

# THE DEMOLITION OF FINE ARTS EDUCATION IN TAFE NSW

## THE FACTS:

- As part of its efficiency targets and associated cost cuts the State Government has withdrawn all public funding from Fine Arts education in NSW. This includes all courses in drawing, painting, printmaking, sculpture and ceramics and a number in design and photography that form part of Fine Arts qualifications.
- As from the beginning of 2013 Fine Arts will only be offered on a 'fee for service' basis, that is, as self-funded full fee-paying commercial courses – this is a TAFE "Private" model. Courses like this are usually short and offered over a limited time. There are no concessions or exemptions available.
- No other vocational area has been treated like this. In all other areas, TAFE courses will retain public funding.

## THE IMPACT ON TAFE FINE ARTS:

- Full fee-paying courses are expensive. The majority of students will not be able to afford full certificate and diploma courses funded in this way. Courses will not run if there are insufficient students, so the result will be that most, if not all Fine Arts programs will close. It is political spin to state that students will still be able to enroll in these courses. It will be a matter of - Can't pay – Go away!
- This will lead to state-wide closure of TAFE Fine Arts sections with no viable alternative for students and the loss of most if not all teaching positions in these areas. An estimated 200 teachers will lose their jobs.
- Removing courses from the public arena will also leave approximately 4000 students statewide with nowhere to go to complete their studies. TAFE has not always been able to offer further stages of a course at the same campus and students have often had to travel further afield – but now with these changes they will be left high and dry - as well as out of pocket.

## THE VISUAL ARTS INDUSTRY AND FINE ARTS COURSES

- The Government press release argues that dramatic budget cuts across the public sector are needed to maintain the economy's health, that job prospects in Fine Arts are low. An emphasis on job prospects demonstrates a serious misunderstanding of the nature of Fine Arts courses and the Visual Arts Industry.
- TAFE Fine Arts courses are product and self-employment focused. This reflects the nature of work in these vocational areas. It makes no sense to judge course outcomes on job opportunities or numbers alone. It is the impact of arts practice on the overall economic outcome that counts. And the Arts Industry is an important player contributing over \$30 billion to the national economy annually.
- Visual artists operate their own micro businesses and in the making and marketing of artworks operate within an interdependent web of businesses and services: art materials manufacturers, importers, wholesalers and retailers, stationers, framers, printers, freight companies, web-designers, photographers, together with agents and dealers ranging from small local galleries to architects, designers and the big end of town galleries, auction houses and collectors. They also work with regional and state museums, galleries and organizers of public events and make a significant contribution to local tourism. Witness the number of thriving galleries in metropolitan and regional NSW.

- TAFE Visual Arts students become part of this network from the outset of their studies and local TAFE campuses are active players in the local arts scene.
- While there is an impressive list of notable artists who have attended TAFE Fine Arts courses, no public training provision will ultimately lead to a drop of people engaged with and moving into the industry and this in turn will lead to a reduction in economic activity.
- It makes no sense that public funded quality vocational training is available for those working in all these associated areas but is no longer available for the artists who generate the creative products.
- Current investment in fine arts courses is not excessive. Current TAFE provision in fine arts courses is modest, enrolments in 2011 constituting less than 1% of the total TAFE student cohort.
- At present an estimated half of all art students across the country are in tafe and the others at universities and other tertiary institutions - but the overall number trained by tafe is higher as many go on to university from tafe and university graduates go back to tafe to learn skills. The concern is that in a decade we will have less than half the pool of artists we currently have, decreasing the quality of art and also the numbers of people engaged in art related industries.

## OTHER POINTS

- The shortfall in Fine Arts training cannot be taken up by courses in Universities. University Fine Arts courses serve a different purpose – they are more theoretical and research-based whereas TAFE courses are more craft-based and grounded in the practicalities of making the work. Further, not all students want to undertake or are suited to university level studies.
- However, TAFE Fine Arts courses offer a pathway for some into tertiary level courses and thus provide an important alternative entry into study at this level.
- Fine Arts training is like learning music – it takes time and practice. Short user pays courses and workshops make a valuable contribution but are not a valid replacement for quality award level vocational programs.

## REINSTATE PUBLIC FUNDED FINE ARTS COURSES

- TAFE NSW has a long and proud tradition of publicly funded course provision in Fine Arts and has been an important player in the training of many of the most notable and distinguished Australian artists.
- Shifting provision to a self-funded model is a betrayal of the principles of equality of educational opportunity that inform public education in this State.
- The decision is based on poor advice regarding the way the arts industry functions, its small business structure and the product-based focus of Fine Arts courses.
- It discriminates against a valuable industry that plays a vital role in the economic and social wellbeing of the State.
- It is a betrayal of those students who have invested time, money and effort in TAFE Fine Arts courses that they cannot complete, and of those future students who now have nowhere else to go unless they are very well off.
- Public funding of Fine Arts courses aligned, as is now the case, with identified industry requirements, must be reinstated. Cuts are one thing, virtual annihilation another thing all together!

**SAVE  
TAFE  
ART**