



18 April 2013

Committee Secretary  
House of Representatives  
Standing Committee on Education and Employment  
PO Box 6021  
Parliament House  
CANBERRA ACT 2600

**Submission Number: 37**  
**Date Received: 18/04/2013**

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Dear Committee Secretary

### **Inquiry into the role of Technical and Further Education system and its operation**

The Community and Public Sector Union (CPSU) is an active and progressive union committed to promoting a modern, efficient and responsive public sector delivering quality services and quality jobs. We represent around 60,000 members in the Australian Public Service (APS), other areas of Commonwealth Government employment, ACT Public Service, NT Public Service, ABC, SBS and the CSIRO.

The CPSU welcomes this opportunity to make a submission to this House of Representatives Committee Inquiry into the role of Technical and Further Education system and its operation. We represent members working as general staff in the TAFE sector in the ACT and concur with the Australian Education Union as to the impact of cuts to TAFE in the ACT since 1997.

#### ***Axed Training Programs in the ACT***

The extent of programs deleted from the CIT training profile due to the search for funding efficiencies since 1997 is legion. Significant historical program closures include the Geology program, axed in approximately 2000. Recently, this program was considered too expensive to reinstate to meet the demand of the mining sector. In addition, difficulty was experienced in identifying and locating experienced geology teachers who could deliver such programs as no succession planning had been in place throughout the country.

The ACT Accreditation and Registration Council functioned for many years as both regulator and community advisory body to the ACT Minister for Education and Training on VET, Further Education and Higher Education offerings in the ACT. In June 2012 it ceased operation and its advisory function was taken over by a Council which has no appropriate community, practitioner, student, industrial or professional representation. In fact, only providers and big business has representation on this advisory council.

There exists no representative body advising the Minister on what the ACT community requires to meet its social obligations regarding VET and higher education. The profile of public training and

education offered in the ACT is therefore decided purely on economic grounds as determined by the institutions themselves; by administrators, not by professional educators. No community consultation is engaged in the decision making processes to cease offering of public VET programs or to cease subsidisation of VET programs. Consequently, the disadvantaged, who traditionally rely on TAFEs to provide them with second and third chance options, are largely ignored in the hurley-burley of financial decision making based profitability of educational and training offerings by CIT.

ACT based Engineering programs have suffered from closures as have programs in Agriculture, Horticulture and programs for at risk youth. Currently, CIT student support services, disability assistance and subsidised second chance educational and training opportunities are experiencing severe funding reductions and are scheduled to be offered only as fee for service in the future. Across CIT, some 350-400 Statements of Attainment (including skills sets) offered in 2012 are being removed from subsidised profile funding and allocated in 2013-14 as fee for service programs or deleted completely.

In late 2012 all CIT accredited Languages programs have been axed from CIT's profiled offerings such that there exists no accredited Languages training offered by a public provider in Canberra, the home of government, especially Foreign Affairs!

### ***Impact of cuts to TAFE in the ACT***

Commencing after 1997, the sequential funding withdrawal from CIT initially extracted achievable outcomes and efficiencies. All reasonable efficiencies were exhausted by the end of 2000 when it became clear that CIT was to compete on an unlevel competitive playing field with private providers. These providers did not have the cost burden of maintaining extensive and aging government assets and the requirement of staff to operate within the Public Sector Management Act. With the encouragement of the ACT government, private RTOs subsequently cherry picked the profitable programs which had long been identified as necessary for the self sufficiency of the ACT and regional communities. The residual, unprofitable but essential programs were left to the public provider to deliver while it was expected that this provider could also maintain the outputs with sequential reductions in funding over a 15 year period.

Despite multiple pleas from the community and industrial representative organisations to governments for reinstatement of funding to support provision of essential training to meet ACT community needs the ACT government has chosen to exclude community, small business and industrial consultation in favour of manipulated market philosophies. The consequences of these actions on the community include:

1. the loss of services to support disadvantaged students,
2. the cancellation of low profit but essential programs to support the skills shortages within the region,
3. the establishment of a coercive, unhealthy workplace culture at CIT
4. establishment of unsustainable teacher workloads
5. inability to secure appropriate teaching staff due to poor working conditions at CIT
6. loss of quality of VET and further education
7. placing staff and students in unnecessary risk
8. devaluation of the quality of training and education offerings at CIT
9. small business needs neglected in favour of profitability of educational institutions
10. failure of CIT to meet its obligations to support the educational and training needs of local business and the ACT community

### ***Massive cuts to TAFE by newly elected State Governments***

The CPSU is also concerned at the large scale of cuts endured by the sector nationally and what it may mean for the future of publicly funded Technical and Further Education in Australia. TAFE has felt the brunt of massive public sector cuts from newly elected state governments in Victoria, Queensland and New South Wales.

In Victoria alone, over \$300m has been slashed from TAFE institutes. Hundreds of courses have been shut, campuses are being closed down and more than 2,400 TAFE workers have lost their jobs. Students are now being forced to pay tens of thousands of dollars for courses which they previously accessed at a modest cost.

In Queensland, the government plans to close 38 of the state's 82 TAFE campuses and has already cut more than \$100m from TAFEs' budgets.

In NSW, more than \$130m has been cut from TAFE and more than 800 TAFE employees will lose their jobs over the next four years. Courses are being cut, students fees have increased and campuses are threatened.

TAFE provide ongoing opportunities for people to re-skill and gain new qualifications throughout their careers. In every industry and in every part of the economy, TAFE provides essential qualifications.

Many families, communities, governments and industry all rely on a well-funded, quality TAFE sector. The more state governments cut from the TAFE sector, the more difficult it becomes for TAFEs to undertake its important role of training and re-skilling people.

TAFEs need secure funding from governments to continue to play its important role in training over one million Australians each year and remain affordable and accessible. The TAFE sector must be funded adequately and the cuts must stop.

Should you wish to discuss this submission any further you can contact me at  
, or on

Yours sincerely



Vince McDevitt  
**CPSU ACT Regional Secretary**