

THE AUSTRALIAN

# TAFE Teacher



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“

The CEOs are making millions in bonuses but

our pay just isn't keeping up”



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MICHELLE PURDY, AEU FEDERAL TAFE PRESIDENT

# National TAFE Day is almost here!

**T**AFE Day is for students, teachers, graduates, unions and community members to celebrate the achievements of our TAFE system. This year we are celebrating on Tuesday 19 June. If you're reading this before 19 June, it's not too late to get involved. Head immediately to page 5 for some ideas of how you can mark the day. National TAFE Day will mark the end of a very busy start to the year- and we're happy to be able to share some of that work with you in *TATT*.

In February, the ALP announced that should Labor win the next federal election they would convene a Commission of Inquiry into post-schools education. Following that announcement a process to establish terms of reference for the inquiry was announced. The AEU made a submission to this process, and you can read an excerpt on page 10.

In March, I was invited to attend the Tertiary Education Union of New Zealand's Hui-ā-Motu – the annual meeting of the TEU's Maori delegates. A full report is on page 23.

In April, the AEU's National TAFE Council held its AGM. Over two days the NTC heard from a variety of speakers, and endorsed an AGM statement. You can read Senator Doug Cameron's speech to the AGM, as well as the AGM statement in this issue of *The Australian TAFE Teacher*. We also have included articles from John Pardy (Monash University), Ian Curry

(AMWU) and Mark Burgess (ETU) who all spoke at the AGM. Also included is *TAFE represents hope* an adapted version of Federal TAFE Secretary Pat Forward's speech to the AGM.

May is of course Federal Budget month, and a good opportunity to dig into funding issues in vocational education. We are lucky to have an article from Professor Leesa Wheelahan – *New figures quantify the extent of the TAFE disaster*. In this piece Professor Wheelahan takes a close look at how TAFEs are being funded, and the effects of underfunding. In addition to Professor Wheelahan's article, we have included a four-page centre section looking at TAFE funding, government payments to the private sector, contestable funding, job losses, campus closures and the Skilling Australia Fund. We hope you find this a comprehensive resource!

The other big story in May was Senator Simon Birmingham's misguided comments about TAFE and basket weaving. As TAFE teachers, we have all heard the jibes about basket weaving before, but coming from the minister responsible for TAFE these comments look particularly foolish. Please make time to read our response – *In defence of basket weaving*.

2018 has been a busy year thus far – we hope you can make some time to enjoy reading *The Australian TAFE Teacher*, and to celebrate National TAFE Day on Tuesday 19 June! ●

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# NATIONAL TAFE DAY

## 19 JUNE 2018

### it's not too late to get involved!

National TAFE Day is being held on Tuesday 19 June! If you're reading this just prior to TAFE Day, or even on TAFE Day it's not too late to get involved in the celebrations! Here are seven ways to get involved.

#### 1. Hold a morning tea or BBQ

If you still have a bit of time up your sleeve, it's not too late to organise a morning tea or BBQ at your campus to celebrate National TAFE Day. You can download a poster from our website [www.stoptafecuts.com.au](http://www.stoptafecuts.com.au) to spread the word, and encourage your colleagues and students to sign up to the campaign website as well as talking about why TAFE is too good to lose.



#### 2. Call or email your MP

One of the most valuable contributions you can make to the campaign is to call or email your Federal MP. Tell them it is National TAFE Day and explain why TAFE is important to you and your community. Remember to ask them to sign our Funding Guarantee (available to download at <http://stoptafecuts.com.au/pledge>)!



#### 3. Photo with colleagues

You could do this activity in conjunction with a morning tea or BBQ, or on its own. Gather some colleagues together and take photo out the front of your TAFE with some Stop TAFE Cuts signs (available to download and print here <http://stoptafecuts.com.au/resources>). Send your photo to us at [rscroggie@aeufederal.org.au](mailto:rscroggie@aeufederal.org.au) so we can add it to the collection on the website.



#### 4. Selfie

If you can't quite muster up a crowd, or you're not on campus – send us through a selfie with our “Guarantee 70% VET Funding for TAFE” sign (also available to download and print here (<http://stoptafecuts.com.au/resources>)). Post it on social media on National TAFE Day – make sure to use the hashtag #StopTAFECuts so we can find it!



#### 5. Order an activist kit

Head to the website and you can request an activist kit. It has posters, signs, fact sheets, funding information and much more! Whether you receive your kit before or after TAFE Day, it's a great way to get more information and start to get active in the campaign.



#### 6. Find and share the campaign on social media

We will be posting regularly on the Stop TAFE Cuts Facebook page and the @TAFECampaign Twitter account in the lead up to TAFE Day. And we hope to share lots of photos from around the country on TAFE Day. Make sure you've liked and followed us so you can see what's going on. And please make sure to hit those share and retweet buttons to spread the word!

#### 7. Share this magazine

When you've finished reading this magazine, please feel free to pass it onto a friend, colleague or student.

TATT is a great resource and will give anyone who reads it a glimpse at what's going on in the sector.

Of course you're not limited to these seven things! Any way you want to mark the day, please go ahead.

Just make sure to send us a photo of your action to [rscroggie@aeufederal.org.au](mailto:rscroggie@aeufederal.org.au)!

We hope you have a wonderful National TAFE Day!



# New figures quantify the extent of the TAFE disaster

Successive government changes to marketise vocational education over the last 10 years have resulted in a collapse of publicly funded vocational education, the decimation of TAFE, the shift to for-profit private providers, and disinvestment by governments in vocational education.

LEESA WHEELAHAN

**T**HIS is seen in changes to publicly funded hours in vocational education from 2009 to 2016. The focus is on hours of delivery rather than student enrolments, because funding is tied to training hours rather than the number of students. Table A examines these dimensions:

- Share of publicly funded hours by TAFE and private providers in 2009 and 2016.<sup>1</sup> 2009 was chosen as the starting point because it was one year after the Council of Australian Governments' (COAG) agreement in 2008 to give private providers greater access to public funding.
- Change in the number of publicly funded hours in TAFE, private providers and overall from 2009 to 2016.
- Change in government funding per hour of publicly funded training from 2009 to 2016.

In Australia overall, TAFE's share of publicly funded hours declined from 81% in 2009 to 54% in 2016. The number of hours of delivery declined by 30% in TAFE, while it increased by 194% in private providers in that time. Funding per hour was cut by almost 10%. If we go back further than 2009 to examine the change in funding between 2007 and 2016, then funding per hour was cut by 15%.

The national picture disguises diversity between the states. While COAG set the framework for national vocational education policy, each state implemented these policies in their own way. Victoria is the most notorious, having implemented scorched earth marketisation policies more aggressively than any other state – at least to begin with. In 2009, TAFE's share of publicly funded hours in Victoria was almost 78%, and this collapsed to 42% by 2016. The nadir for TAFE in Victoria was in 2015, when TAFE's share of publicly funded hours was not quite 36%. The number of publicly funded training hours in Victoria in TAFE declined by almost 29% from 2009 to 2016, while it rose in private providers by almost 333%. Funding per hour of delivery plummeted by almost 25% in that time.

<sup>1</sup> Adult and community education is excluded from the analysis because their share of publicly funded hours is very small; in Australia in 2016 ACE accounted for 4.2% of publicly funded VET hours. ACE had the biggest share of publicly funded hours in Victoria in 2016 at 8.4%, however ACE's share does not exceed 3% for any other state.

