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To: The Senate Committee of Inquiry into the role of TAFE and its operation

I am a ceramic artist, trained in Australia, with 28 years of professional experience and an international reputation. My work is represented in many public collections including the National Gallery of Australia, and I have received numerous awards including a Bronze Prize in the Korean Ceramic Biennale International Competition 2007. I regularly participate in international conferences, exhibitions, residencies, guest lectureships and visiting artist opportunities. My international recognition followed PhD studies at Monash University Gippsland, and publication of my book, *Soda Clay and Fire*, a leading text in the field. None of these achievements would have occurred without the accessible high calibre training I received at St. George TAFE in Kogarah, Sydney in the early 1980's, which introduced me to clay work and launched my professional career. Later on, TAFE provided opportunities for me to teach and pass on my skills and knowledge to a new generation of artists.

TAFE has played a significant role in Australian art education. The TAFE sector has amassed good facilities and highly trained and accomplished staff. It is devastating to see this being thrown away. Training a visual artist requires a lifetime of work, and evidence of professional work may not be evident in the years immediately following completion of a TAFE course. However, this doesn't detract from the importance of TAFE-level art courses. TAFE has provided vital community access to art education, allowing students to discover their talents and laying the foundation for further study and professional development. The Australian art world and the wider community will be poorer without TAFE Art.

Personally, I know my life would have been very different without it.

Regards,  
Gail Nichols