

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

Submission Number: 26
Date Received: 18/04/2013

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Submitted by:
AEU NMIT Sub Branch
77-91 St Georges Road
Preston 3072
Contacts:

This submission has been prepared by the AEU NMIT Sub Branch on behalf of our membership. We are incredibly concerned with the decisions that have been made about TAFE and the VET system by the Victorian State Governments over the last five years. Since the Labor government introduced Skills Reform in 2008 and the Coalition made further TAFE cuts in 2012 we have watched the gradual erosion of the TAFE system. This has resulted in:

- Students undertaking courses at private providers without the knowledge that they will be locked out of government-subsidised places in the future
- Courses with predominantly female students disproportionately affected, resulting in women wishing to retrain and return to the workforce being cut out of educational opportunities
- Unscrupulous private providers offering incentives to students to enroll in course of dubious quality (eg: 160 hours of government funded training delivered in just 4 hours!)
- Fee hikes that lock students out of the vocational education system completely
- TAFE cutting face-to-face delivery to manage budget cuts
- Job losses for teachers and staff in the TAFE system

We have collated information from our members from a range of different programs at NMIT. We put our trust in this process to raise awareness and make changes to ensure Victorians continue to have access to high quality, meaningful, affordable educational opportunities.

About NMIT taken from: <http://www.nmit.edu.au/about/>

NMIT (Northern Melbourne Institute of TAFE) has been delivering vocational training since 1912. Delivering high quality education and training with a strong focus on the world of work is the keynote of its success. Catering for students from a diverse multicultural background, NMIT has established itself as an educational enterprise that continues to develop and flourish from modest trade beginnings early in the 1930s to a strong and vibrant institution in the 21st century. With over 68,000 course enrolments in 2011, NMIT offers over 500 nationally accredited courses, many which are available on either a full-time or part-time basis. It also provides over 400 institute-accredited courses.

Its emphasis is on practical, personal and empowering education. NMIT is intent on providing real avenues to employment and further education for early school leavers to those aged in their seventies who might want to return to study. NMIT offers courses in everything from accounting to advertising, childcare to commercial cookery, fitting and turning to floristry, as well as over 200 short courses in beauty therapy, real estate investment or running your own small business.

These study programs are delivered by six faculties - Earth Sciences, Further Education, Business & Personal Services, Building & Construction, Arts & Social Sciences and

Engineering - across seven campuses in the northern region of Melbourne and country Victoria, Australia, as well as six training centres. Courses range from Certificate 1 level right through to Advanced Diploma, and recent years have seen the introduction of a growing number of higher education programs.

We would like to comment on the role played by TAFES in:

1. The development of skills in the Australian economy;

NMIT students and teachers speak consistently highly of the relevance of their courses for the Australian economy, the connections with industry, and the high rates of students who take their places in industry during and at the completion of their courses. Here are some examples:

a. The Music Industry

taken from

www.nmit.edu.au/course_info/local_students/more_information/success_stories/rachael_head/

www.nmit.edu.au/course_info/local_students/more_information/success_stories/tony_spizzica/

Rachael Head, a graduate of NMIT's Advanced Diploma of Music Performance, says the industry contacts she made at NMIT helped jumpstart her career.

"The teachers have been in the music industry for years and they've been in bands. They're all very talented. I felt lucky to be working with them."

The 20-year-old is currently touring as a backing singer with Clare Bowditch's band and has just finished recording on Bowditch's new album. Rachael puts her success down to meeting the right people in the industry.

"One thing leads to another. The connections at NMIT got me into the position I'm in now."

Tony Spizzica, current student in NMIT's Bachelor of Australian Popular Music, explains that his NMIT music course has provided him with a deeper understanding and greater analysis of music, despite all his experience in the business (Tony regularly plays in four different bands).

"The course is put together so well, it dovetails the creative aspects with the business management side of the music industry and has given

me the technical tools to add to my skills. It's not just about learning to play an instrument; it's a comprehensively holistic approach."

Tony now co-ordinates several music and theatrical events, including a Victorian Government youth initiative, FREEZA, which was held in Elmore in January this year with great success. Through the business management part of the course, Tony has gained enough confidence and knowledge to drive these kinds of events.