Table A: Share of publicly funded training hours for TAFE & Private Providers (PPs) 2009 – 2016(a); change in the number of publicly funded hours 2009 – 2016 for TAFE, Private Providers (PPs) & overall (a); & change in funding per annual hour 2009 – 2016(b)

		Share of hours		% change in no. of hours	% change in \$ per hour
		2009 (c)	2016(c)	2009 – 2016 (d)	2009 – 2016 (e)
NSW	TAFE	88.5	76.5	-28.7	
	PPs	8.1	20.8	111.0	
	<b>Total</b>			-17.4	18.6
Victoria	TAFE	77.6	42.0	-28.8	
	PPs	15.1	49.6	332.9	
	<b>Total</b>			31.4	-24.5
QLD	TAFE	77.0	29.8	-50.1	
	PPs	20.8	68.2	322.2	
	<b>Total</b>			28.9	-27.0
SA	TAFE	71.4	62.6	-29.5	
	PPs	26.8	36.2	8.7	
	<b>Total</b>			-19.6	-9.6
WA	TAFE	83.7	70.1	-19.4	
	PPs	15.1	28.0	78.1	
	<b>Total</b>			-3.8	0.7
Tas	TAFE	75.6	67.1	-15.4	
	PPs	24.4	32.9	28.5	
	<b>Total</b>			-4.6	1.7
NT	TAFE	66.0	60.8	13.7	
	PPs	34.0	39.2	42.2	
	<b>Total</b>			23.4	-23.9
ACT	TAFE	75.5	68.9	-22.7	
	PPs	24.5	31.1	7.5	
	<b>Total</b>			-15.3	-3.9
Australia	TAFE	81.3	54.1	-30.0	
	PPs	14.9	41.7	194.3	
	<b>Total</b>			5.2	-9.7



However, Queensland is even more alarming. TAFE's share of publicly funded hours was barely 30% in 2016, down from 77% in 2009. The number of training hours delivered by TAFE in Queensland dropped by half in that time, and the funding per hour of delivery in Queensland declined by 27%. In 2016, private providers' share of publicly funded hours was 68% and the number of hours they delivered increased by 322% from 2009 to 2016.

South Australia and New South Wales are dire straits, each in their different way. Policy in South Australia has combined marketisation with chaos, as governments there lurch between funding TAFE and full marketisation. TAFE's share of publicly funded hours in South Australia in 2016 was 62.6%, up from 47.2% in 2014. In 2014, the Labor government decided to redirect funding to TAFE, while the newly elected conservative government will re-introduce full

contestability. Despite this short reprieve since 2014, TAFE's number of publicly funded hours declined by almost 30% from 2009 to 2016, while it increased in private providers by 8.7% in that time.

New South Wales is in chaos. While TAFE's share of publicly funded hours was almost 77% in 2016, the number of publicly funded hours in TAFE declined by almost 29% from 2009 to 2016, while it rose by 111% in private providers in that time. It *looks* as if funding per hour has been improved in NSW, but this is only because enrolments have collapsed. NSW used to have the biggest vocational education system, reflecting the fact that it is the most populous state. In 2009, NSW's share of publicly funded hours in Australia was 34%, but by 2016 it was 27% and this was an improvement over 2015 when NSW had only 20% of all publicly funded hours in Australia. Victoria now has a bigger system than

NSW, and has had since 2011.

Federal Labor has promised to save TAFE if it is elected. The only way this can happen is if governments invest in TAFE *as institutions* and in the TAFE system. If Labor is to succeed, it will need to rebuild trust in vocational education and rebuild the capacity of TAFEs to offer high quality programs to *all* students seeking a place in programs that meet their aspirations, taught by highly qualified and well-resourced teachers. ●

*Leesa Wheelahan was the Associate Professor at the LH Martin Institute for Tertiary Education Leadership and Management at the University of Melbourne. She is now the William G Davis Chair in Community College Leadership at the University of Toronto. Leesa has taught in tertiary education for approximately 22 years, which includes time as a TAFE teacher.*

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- National Centre for Vocational Education Research. (2017). Historical time series of government-funded vocational education and training from 1981 to 2016. Retrieved from Adelaide: < <https://www.ncver.edu.au/data/data/all-data/historical-time-series-of-government-funded-vocational-education-and-training-from-1981-to-2016> > viewed 5 September 2017
- Productivity Commission. (2018). Report on government services 2018. Retrieved from Canberra: < <https://www.pc.gov.au/research/ongoing/report-on-government-services/2018/child-care-education-and-training> > viewed 27 March 2018

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- (a) Source: NCVER (2017: derived from Table 12) Historical time series of government-funded vocational education and training from 1981 to 2016
- (b) Source: Productivity Commission (2018: derived from Table 5A.2)
- (c) Share of publicly funded training hours. Totals don't add up to 100% in all states because publicly funded hours in ACE have been excluded
- (d) Change in the number of publicly funded hours from 2009 – 2016 in TAFE, Private Providers, and overall
- (e) Change in total government real recurrent expenditure per annual hour (2016 dollars) from 2009 - 2016



# In defence of basket weaving

*“But we do know that the last time the Labor Party played in the vocational education space all we got was the disastrous VET FEE-HELP program that subsidised everything from energy healing to basket weaving and saw billions of taxpayer dollars rorted and tipped down the sink.”<sup>1</sup>*

<https://www.senatorbirmingham.com.au/doorstop-interview-adelaide-33/>

VET FEE-HELP was legislated under the Howard Government, and supported and extended under the Labor Government, especially in the 2012 National Agreement for Skills and Workplace Development. The massive rorting of VET FEE-HELP occurred between 2012 and 2015, under the watch of Simon Birmingham and the Coalition Government. Expenditure on VET FEE-HELP rose from \$322,620,267 in 2012 to \$2,915,377,198 in 2015.

There is little doubt that the design and introduction of VET FEE HELP was an ill-conceived bipartisan project, but the Coalition Government was responsible for the implementation of a massive policy debacle, and they ignored repeated warnings that private for-profit providers were rorting the system.

It is, however the Education Minister's recent comments, quoted above, about basket weaving and TAFE which has justifiably raised the ire of the Australian community. The irony of the Minister's comments, basket weaving aside, is not lost on vocational education and TAFE insiders, who trawled through the Government's 2018 Budget announcements for a mention of TAFE, for a glimmer of hope for the embattled sector, for some acknowledgement that the parlous state of government funding and support was to be addressed. There was no mention of TAFE. Instead, the Coalition's ill-conceived Skilling Australians Fund, the third in a long line of attempts by governments to bypass the TAFE system and direct money to employers, received a \$270m cut. While even the optimists doubt the effectiveness of the Skilling Australians Fund, the cut is symptomatic of the Turnbull Government's approach to the sector, and it throws into sharp relief the Education

Minister's foolish comments about basket weaving and TAFE.

Dismissive allegations that TAFE only teaches basket weaving have been around for decades. They are not funny and they are ill informed. In this instance, the Minister's comments went viral, and they sparked a huge response from across the country about the breadth, depth and importance of the work that TAFE does.

As we know, and as the Australian community knows, TAFE provides another opportunity for those who don't do well at school, including an alternative pathway to further and vocational education, and oftentimes, a pathway to university. Much of that work that TAFE has done is under threat across the country. Much has already been lost.

TAFE is also a first choice for those who want to learn a trade. It is a place where laboratory workers learn. TAFE is the place for blue-collar apprentices, but it is also a place for artists, musicians and creative types.

