



**South Coast Labour Council**  
**1 Lowden Square**  
**Wollongong NSW 2500**

6<sup>th</sup> March 2014

The Committee Secretary  
Senate Education and Employment Reference Committee  
Parliament House  
CANBERRA ACT 2600

**Submission to the TAFE Inquiry**

Dear Secretary,

Thank you for your public invitation to make a submission to the above inquiry.

The South Coast Labour Council is the peak trade union body on the South Coast of NSW representing 28 affiliated unions, covering 50,000 workers and a geographic area spanning from Helensburgh in the north to the Victorian border in the south, the Southern Highlands and adjacent tablelands to the west. Across this broad region are employed workers from almost every known occupational grouping and a diverse range of industries.

Should the Committee wish to have an appearance from the Council at your hearings I would be more than happy to address and expand on the following points:

1. The Illawarra region has, particularly since the downturn in the steel industry in the 1980s, experience high levels of unemployment and in particular youth unemployment, measured at more than 16% in a recent study by the Brotherhood of St Laurence.

[http://www.bsl.org.au/pdfs/MyChanceOurFuture\\_AppendixA\\_maps\\_Feb2014.pdf](http://www.bsl.org.au/pdfs/MyChanceOurFuture_AppendixA_maps_Feb2014.pdf)

2. The role of TAFE has been critical in not only retraining thousands of displaced workers but also in preventing the deskilling of our region and retaining an apprenticeship/traineeship system to enable the survival of key traditional industries.

3. TAFE, as the principal public provider is the only institution with the capacity, history and proven ability to meet the challenging training needs of our region including ensuring that communities in remote and rural areas are not disadvantaged because they lack the critical mass and economic viability to run courses as they might in a privatised or market oriented system.

4. The 'reforms' to the VET sector including the contestability framework introduced federally and moves toward the systemic dismantling of the TAFE system in NSW poses the greatest risk to skill formation and retention in our recent history. In our region, as I am sure elsewhere, the demise of TAFE threatens the future of not only targeted programs but skill formation and retention as a whole in the near future.

Sincerely

**Arthur Rorris**  
**Secretary**