

To whom it may concern,

Today I am writing you to inform you of the impact on my life now in the present and in the future.

My Name is Josephine Yates, I am 24 years old. I come from a low income single parent family where my mother raised 5 children to the best of her abilities. It was always clear in our mind that education was the biggest key to succeed in life and to break free of the generational poverty and disparity my family comes from.

My high school education was somewhat average, the administration workers knew me well as I always advocated for myself and my siblings with financial assistance for uniforms and school excursions we otherwise would not have been able to have. Looking back, I know I did quite well in my high school certificate and then my higher school certificate (HSC).

University after my HSC as always a possibility until I was faced with knowledge of costs of fees, books and other related items, I opted to work full-time to assist my family financially.

During the 6 years since I have left school I have experienced homelessness, poverty, discrimination, bullying and had been taken advantage of in work place situations.

To this day I have not let any of my personal experiences affect me in my dreams to seek further education.

Currently, i am attending TAFE, completing a Diploma of Community Services at Wentworth Falls in the Blue Mountains.

This is my class, we are promoting Mental Health month. You can see we are all different ages, ethnicities, backgrounds yet we have common interests and goals.

TAFE has and continues to offer me the second chance learning I so desired. I work on a casual basis cleaning and working as a kitchen hand at a conference centre, this combined with my Youth Allowance pays my rent, my essential utilities and for basic food needs.

The support that TAFE has given me in ways of empowering myself to learn, be educated and informed is phenomenal . All teachers and staff are incredibly knowledgeable and are always there to offer assistance for all areas of life.

Tafe has also facilitated a workplacement for me at a refugee & asylum seeker centre located in Sydney. For the first time in my life I am given a full chance to learn and to be taught by the professionals in the industry.

I am not perfect, but I am empowered, full of knowledge and this is solely because of the courses. Teachers and environment in which I have been taught in at TAFE.

The ongoing changes currently in place for TAFE has impacted on my mental health. I do believe that I will no longer be able to seek learning from the institution which offers second chance learning. I believe the moves have been destructive, a lack of empowerment fills the air and other students also worry about their future, not only for a career path but also for what we call a second chance at learning and a hands on/learning focused approach.

I attended the Ipart stakeholder's roundtable meeting last year along with three other students from my campus. During this meeting I took a chance to engage with the professionals making the decisions based upon statistics.

I asked "did anyone come to TAFE and ask us how possible changes and cuts would impact and affect our lives?" "did anyone ask me if I could afford the changes" did anyone ask me how valuable my learning is". The answer to all these questions is no and I maintain that answer for every student I have spoken to about the cuts and changes.

No longer will I be able to refer community members to TAFE, because they could not afford it.

No longer will I be able to seek my education from TAFE, because I will not be able to afford it.

No longer will I be able to attend my TAFE, because teachers will not be there.

No longer will I be able to be educated in areas which are relevant to my course, because they will not be available.

The hope for learning and second chances even extends to my family. My mother who has a year 9 limited education now cannot afford the course she desires to do, my sisters cannot afford to pay the upfront fees and even are deterred by the rise of concession fees by a phenomenal amount.

**No one asked the majority**

**No one asked me**

**Yours in Faith,**

**Josephine Yates**