

Around Australia

VIC



AEU members in Victoria have responded to the industrial relations agenda of the Howard government with shock and anger. The introduction of the 'Skilling Australia's Workforce' Bill to the House of Representatives has provided insight into the ideological bent of this Federal Government. The nexus between funding and industrial relations changes, with a requirement for AWAs, is alarming. The AEU organised joint rallies together with the NTEU in Melbourne, Geelong, Ballarat and Bendigo on 1 June. Attendance at the Melbourne rally was overwhelming with standing room only at the Athenaeum theatre. It is estimated that 1500 members attended the rallies held at lunch time on the day. A motion was passed condemning the attack on TAFE teachers by the Federal Government.

Talks have been held with the State Government and Minister Kosky over our total opposition to any attempt to introduce AWAs into the Victorian TAFE system. These, together with the national AEU campaign, will continue into the future.

Members are particularly angry at the unnecessary federal interference. It is an attempt to gain 100% control of TAFE when the Federal Government only contributes around 30% of the required profile funding and this figure has been declining in recent years. AEU sub-branches have commenced distribution of the signs 'This TAFE is an AWA free zone' to all campuses, to be placed on fences or in windows where the public can see the message.

Robert Stewart is the Deputy Vice President TAP Sector, AEU Victorian Branch.

WA



With the Certified Agreement registered TAFE members are now focusing on ensuring their rights and entitlements are being upheld by TAFE College management.

The 'Certified Agreement Enforcement Campaign' is to get members talking to each other about their conditions, rights and entitlements and to creatively work out strategies to deal with breaches of our agreement and deal with workplace injustice more generally.

If workers and unionists don't know what they currently have, and don't enforce their current Agreements and Awards, hard won rights and entitlements will disappear. Too many TAFE lecturers don't fully understand or recognise the hard work of union members over decades that has resulted in the current wages and conditions we now enjoy.

But if the Federal Government gets its way all this will change. What will matter is the strength of our unions if we are to maintain and improve working conditions and resolve workplace issues. Now more than ever non members need to join. Your independent umpire is going, your safety nets are being undermined, the balance of power in your workplaces is being tipped in favour of your employer.

Do not underestimate the impact these changes, and tell your family and friends about the importance of a fair workplace and tell them about TAFE. And ask one non member to join your union today.

WA TAFE lecturers have started campaigning by ensuring their current rights and entitlements are being upheld and by joining in the Union wide campaign activities. TAFE and your rights at work – worth fighting for.

Ramona Mitussis is the TAFE Organiser, SSTUWA.

NSW Education

Approximately 85 per cent of the NSW inmate population did not complete Year 10 at school and at least 65 per cent of inmates entering the correctional system have low to non-functional literacy, numeracy and communication skills. As the NSW Department of Corrective Services has noted, 'research indicates a correlation between low levels of literacy, low economic status and imprisonment'. (Annual Reports, 1997/98, 2000/2001).

The vast majority of inmates in education and vocational training programs are enrolled in either AQF Secondary or Vocational level courses, with only 1.3 per cent of inmates enrolled in AQF Higher level courses.

Within the NSW correctional system the greatest proportion of delivery is undertaken by the Department's Adult Education & Vocational Training Institute (AEVTI), an RTO which provides accredited courses specifically to inmates. Some specialised vocational training is also delivered by TAFENSW.

The *Crimes (Administration of Sentences) Act* requires offenders to demonstrate a willingness to participate in rehabilitation and developmental programs to bodies such as the Parole Board and Serious Offenders Review Council.

Prior to the last state election the Carr Government announced additional funds over four years for targeted rehabilitation programs in prisons, including literacy, numeracy and work skills training. Mr Carr's press release said: 'It is extremely difficult to reduce re-offending. Often by the time offenders are sentenced to adult imprisonment, their attitudes and behaviour are deeply entrenched. It is therefore important to expand access to rehabilitation programs.'