Detractors of the TAFE system, and those who have attempted to redesign vocational education into a market-driven, employer focussed deliverer of “just in time” skills scoff about basket weaving, just as they have scoffed about the broad range of arts and music courses which TAFE used to offer. In fact, basket weaving is a complex, fascinating and skilled art form. Aboriginal people – from the Yolgnu people of Arnhem Land to the Gunditjimarra people of southwestern Victoria are expert weavers. For millennia they have carefully collected the appropriate natural fibres; dried or processed them; and then sat and weaved them into baskets, dilly bags, eel traps and any number of useful and decorative objects. Some Aboriginal weavers take the skills they have been taught by their communities, and

## VET FEE-HELP payments exploded between 2012 and 2015

### Australia



mesh them with the contemporary Western art practice they learn at TAFE. Of course basket weaving is not unique to Aboriginal culture. As long as humans have needed to carry things, they have needed baskets. The process of weaving fibres together to create something strong enough to carry heavy objects requires a particular set of skills and knowledge.

Sadly, after decades of funding cuts, and the destruction of many arts courses it is increasingly difficult to find arts courses of any sort, let alone basket weaving at many TAFE colleges across the country. This is despite the arts being a growth industry in Australia, and TAFE previously providing high quality arts courses that covered not only the practical and technical side of artistic practice, but also small businesses skills, and information about working in the broader arts sector. TAFEs are in the unenviable position of being pilloried for teaching basket weaving; and simultaneously being unable to provide basket weaving and other arts courses for lack of funding and subsidies.

The response to Senator Birmingham's basket weaving comments was

a defensive "TAFE's not about basket weaving!" And for many workers – electricians, builders, hairdressers, nail technicians, potters, musicians, mechanics, chefs, nurses, lab techs, community services and disability workers, computer programmers, shipbuilders, forklift drivers, agronomists, accountants, administrators, logistics specialists, and fitters and turners – their time at TAFE did not include any basket weaving whatsoever. But for some people, TAFE was about basket weaving. And for some people, an art class or a session on basket weaving was the first step back into education before moving onto a life changing certificate, diploma or university degree.

Governments would do well to think seriously before they continue the practice of allocation government funding selectively only to courses in areas of so-called industry shortage. It is perpetuating an idea

that working class students who undertake vocational education should only be able to access government funding in a narrow range of employer-determined courses, and should not have the same choices that their middle class cousins have at university.

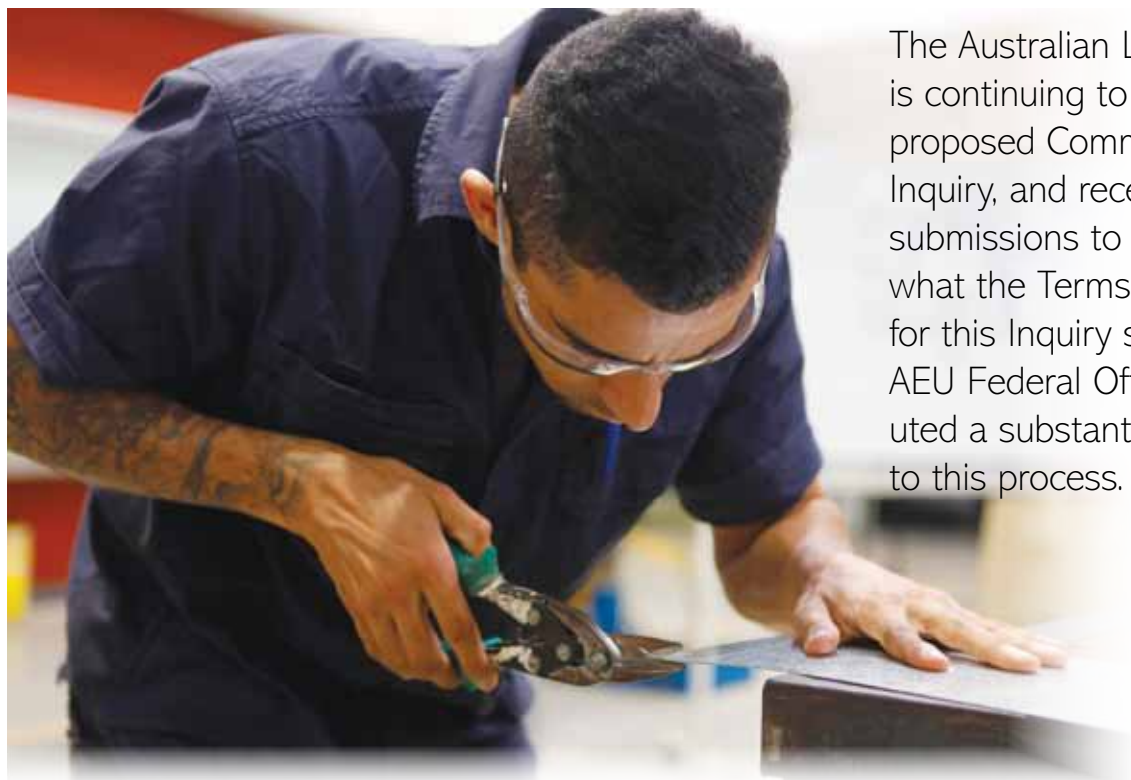
It's easy to be dismissive of basket weaving if you don't understand it. And for this government, it seems they understand TAFE as much as they understand basket weaving.

Sandra Aitken a Gilgar Gunditj woman who was taught to weave by her Auntie and then went onto a Diploma of Visual Arts at TAFE is a great example of the art and skill of basket weaving. Sandra said that she found that "weaving and making baskets with groups of people breaks down barriers, we enjoy each other's company and stories as we weave."

Simon Birmingham should head to his local TAFE college, not to sit down and weave, but to look around and understand the full breadth and importance of TAFE – from automotive engineering to basket weaving. ●



# Working towards the COMMISSION OF INQUIRY



The Australian Labor Party is continuing to work on its proposed Commission of Inquiry, and recently asked for submissions to help consider what the Terms of Reference for this Inquiry should be. The AEU Federal Office contributed a substantial submission to this process.

**T**HE submission firstly discussed the role of TAFE broadly, TAFE's history, the important work TAFE does as a place for workers to learn, the importance of TAFE teachers and some questions around funding. The second part of the submission examined the four main areas that the AEU believes the Inquiry should focus on. We are happy to be able to print the second part of the submission here in *The Australian TAFE Teacher*. If you are interested in reading the whole submission, please contact Rosie Scroggie in the Federal Office at [rscroggie@aeufederal.org.au](mailto:rscroggie@aeufederal.org.au) and she will send you a copy.

## What should the terms of reference for the inquiry be?

The inquiry must focus on TAFE first. The urgency of the task ahead cannot be overstated, nor the damage done to the TAFE system ignored. Whilst it is sensible to consider all elements of the post-secondary education system in Australia in this inquiry, because they are so interrelated, TAFE cannot wait. The damage being done to the

sector as underfunding continues to wreak havoc must be stemmed urgently. In NSW, Victoria, Queensland and South Australia, job losses have gutted the TAFE sector. In Victoria, 44 per cent of the TAFE workforce has been sacked. In NSW, it is 35 per cent and in Queensland, 25 per cent. This has undoubtedly effected not only students, but the remaining staff and teachers. It represents an irreplaceable loss of knowledge and expertise to the system, and further demonstrates the crisis in the sector. The number of government funded vocational education students has fallen by almost 17 per cent since 2012 across all jurisdictions, but in TAFE, student numbers have fallen by 25 per cent, as all states and territories endure cuts to campuses, courses and staff.

## 1. Funding and resourcing

The TAFE sector is the lowest funded of all the education sectors. The inquiry must assess what all key social partners acknowledge to be the deplorably low rates of investment and funding in the sector, both in comparison with other education sectors, and in relation to the real costs of providing

high quality, and dynamic vocational and general education in this sector.