"We drew on talent from rural schools and youth groups with a view towards giving young people in regional areas an opportunity to perform to a real crowd on a real stage with proper sound equipment and engineers."

b. The Tourism Industry

According to Tourism Australia's 2020 Vision, the tourism industry has a labour shortage of 36,000 and an employee vacancy rate over four times the national average that is preventing parts of the industry from effectively servicing global customers. By 2015, an additional 56,000 people will be needed to fill vacancies (including 26,000 skilled positions).

NMIT is perfectly placed to train future employees of the travel and tourism industries. We have a growing network of industry professionals we work with and their input, together with the most recent research and tourism forecasts, informs our decisions around our curriculum. We adapt our curriculum to ensure our students graduate with skills that industry need. Our students work at high-profile events, they can manage budgets, they can calculate fares and understand the diverse needs of customers. We teach our students how to strategically use social media and to work in an online environment. Our students graduate and enter the workforce immediately adding value rather than relying on their employers to give them further training.

"I am now working fulltime in a well paid job and alongside a small team organise four caravan shows as well as running lots of Association events, such as filming lifestyle television shows. NMIT gave students hands on experience in the industry, allowing us to work at a large number of events in Melbourne. The course gave us the opportunity to complete work placements to back up the work learnt in the classroom."

Bev Charles, NMIT Graduate

c. The Community Services Industry

Without good quality community services courses, we would not have skilled staff working with people with a disability, we would not have programs for the homeless, children at risk and we would not have compassion for those with mental health issues and those struggling with drug and alcohol issues. Workers in all areas of the sector would be without access to evidence based best practice and latest government initiatives.

NMIT Community Services graduates fulfil roles in the community services sector that make a difference to the lives of others just like the TAFE education makes a difference to their lives.

Marg Quon, Community Services Program Coordinator at NMIT, says:

“In the past twelve months I have utilised the vocational skills of many industry trainers who gained their initial education in our department. There remains for me no greater measure of the value of what TAFE provides than seeing these trainers engaging and inspiring other adults to be the best they can be, to make choices they can follow through with and to leave the past behind.

Our most experienced and highly regarded trainer from Industry studied as a single parent, went onto University and completed Social Work, worked with integrity in the mental health sector and then returned to NMIT as a trainer. Her skills are invaluable, she herself values the opportunities that TAFE provided her and the knowledge and skills she attained and consequently she gives that back to current students in her teaching. While we would benefit greatly from her skills on a daily basis we graciously share her with the counselling program required after Black Saturday.”

2. The development of opportunities for Australians to improve themselves and increase their life and employment prospects;

TAFE is a unique learning environment that on any given day is vibrant, colourful and diverse.

Measuring the value of a TAFE education usually involves collecting specified data over a period of time. Measures include how many students enrolled in each course offered, how many completed their courses and from there how many gained employment. Added to that data we can include those who went onto higher education.

The TAFE environment can be exceptional in the outcomes achieved for students, but for many teachers at NMIT this is not the true value of the opportunity they provide, as outcomes give little consideration to the personal attainment of students, the guts and determination to turn their lives around and the satisfaction of doing so.

Teachers at NMIT have many stories of individuals who have improved their lives dramatically through their studies and experiences at TAFE. Here are some examples:

a. Bev Charles, Mill Park, NMIT Tourism and Events Graduate

"My NMIT Dual Diploma Course of Events Management and Tourism Operations changed my life. From being a stay-at-home mum with four boys, organising school fundraising events as a volunteer, I went back to school to study for what I really enjoyed doing. I am now working fulltime in a well-paid job and alongside a small team organise four caravan shows a year as well as running lots of Association events, such as filming with lifestyle TV shows. I will be forever grateful to NMIT and to the teaching staff who supported students throughout the course."

b. Tony Spizzica, current student, Bachelor of Australian Popular Music

www.nmit.edu.au/course_info/local_students/more_information/success_stories/tony_spizzica/

"Although I researched it well, I didn't know what I was getting into! I had only studied to Year 10 and didn't feel academically confident, but was so inspired to follow my heart.

"After the first year, it got easier. I came back from Christmas break and had the time to reflect on everything I had learned. I had become part of

a student community at NMIT and understood that the friends I'd made shared common goals and ambitions."

Tony lives in regional Victoria, travelling up to 170 km per day to reach Fairfield campus. He has two young children still in school.

