

Andrew G Gammage

To Whom It May Concern....

I am writing to you in response to the upcoming senate inquiry into Technical and Further Education as I feel I have some important points of view.

Firstly a little about myself if I may, I am a 33 year old single male from Western Sydney who has a herniated spine including 4 bulging discs and live with my parents as a result of my limited income capacity. I like seafood, cold beer, live music and can't wait to partake in all three on Australia Day. I currently work part time in a public bar and drive a second hand vehicle I purchased from my father.

I attempted university twice after graduating high school and having felt alienated by the university system I developed a recreational drug addiction and was forced after an overdose to re-evaluate my life choices. I got myself clean and worked jobs in various warehousing positions, an industry where I remained for over 8 years. After being retrenched as a stores supervisor I was diagnosed with the spinal condition previously mentioned, a herniated spine.

At this point in my life I was crushed both physically and mentally and suffered a number of setbacks over the last four years but the most devastating moment for me was when my family doctor recommended that because I had not sustained an injury but rather developed a condition and was not entitled to workers compensation that I should apply for a Centrelink illness and injury pension and had the forms on hand ready for me to sign. As I was 30 at the time I immediately felt I was too young to spend the rest of my life on a pension wondering whether I would have enough money for food and electricity and giving a clear explanation as to why I now, again, live with my parents.

Instead of giving up and going on a pension, and together with my incredibly supportive Technical And Further Education teachers at Nepean TAFE I formulated a plan to study, reskill, up skill and earn my way back into the workforce in a new industry giving myself a goal and my parents hope that they may yet one day empty the nest (insert humorous comment about no social life here).

As a result of the Technical And Further Education system being both readily available, affordable and more importantly not attracting a debilitating long term debt, Technical And Further Education has meant that I could go from being a pension applicant with very little hope for a bright future to being an award winning Technical And Further Education graduate who holds both a Diploma Of Event Management and an Advanced Diploma Of Hospitality Management.

Furthermore, as a part of my now self-funded rehabilitation I am working part time and will have been for six months by February when I will return to Technical And Further Education to study part time (Diploma Of Travel And Tourism) thus allowing myself to increase my work load safely and gradually so that I may return to full time work.

Therefore without the assistance of Technical and Further Education I would quite clearly be a burden on society but with the help of a long term affordable Technical and Further Education system I am once again a tax paying member of society with a difficult but brighter future ahead.

I urge you, please, ensure the longevity of Technical And Further Education so that all minorities of all varieties have a chance at a new and bright future just like I was given.... With my qualifications and 5 years industry experience at management level I may yet get the chance to return to Technical And Further Education as a teacher and finally follow in my families footsteps and become a fourth generation teacher at something I love and in surroundings that make me proud to be Australian.

Thanks for reading,
Andrew Gordon Gammage