



**TAFE
DIRECTORS
AUSTRALIA**

SUBMISSION

Select Committee

COST OF LIVING

March 2024

About TAFE Directors Australia

[TAFE Directors Australia \(TDA\)](#) is the national peak body that represents Australia's network of state and territory publicly owned Technical and Further Education (TAFE) institutes and university TAFE divisions. All TAFE institutes and TAFE divisions of dual sector universities across Australia are [members of TDA](#). TDA members range from the largest registered training provider in Australia, TAFE NSW to regional TAFEs with significant geographical coverage such as North Regional TAFE (WA). The primary business of TDA members is vocational education and training focusing on nationally accredited qualifications and skill sets, non-accredited training for bespoke employer purposes, and foundation skills. Over half of TDA members also deliver higher education.

TAFE Directors Australia
37 Constitution Avenue
REID ACT 2612
ceo@tda.edu.au

www.tda.edu.au

TAFE Directors Australia (TDA) appreciates the opportunity to provide feedback on the Senate Select Committee on the Cost of Living enquiry.

Cost of Living

The cost of living is the cost required to cover necessary expenses to maintain a certain standard of living in Australia today. It encompasses various aspects of daily life, including housing, food, transportation, healthcare, education, and entertainment. The actual cost of living can vary based on factors such as location, lifestyle, family size, and individual choices.

TDA notes that education is included in the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) Consumer Price Index groups, but also notes that education may be regarded as less important if people are under financial strain.

Fee Free TAFE meets skill shortages in industries in demand

TDA strongly supports Fee Free TAFE as a strategy to alleviate cost of living and to increase economic health of the country and is pleased to see the target exceeded.

Fee-Free TAFE programs aim to eliminate financial barriers to vocational education, making it accessible to a broader spectrum of individuals. By waiving tuition fees for eligible courses, these initiatives enable people to participate in vocational education and training (VET), foster inclusivity and empower individuals to unlock their full potential, regardless of their socioeconomic status. Every State and Territory has included priority skill shortage areas for their economies on the fee-free TAFE list.

Fee Free TAFE prioritises those from economically disadvantaged backgrounds, that is people who traditionally are less likely to engage in further education.

Education is key to a nation's economic health and fee free TAFE has a ripple effect on the broader economy by equipping a wider range of individuals with the skills needed to fill essential roles in key sectors. As industries evolve and technological advancements reshape the labour market, there is an increasing demand for skilled professionals. Fee Free TAFE prioritises industry sectors with identified skills shortages and serves to meet this demand, thereby enhancing workforce productivity and driving economic growth.

Individuals who complete qualifications are more likely to find secure long-term employment leaving them better equipped to manage increases in the cost of living.

TAFE as a provider of foundation skills

A healthy economy relies on continuous learning and skills development. Fee Free TAFE facilitates development of these skills through foundation skills training, either as specific qualifications, or in addition to vocational qualifications.

Foundation skills are fundamental skills that individuals need for work, learning, and life in general. Sometimes thought of as employability skills, they are considered essential for participating fully in society and the workforce. These skills also provide the basis for further learning and development in various areas. They are skills in language, literacy, numeracy, and digital skills.

As foundation skills enable individuals to adapt to new situations, solve problems, and engage meaningfully in society, individuals who have had the opportunity to develop these skills contribute to improved employability, economic participation, and social inclusion.

TDA wants to highlight that TAFE provides students with foundation skills as well as equipping them with vocational skills and knowledge required for specific roles. As educational organisations TAFEs have highly trained educators able to assist in language, literacy, numeracy and digital (LLND) skills development.

It is often those from economically disadvantaged backgrounds that miss out developing these skills at school; Fee Free TAFE offers another chance to achieve a post school qualification and associated foundation skills.

TAFE and additional support

Study at TAFE includes a range of services to assist students complete their qualifications. These services are designed to address various needs and challenges that students may encounter, thereby enhancing their overall learning experience and increasing their likelihood of completing their qualification. Support can include:

- Student Counselling
- Academic Support
- Career Services.
- Financial Assistance
- Accommodation Support
- Disability Support
- Health and Wellbeing Services

Many TAFEs also have learning areas dedicated to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders.

Conclusion

Fee Free TAFE enables a wider range of Australians to participate in vocational education and training in areas of skills need. TAFEs are well suited to support students to commence and complete qualifications, with well-developed programs to support those from economically disadvantaged backgrounds.

Fee Free TAFE alleviates the cost of living pressures on Australians by enabling more people to gain qualifications to equip them to find stable, better paid employment. It is an effective strategy in the Government's fiscal policy in response to the cost of living.

Additionally, TAFE provides other support services for students studying with them, which increases the likelihood of students completing their qualification.