



Date: Thursday, 11 April 2013 10:27:17 AM

To whom it may concern

A quick email to you and all your parliamentary colleagues.

I have just been made formally redundant after teaching in TAFE for approximately 16 years across three regional Institutes teaching a wide range of subjects including Professional Arts Practice, Museum practice, Drawing, Painting and Printmaking. I recently assisted with implementation of a museum and gallery practice course up here at Newcastle Art School that interns students in 3 regional galleries and many Museums throughout this region. Last year two students gained paid employment and both art artists before the end of their course, one was trained in the Fine Arts at Foster / Tuncurry TAFE.

I handed back my keys last night as I watched three years of students graduate including the first round of Museum students from the Hunter TAFE. It was a defining moment for me to see individuals grow confident and develop skills necessary for the world we live in as artists. I hope this government and or future governments grow to understand the loss/es of the role Fine Art funding in TAFE within education and community development particularly in linking up suburban structures in cities and regional centres. Fine Arts Education has played a key role as a stepping stone for students who have traditionally felt less confident and were less academically inclined to gain skills and confidence to apply for higher degrees. This includes students with many disabilities across neurological and physical spectrums. I have seen many students gain employment and gain confidence to apply for jobs and develop as academics since I arrived at Newcastle Art School in 2000 and from the Western Institute before that.

Many of the local Regional and community galleries in the Hunter Region are being run and have been set up by students. Three staff at my local regional gallery (Lake Macquarie City Art Gallery) are ex students, Cessnock Regional Gallery's also recently appointed a director who is one of our graduates and four of our local artist run spaces were set up by ex TAFE teachers and are now being run by TAFE graduates. There are so many success stories that I cannot name them all in one email. I have seen students gain exhibitions throughout the world, win grants, art prizes, scholarships, develop teaching careers, work as art-workers within communities making murals and public artworks and gain local council employment.

I am also an Alumni member of the Sydney Gallery School (1979-1980) where I started as a young artist at 17 years of age- I did eventually go on to gain a degree as many of our students still do, but my skills were established at Meadowbank TAFE. I am very proud of my work history within TAFE and connections with TAFE- There are so many other ex teachers like me that at the moment are grieving the loss of the strength it had... We all hope that returns. This process of change and the removal of funds in Art teaching within TAFE has disrupted the education of the current students and worn down staff who remain. It has worn down regional communities throughout the state. TAFE Fine Arts courses have key role within our communities for students who haven't "fitted" into the system of school training- it is a major mistake to remove this VITAL funding. Don't strip it back any more- please turn this process around and re-instate this VITAL community resource for the future of art in this state and communities throughout Australia.

Whilst I am treading water a little at the moment before I contemplate the next direction I cannot imagine a life without art as it has been my life- I will spend some time contemplating life after TAFE as a statistic of this tragic decision. I will return as an artist to the community as “Community Arts worker” and continue to provide support for young and emerging artists- as they are the next generation of educators in skills development and creative process.

Best wishes and I hope to hear about positive changes that will shift back toward the reinstatement of funding within NSW for the Fine Arts. Please do not hesitate to contact me for further information.

Linda

Linda Swinfield