



## **Australian Education Union - Federal Office**

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### **Federal TAFE Crisis Targeted In Election Campaign**

More than 40,000 young people will miss out on TAFE places this year due to a Federal Government freeze on funding to the states which has brought the sector to crisis point, the Australian Education Union said today.

Rural and regional Australians are the most disadvantaged by the freeze, with their TAFEs already starved of funding and unable to absorb further cut-backs.

Responding to the crisis, the National TAFE Council Annual General Meeting being this week held in Hobart has pledged to make TAFE funding a major focus of its 2004 federal election campaign.

AEU officials and delegates present at the meeting have resolved to:

- establish a national TAFE campaign strategy focusing on the effects of Federal Government cuts;
- make all political parties accountable for implementing a TAFE system that provides quality education and training for all Australians;
- highlight which political party has the best policy on federal funding for TAFE; and
- form alliances with TAFE students and local communities to support increased federal funding of TAFE.

Federal AEU TAFE President Pat Forward said, "When the Howard Government heads to the polls this year it will no longer be able to sweep under the carpet its serious mismanagement of education responsibilities and the dire impact its misdirection of funding will ultimately have on the economy."

"Thousands of school leavers are being turned away from TAFE at a time when there is a severe national skills shortage which can only be bridged by funding the education system sufficiently to match employment opportunities.

"Key and vital Australian industries including manufacturing, business services, and some traditional trade areas are crying out for trained and skilled workers and Federal Education Minister Brendan Nelson's response is to threaten further cuts if the states do not agree to the Government's shabby offer.

"The Australian Bureau of Statistics figures show some 39,600 prospective students were turned away from TAFE in 2002 and with the Federal Government refusing to increase funding in six out of nine of its years in power the situation is rapidly deteriorating," Ms Forward said.

State TAFEs are funded through the Australian National Training Authority Funding Agreement.

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