



Australian Education Union - Federal Office

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VET MINISTER'S FUNDING CLAIMS DO NOT TELL THE REAL STORY

Ms Pat Forward, Federal TAFE Secretary of the Australian Education Union, has challenged the claims of massive Commonwealth funding increases for vocational education and training made by the Minister for Vocational and Technical Education, Gary Hardgrave.

"The figures used by Mr Hardgrave include incentives paid to employers to take on apprentices", Ms Forward said.

Ms Forward said that the Coalition Government abolished growth funds and imposed a funding freeze on vocational education and training in 1998-2000, provided modest growth funds in the next triennium and has now imposed funding penalties on state and territory governments for refusing to agree to yet another inadequate funding offer from the Commonwealth.

"This Commonwealth Government has consistently refused to provide adequate resources for enrolment growth in vocational education and training and to try and claim otherwise is disingenuous", Ms Forward said.

"The National Centre for Vocational Education Research provides audited financial data for vocational education and training. Adjusted for CPI increases, NCVER figures show that Commonwealth funding has fallen by 6.5% in real terms since 1997 while the states have increased funding by 3.2%", Ms Forward said.

Commonwealth expenditure has fallen from \$3.82 per student hour to \$2.81 in real terms.

Ms Forward said that the current skills shortages are caused by a range of factors, including the failure of employers to take on sufficient apprentices and the unwillingness of many young people to take on apprenticeships.

"There is no doubt that the skills shortages are being exacerbated by the failure to provide adequate funding for TAFE systems. Employers are reporting waiting lists for TAFE courses in the traditional trades due to insufficient places. Rather than playing with numbers, the Minister should be ensuring that the Commonwealth provides the additional funding needed to provide urgently needed student places in TAFE", Ms Forward said.

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