



Community & Public Sector Union  
Civil Service Association of WA

Community & Public Sector Union  
SPSF Group, WA Branch  
Civil Service Association of WA Inc

[www.cpsucsa.org](http://www.cpsucsa.org)

UnionLink: 1300 733 800

Email: [help@cpsucsa.org](mailto:help@cpsucsa.org)

Reception: 08 9323 3800

Fax: 08 9323 3878

Address: 445 Hay St, Perth WA 6000

Mail: PO Box X2252, Perth WA 6847

ABN: 78 678 313 448

Dear Hon Simon Obrien MLC  
Chairman of the Standing Committee on Environment and Public Affairs.  
Parliament House  
GPO BOX A11  
PERTH WA 6837

19<sup>th</sup> December 2014

Dear Hon O' Brien,

#### **Petition No 75- Pilbara Institute (TAFE) funding cuts**

I write on behalf of the Community and Public Sector Union/Civil Service Association.

The CPSU/CSA (Community and Public Sector Union/Civil Service Association) represents workers in administration, library, and student services roles in TAFEs.

The purpose of this submission is to assist the Committee to understand the impacts of the significant funding cuts that are underway at the Pilbara Institute and the serious impacts these cuts will have on staff and the wider community.

We would argue that a strong, publicly-funded TAFE system is vital to not only the development of the WA economy, but also in providing opportunities to all Western Australians. TAFE delivers this 'social good' function through offering education and training to all Western Australians, and to this end TAFE must be accessible and provide a wide variety of courses to suit various occupational and interest areas. The government has a responsibility to provide education and training that contributes to social cohesion, rather than just employment outcomes. We believe, however, that TAFE is currently at crisis point in WA due to the Barnett government's continued budget cuts, job cuts, and the *Future Skills WA* reforms.

Regional TAFEs in particular have been hit hard by these cuts. Our members are of the view that strong local TAFE campuses add value to our communities, and are particularly vital for regional communities. WA has always faced significant issues due to its vast geographical size and spread with respect to infrastructure and delivery of government services including health and education. Therefore, Western Australians rely on the government to assist or be primarily responsible for the delivery of such services because of the distance and associated isolation of the State, and resulting costs making any other model of delivery unviable for the private sector.

The CPSU/CSA is of the view that any further cuts to regional TAFE colleges will certainly have a negative impact on those regional communities that rely on TAFE to provide opportunities and social cohesion. Regional communities are already feeling the impact of course-cuts. As the parent of one 18 year old student in Port Hedland told us:

*"My son wanted to study a course at Pilbara Institute in South Hedland, but it was no longer offered in 2012. As a family, we struggle with the issues of being Maori in a small community and I want to have my son close to me and my de-facto partner so he does not get into trouble. He now needs to go to Perth to study his chosen course which means living away from home and I am really worried about it, because I cannot help him if he is so far away."*

The Pilbara Institute (PI) in particular is a key community asset and is integral to the ongoing development of the Pilbara region into a vibrant, inclusive, diverse and sustainable community. With a slowdown in the mining/construction industry, it is only logical that TAFE should be playing a key role in supporting the community to transition to jobs that can be maintained during a slowdown in mining activity.

In September 2014 we became aware of the cuts to the Pilbara Institute as outlined in an email from Pilbara Institute management:

*'PI has struggled to meet targets with adjustments to the Delivery and Performance Agreement (DPA) which is the funding process administered by the Department of Training and Workforce Development. These adjustments translate to a reduction in income and it is forecasted that the Institute will be in deficit by close of business (COB) 2014 by \$6.7m.'*

We believe these cuts will reduce access to courses, reduce student support services and leave less education options for the Pilbara region.

We are particularly concerned that these cuts will reduce access to education by already disadvantaged groups that already find access to education difficult. In particular the removal of administration and client services support and the replacement with a centralized 1300 number and website are likely to result in a range of vulnerable groups missing out on the opportunities to be educated. As a Pilbara Institute staff member stated:

*'With almost half of the Australian adult population being functionally illiterate providing only a 1300 number and a website marginalises this group even further. Not everyone has access to a computer nor internet.'*

We therefore call on the State Government to:

- Immediately call a halt to the budget cuts imposed at the Pilbara Institute.
- Provide additional financial support to the Pilbara Institute to assist with the transition of the local economy and to reflect the costs of providing education across a vast and strategically important region of WA.
- To ensure TAFE course fees do not increase further in 2015 and to lower TAFE course fees to 2013 levels.

Please note we have not taken our complaint to the Parliamentary Commissioners for Administrative Investigations (Ombudsman)

Yours Sincerely

Rob Sheehy  
Coordinator of Organising  
CPSU/CSA