



Australian Education Union - Federal Office

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Abolish Fees for all TAFE Students, says AEU

"TAFE teachers and educators across Australia call for a commitment from the Federal Labor Opposition to get rid of fees for all TAFE students," said Linda Simon, Australian Education Union (AEU) Federal TAFE President, in response to today's announcement from Kim Beazley, Leader of the Federal Labor Opposition.

"Today's announcement from the ALP does nothing to address the issue of the massive underfunding of the TAFE system by the Howard Government since it has been in office. Funds have been cut by around 24% from 1997 to 2004. Both this ALP policy and the Howard Government's requirements through the Skilling Australia's Act, mean that greater numbers of TAFE places must be allocated to apprentices in the traditional trades. This means fewer places for other students," said Ms Simon.

"The AEU and its members have been calling for a focus on skills shortages in the traditional trades for years, long before the crisis was recognised by the Howard Government. However, we also recognise the need to ensure that we have trained and educated workers in other areas of shortage, including childcare, aged care and welfare work, and many paraprofessional areas. If we don't skill young people in these professions, and in new and emerging skill areas as well, then Australia will face another jobs crisis.

"The simplistic focus on traditional trades' training does not acknowledge the very large role that TAFE has in second chance and further education for people of all ages. Any educational policy must recognise the need to ensure funding for these course areas as well.

"While we agree with the Labor Party that it is time to re-invest in a skilled future for Australia, the AEU's policy calls for a broader recognition of the needs of all Australians through greatly increased funding for TAFE Institutes across Australia, so that no TAFE student has to pay a fee for the vocational education and training that they deserve," said Ms Simon.

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