

Subject: Fw: Senate Inquiry into TAFE
Date: Thursday, 18 April 2013 2:43:58 PM

JE.

Regarding Senate Enquiry into TAFE

Dear Senators,

Background to my employment in the TAFE System.

I have been fortunate to have worked in the TAFE system since 1991, mainly at East Sydney, (now the National Art School, Darlinghurst). Over the years the education of men and women in the pursuit of their artistic ambitions has been rewarding and inspiring. My employment has a positive symbiosis with my career as a practicing artist and my work has been collected by the Mitchell Library, the Australian National Gallery and St Vincent's Hospital.

Development of Artistic and Cultural skills in the Australian community/ economy

In 2011 I moved from Randwick to the Central West of NSW to take up work teaching Drawing and Painting at the **Western Institute of TAFE, Dubbo**. This central western city is home to the **Western Plains Cultural Centre (WPCC)** - a major Government funded Art Gallery and Museum as well as to the **Dubbo Regional Theatre and Convention Centre (DRTCC)**. Both these organisations are hubs for artistic and cultural activities involving the local community as well as the focus of travelling exhibitions connecting Dubbo to wider Australian artistic communities. Over the years both these organisations have worked to bring a cultural maturity to the town.

The educational focus of the **Visual Arts and Media section of TAFE** is an integral part of this community growth. With an education in the Visual Arts a visit to an art gallery or theatre holds a rich and inventive context for the viewer. Experiences such as these carry positive manifestations into the wider life of this reasonably small rural community. Artists make work in specific historical contexts. Artists make work in relation to multifarious cultural, environmental, spiritual, and socially engaging concerns. To gain some understanding of the history of art - and a glimpse of your place within it, is a potentially empowering and positive inspiration for all aspects of peoples lives.

Development of opportunities for Australians to improve themselves and increase their life and employment prospects.

People in my classes often have long-held desires to expand the creative side of their lives. Sometimes they come with trepidations and self-doubt hindering their progress. To assist in even a small way towards overcoming these unhelpful patterns is integral to the positive cycle of community and tertiary education. Education in Visual Arts enables people to gain the skills and the confidence to express their creativity and to potentially become part of the artistic life of the local community. Art classes create situations of positive encouragement and, at the higher levels positive criticism within a supportive atmosphere. Often bringing together people of varying ages and social situations, there is a strong potential to create connections between young and old, wealthy and financially struggling, Indigenous and non-Indigenous members of our community.

There are many individuals in the Dubbo community whose Art Education in TAFE has led directly to employment, self employment and or community engagement generally. As I have been part of the community only since July 2011, I feel it best to let them speak in this situation. I am happy to be contacted as necessary.

Supporting communities and disadvantaged individuals to access training and skills and a pathway to employment.

The current funding structure actively hinders poorer and more socially disadvantaged people from accessing a TAFE education. At \$10,000 for a one year Diploma or Advanced Diploma (or \$12,000 per annum if using Fee Help loans) only the more wealthy or elderly individuals are able to access classes. This is a highly discriminatory situation which, in a very few years will have impacted negatively on the overall community. If as I have suggested above - that art gallery viewers with education in the arts gain a richer experience from the visit (and have richer experiences and knowledge to give back to employment and community) - the opposite situation has potentially damaging cultural ramifications.

At TAFE students study historical art movements, gaining an understanding of changes in communities over time. Art requires the development of a range of motor and visual skills, and while experimentation is encouraged there are technical and visual skills to be acquired in order to understand the creation of contemporary works of art. These are skills which link our times to world art movements - to inventiveness and creativity since antiquity. Writing and computer skills, speaking and communication skills are an integral part of the TAFE Visual Arts course - the ability to communicate complex ideas and concepts and to work in a positive community environment - all requirements for contemporary working lives.

Sincerely,

Ruby Davies

I am happy for the above submission to be made public