

TAFE *FACT SHEET*



For secondary schools

September 2008

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Rudd's market agenda in TAFE What it means for vocational education and training in schools

The Federal Government is planning to make far reaching changes to the funding and organisation of the TAFE and VET in Australia. In summary, these changes will:

- reduce government funding allocated to vocational education and training;
- increase the amount of money students will have to pay to study at TAFE; and
- reduce the range of courses available for students.

The Federal Government is intending to use its estimated 30% share of VET funding to "reward" states for implementing a range of marketisation strategies. These include:

- full competition for all government (federal and state/territory) VET funding between public (TAFE) and private providers, and between TAFE Institutes as well;
- a significant shift of costs for training from governments to individual students, masked by the introduction of a deferred payment loan scheme (HECS); and
- penalising TAFE Institutes for the funding they have received in the past for capital and infrastructure through the implementation of competitive neutrality principles.

When the Howard government tried to force its industrial relations agenda on TAFE and the VET system, they used the threat of withholding federal VET funding from the states and territories to coerce them into compliance. The Rudd government is using exactly the same strategy to implement its marketisation agenda in TAFE.

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What does this mean for school teachers and students?

If the Federal Government is successful in implementing its agenda in TAFE and VET, this will:

- increase the cost of VET courses for schools and for individual students;
- reduce the number and variety of courses available for students, because TAFE Institutes will only be able to offer courses for which there are sufficient students, or which are financially viable;
- encourage all VET RTOs (including TAFE Institutes) to increase the costs of popular courses to cover the costs of less popular, or more expensive ones;
- force TAFE Institutes to make commercial decisions rather than educational ones when providing courses to students; and
- undermine broad VET qualifications, allowing the proliferation of narrow instrumental skills.

What can you do?

- Visit the AEU website (www.aeufederal.org.au) and have a look at the TAFE Fact Sheets which give you more information about the impact of the Federal Government reforms on TAFE.
- Join the campaign against the marketisation of TAFE.
- Organise a union meeting at your workplace to discuss these issues, and actions you can take.
- Contact your local federal Member of Parliament and let them know what impact these changes will have on your school and its students.