"My family offer me incredible support, which enables me to do what I do. In 2006 I was fortunate enough to be awarded NMIT's Fuji Xerox Study Grant which helped purchase a second car: up until then, when I took the car, my wife (Viv) and kids would have a very long walk to school!"

Tony has many options for his future beyond NMIT, including continuing study in a Dip Ed to qualify as a teacher. But for now he's enjoying student life.

"The biggest buzz I get is from the creative environment at NMIT. I recently arranged a piece of music I had written for a 12 piece band. It was performed by teachers and other professional musicians. I was pretty proud. At the end I thought, 'wow! Did I really do that?!'"

c. Rachael Head, NMIT Advanced Diploma of Music Performance Graduate

Taken from:

www.nmit.edu.au/course_info/local_students/more_information/success_stories/rachael_head/

Rachael grew up singing and performing in local productions in Shepparton, and started playing in bands when she was 16. Two years ago, she moved to Melbourne hoping to become a professional performer. It was a daunting challenge and she decided studying music would improve her chances.

"I asked around about courses and I kept hearing about NMIT."

Since graduating last year, Rachael has toured and recorded with Clare Bowditch, and formed two bands of her own, including Tet to Tet, with NMIT graduate Cam Nichol. The music courses at NMIT offer students plenty of hands-on experience both in the recording studio and in performance spaces like the Yarra Edge Theatre at NMIT's Fairfield campus. Regular performances helped build students' confidence. As a final assignment, students arrange, promote and perform their own gig. Rachael played at The Spot on Sydney Road, Brunswick.

“NMIT really gave me the knowledge and confidence to begin a career in the music industry. It was a great transition. I got the chance to perform with lots of different people and I’m playing with them in bands now. I had been performing for years but a lot of people on the course had never performed before. It was amazing to watch that first performance when they were shaking like a leaf and then see how much confidence they had gained by the end of the course. It was fantastic. By that stage I was really ready for it. I didn’t feel overwhelmed because I’d been given the knowledge.”

d. Community Services Students

Marg Quon, Community Services Program Coordinator at NMIT, says:

“My department is an adult learning environment where students must be twenty years of age or older. In 2012 our eldest student was 74 years of age and she continues to speak glowingly of her experience at NMIT. She continues to hold a position in a school undertaking the pastoral care of primary age children and their families. The younger students in her class were enthralled by the experiences shared by the older student particularly the sharing of the importance of a work ethic, employability skills and maintaining relationships. She gave them self belief that anything is possible, by perfect example in a TAFE setting.”

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;

As with all TAFE Institutes, NMIT provides far more than vocationally oriented training. Foundation and bridging programs, disability, Koori, learning and study skills support, libraries, student liaison and media, and counselling services all contribute to a rich and supported learning experience for students from a great diversity of backgrounds.

a. Foundation Skills

NMIT's Further Education (FE) Faculty provides a range of programs to support adults from migrant, refugee and educationally disadvantaged backgrounds to develop the foundation and learning skills needed to access vocational training and employment. For these students, support with planning their pathways into VET, and bridging programs to help them get there, are vital ingredients for success in finding their places within the Australian economy and community. This holistic approach to learning is a strong feature of the TAFE environment.

Here are some comments from students studying English as a Second Language (ESL) courses in the FE faculty at NMIT:

Being a student at NMIT really changed my life. Not only because they helped me to improve my communication skills and to prepare for a job, but because they embraced me and made me feel that I belong. They showed me the beauty of my country, the colourful multicultural Australia. They gave me the opportunity to make friends from almost every land in the world, and that was wonderful because now I love to work together, achieve together and celebrate and dance. They helped me be a better person. I hope the Government will continue to support this Institute.

I've learnt many things as a student who comes to learn English - I build my confidence, I used Library resources, I'm preparing for jobs now and I find it very useful for me and for my Classmates. Also I have taken part in some activities such Harmony day, Market day and Excursions which really helped me to settle in Australia I really appreciate that, and I hope that our State government keeps funding NMIT TAFE, not just for my case but also there are many other students keenly looking forward to get some opportunities to have trade courses and training which can

help them to achieve their future goals and give Australia a big benefit and rewards. I value TAFE's work and the job they do for us as it is really ideal, functional and monumental in helping me to settle down in Melbourne.