Although the provision of these additional funds has been welcomed, neither the Act nor the Regulations guarantee that education and vocational training will be provided to inmates. The Regulations outline a range of delivery, but state that provision is limited to what the Commissioner 'may' provide for, rather than what the Commissioner 'shall' provide for in the way of education and vocational training programs.

The *2004 Inmate Handbook* published by the Department of Corrective Services states:

Each correctional centre offers a wide range of education and vocational training courses. Basic courses include reading, writing, maths, computers, art and craft. Inmates who are Aboriginal or from a non-English speaking background

Corrections Campaign

A TAFE Organiser with NSWTF, and a former teacher in Corrective Services, **PETER DE GRAAFF** outlines the issues involved in the NSW Corrections Education Campaign.

can undertake courses in culture and English language. Additional vocational education and training is available in a number of work skill areas with support from Corrective Services Industries.

The Handbook notes that courses are nationally accredited and that each centre has a library, including either a law library or provision of assistance with legal matters. Such provision is not however mandatory, and in many correctional centres the opportunity to participate in courses and to access libraries has been severely impacted upon by lockdowns. In one case a law library which had been accessed by inmates for several years was closed down at the direction of a local manager.

The *Inmate Handbook* states that:

You have a right to expect to participate in education, vocational training and employment, as far as resources are available, and in keeping with your interests, needs and abilities.

Whilst the Regulations require inmates to comply with lawful directions whilst participating, there is no legislative basis to the claim that inmates have a right to participate in education programs.

Standards on correctional education such as those developed by the Corrections Education Association (USA), against which delivery is audited across some jurisdictions in the United States, require there be a solid legislative basis for education and vocational training programs.

There is no statutory guarantee of the provision of education and vocational training programs, including libraries and access to legal resource and reference materials, in NSW. Nor do inmates currently have a statutory right to participate in education and vocational training programs, or to access libraries and resources.

Over the last ten years there have been considerable improvements to the status of education and vocational training within the correctional system.

The NSW Teachers Federation and its members working in Corrections have long been active in

seeking to improve the level of provision, breadth of delivery and access of inmates to quality educational courses. The Federation has been able to negotiate the inclusion of Education Quality statements into the *Crown Employees (Education Employees Department of Corrective Services) Award 2004*:

18.1 In line with the Department's commitment to reducing re-offending, AEVTL is committed to providing adult education programs to inmates



and to identified disadvantaged groups within the inmate population.

18.2 The provision of educational courses shall be in the form of nationally accredited training equivalent to that available in the community. This standard will be maintained by the employment of professional educators within the system.

18.3 Education programs aim to contribute to good order of correctional centres and to the overall well-being of inmates.

18.4 Education programs aim to assist inmates to develop skills and aptitudes to improve their prospects for post release reintegration into the

wider community.

18.5 These programs will include classroom subjects, vocational education, creative and cultural activities, physical education and sports, social education and library facilities.

These provisions seek to reflect principles found in internationally recognised standards such as Recommendation No. R (89) 12, adopted by the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe on Education in Prison. Unfortunately the industrial relations changes proposed by the Howard Government will mean that statements such as those on Education Quality in the 2004 Award would no longer be allowed.

Although the NSW Government has been demonstrating a commitment to rehabilitation programs in its effort to provide offenders with opportunities for reintegration back into the community upon release, more can still be done.

The provision of education and vocational training, including the provision of libraries and access to legal research and reference materials, needs to be guaranteed by the Crimes (Administration of Sentences) Act. The Act should also be amended to include an inmate right to education, vocational training and libraries alongside the obligation of inmates to comply with lawful directions whilst engaged in such programs.

You can support amendments to the Crimes (Administration of Sentences) Act by going to the URL listed below at the NSW Teachers Federation website, where you can send a protest letter to the Premier Bob Carr, and the Minister for Justice, John Hatzistergos. ♦

http://www.nswtf.org.au/campaigns/corrections/protest_form.html

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