



## New England Visions 2030 Institute Catalyst for Change

---

### Submission TAFE Discrimination against Regional Apprentices

The Hon. Chris Minns MP  
Premier of NSW  
GPO Box 5341  
SYDNEY NSW 2001  
(02) 7225 6000

Dear Premier,

We are a local futurist Think Tank based in Armidale NSW. We investigate local issues, bring stakeholders together, publish reports, write submissions, circulate petitions, host Forums and ensure wide media coverage of issues of concern to the local community.

As you know the New England Renewables Energy Zone (REZ) is well underway with several solar and wind farms already constructed, two big batteries and the Oven Mountain Pumped Hydro Scheme in the planning stages. The REZ will require a very large workforce in the construction phase including hundreds of electricians and a smaller but substantial workforce in the future maintenance phase. During our investigations we discovered that the Electrical Trades Certificate is only available to New England apprentices through Tamworth TAFE which is 110kms from Armidale and over 200kms from Glen Innes and Inverell.

We sent a submission last year to Mr Stephen Brady, Minister Henskens and Lea Sharpe of Tamworth TAFE requesting that the Electrical Trades Certificate be reinstated to Armidale TAFE as a starting point for further training opportunities for local apprentices. Our submission was supported by five local councils in the region.

**We waited almost 5 months for a reply and when it arrived it was obvious that the person who wrote the response had not read the submission or the supporting documentation. We were totally disgusted with this lack of professionalism.**

Since that time we have learned that bricklayer apprentices in Coffs Harbour must travel to either the Gold Coast or Newcastle for their training. We are certain that there must be many other examples of such discrimination against regional apprentices and it needs to be thoroughly examined. Metropolitan apprentices are not discriminated against in this manner. Trades training used to be the hallmark of TAFE campuses throughout regional NSW, ensuring school leavers a secure pathway to employment in their areas. The requirement to travel long distances for training is a disincentive at a time when we are short of skilled people in our regions.

Not only that but we have a shortage of suitable accommodation for tradespeople coming in to service the REZ. It makes sense to train locals who live at home and would not impact on the current housing shortage.

All we are asking for at this stage is the reinstatement of the Electrical Trades Certificate to Armidale TAFE. They are already teaching Engineering and the ETC would be a good fit to the current program.

We are also asking for an investigation into the situation with Regional Trade apprenticeships and the travelling distances required for training. If the investigation reveals discriminatory practices then we are asking that TAFE be required to once again reinstate Trades training into regional TAFEs.

We do hope you will treat our request with some respect unlike the previous response we received.

We look forward to hearing from you.

Mrs Maria Hitchcock OAM (convenor)  
P. 0421961007

Dr John Nevin  
Dr John Atchison OAM  
Dr Juliet Roberts  
Mr Martin Levins  
Fmr Cr. Andrew Murat