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MORE WASTEFUL ATCs

The Howard Government's announcement today of funding for two new Australian Technical Colleges is more about buying votes in marginal seats than giving young people skills training, the Australian Education Union said.

AEU Deputy Federal President Angelo Gavrielatos said the money would have been better spent providing urgently needed funding for students in the TAFE system.

"Already more than \$550m has been committed to the establishment of 28 Australian Technical Colleges across the country. However, they are struggling to get students to enrol," he said

"In August this year, the Howard Government admitted that only 1,800 students were enrolled in ATCs across the country.

"Not one single student has graduated from an Australian Technical College.

"The average cost of a student at an ATC is \$55,000. The average cost of a student at TAFE is \$2235.

"The Government is putting vote-buying before improving educational outcomes. ATCs are an inefficient duplication of existing resources.

"At the same time as the Federal Government has been throwing money at ATCs, the Howard Government's funding contribution to TAFE has declined by 26%.

"TAFE Institutes across the country have waiting lists in the areas of skills shortages which ATCs cannot address. TAFE Institutes have had to turn students away because they do not have the funding to provide the training desperately needed by Australian industry.

"The AEU is arguing for an additional \$470m in 2008 for TAFE Institutes across Australia to allow them to meet the increased demand for vocational education and training places to address the skills shortages.

"This funding would provide additional places for many thousands of students, and would deliver hundreds of thousands of graduates well before the ATCs produce even one skilled and trained graduate."

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