I see myself improving English and I make friends who help me to begin my life here. Also the teachers prepare us for jobs and help us to find work placement. Important is the lesson in computer lab and in library we found resources to learn us things for Australia. The Harmony Day in NMIT help all the students from different countries to live together. I wish the government continues to support the NMIT.

First I came to Australia from Vietnam, I could not speak English and it is very hard to live in a country that English is mother language. So, I decided to go to school to improve it. What I learned is not only English (Speaking, Listening, Writing, Reading Skill) but also is about the other things. I do have knowledge about the other Country, Religion, and a lot of things. I did make friends. I enjoyed my class. Now, I am so confident to go any where by myself. So, I think you should not cut NMIT funding because we need their help.

Hopefully I'm going to stay here until I finish my course and gets better in English, which is what NMIT is helping me with. They helped me with a lot of things since I started here like building my confidence, improving my English, preparing us for jobs and making friends. And there is always activities which help us to meet a new people and shows our habits from our countries like Harmony day celebrations and marketing day, and there is also the library resources part and computer labs which help us a lot with earning some experience, like improving our pronunciation by training on reading books and use the internet to learn emailing with the smallest details. It's not a correct decision to stop supporting NMIT after everything they are doing for us, they make us feel like we are in our homes and among our families. So I hope you reconsider this decision and make a fair decision for us.

The course is full of activities, meetings, friendships, knowledge, social communication, and teamwork, all things that can make us fun and

learn at the same time. The useful things for example; learning, writing, reading, spelling, computer and especially speaking the language it helps me more to improve my English language. The education system in Australia is perfect and interesting, we do a lot of activities, and one was the harmony day which included multicultural activities.... really it was great. Now NMIT is helping me to find a job when I finish my Certificate 111. I hope the government can help NMIT to help me to keep working well with good education.

I started doing this course at first to improve my English but also for making some friendship with people like me that came from far away. I'm 24 years old and I came from Italy, the other side of the world. I really miss all from there. But here I need to say thanks to my teacher Rizana that she helps me and all my classmates in everything. She has lots of knowledge and she's very helpful and kind. My class is like my second family and I think that every people who come from other countries of the world, with this help they will start a better life. I hope the Government will continue to support NMIT.

b. Bridging Programs

The Further Education Faculty also offers a range of *dual delivery courses*, where the Faculty partners with a range of industry departments across the institute to offer entry level VET training in conjunction with ESL, for example, ESL and Childcare, ESL and Hospitality, ESL and Teacher's Aides. These courses are highly successful in equipping learners with the language, study and vocational skills that they need to pursue further study and employment in these industry areas. While many ESL students will find it difficult to successfully access and complete mainstream VET courses independently, these programs do work as a very necessary bridge to scaffold the transition to vocational education and training.

Here is an example of a student who completed the ESL and Childcare course, taken from the NMIT website:

www.nmit.edu.au/course_info/local_students/more_information/success_stories/feng_han/

Diploma of Children's Services student Feng Han worked as a kindergarten teacher for seven years in her native Shanghai and has brought many skills with her to Australia, such as dance, playing piano, origami and craft-making.

Han, who has a two-year-old daughter, completed NMIT's Certificate III ESL Employment for Childcare last year, a dual delivery course designed for ESL students who want to work in childcare. She is now completing the Diploma of Children's Services (Early Childhood

Education and Care) while working part-time at a childcare centre in Preston.

As part of the course, Han completed placements at local childcare centres ABC Learning and Wood Street Childcare Centre. She says the teachers at NMIT were a great support. "They gave us a lot of knowledge and organised a lot of activities for us. I was able to learn a lot of practical skills like first aid. They made the course interesting and enjoyable and encouraged us to be more confident."

The children taught by Han also benefit from her unique skills in dance and origami. "For multicultural day I brought lots of origami and taught the children how to make lanterns to put in the window. We also made umbrellas and a paper piano!"

Han moved here four years ago with her Chinese-born husband and wants to work as a kindergarten teacher after finishing her course. She is also planning to study part-time for a degree in childcare.

c. Student and Learning Services

Disability Services at NMIT provide a range of support to students with a disability, including organising renovations to facilities, providing aides in classes, and assisting with pathways and career planning.

