



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

The Marrickville Multicultural Interagency (MMIA) is an independent network of government and non-government service providers, organisations and community members working with and supporting people from Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) communities in the Marrickville LGA in NSW. The Marrickville Multicultural Interagency is committed to implementing the Principles of Multiculturalism as they pertain to the Marrickville LGA. MMIA is committed to social justice issues and providing support and action for local CALD communities.

MMIA has a particular commitment to supporting post compulsory vocational education which provides opportunities for people from CALD backgrounds to increase their engagement with further education, employment and the wider community. We believe a fully functioning publicly funded TAFE system is integral to this process. Furthermore TAFE has been crucial to MMIA's role of working in partnership to address issues of community need and in responding to immediate and emerging issues by providing tailor made educational provision.

- 1. The development of skills in the Australian economy; and**
- 2. The development of opportunities for Australians to improve themselves and increase their life and employment prospects**
- 3. The delivery of services and programs to support regions, communities and disadvantaged individuals to access training and skills and through them a pathway to employment**

TAFE is indeed crucial to the development of skills in our economy and in our local communities, and is the first point of call for most people in our LGA wanting to develop skills for further education and employment. For many of our residents it is difficult to access mainstream education, they need access courses that provide specialist support as they gain the confidence, strategies and skills to move on to higher qualifications.

MMIA members have worked in close partnership with the TAFE Multicultural and Outreach sections over several decades and this has resulted in a great increase in individual and community capacity resulting in CALD students progressing to mainstream TAFE courses and employment. The Multicultural Education Coordinators have made an extremely valuable contribution to the TAFE Multicultural program as they have assisted many thousands of people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds by delivering and managing customised multicultural education courses in vocational, orientation, special purpose English, cross cultural and employability skills. Unfortunately many of these positions are being deleted in our region and elsewhere in NSW.

It is imperative that these equity services remain. Attached are three cases studies of people that have benefited from these services and other TAFE services and provision.

#### **4. The operation of a competitive training market**

We are alarmed that the operation of our publicly funded TAFE system is under threat from our state government with its proposal to make all vocational educational funding contestable. As mentioned above many Multicultural Coordinators have already lost their jobs and those that remain do not have a budget and are unable to run educational programs but have to work as brokers in their own organisations.

We are also concerned about the entitlement part of the proposal where students have an entitlement to shop around and buy their course without effective careers advice and referrals. Many of those entitlements will be wasted on unsuitable and inadequate courses, ie not providing adequate support services to enable students to progress to higher level courses. Many private training organisations will go to great lengths to lure people to train with them and provide inferior courses as is already happening on a small scale in our communities for example a Sydney based private college offering training for Aboriginal students that is one third of the duration of the local TAFE College course.

How will TAFE be effectively funded to retain equity services for students from CALD backgrounds and other people experiencing barriers to gaining qualifications.

#### **Conclusion**

We welcome this national inquiry into the role of Technical and Further Education system and its operation. MMIA believes that a publicly funded TAFE system with all its equity and support services left intact is integral to the advancement of individuals and the communities of the inner west of Sydney. Our TAFE system has been the envy of many countries and we should do everything within our power to maintain this provision.

#### ***Case study 1***

Ariyani first came into contact with TAFE Outreach at Connect Marrickville in 2005. She spoke no English and had a small baby and her first entry point was the Indonesian Women's Group. From there she attended playgroups and the TAFE Outreach Community Engagement/English Class. The crèche run adjacent to the TAFE class allowed her to study. This child care has been funded by Outreach and a grant from Metro MRC. As her English improved she joined an Outreach WOW (Work Opportunities for Women) course (Certificate I) and later an Outreach course in Playgroup Facilitation.

During this time Ariyani was employed by Connect as a casual childcare worker on one of their playgroups and for the crèche for the Community Engagement/English class and she continued to work in this role for several years (2009 to 2011).

In 2012 Ariyani enrolled in Petersham TAFE's Multicultural Unit's Cert II in Community Services (Children's Services) and is now completing her Cert III in Children's Services at Petersham TAFE College. Early this year she was employed by KU Children's Services and is valued as a highly skilled childcare worker.

Ariyani's education and employment pathway from 2005 to 2012 has been made possible by a strong partnership between Connect and TAFE Outreach and by the provision of a range of access programs and expertise including TAFE Multicultural programs. There are many people in the

community with similar needs to those of Ariyani and thus the importance of retaining TAFE equity programs so that they too may have opportunities to pathway into mainstream qualifications, volunteering and employment.

### **Case study 2 Brendan**

Brendan is a 21 year Aboriginal student who commenced studying the Petersham TAFE Outreach *Access to Aged Care* course in July 2012. He pathwayed to this course from a Foundation Studies (Literacy and Numeracy) program where he received intensive support for a learning disability. This support continued during his studies in aged care.

In the *Access to Aged Care* Industry course students study a range of access units and three subjects from the Certificate III qualification for which they receive advanced standing when they pathway to the Cert III.

Brendan has now successfully completed the *Access to Aged Care* and as part of his studies completed a week of work experience at Wyanga Aboriginal Age Care at Redfern where they were so impressed with his skills and knowledge they offered him a job. During his work experience at Wyanga he visited UTS where he met Michael McDaniel's, the head of the Jumbunna Indigenous Centre of Learning. He encouraged Brendan to look long term at Nursing at UTS where he will receive support from Jumbunna.

While studying Brendan received support from his teachers, TAFE counsellors and Head Teachers. His counsellor nominated him for a TAFE Equity Scholarship and fortunately this was successful which will help towards the costs of studying his next course a *Certificate III Acute Care Nursing* at Ultimo TAFE College in 2013.

Prior to 2012 Brendan had attempted to complete several mainstream courses but had not been successful. This case study illustrates the importance of specialist literacy and disability teachers, counsellors and adequate access pathways – the professionals and provision that is being undermined by recent cuts to public education and that will be further undermined by *Smart and Skilled* in 2014.

Brendan's time at Petersham TAFE has been transformative, he has gained so much confidence and sees himself as someone who can learn and apply his knowledge. One week after completing his course he visited the college and told of how he had used his newly acquired first aid skills to care for an elderly couple who were involved in a car accident. He was commended by both the paramedics and police for his actions that averted much more serious injuries.

### **Case study 3**

I am from Spain and have lived in many different places. I moved to Marrickville in 2005. I have two daughters and when my eldest was due to start primary school in 2006 I visited Marrickville West Primary School. Ms, Ling our school's principal provided all the information we needed and as part of the school tour, took us to 'Connect Marrickville', which is a Schools as Community centre within Marrickville West Public School.

Connect has many different programs but we began our journey attending the Friday Playgroup. The playgroup allowed my daughters to socialise with other children and get used to the school as well as providing me with the opportunity to meet, and later on develop friendship with other parents within our school community.

I volunteered and helped in the playgroup and discovered I loved working with children so enrolled in a TAFE Outreach Playgroup facilitation course, which was one of 'Connects' TAFE outreach programs. I completed several other TAFE Outreach and TAFE Multicultural courses including the Certificate II in Children's Services where I received help with English language and literacy and study skills. I am now studying the Diploma in Children's Services at TAFE and working as playgroup co-facilitator for 'Connect' and I work as a volunteer at many community events. 'Connect Marrickville' and the opportunity to study at TAFE has changed my family's life by providing my daughters with a smooth transition from home to school and me with the self-confidence to take on study as an adult and build many wonderful friendships from our multicultural community.

*(This student has struggled with mental health issues, an ill daughter, a medical issue and a difficult family situation. Her learning pathway has been disrupted several times as a result.)*