There must be an urgent and independent analysis of the impact of income contingent loans on the sector, including the impact on individual students, on participation, on costs to the system and to individuals, and the impact on the capacity of the system to offer a broad range of qualifications and courses across a range of industries and sectors.

## 2. Architecture and governance

The AEU acknowledges the manifest risk in focussing on the roles of respective levels of governments in funding and resourcing of the Australian TAFE system. We believe that if the inquiry considers this aspect of the system before any others, there is a risk that it will be unable to resolve any other aspects of the systems problems in time to stop the damage which is currently paralysing the system. For this reason, it

is important to progress other aspects of the inquiry at the same time as the roles of respective levels of governments are interrogated.

The system has been obsessed over the past thirty years with employer control of the system, including curriculum and pedagogy. Many of the governance arrangements have been focussed on employers, and skewed towards their interests, including a willingness to make government funding available to subsidise or encourage training, both through direct delivery, and also through wage subsidy. The rationale for this has been the importance placed on employment and just-in-time skills to make student work-ready. Even if we were not to dispute the narrowness of the underlying philosophy of such an approach, it is clearly time to acknowledge that the strategy has not been successful. We manifestly do not have a vocational education system which meets the needs of a modern, innovative and adaptive economy and society, and students have been denied the opportunity to access a broad, sophisticated and innovative vocational education which prepares them for the future. It is critical that the impact and role of employer dominance of the vocational education system be examined, and that the inquiry consider the role of all social partners, including students, in the public TAFE system.

### 3. Curriculum and pedagogy

The role of competency based training in the Australian TAFE and vocational education system has arguably run its course. Training Packages and CBT have dominated the system, have become an industry in themselves, with vast amounts of public funding expended to maintain a network of “advisory” and other bodies, and a growing number of qualifications which are of questionable quality, and usefulness, to individuals or industry.

This inquiry must consider what sort of qualifications and courses a contemporary public vocational education institution like TAFE needs to develop and offer. It is critical that the inquiry engage which a broad range of social partners to determine the type of qualifications that society and the economy require to meet the needs of the workforce in the future. This must include an examination of the future of work, and the anticipated structure of the economy into the future.

It should be the role of the public vocational education system, and its TAFE institutions to collaborate with communities, individuals, governments and industries to focus on working with students to assist them in preparing for a future of life and work where industries and the economy are in constant state of flux. The focus of the system must not be on just in time skills, but rather on deep and sustainable knowledge and practise — things which the TAFE system has done in the past, and which it must now be supported to do into the future.

### 4. The TAFE teaching workforce

The TAFE teaching workforce has been decimated. Teaching preparation and skills have been neglected, largely as a result of an ideological commitment to competency based training, and the determination of governments and employers to exert control over the



content and methodology of teaching and learning in the sector. What little preparation and ongoing professional development continues to exist in the sector is haphazard, and poorly funded and organised. Industrially, TAFE has unacceptably high rates of insecure work. Workload has soared, as employers in the sector have sought to make ends meet in the wake of increasingly low funding and resourcing by shaving hours, and by work intensification. TAFE teachers have rejected the largely discredited low level, CBT based qualification which has become the standard in the sector — the CIV TAE.

The AEU advocates for a teaching workforce renewal strategy which includes degree-level teaching qualifications for TAFE teachers, including the specific features of adult and vocational learning which students in the TAFE sector require. Any qualifications offered in the sector must also acknowledge the specific industry qualifications and expertise that individual TAFE teachers bring to the sector, and on-going professional development, and return to industry programmes to maintain currency and expertise. The sector must commit to the development of high level teaching and vocational expertise, and engage in a collaborative strategy with the profession, through the AEU to rebuild the teaching workforce, and recognise the key role that it plays. ●

# TAFE represents hope

We live in interesting times for TAFE – times that are challenging, despairing and fraught with dangers and opportunities.

PAT FORWARD

**I**N THE last twelve months the ALP nationally has made two major announcements. They have guaranteed TAFE a minimum 2/3 government funding, including a restoration of the most recent Turnbull budget cuts, and they have decided that a National Commission of Inquiry into post-secondary education will be established in the first 100 days of a Labor government.

Both these things are historic, and game changing. They represent a dramatic shift in the political landscape for our embattled sector. The funding guarantee is an acknowledgement that market organisation has failed the sector. The inquiry represents the opportunity to radically rethink the meaning of TAFE, and to break from the dominant narrative in the sector which has controlled the way governments have funded and organised it over the past thirty years.

These announcements represent hope and potential, but they are also both fraught with dangers. Nothing is certain in the climate we are currently working in. And decades of work in the sector should emphasise this point.

What underpins our work, and our “knowing” of the sector, and our determination not to give up is the understanding of what damage neo-liberal reform to TAFE has done to this generation of students of the sector, both in terms of student debt, but also in terms of lost hope and lost opportunities. We talk about a collapse in trust – it sometimes sounds glib to say it, but those of us who have taught in TAFE know what a collapse in trust and lost opportunities really mean to individuals.

It is difficult for many in our society to live without hope of a different future – and TAFE has always represented hope.

The opportunities in the present moment are the potential to rebuild a public system of TAFE institutions, and to restore trust – and funding – in what we all know is an absolutely vital public



education sector.

We will be bold and determined. We will say to the ALP – let's make it an inquiry of Kangaroo proportions and ambitions! Let's not tinker around the edges, and fix little bits here and there. Let's revisit the past, and sometimes failed ambitions of the first TAFE sector – a series of public educational institutions which sought in their practice to be encompassing and egalitarian.

Let's not dwell in a second chance, welfare-ist frame – and cast the poor and the marginalised as if they are deserving only of the help of the middle class, and the crumbs from the table – the opportunity to get just-in-time skills for insecure work.

Let's argue for education for the working class – powerful education which enables people to themselves become powerful – in society, in workplaces, in communities. And let's not fall for the argument that TAFE is about jobs. There are not enough jobs to go around, and if the only measure of success is that people get a job from their narrow training – we will fail every time. We need an education which prepares people for a vocation, but also prepares people to participate

in society and in the political debate so that they can fight for real and decent work.

That is what TAFE should be about.

We must argue not for a return to the past, but for a process which allows us to understand and capture all those things that TAFE wanted and tried to be at its formation, succeed at from time to time under duress, under attack, and with insufficient funding – and which are now in danger of being lost if we do not act urgently.

TAFE is a mere shadow of its former self. Recent events in a couple of states show this. The damage TAFE has sustained has brought it to the brink – we must intensify our campaign. We just cannot give up.

The opportunities presented by both the funding guarantee, and the inquiry cannot be realised unless the ALP is elected nationally. We have never been in a situation in the last thirty years when the choice has been so stark, and when the path ahead has been so clear.

But there is much work to be done, both now as we prepare for a strengthening of the Stop TAFE Cuts campaign, and as we focus on ensuring that all politicians do not forget the importance and the significance of TAFE.

We need to build the campaign. We need to ask politicians to sign up to the pledge for guaranteed funding. We must have those conversations with politicians, and we must get them to sign up individually to the guarantee.

The TAFE cuts continue, the damage continues. TAFE matters to people in their local communities – we know that, and we have to translate that into action and votes.

TAFE teachers and their union have kept the TAFE sector going for thirty years. The fight for a public TAFE system would have been lost twenty or more years ago if it wasn't for you. We have allies and friends who stand with us. But it is TAFE teachers who have kept TAFE alive. ●

*Pat Forward is the Federal TAFE Secretary. This is an adapted version of a speech given at the 2018 AEU National TAFE Council AGM in April.*

# Making TAFE

This article is Part One of a Two Part series, and considers the institutional beginnings of TAFE and highlights how TAFE came about and concludes by focusing on TAFE's distinctive role.

