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To whom this may concern

It is of great importance that the TAFE system is preserved as an alternative to University, so as not to let students unable to attend those universities fall into a cycle of uneducated poverty.

I have been educated as mature age student through the Hunter Street Art School and received the outstanding students achievement award on completion of that education. This gave me the confidence to go onto university where I completed my degree in Fine Arts with distinction. I now work at Lake Macquarie City Art gallery in which I extend my education in the arts by the sheer nature of the job, and I might add, I am paid quite well.

As a single parent, it is solely because of this education that I have been able to not only survive emotionally but also financially. I would never have had the confidence To further my education If it were not for the TAFE system.

I recently heard Simon Crean say that the Arts was experiencing growth in the economy, It is my understanding that he was specifically talking of the growth aspect of the technological arts.

My son who is now 20 years old, completed his HSC and began a course at a TAFE in computer coding receiving a diploma in this field. He is now attending Hunter Street Art School where he will complete a diploma in fine arts. What is important about this is the differences I am witnessing with my sons education compared to my experiences. His life drawing classes are already over for the year. In my understanding this is fundamental in an arts education. He is not receiving any tuition in design principles either (this is definitely a fundamental element in fine art), and even though he has paid \$2500.00 in up front fees from his own savings since completing high school, and has a \$12000.00 hex debt to pay off, this is our new and improved system of TAFE.

I think not!

I was taught thoroughly by all of the staff within the TAFE system, they were able to implement comprehensive tuition enabling me a full understanding of the subject matters. I am only around \$6000.00 in hexed debt which is manageable and realistic for the one year I attended university. This is obviously vastly different to the debt my son is in already and he hasn't even got to University yet.

I fear he will become despondent and want to work some dead end job to pay this off as he already worries that it's too much at this point in his life. As my TAFE education was relatively inexpensive I of course did not have this type of worry.

I have witnessed many of my fellow students fall into jobs requiring an arts education. In my opinion if the State Government continues with its negative campaign towards the TAFE system and it's students and teachers, we are at risk of developing a more depressive and uneducated state than we already have:- and furthermore if educated people in government such as Simon Crean can identify growth in the arts sector, why is it that all forms of access to this education are not being nurtured? Why desecrate this area of growth? I don't understand this at all.

It is not rocket science we are talking about here, it is just the future social conscience of our populace!, a conscience that just may keep that 'rocket scientist' in check, and with that thought in mind and given the current climate of world peace, this seems an apt way to end this email.

Thanks for taking the time to read this,

Marlene Houston.