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SURVEY SHOWS UNDER-FUNDING CAUSING CUTS IN CRUCIAL TRADES AT GORDON TAFE

A survey of Australian Education Union members at Gordon Institute of TAFE has revealed that a lack of federal government funding is causing cuts and waiting lists in key skilled trades areas.

In the selected survey of over thirty members across the TAFE, over 60% reported cutbacks in teaching and contact hours to a variety of courses over the last three years. Industry areas affected include building and construction, engineering and electronics, as well as community services, English as a 2nd language and Literacy and Numeracy. Other courses including Electronics, Electro-technology, Carpentry, Bricklaying, Plumbing, Joinery and Medical Administration had waiting lists.

Over 50% of respondents were concerned that when teachers retired or left TAFE, permanent positions were being converted to casual positions. Most believed that the majority of new positions at the Gordon TAFE were casual.

Respondents' priorities for additional funding were lower class sizes, better IT support, upgrades for trade equipment and computer and technology for students.

Gordon TAFE Carpentry teacher Mark Hyde said that despite Australia's skills shortage Gordon TAFE had waiting lists of up to 40 apprentices for crucial plumbing and carpentry courses. He also said many other TAFEs in Victoria had even bigger waiting lists in these crucial areas.

"We don't have enough teachers or resources to meet the student demand," said Mr. Hyde.

"The high level of casual positions also means that it is harder to attract people to teaching positions. Why would they be a TAFE teacher when they can get a better paid and more secure position in industry?"

"What we need is a funding increase to make sure that we have the facilities and resources to train Australians to meet the skills shortage."

"The Federal Government has neglected TAFE by reducing its funding every year it has been in office," said AEU Federal TAFE Secretary Pat Forward.

"In the lead up to the federal election, we have to ask whether we really want a TAFE system which is turning away students at the same time as employers are saying that there is a growing skills crisis?"

The AEU is campaigning for at least \$470 million in additional funding per year to increase TAFE places, improve services and reduce fees and charges.

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