



## ***Australian Education Union - Federal Office***

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### **HOWARD CYNICAL ON TRADES PLACES AND TAFE FUNDING**

"John Howard's extraordinary claim that Australians are obsessed with university education at the expense of the traditional trades is cynical", said Pat Forward, AEU Federal TAFE Secretary.

The Howard Government has repeatedly refused to adequately fund vocational education and training through the public TAFE system, and is deliberately undermining the status of this valued pathway.

"More than 1.7 million Australians are engaged in vocational education this year alone, and many are studying and training in difficult circumstances as a result of the Howard Government policy," said Ms Forward.

More than 40,000 people have been turned away from TAFE each year because there are insufficient places, and because the Federal Government refuses to support the traditional trades.

The ACTU predicts that that over the next five years, more than 170,000 trades people will leave industry, with only 40,000 entering. The June 2004 ACCI Survey of Investor Confidence identified skill shortages as the number one constraint on investment.

The AEU estimates that an additional \$180 million is needed to fund sufficient places in 2004 alone. Areas of skill shortages need to be targeted, and young people need to be encouraged to enter the trades.

Instead, the message that the Howard Government is sending to Australian industry and the Australian public is that there is no support and no adequate funding for vocational education and training in Australia.

"The Howard Government has a real opportunity to put its money where its mouth is, today. It could support vocational education and training and address the issue of skill shortages by increasing the proposed funding in its VET Funding Amendment Bill 2004, which is currently before Parliament," Ms Forward said.

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