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TAFE Must Be The Focus of Skills Investment

The Australian Education Union said today the Federal Government must maximise the TAFE share of the \$660 million skills training package announced in the Budget.

AEU Federal President Angelo Gavrielatos said the package included \$200 million over four years for 39,000 training places in sectors facing high skills demands, \$120 million for adult literacy and numeracy and \$130 million in reward funding for large training organisations including TAFE.

Among that spending \$527 million is brought forward or redirected from existing programs.

"It is critically important that the TAFE share of this funding is maximised because that is where the money is needed most," Mr Gavrielatos said.

"Only TAFE can deliver the high quality training and education that Australians need.

"TAFE provides opportunities for all Australians to get vital skills, to learn a trade or change careers and to rise above economic or social disadvantage and yet it has been systematically starved of funding.

"The AEU released in March a report by the Centre for the Economics of Education and Training (CEET) which found government spending per hour on vocational education and training had fallen by 12 per cent since 2003 and 22 per cent since 1997.

"The report found that to meet the COAG targets to halve the number of unqualified/underqualified Australians and to increase the proportion of the population with higher level qualifications would require an additional \$200 million a year on average from 2009 to 2020."

Mr Gavrielatos said the Budget exposed the continuing imbalance in federal schools funding.

"We still have a situation where private schools receiving two thirds of the recurrent spending on schools despite teaching one third of students," he said.

"This underscores the importance of the upcoming review of schools funding. The review must deliver a schools funding system which recognises that the primary obligation of governments is to properly and adequately fund public schools."

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