

SECOND CHANCE
NOT
SECOND BEST
A history of TAFE NSW
1949 – 1997

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I certify that the work in this thesis has not previously been submitted for a degree nor has it been submitted as part of requirements for a degree except as fully acknowledged within the text.

I also certify that the thesis has been written by me. Any help that I have received in my research work and the preparation of the thesis itself has been acknowledged. In addition, I certify that all information sources and literature used are indicated in the thesis.

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ABSTRACT

This thesis explores the history of the New South Wales Department of Technical and Further Education (TAFE NSW), which was legislated into existence in 1949 as the Department of Technical Education. For the first time in the history of state-provided technical education in New South Wales it was separated from school education. This separation lasted until December 1997, when the two sectors were amalgamated to form the Department of Education and Training.

Central to this history is the argument that TAFE NSW was a provider of second chance education, not second best education. In exploring this argument I look at the function of technical education in the context of the economic, political and social influences which have shaped it over time. Tapping into a vast body of primary and secondary source material, this thesis shows how technical education has provided for a wider range of occupations, interests, age groups and academic levels than any other education sector. It has reflected more than any other sector the nature and the needs of the community it has served, offering a greater diversity of courses than any other post school education sector. In doing so it has served the needs of both the individual and of industry.

Throughout its history, TAFE NSW has been torn by tensions between those who advocated the critical role of technical and further education in maintaining an efficient and competitive workforce and generally higher standards of education throughout society, and governments, both federal and state, which had their own agendas driven by funding and labour market imperatives. This thesis explores those tensions and the ways in which they impacted on TAFE NSW.