



TAFE Teacher Qualifications – Keep TAFE Professional

THE Federation lodged a dispute in the Industrial Relations Commission in February over the unilateral decision of the Director General to downgrade the teaching qualifications required for a permanent teacher in TAFE to the TAA4, the impact upon release from teaching for those undertaking tertiary teacher education qualifications, and cost shifting of fees. Up until this time all permanent TAFE teachers had been required to have a teacher education qualification from a university before being confirmed in their appointment.

The Commission attempted to conciliate the matter, but due to the Federation's insistence that permanent TAFE teachers should be required to have tertiary teacher education qualifications this failed.

In the lead up to the 24 hour strike and rally by teachers in TAFE, AMES and schools on 22 May, TAFE teachers also undertook a number of wildcat stop-works and protest actions. The strike was strongly supported in TAFE campuses, indicating the anger felt by members over this issue aimed at undermining their professional status.

The matter was due to be arbitrated with hearings to commence on 17 June, but DET moved to have the matter dismissed on jurisdictional grounds. Justice Schmidt handed down a decision on 13 June, which found that the Commission could hear the matter as the Federation's claim had been constructed around a change to working conditions in relation to release and payment of fees and was an industrial matter. However, as what the Federation was seeking was an extra claim this could not be heard until January 2009. Notwithstanding that she understood the Federation's position regarding qualifications, it is clear that the Director General has the power to determine what this will be. It was suggested that the parties attempt to further conciliate the matter.

The matter will continue to be pursued as part of the Federation's salaries campaign. The current Award finishes at the end of 2008. The Federation's campaign includes advertising to highlight the need for TAFE teachers to be qualified under the slogan – *Keep TAFE Professional*.

Adult Migrant English Service

DET has been pursuing restructuring in AMES. The Federation lodged a dispute with the Department in the IRC over its use of temporary contracts to attempt to change working conditions. AMES is attempting to reduce its number of permanent employees through increased advertising for temporary employment opportunities. It has argued that the level of permanent, temporary and casual employment in TAFE NSW provides a model.

The impact of these changes could mean an erosion of 20% of permanent AMES positions. Members in AMES are actively campaigning and are continuing to take stop-work and protest action. ❖

Peter de Graff is NSW National TAFE Council Executive Member