



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

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### **New Inquiry Finds Urgent Need for Action on TAFE**

The findings of an independent inquiry into TAFE which have been announced today show that chronic under funding has severely restricted the education and training able to be provided by TAFE.

Australian Education Union Federal President, Ms Pat Byrne, said that the Inquiry, conducted by Dr Peter Kell had received over 100 submissions from TAFE teachers and students, local communities, unions and industry and had held more than 80 consultations around the country.

“The Inquiry found that TAFE is a vital part of Australia’s education system and is relied on by industry, local communities and families,” she said.

“But the report criticised the lack of government funding for TAFE saying ‘diminished resourcing and the squeeze on budgets are universally recognised as the major impediments to TAFE being able to properly perform its role’.

“The Inquiry was highly critical of the Howard Government saying it was hostile to TAFE, had adopted funding policies that favoured the private sector and its priorities were not directed to building or supporting TAFE.

“Courses are being cut and teaching hours reduced due to a lack of funds and as a result, TAFE’s commitment to provide educational opportunities for all Australians is being compromised,” said Ms Byrne.

“The Inquiry found uncertainty over future funding levels was also hampering the capacity of TAFE to develop long-term partnerships with industry and the community.

“At a time when Australia is facing a skills crisis, the Howard Government has turned its back on the public provider of vocational education and training.

“It is time for the Federal Government and the state and territory governments to reverse the funding policies which have had such a devastating impact on TAFE.

“Findings in the report also noted the fact that the TAFE workforce is one of the most casualised in the country.

“Teachers are overstretched trying to juggle teaching with increased administration duties and there is a critical shortage of teachers in some areas.

“Low wages have also been identified as a major problem, with teachers in some areas earning thousands of dollars less a year than the apprentices that they are teaching.

“On the positive side though, the report found a strong culture of innovation and creativity and an energy and enthusiasm for teaching at TAFE.

“Student poverty has also been identified as a major issue and fees and charges are a major barrier for many people attempting to make the transition from welfare to work or to take courses such as basic English.

“Having just received the Kell report, the AEU will now formally consider all its findings and recommendations.”

**NB: The full Kell report and a summary document are both available at [www.tafefutures.org.au](http://www.tafefutures.org.au)**

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