



Higher Education degrees in TAFE

Since 2002 TAFE's have been offering Associate and Bachelor Degree's in a variety of fields. Students are attracted to these degrees for a number of reasons:

1. Smaller class sizes, more individual attention
2. Location/proximity to home
3. TAFE's tend to offer specialist vocationally based degrees in specialist fields that are less common in Universities
4. Some TAFE degrees are leaders in their field

A student who chooses a TAFE degree is disadvantaged as they are denied access to Commonwealth Supported Places that would be available to them if they were to undertake these degrees in a University setting. All TAFE students, while having access to Fee Help, are full fee paying students.

As TAFE are not self accrediting institutions, they have had a long history of accrediting degrees and assuring the quality and suitable academic rigour is in place via a variety of policies, processes and procedures as well as extensive accreditation and regular reaccreditation requirements.

Since 2012 TAFE degrees and University degrees are all accountable to the same regulatory body TESQA, it is discriminatory to not allow TAFE students to access CSP funding and for TAFE institutions and degrees to not have access to the same nationally based funding as Universities. This argument was relevant before the formation of TESQA and is even more so now. TAFE students are doing nationally accredited and internationally recognised degrees but they do so with no direct fee assistance from the federal government. TAFE's themselves are funded by the states so these students fall between the cracks of funding. The states offer no assistance for degrees in TAFE and the federal government offer no assistance to TAFEs

To make an argument that TAFE degree students deserve less government support than University students is egregious and defies logic, especially in the context of this inquiry's own terms of reference which acknowledges TAFE's role in providing access to disadvantaged individuals. The current policies of denying these students access to CSP funding disadvantages this group even further and simply discourages participation and for those who do undertake programs, leaves them with large debts that are much greater than their University student counterparts.

This week the minister quoted figures such as "Total Commonwealth-supported University places are up an estimated 146,000 in 2013 compared with the level before the change of government in 2007. That's an increase of more than one-third."

Given the relatively small number of students actually enrolled in TAFE degrees and the huge number enrolled at Universities, allowing TAFE students access to CSP's would be just a drop in the ocean compared to the total amount of funding available, but would be a major improvement for TAFE funding (for all of those TAFE's offering degrees) and for those students doing these specialist courses.

Regards

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