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SKILLS SHORTAGE CRISIS CONTINUES UNDER HOWARD GOVERNMENT WITH NO VISION FOR FUTURE

The Australian Education Union (AEU) has welcomed the acknowledgement by the business sector of the Howard Government's failure to adequately address the current skills shortage.

AEU Federal President, Ms Pat Byrne said the Government's failure to adequately fund skills training was reflected in the systematic under funding of TAFE over the past ten years.

"This under funding is a deliberate strategy to undermine a successful TAFE system and has significantly contributed to the crisis that we are experiencing today.

"TAFE has been forced to turn away over 40,000 students a year at the same time employers are desperate for skilled workers. This is totally unacceptable.

"What the Howard Government should be doing is investing in education and training in order to ensure the system continues to deliver results, rather than offering bandaied measures such as Australian Technical Colleges which divert much needed funding from the TAFE sector through unnecessary duplication.

"Australians are not getting the TAFE system that they deserve because of the Howard Government's failure to provide funding.

The AEU commissioned a national independent inquiry into the future of TAFE in May this year which was designed to examine the future direction and role of TAFE in the VET system.

"The TAFE Futures Inquiry will provide recommendations that will improve the current system so that TAFE is sufficiently strengthened and well equipped to train people for the working challenges of this century.

"What we will need from this Government is adequate funding and a commitment to the VET system which will address the skills shortage crisis not reinforce it," Ms Byrne said.

The TAFE Futures Inquiry final report is due to be launched next month.

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