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Committee Secretary
House of Representatives Standing Committee on Education and Employment
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600
Australia

I would like to express my amazement and shock that anyone should consider shrinking the TAFE system.

I am 76 years old and have been retired for some eleven years.

When I left school I was lucky to be further educated in the era before student fees. I studied hard and with that Government help was thus able to contribute to the community as an engineer in industry and a teacher in the public school system for the rest of my working life. I consider the money the Government spent on my education was an investment in the country's future and not a hand-out to me. It wasn't easy.

My daughter and her husband are now in the process of retraining with the help of TAFE so that they will also be able to make a useful contribution to the community and not be a drain on the taxpayer.

Cutting TAFE is a stupid idea that only damages the community. Of course we all agree that the Government should ensure that public funds are not wasted in any area but 'saving' money by cutting TAFE is short-sighted in the extreme. In this changing world we need education for all more than ever.

TAFE fills a vital role in making us the "clever country" we hear so much about. TAFE offers everyone young or old, rich or poor the chance to develop and help the community. TAFE is not a charity.

TAFE is education in a very practical sense that enriches lives. It should be greatly extended and targeted to assist rural and depressed areas— not cut-back to 'save' dollars. It is needed everywhere. Education the only way we can ensure a prosperous future for all. How can we modernise and meet the challenges of the future without expanding education and allowing everyone to play their part? We must ask ourselves what sort of a future we want for our children.

Yours faithfully

Ted Howells