Part Two, Unmaking TAFE, will focus on the policy trajectory that created a national training framework, a 'training market' and then the introduction of VET FEE HELP and look at how these policies brought TAFE to near ruin. Part Two will be printed in the Spring Edition of TATT.

Technical and Further Education (TAFE) has been the key government owned provider of post-school technical and vocational education and training since the 1970s. It is at the policy and institutional level that the contemporary challenges faced by TAFE in its mission to provide technical vocational and further education becomes starkly apparent.

BY JOHN PARDY

TAFE as an important Australian education institution has positively shaped and changed individual lives. TAFE has been instrumentally important for developing Australia's workforce and in supporting communities to adjust with changing social and economic circumstances.

TAFE is a relatively young institution that began to garner serious consideration as a specific organisation engaged in the provision of wide ranging technical and vocational education. TAFE as a key aspect of education in Australia is made up of a network of organisations, institutions and campuses with multiple offerings that are dispersed geographically and spread across all parts of Australia. It was the Whitlam government of 1972-1975 that in the year 1973 breathed life into the acronym TAFE. The options and activities carried out in technical schools, technical colleges and the further education and those offered in adult and community settings were reoriented through the strategic formation of a new type of education institution, TAFE.

A significant aspect of the Australian Committee of Technical and Further Education (ACOTAFE) was liaison with and responsiveness to the education needs of Australian states. This was the time of the creation of the Australian Schools Commission (ASC), that progressed needs based funding. It was also the era of the Australian Universities Commission (AUC) that initiated increasing access and widening participation in university education. National policy coordination with regard to all education was a significant policy achievement of the Whitlam government and has had lasting institutional effects.

Data gathering and the establishment of processes to build intelligence about the patterns of participation in technical education, further and adult education were the main policy drivers and basis for institutional goals in the creation of a distinctive TAFE sector. This resulted in state TAFE authorities making submissions about the objectives and patterns of participation in TAFE along with expenditure requirements. Very early on in the national coordination of TAFE policy orientations to include community input were

highlighted as being just as vital as industry input.

In ACOTAFE's landmark 'Kangan report', *TAFE in Australia* (1974), the following definition of TAFE was developed;

*TAFE should be regarded as describing all organised and sustained programs designed to communicate vocationally oriented knowledge and to develop individual's understanding and skills. It should include all programs of education with a vocational purpose other than those financially supported by other Commissions, whether the individual is using the program with employment as a primary aim or with the aim of gaining additional specialised knowledge or skills for personal enrichment. It includes what is usually known as adult education. (ACOTAFE, 1974, xxiii)*

This definition was reactive in that it sought to define an educational purpose and activity for TAFE that was distinctive from those that were covered by the Australian Universities Commissions (AUC) and the Schools Commis-

sions. ACOTAFE would recommend in its first report the establishment of the Technical and Further Education Commission (TAFEC). The establishment of the TAFEC conferred upon TAFE comparable legal status that was afforded to Universities and the Colleges of Advanced Education (CAE), through the AUC and that of schools through the Schools Commission.

By 1977 TAFE, during the Fraser government would come under the control of the Tertiary Education Commission (TEC). The TEC was in existence until 1984. The TEC included three constitutive councils, one for Universities, another for Colleges of Advanced Education and the TAFE council. The TEC, through the TAFE council established the processes for submissions from the states and territories for the allocation of grants. With ACOTAFE having set the agenda from its first report in 1974, with the next fifteen years resulting in the rapid growth and expansion of the Australian TAFE systems.

The creation of TAFE meant that technical education would become exclusively identified with tertiary education. This is historically contrasted with a broader technical education that had existed in secondary technical schools where students were prepared directly for work, and higher technical education offered by Technical Colleges and Institutes of Technology.

The blending of skills development in the pattern of technical and vocational education, together the ideas of lifelong education laid the basis of who would constitute the students in TAFE. In addition to skills and trade training, adult education that sought to include those who had experienced exclusion from schooling and tertiary education, such as women, migrants, indigenous people, young people, and people with disabilities made TAFE an important education institution with regard to social cohesion and a skilled workforce.

TAFE, as an area of education is betwixt and between schools and universities. TAFE emerged from a dedicated policy agenda that sought to create a more national footing for technical education. TAFE today has been bedeviled by an impoverished policy imaginary that has over-emphasised the economics of education as a result of a misunderstanding and discounting of what TAFE involves and who it includes.

Securing the future of TAFE institutions is dependent upon a cohesive policy approach that is reflective of a well understood appreciation of the breadth, diversity and value of the education options made possible through TAFE. For TAFE to continue to offer education, locally, nationally



and internationally, quality education experiences depend upon secure institutions.

From the late 1980s the number of universities in Australia doubled. Through the restructuring of Institutes of Technology, Colleges of Advanced Education and Teachers Colleges new universities were made through the Dawkins reform. In that same historical periods school participation to the end of secondary school consistently increased. These changes, including the growth of TAFE signaled a changing education landscape for Australia. This landscape was characterised by changing social expectations of schooling and education. Education became the norm so much so that families increasingly expected their children to complete school and attend university or get a qualification that will hold them in good stead in a changing labour market.

TAFE as a result of its solid institutional foundations from the 1970s was able to 'hold its own' along with increasing school retention and expanding university participation. Yet the certainties that emerged from the cohesive national policy progressed by the Kangan report had started to be disrupted. In spite of this, TAFE continues to provide a place based education responsive to community needs and changing industrial circumstances. It has always been involved the provision of pre-tertiary along with tertiary education offerings. What TAFE

does differently from universities and schools is applied learning and practical education in ways that are distinctive and grounded in networks of local employers, and communities.

Global rankings somewhat influence the work of universities as do comparative national educational achievement scores do for schools. TAFE institutionally has continued to occupy that middle level organisational space of attending to local, community and industry and employment needs in ways that universities and school do not and cannot. TAFE today is surviving in a policy context that has become much more complicated and contested in contrast to 1970s Australia. ●

*John Parry is Senior Lecturer in the Faculty of Education at Monash University.*



**Part Two (unmaking TAFE) will examine that complicated and contested space that has made the work of TAFE that much harder.**

# TAFE Funding

## – the continuing crisis

Market reforms both cause, and exacerbate the funding crisis in TAFE. Governments have introduced market reforms to shift the cost of vocational education from themselves, onto students.

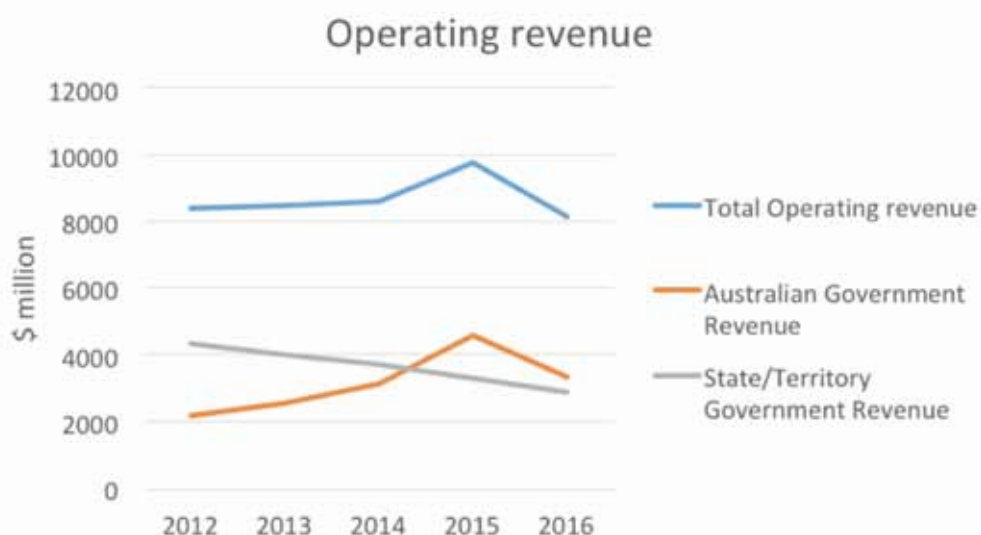
THE Productivity Commission recently said that the VET sector was a mess, echoing the concerns of all major stakeholders.<sup>1</sup> Even the Business Council of Australia has warned that the residualisation of TAFE will 'fail to deliver a good long term outcome'. They argue that governments need to define the role of the public provider in order to 'maintain a sustainable TAFE network across the country'.<sup>2</sup>