There is also support for Koori students, and training and support for staff in working sensitively and effectively with them.

Counselling services support many students with personal issues that impact on their ability to study, and the student liaison and media team offer on campus events and publications to add to the student experience.

The Learning Skills and Assessment Unit works to provide literacy, numeracy and learning support within VET classes (VET Support), and study skills support on a one to one basis. Many students in the TAFE environment have not had successful experiences at school, have had a long period away from formal education, and/or do not have strong academic skills. These supports are invaluable for assisting them to complete their studies successfully and for improving their skills and confidence in their literacy, numeracy and learning skills.

While the Study Skills service has operated for many years, VET Support is a more recent innovation, introduced in recognition of the need to strengthen the literacy and numeracy skills of our graduates across the board. It has been extremely well received by both VET teachers and students, and early evaluations of its impact are very positive.

All of the above programs and services are part of the success story of TAFE, and illustrate why TAFE is so well positioned to provide access to education and training opportunities for the whole community.

Here is some further insight into this from Marg Quon, Community services Program Coordinator at NMIT:

"We do what we do well, in many of our courses we have adults with police checks that may restrict them, we have students on parole, and we have students who have served time. No one would know. Every student is treated with respect and given the same opportunities. Our pride is that these students succeed where previously they had given up or never tried or others had given up on them. The value to the community is immense; these students have gone onto employment, have mentored others and have stayed out of the justice system. One student has returned as a highly valued trainer and mentor to other students. He takes his learning across Australia to encourage and support similar people to his past to seek education and change in their lives. This is backed by the large corporate organisation that employs him.

Many of our students are parents returning to work or seeking work and they find the best way to do that is to undertake TAFE training in a chosen field. Our students who are parents model to their own children the importance of choice that an education can give them. Not everyone is suitable for a university education and not everyone is suitable for a TAFE education but people find having the choice opens up far more than they had previously imagined. If we reduce TAFE opportunities we reduce the social capacity of these students.

I am impressed constantly by the dogged determination of our students who have not had a positive time in their school days, who have learning difficulties, who are bi lingual, our refugees, those in recovery from a range of health or social issues. TAFE supports these students through programs supplementing the classroom delivery. Our TAFE has a uniquely cooperative approach to ensure students who once believed they could not achieve, achieve.

A young man in his mid twenties who had a difficult schooling due to family issues, times of being homeless and times without parental guidance was so thrilled with the feedback of his assessment task he told me he was taking the assignment to Nan's house to display on the fridge, he was so proud of himself and he knew his Nan would be also. How can we measure that moment as a turning point in that young man's life? He now runs his own business facilitating workshops for other young people on managing anxiety."

4. The operation of a competitive training market;

There have been many examples of poor quality private training providers reported in the media in recent times, particularly since the introduction of a fully contestable training market in Victoria. While by no means all private providers fall into this category, NMIT teachers regularly see the impact of poor quality provision for their students and the courses that they teach.

Many NMIT students have been pressured or convinced to enrol in short training courses at private providers of dubious quality, and/or for which they are not suited. Not only do these courses not properly equip students to enter employment in the relevant industry, in Victoria these students have no further opportunities to access Government –subsidised training at the level at which they have previously undertaken training, even where this training has been inadequate. So once a student has been awarded a Certificate 3 in a particular industry area, they are not eligible for a Government-subsidised place in a Certificate 3 course in any other industry area. Many of our students simply do not have the skills to undertake training at Certificate 4 level, cannot find employment with the inadequate qualification they now hold, and are therefore completely stymied in their aspirations to train and enter employment.

Here are some examples from our staff:

- *MWT (private RTO) offer a Diploma of Music in 16 weeks. A student (from this RTO) in my Advanced Diploma Music, a year long program, has much poorer musicianship skills, well below the standard of our Cert IV graduates.*
- *In 2010, CCAT (private RTO) collapsed and closed its doors. NMIT Performing Arts took on many of these students. Much to the relief of their parents who had paid lots of money to CCAT (and lost it). We had many issues trying to find out the previous results of the students at CCAT and they did not appear to operate as a professional RTO.*
- *Students are referred to VET courses offered by private providers by Job Services Australia organizations (JSA's) without an adequate assessment to determine whether they have the skills to complete the course successfully. Often these students do have a successful completion of the course they are enrolled in but this is not a true reflection of what is needed to successfully gain employment. Students are not informed of the implications of enrolling and completing these courses. It places them in a position where they are severely disadvantaged in the future if they wish to enrol in a course at the same level. There are many instances of students at a pre literacy level or low levels of English who are enrolled or have completed a Certificate 3 VET course.*

