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To the Secretary House of Representative Standing Committee on Education and Employment:

Thank you for the opportunity of making a submission to your enquiry. I make this submission on behalf of members of staff of Moree Campus of New England Institute of TAFE:

The role played by TAFE in the development of skills in rural and remote areas of Australia cannot be underestimated. I would like to highlight the following areas:

TERMS OF REFERENCE A.

1. Construction industry: the construction industry in Moree and surrounding areas is filled with qualified builders as a result of their training at Moree TAFE. Recently a number of young people have arrived at Moree TAFE at stage 2 or 3 of their apprenticeship. They have commented to the very experienced and qualified teacher (BVET in addition to TAE) that they have learned more in a term or two with him as their teacher than they did in 1 or two years under private RTOs. I was shown an example of the kind of "tick and flick" workbook one young man had presented from a private RTO on the unit of competence relevant to concreting. It was scarily inadequate even to my relatively untutored eye.
2. Engineering: Basic welding skills are an essential tool for the farmer. Certificate 1 is delivered by a very dedicated and thorough teacher and a whole raft of farmers and farm workers are able to use the skills that they have acquired to both maintain their businesses and gain and keep employment. There is unmet demand for higher certificates in Engineering to be delivered in Moree, however budget decisions mean that students/ apprentices have to travel to Tamworth, 3 hours away to be trained in that area. School/TAFE partnerships allow the local high school students to gain these skills as well
3. Agriculture: As stated Moree is a farming community. There are many, many rural workers, even if they are seasonal workers, who can thank the training they received from the highly qualified Agriculture(B AgSc and BVET) teacher, who sadly has been given a redundancy package as a result of budgetary constraints. He continues to deliver the occasional, highly popular, short commercial courses at the excellent rural skills centre which is part of Moree TAFE. Improved funding could see that centre re-invigorated in terms of what course could be offered. There is no shortage of demand.
4. All of the above examples are expensive in terms of infrastructure and would totally disappear from the Moree and district community if Moree TAFE were dismantled.

TERMS OF REFERENCE B.

1. I suspect that Michael Coutts Trotter is possibly the best known, politically, recipient of second chance education opportunity. He gained entrance into the University of Technology, Sydney through a NSW TAFE qualification, Tertiary Preparation Certificate IV. The rest, as they say, is history.

He is however not the only person, who for various reasons, has wanted to access a University education and have used the same pathway to achieve the skills and knowledge required for study at that level. It should be also noted that with the school leaving age now at 17, increasingly employers will be expecting and needing higher level skills and knowledge of their employees. A year 12 or equivalent education will become the entry point for employment.

Moree has a sizeable Aboriginal community. Many members of that community have not had good education opportunities. There are many instances of Aboriginal people having their lives changed for the better and being able to enter the workforce as a result of their study at TAFE. A Certificate 111 in Business has enabled one young woman to access a traineeship, which should lead to permanent employment. There is also a ripple on effect from the success of that young woman, with members of her family emulating her and coming to TAFE to study themselves. Her peers have also been motivated by her success.

The General Education and Equity Services faculty at Moree campus has run a number of courses such as Work Opportunities for Women and Men Achieving Goals(MAGS) which are designed to equip the students with a range of job readiness skills such as resume writing and interview skills, basic IT skills as well as enhanced Literacy and Numeracy skills. One student who came to Moree TAFE following an episode of serious mental illness has gone from a WOW course to a Diploma in Governance and has recently commenced a degree in Business/Law. She has obtained a number of part time jobs and is more than happy to acknowledge the role TAFE played in her recovery. Two of the men from the MAGS course in 2012 have obtained work as a result of their studies in that course. There is great uncertainty concerning the future capacity of Moree TAFE to continue with these successful programs into the future as NEIT is facing a budget cut of \$3mil. Delivery of course in Bogabilla, a small most indigenous community a 100 kilometres to the north would almost certainly cease.

The GEES section also delivers English as a Second Language to the growing Culturally and Linguistically diverse (CALD) community in Moree. Over the recent past, some of the students have gone on to successfully run their own businesses and to get jobs. Some have improved their English language skills sufficiently to obtain registration as Occupational Therapists, Teachers, Dentists and Doctors. Moree TAFE was able to attract an experienced and well qualified ESOL teacher has made this possible. For profit organizations such as NAVITAS are highly unlikely to want to operate in a small area such as Moree. NEIT also delivers the Commonwealth funded LNNP program. This program provides an entry point for disadvantaged students into higher level vocational courses and potentially worthwhile employment opportunities.

TERMS OF REFERENCE C.

Moree TAFE is an integral part of the local community. There are virtually no families who have not benefited from the opportunities provided by TAFE. A close relationship with the local council and the job providers in Moree ensures that Moree TAFE is responsive to the needs of the local community. It also provides employment for teachers and administrative staff who live and spend in the community, thereby contributing to the local economy.

The local community college partners with a number of private RTOs to deliver a small range of courses. However, they do not have the facilities to deliver the wide range of courses that TAFE does. The private RTOs would not come to a town like Moree to set up courses but are happy enough to blow in and out for a day here and there. In short, without TAFE there would be no post-secondary training or education opportunities in Moree. This would also be true in the other surrounding small towns. The TAFE library also hosts a study access centre for the University of New England. If TAFE ceased to exist in Moree that opportunity would also close.

There is a very real limit to level of courses that can be delivered in a variety of online and other media formats. There needs to be a reasonably well developed level of a range of literacies on the part of the student to enable them to be independent learners as those forms of delivery require. I have not seen any studies on the success of these forms of delivery at certificate 1-3 level, but my experience as a teacher using teleconferencing at Certificate 111 level indicates that it is not as successful as face to face. Ways of funding small classes below certificate IV level have to be found in my view and only a government funded service such as TAFE will do that. Education driven by profit is simply not going to be bothered.

TERMS OF REFERENCE D

I am only aware of the poor quality of training being provided to building apprentices from Queensland. It would appear that well over 90% of the training falls to the employer and that the RTOs are simply coming in to the work place and assessing what the apprentice has filled in a workbook. No actual training appears to be undertaken by the RTO. Many apprentices have limited opportunities in their workplace to acquire the full range of construction skills, as a result of the narrow range of work undertaken by their employer. It should be of great concern to the whole community if our future builders, electricians, plumbers and mechanics are not thoroughly trained as they are in Moree and NEIT colleges.

Education should never be a profit driven commodity. It should be seen as what it is, the right of every member of society or access for theirs and the communities benefit.

TERMS OF REFERENCE E

I am aware of the fear and trepidation felt by my colleagues in other NSW Institutes. This is now starting to be felt in NEIT. This atmosphere is not conducive to a productive workplace. There has been no rational explanation from the O'Farrell government for the arbitrary number of 800 jobs which are to go from TAFE. It seems to be counter-intuitive to introduce a so called policy of "smart and skilled" then slash and burn the major provider of skills training in the state.

I am sure that there are savings which can be made in the way TAFE NSW is run. I am sure that there is an element of top-heaviness in the organization. However, front line services are the ones being impacted at the moment while ever more management positions are created. There is the possibility of the "Yes Minister" hospital without the patients being created.