Elaborating a clear purpose, and acknowl-

edging the public good that TAFE institutions encapsulate is an important step in rebuilding the sector, but chronic underfunding, a persistence with market reform and a refusal to stem the tide of public funds flowing to the for-profit sector are central to the problem.

The National Centre for Vocational Education Research's 2016 Financial Information<sup>3</sup> confirms the fact that vocational education is in dire straits. The sector lost one-sixth of its financing in 2016, with operating revenues

falling 16.8 per cent to \$8.14 billion. Commonwealth revenue fell 27.3 per cent or \$1.25 billion, while the states and territories withdrew an additional \$425 million. Claims by the Federal Government that the figures reflected the federal clampdown on the VET FEE-HELP catastrophe do not stand up to scrutiny. Overall government funding for the sector has plunged 23 per cent since 2012 once funding for VET FEE-HELP is eliminated from the statistics.<sup>4</sup>



<sup>1</sup> Productivity Commission 2017, *Shifting the Dial: 5 Year Productivity Review*, Report No. 84, Canberra p86

<sup>2</sup> Business Council of Australia 2017, *Future-proof: protecting Australians through education and skills*, Melbourne, Business Council of Australia, p. 77

<sup>3</sup> NCVER 2017, *Australian vocational education and training statistics: financial information 2016*, NCVER, Adelaide

<sup>4</sup> Ibid

The 2016 figures are consistent with the trajectory that the sector has been on for more than ten years. Since 2005, government real recurrent VET expenditure has increased 4.1 per cent, while the number of government funded annual hours has increased 51.8 per cent. As a result, government real recurrent expenditure per annual hour nationally has declined 15.17 per cent over the past 10 years — from \$18.02 in 2007 to \$15.29 in 2016.<sup>5</sup> The decline is much worse in some jurisdictions. In Victoria, funding has declined by more than 30 per cent between 2007 and 2016. In Queensland and the NT, the figure is 26 per cent, and in South Australia 18 per cent.

# TAFE FUNDING –

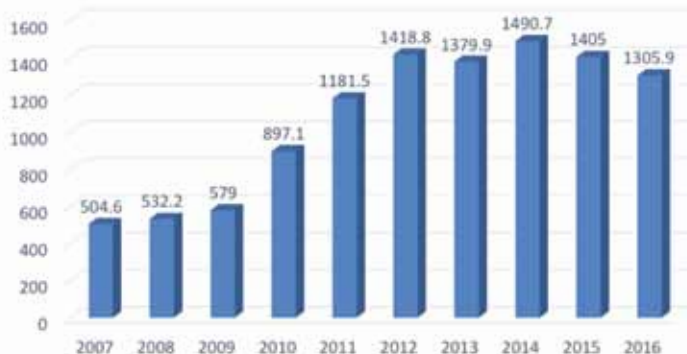
Government payments to non-TAFE providers, excluding payments through the VET FEE-HELP scheme, have increased by more than 158.8 per cent since 2007. In 2016, more than \$1.3 b was allocated nationally to private providers. This is close to 28 per cent of government recurrent funding. In 2007, that figure was \$505m. In some jurisdictions, the increases between 2007 and 2016 have been eye watering. In Victoria, where the proportion of recurrent funding which goes to private for-profit providers is 47 per cent, the increase in funding to the private sector between 2007 and 2016 was 243.7 per cent. In Queensland, where the proportion of funding allocated to private providers is more than 41 per cent, the increase in the last ten years is 269.4 per cent.

Real recurrent expenditure per annual hour - Australia



<sup>5</sup> SCRGSP (Steering Committee for the Review of Government Service Provision) 2016, Report on Government Services 2016, Productivity Commission, Canberra

Government payments to non-TAFE providers



The amount of funding allocated “contestably” has doubled in the last ten years. In 2008, just over \$1b or 21 per cent of recurrent funding was allocated contestably nationally. In 2016 nationally, more than \$2.154b or 45 per cent of government funding was allocated “contestably”. “Contestable funding” is somewhat misleading, however, as a huge proportion of public funding which is recorded as “contestable” is actually simply allocated by tender from government departments, not as a result of any competition, but rather as a result of an ideological decision to grant private for-profit RTOs government funding. Based on the results of the publicly-listed for profit providers, a 2015 University of Sydney study showed that these providers were sustaining profits of around 30 percent. This indicates that every dollar of public subsidy paid, 30 cents of profit were distributed to the company’s shareholders<sup>6</sup>. This study largely excluded funding from VET FEE-HELP.

<sup>6</sup> The Capture of public wealth by the for-profit private VET sector – Oliver and YU <http://www.aefederal.org.au/application/files/9614/3315/0486/WRCAEU2015.pdf>

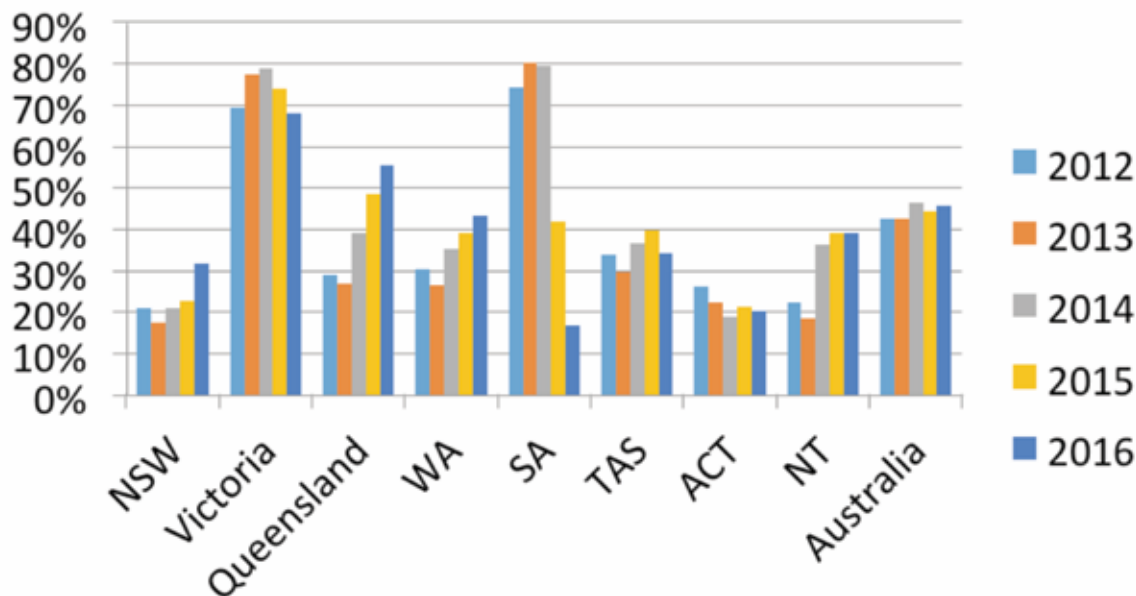
VET FEE-HELP and income contingent loans in general, have resulted in a wholesale shift in the funding and organisation of the sector. Very few Diplomas and Advanced Diplomas are now publicly subsidised, and students must now pay full cost for these qualifications, and defer payment for them. VET FEE-HELP payments ballooned from just over \$322 million in 2012 to almost \$3 billion in 2015. Despite “Reforms” to VET FEE-HELP, in 2016 \$1.5 billion was still paid to providers in loans.