- *There have been some incidents with private providers targeting JSA's in the City of Yarra and offering courses for free. Some JSA case managers have intimidated and bullied students to leave NMIT and complete these courses. One student was told they had to leave their part time job so they could attend classes in the city. Student feedback after placement interviews with the provider (ITHEA) indicated these initial placement interviews were inadequate. They were not interviewed initially by a staff member but handed a pile of tests and a CD and told to work through them. They also told the potential student that Centrelink were referring all clients to their organisation. Students become quite stressed and upset by their behaviour. It was also clear that the organisation was not able to deal with the range of levels of students studying there or did not have the skills or knowledge to set up programs. Those at an intermediate level of English were placed in classes with pre literate learners. The rooms were quite small and had too many students placed in a small room. Students had to climb over chairs to get out of classrooms. There were also no pathways for students provided. Those students who did not progress were not offered classes. I was informed that these students who had previously studied at NMIT were now at home and not accessing any language classes after their ordeal.*
- *Some of my full time tourism students in 2012 enrolled in what they thought was a Responsible Service of Alcohol Certificate. They were paid \$150 each to attend 6 weekly sessions of 4 hours each in a function room at the Cross Keys Hotel. They were provided with workbooks complete with the answers in them. They undertook ALL units to qualify them for a Cert III in Hospitality except for ONE important unit – the one that requires them to actually work hands-on in a hospitality environment (which coincidentally doesn't attract any government funding). In one four hour session alone these students studied coffee making and advanced coffee making - during this process they did not make one coffee. This was taught to them verbally with the aid of a whiteboard!*

5. Those jurisdictions in which State Governments have announced funding decisions which may impact on their operation and viability.

Since the State Government funding cuts were announced last year, NMIT has felt a range of impacts across its programs, including fee hikes that are substantial in some cases, redundancies, increased class sizes, and reductions in face to face teaching hours.

NMIT experienced approximately 25 redundancies in 2012, with the numbers this year still to be determined in response to ongoing monitoring of student numbers across the Institute. There is also a reduction in the number of sessional teaching staff employed this year. Larger numbers of redundancies have so far been avoided by NMIT's decision to operate with a budget deficit in 2013 while the transition to the new funding arrangements and environment takes place.

Changes in funding arrangements that were introduced in Victoria as part of the Skills Reform package mean that student places are no longer funded where students withdraw from programs. As withdrawals are inevitable in any program, this requires teachers to over-enrol, in order to keep programs viable when students drop out. The budget cuts announced last year has intensified the pressure on staff to increase class sizes to minimise any losses from withdrawals, which has a big impact on workloads and the quality of programs.

Many staff have also reported that there has been a reduction in the face to face hours that are allocated to their courses, meaning that they are being asked to teach the same amount of content in less face to face delivery time. This obviously has a big impact on workload and quality for students, and is an issue that is yet to be worked through fully.

Here are some comments from our staff and students about these impacts;

a. Fee Hikes

- *There is huge inequity between people that can/cannot afford the new fee structures. Many people who would love to study music part-time, to retrain, can no longer afford the fees.*
- *Our tourism fees have tripled. Some students are unable to finish their studies as they have been unable to afford their fees this year.*
- *I've seen firsthand that TAFE can change lives but now for the first time in my life I am seeing people walk in our doors wanting to study and then walk out again because they can't afford it. These TAFE cuts crush dreams - not just for students, not just for staff but for entire communities.*

