when TAFE was free, and TAFE provided an equity pathway for people in demographics which did not traditionally access post secondary education. It also provided equitable support for people from disadvantaged backgrounds or with special needs. It provided a second chance at a secondary education and a remedial education.

Universities shouldn't be places to make compliant workers, but places where independent thought is valued. Research within universities can be for the greater good of all of us, not just narrow corporate interest.

Rather than making universities and TAFEs public institutions designed to serve private business we should be looking to make them more diverse places, with equality of access, innovative research, and world quality teaching.

So for me this means:

- Free university and TAFE so that financial barriers are not an obstacle to a quality education
- Quality teaching conditions including an end to casualization of employment
- Support for students to be able to learn including raising youth allowance and restoring funding to improve teaching and learning conditions
- Political activity should be supported within universities through universal student unionism
- University campuses should be free from corporate limitation on freedom of speech, foreign governments including the Confucius Institute and private institutions like the Ramsay Centre