VET FEE-HELP payments



# the continuing crisis

**Proportion of Government Funding  
Allocated Contestably**



The underfunding and cuts to the embattled TAFE system continued in the 2017/18 Federal Budget. The replacement of the *National Partnership Agreement for Skills Reform* with the *National Partnership Skilling Australians Fund* represents a cut of \$177 million to the states and territories in 2017/18, and annual cuts thereafter. This includes a \$13 million cut to South Australia (a reduction in funding of 35%).

The *Skilling Australians Fund* is to be funded by a levy imposed by the government on employers using temporary and permanent migration programs. It requires matched contributions from the states and territories and the amounts available to them will depend on how much they contribute to the fund and will also be contingent on them meeting certain criteria – yet to be made public by the government. Modelling shows that the new charge is unlikely to raise enough money to finance the scheme.<sup>7</sup> No other Commonwealth-state agreements have been funded by such a mechanism. The uncertain revenue will make it difficult for the federal government to negotiate deals with the states.

It is worth noting that the Skilling Australians Fund is just one in a long line of failed attempts by successive Federal Governments to channel government funding to private for-profit providers, through various employer “advisory” bodies, by-passing TAFE and incentivising even the administration of the programmes. These have included, in the last ten years, the Productivity Places Programme, the National Workforce Development Fund, the Industry Skills Fund and now the Skilling Australia

Fund. None of these programmes have been properly evaluated, all have seen huge sums of money transferred to the for-profit sector, and each, as noted above, has failed and been shut down before their legislated conclusion. Each could be seen as part of the additional cost to the public purse of trying to run an ideologically motivate market system.

Along with these cuts, structural system changes have also been flagged, including universities being allocated Commonwealth Supported Places for sub degree programs. The Federal Government’s decision to expand the demand-driven system in higher education to sub-degree programs will devastate TAFE’s delivery of higher level vocational education qualifications. Diplomas and Advanced Diplomas are estimated to be about 30% of TAFE’s current delivery.

The number of government funded vocational education students has fallen by almost 17 per cent since 2012 across all jurisdictions, but in TAFE, student numbers have fallen by 25 per cent, as all states and territories endure cuts to campuses, courses and staff.<sup>8</sup>

Pieced together, these figures confirm continued defunding, deteriorating support for TAFE institutions, the existence of a private for-profit sector reaping super-profits, continuing uncertainty about the activities of the private sector in key industries – and an overwhelming logic which shows that the only way in which the private sector can make profits in this chronically underfunded area is by ripping students off.

<sup>7</sup> The levy extracts \$1200 a year from organisations that hire skilled migrants on a temporary basis, or \$1800 if their turnover is more than \$10m a year. Sponsors of permanent skilled migrants must pay one-off fees of \$3000 or \$5000, depending on their turnover. The Australian modelled the levy, and assumed that skilled migrant numbers would remain at 2015-16 levels, temporary migrants will stay in Australia for an average of two years, and 80 per cent of employers will meet the \$10m turnover threshold, among other variables. However many commentators expect skilled visas to crash, particularly sponsored visas, as employers balk at charges that have risen from \$380 under the axed 457 visa scheme.

<sup>8</sup> NCVER 2017, *Students and Courses, 2016*, NCVER, Adelaide, Table 2

## Job losses & campus closures

In NSW, Victoria, Queensland and South Australia, job losses have gutted the TAFE sector. In Victoria, 44 per cent of the TAFE workforce has been sacked. In NSW, it is 35 per cent and in Queensland, 25 percent. This has undoubtedly effected not only students, but the remaining staff and teachers. It represents an irreplaceable loss of knowledge and expertise to the system, and further demonstrates the crisis in the sector.

State	TAFE job losses	% of workforce
NSW <sup>9</sup>	5,163	35
Victoria <sup>10</sup>	8,048	44
Queensland <sup>11</sup>	1,649	25
South Australia <sup>12</sup>	571	17

Campus closures around the country demonstrate the true cost of funding cuts – particularly in regional communities. It is difficult to obtain accurate numbers of campus closures, but we have confirmed at a minimum six campuses in NSW, four in Queensland, one in Tasmania, 16 in South Australia and 10 in Victoria have been recently closed. The bulk of these campuses are in regional or rural areas, and will be having devastating effects on local communities. This is the ultimate cost of funding cuts – communities without access to education.



(Footnotes)

<sup>9</sup> TAFE NSW Annual Report 2015 – 2016 - [https://www.tafensw.edu.au/\\_\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0004/25069/TAFE-NSW-2015-16-Annual-Report.pdf](https://www.tafensw.edu.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0004/25069/TAFE-NSW-2015-16-Annual-Report.pdf)

<sup>10</sup> Victorian Public Service Commission, *State of the Public Sector in Victoria* <https://vpvc.vic.gov.au/resources/state-of-the-public-sector-in-victoria/>

<sup>11</sup> Queensland Government, *Queensland public service workforce statistics*, <https://www.forgov.qld.gov.au/queensland-public-service-workforce-statistics>

<sup>12</sup> Government of South Australia, Office for the Public Sector, *Workforce Information*, <https://publicsector.sa.gov.au/about/office-for-the-public-sector/workforce-information/>

# The importance of TAFE



THE FOLLOWING IS AN EDITED VERSION OF A SPEECH GIVEN BY **SENATOR DOUG CAMERON** AT THE 2018 NATIONAL TAFE COUNCIL ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING HELD IN MELBOURNE.

BY SENATOR DOUG CAMERON

**T**AFE is an iconic public institution that sits at the centre of Australian life. The contribution it has made, from its establishment as workman's colleges and mechanics institutes in the 19th century and its evolution through to the modern TAFE network, has been immense. TAFE has educated and trained millions of our citizens, supported students who thrive in adult learning environments, and delivered critical education and training services to regional and rural Australia.

TAFE is the backbone of technical and trades training in this country.

TAFE provides quality vocational training to the growing services and knowledge industries and English language, literacy and numeracy teaching, smoothing the way for further education. It plays a vital role in our skill formation system — sitting at the forefront of 21st century challenges. TAFE plays these multiple roles across the network, reaching into diverse communities, in hundreds of towns and

suburbs across Australia.

TAFE is essential to Australia's future prospects and our domestic and international competitiveness. It is more than the sum of its parts.

Teachers lie at the heart of the success of TAFE. There is no job like teaching.

It is highly skilled, demanding, intellectually exacting work and requires deep content knowledge as well as the mastery of specific occupations and crafts — to then be imparted to a diverse range of students — across all ages, from every type of background, each with their own aspirations for a fulfilling future. Good teachers are smart, inventive, and down to earth; they cajole, mentor and inspire. They have earned and deserve the recognition, social status, and financial security that other trained, skilled and responsible professionals enjoy.

The unfortunate truth is that policies that have driven competency based training, marketisation and unhealthy competition in the VET sector, have diminished TAFE.

