



Gerry McNally
Committee Secretary
Senate Education and Employment Committees
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Via email: eec.sen@aph.gov.au

Dear Gerry

Free TAFE Bill 2024 – Submission

We would like to thank both you and the Committee for taking the time to consider our submission to the provisions of the Free TAFE Bill 2024.

HACSU Tasmania overwhelmingly supports the intent and objectives of the Bill.

It is our viewpoint that any initiatives that lead to the breaking down of barriers that prevent the accessibility of TAFE must be championed and welcomed.

For many years of Australia's past, TAFE was the cornerstone of our skilled labour base, empowering Australians from all walks of life and leading to the creation of service providers that were the envy of the world.

As successive governments have neglected public funded TAFE over recent decades, we now find ourselves with skill shortages in crucial areas, particularly in health.

In Tasmania alone, chronic understaffing in critical areas of the sector had led to a severe decline in both the delivery and quality of care, with the State simply not being able to produce trained health professionals at a rate to keep up with demand.

Institutions within the sector in Tasmania are then forced to compete on wages with their wealthier mainland counterparts for the same talent pool of skilled labour. This further diminishes the Health and Community sector, leading to our current working professionals feeling overwhelmed by the unnecessarily increased workload that has occurred as a result.

By extending additional FT Places for courses in areas such as the Health and Community sector, we can go a long way to addressing such inadequacies in staffing numbers.

HACSU notes that, since the launch of Fee-free TAFE in 2023, Australia has benefited from over 131,000 additional enrolments in Aged Care and Disability Services alone, with a third of all enrolments in the scheme coming from regional areas such as Tasmania.

This is overwhelmingly positive news, but the job is not done. Supporting the Free TAFE Bill 2024 and its proposal to extend the program to an additional 300,000 placements over the next three years will help to address longstanding skilled labour shortfalls, whilst setting Australia up for a bright future in not just the Health and Community sector, but other key work sectors.

It is our recommendation that the Senate pass this nation building legislation to help set up Australia's labour force for the challenges of the future. By doing so, we as a collective can ensure a bright future for Australians from all walks of life.

We would also recommend, should the Bill pass, that Health and Community sector courses like Aged and Disability care continue to remain a priority, and that a focus on increasing enrolments in regional areas remains as one of the Bill's core tenants.

Yours sincerely

Tammy Munro
Acting State Secretary

13 January 2025