- *I would never have contemplated, nor been able to afford to start the course at the current fees. (Bev Charles, NMIT graduate)*
- *Sadly many prospective students cannot access a TAFE course with the huge increase in fees over the last twelve months. Many students have not continued into second year of their course with fees rising in one case from approximately seven hundred dollars per year to almost six thousand dollars. To watch her wipe away tears and walk out the door was heartbreaking as she had shared her future employment opportunities that had been made to her dependent on her completion of study. She was so excited about these prospects as study and employment were about to break her from a cycle of poverty and hardship as the single parent of four children, two with disabilities.*

b. Increased class sizes

- *In our Cert IV Music classes we have 35 to 37 students per class. Because of the way the funding model works we have to oversubscribe so that if we lose a few along the way our programs are still viable to run. This does mean that teachers have to modify their program so they can deal with extra students in the allocated time. Students get less individual attention and feedback. And if we don't get any attrition it remains a very crowded classroom.*
- *Larger classes and continual enrolments are disruptive. Previously we were able to strategically place students at different points at a time, usually at the beginning and midway through the term. With the pressure of meeting target and accounting for students who have had to withdraw this no longer happens. As a result of this, staff have to continually deal with new students, keeping them up to date as well as ensuring they have the skills to complete tasks. The idea had been that continual enrolments were necessary for term 1 only but the pressure is on to continue this for most of the year. We cannot afford to ask students to wait when we have not yet met the target of 26 students in class.*

In closing we would like to include this letter from one of our dedicated NMIT teachers, Graeme Sparkes:

I am a TAFE teacher who works on a program that is relatively insulated from the recent unprecedented Victorian Government funding cuts to the TAFE system.

I teach English to young adult migrants and refugees. Many of them have suffered a great deal on their journey to Australia, the victims of civil wars, failed states, poverty, famine and cruelty in many forms. Some of them have lost their families, have seen their parents killed, or have lived in refugee camps most of their lives.

I have taught a boy who escaped a refugee camp in Africa. He stowed away on a ship bound for Australia, was discovered by the crew, and dumped in the middle of the Indian Ocean, to be picked up by a more compassionate ship and delivered here, only to be placed in detention for a year or so.

I have taught boys who have been shot or maimed. I have taught some girls who have never seen the inside of a school before.

All of them are grateful for the opportunity Australia has given them for a new life. All of them humble me with their resilience, their hunger to learn, their desire to be worthwhile citizens.

But it is often a rocky road.

Young people in a strange land encounter all sorts of barriers to their full participation in Australian society. They often do not yet have the inner resources or experience to make the transition from one culture to another. They see other young Australians and want to be like them, which often brings them into conflict with their own cultures.

At TAFE we do more than teach English. The aim of the program I work on is to provide the students with the skills and the confidence to deal with many of the issues they face so that they will be able to reach their employment goals.

We teach a curriculum that includes maths, Australian Studies, civics, health, living skills, and work experience. The TAFE provides intensive, individual career pathway guidance. Its counsellors deal with any obstacles students face to reach their employment goals, sometimes such obstacles as homelessness or missing meals.

Our students are given the opportunity to do 'tasters' in mainstream TAFE courses, hands-on experience that will facilitate their choices.

We liaise with local businesses, ethnic community groups, local council and other youth service providers to gain as much support as possible for our students.

The results of our program speak for themselves.

Our students have taken pathways through the TAFE system into apprenticeships in carpentry, bricklaying, plastering, mechanics, hospitality, and careers in accounting, drafting, and nursing. Some have done diplomas at TAFE and gone on to the higher education sector.

Some years ago I taught a 16-year-old, shy Somali girl, with very little formal education. She is currently studying medical science at one of our universities.

Another recently completed an Advanced Diploma of Building Design. Her final project was to design a school. She received some money to have the school built and shipped in a container back to her impoverished homeland.

While our program, for the time being, will survive the massive cuts to TAFE funding, many of the programs that have provided successful pathways for our students won't. Many of the crucial services that TAFEs provide, such as counselling, libraries and career advice are in jeopardy. The removal of financial support for these services, apparently to create a fairer competitive environment for the private providers of VET courses (which don't offer such services), puts the viability of all TAFEs at risk.

When TAFEs disappear, or are diminished to a rump of courses that are unprofitable to private providers, the program I work on will disappear as well. Our success with young migrants and refugees will end. No private provider, wishing to make a profit out of education, can possibly offer the program we have developed over twenty-five years.

The occasional paper, *Valuing Skills – Why Vocational Training Matters* by Christopher Stone the Research Director from the Public Service Research Program at the Centre for Policy Development, is a detailed paper that describes further many of the issues we have raised in this submission. It can be downloaded here: <http://cpd.org.au/2012/11/valuing-skills/>