



Australian Education Union - Federal Office

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TAFE UNDER-FUNDING A VOTING ISSUE: NATIONAL POLL

Results of a national poll released today show that TAFE and education funding is a significant voting issue for the majority of Australians.

76% of soft voters (people who may change their vote), and 64% of overall respondents agreed that the Howard Government has gone down the wrong track on education and if the ALP put up a policy which included substantial investment in public schools and TAFE that would be reason enough to vote for them.

Taken of 500 respondents nation-wide, the poll also found:

- 94% of all respondents agree that "Providing extra funds for TAFE is essential to train more Australians to meet the skills crisis"
- 80% of "soft voters" agree that "One of the biggest mistakes the Howard Government has made is slashing funding to TAFE, making it harder to fix the skills crisis."

The Australian Education Union released the results of the poll with its national TAFE claim, which calls for a massive increase in funding. When asked, 80% of all respondents agreed with the AEU claim that at least an additional \$470 million a year was needed to increase TAFE places, improve services and reduce fees and charges.

The claim calls for a review of infrastructure and capital requirements in the TAFE system, and a national summit to consider student service provision and relief for fees and charges. The claim also proposes a quality improvement fund to address unacceptably high levels of casual employment and professional development for TAFE teachers.

AEU Federal President Pat Byrne said that Australians were not getting the TAFE system they deserve.

"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?" said Ms Byrne.

"There is no dispute that the Federal Government has neglected TAFE by reducing its funding every year it has been in office.

"The Federal Government has turned its back on TAFE and made it harder to train Australians to address the skills shortage," said AEU Federal TAFE President Linda Simon.

"Sixty per cent of teachers are not permanent and some colleges have facilities that are sub-standard and not suited to providing the training we need to tackle the skills shortage.

"Instead of funding our TAFE system, the Government has tried to establish Australian Technical Colleges which has so far been a giant waste of taxpayers' money."

Media opportunity

The AEU will launch its new TAFE claim today at the Level 4 Lounge, Building A, Ryde College, TAFE NSW, 250 Blaxland Road, Ryde, at 10:30am.

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