



Australian Education Union - Federal Office

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September 24, 2004

Coalition Pre-Vocational Offer is Not Enough.

The Australian Education Union has described the Coalition proposal for additional pre-vocational places as being insufficient to address skills shortages and failing to deliver for TAFE.

AEU TAFE Federal Secretary Pat Forward said that the Howard Government slashed funding for pre-vocational courses on coming to office.

"The Coalition announcement of additional places is an acknowledgement that cutting the number of pre-vocational places was a mistake but their proposals would only go some way towards restoring what had been removed", she said.

"The Pre-Vocational Places Program was replaced by the Coalition's New Apprenticeship Access Program in 1997, and funding was reduced from \$32.5 million to \$20.4 million in 1997-98. By 2004-05, funding was estimated to have fallen to \$10.6 million. The proposed new pre-vocational and New Apprenticeship Access Program places together would not take funding back to previous levels", Ms Forward said.

"Pre-apprenticeship and pre-vocational courses have been recognised as an important pathway into trade apprenticeships and into the workforce, especially for young people who are in danger of leaving education and training too early or who do not have the skills to move straight into an apprenticeship", Ms Forward explained. "In the context of Australia's skills shortages these courses provide an opportunity to encourage young people into the trades", she said.

Ms Forward said it was very disappointing that the proposed pre-vocational courses would not be available through TAFE.

"TAFE provides access to high quality programs with very experienced vocational teachers across the whole of Australia. TAFE's capacity to provide pre-apprenticeship courses has been limited by the funding pressures imposed through the Commonwealth's effective funding freeze."

"TAFE urgently needs a substantial increase in federal funds to provide pre-vocational and other courses which will help tackle skills shortages, address unmet demand and ensure quality provision", Ms Forward said.

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