The system undervalues and degrades the

role of teaching and pedagogy. This is no more starkly represented than in the acceptance that a Certificate IV in Training and Assessment is regarded as an adequate qualification for teaching excellence.

While the poor results of marketisation have primarily been in the for-profit part of the system — the pressures have also been applied to TAFEs. This has led to TAFE campus and course closures and the loss of jobs. For students enrolling in VET, it's meant cost shifting to them, fee increases, limitations on access, and unequal treatment across the post-school sector. The critical role of TAFE as the public provider, and the professional role TAFE teachers play, is not recognised and supported in the current system.

I am a product of trade and technical training which I received at the equivalent of Australian TAFE in Scotland. I was one of those distracted young people at school and I didn't have the patience for abstract, classroom learning. I had great teachers at school but it was not the right place for me. It wasn't until I went to Tech, when I understood what algebra and equations could

be used for, that I settled into the rigours of formal learning. I am not sure what my life would have been without the discipline of my trade and the structure and focus my apprenticeship gave my education from the age of 15.

My personal experience of TAFE, and the education and lessons I drew from it, was far from unique – but I think it is fast becoming a more exceptional story. I am increasingly concerned that the 15 year old I was then would not have those same opportunities today. When I commenced my apprenticeship in 1966, my employer had an obligation to release me for formal off the job technical training and they were responsible for the costs of that training. Fifty years later and the terms and conditions for apprentices have declined instead of improving. The commitment and investment from employers to train their workforce has declined instead of grown.

Young people, while being fed rhetoric about choice, are having their opportunities constrained by poor policies.

High rates of youth unemployment, growing rates of underemployment, and dropping numbers of apprenticeships, are just the

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## *TAFE is the backbone of technical and trades training in this country.*

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headline evidence of the barriers to the labour market being faced today. What lies beneath the aggregate figures are the increasing numbers of contingent and precarious jobs people are compelled to work in; and growing uncertainty about what work in the future will look like.

The current vocational education and training system is flawed and it needs to be fixed – but the problems in VET are a manifestation of deeper ideological trends that have shaped policy development in Australia for far too long.

Inequality is growing. Trickle-down economics – and relying on the good agencies of rich corporations to share wealth – always a delusion – has now been comprehensively discredited.

It is my view that the rise in inequality has been exacerbated by the misuse and misapplication of competition policy – the slavish adherence to increasing competition, privatisation and outsourcing has done considerable

damage.

Competition policy has developed an almost religious quality whereby pro-competition activity is regarded as socially beneficial and anti-competition is automatically seen as detrimental conduct.

While competition policy is beneficial in dealing with the anti-competitive behaviour of business and in particular monopolies, competition should not be mindlessly imposed on non-commercial activities, such as TAFE that are needed to promote social causes and benefits.

Despite compelling evidence to the contrary, the myth that competition is always good has been an incredibly resilient idea in modern Australian mainstream policy making. This is despite the evidence of competition policy having negative impacts on the TAFE system.

The Australian training market provides a three decade long salutatory lesson in how market competition in education has failed us as a society.

The proponents of competition policy in VET say that it drives down prices. They argue that consumers, in exercising their choice, put pressure on producers and providers to become more efficient and improve quality.

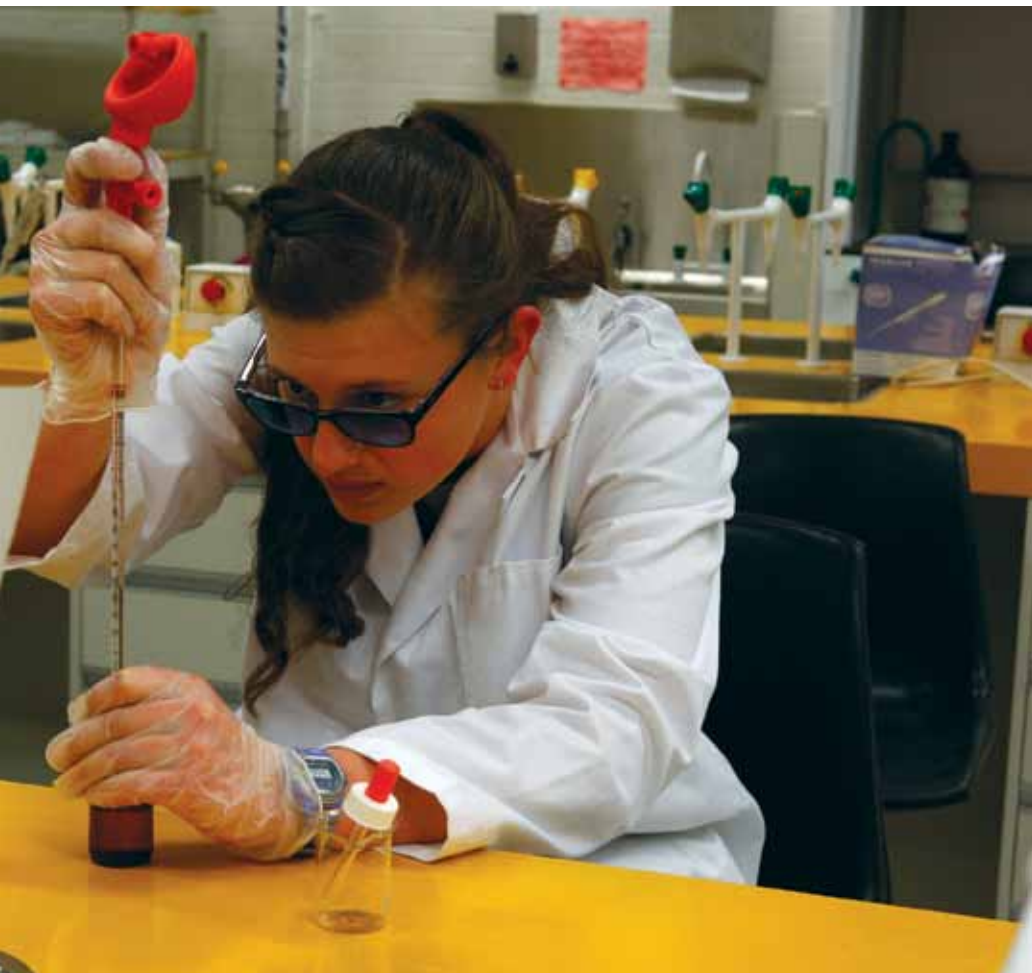
Economic theory doesn't distinguish between price and value. Regulating for the cheapest petrol is light years away from regulating for the best quality education and training system that is possible.

It is not choice when the best providers are de-funded and the worst are rent-seekers.

In developing the training market, simple principles were applied to a complex system. Consequently, even by the logic of orthodox economics, and Transaction Cost Economics in particular, the application of a competitive market system in vocational education and training has been a failure.

The evidence shows that the training market in Australia has led to:

- an overall decline in the outcomes for students
- a decline in quality
- the proliferation of wasteful and rigid bureaucratic processes
- dissatisfied employers continuing to complain of skill shortages and gaps –
- cherry-picking and rent seeking by for-profit providers
- insufficient investment in infrastructure and in teacher qualifications and resources
- money wasted on marketing, promotion and advertising
- the development of a market for low quality





courses, and

- the defrauding and exploitation of citizens trying to improve their lives through gaining education and qualifications.

Our minds invariably turn to VET FEE-HELP when we think about rorting — Careers Australia and its \$600 million dollars of government funding, 1,000 sacked workers and thousands of students saddled with debt and nothing to show for it.

It is important to remember that rent-seeking and rorting in the VET market pre-dates VET FEE- HELP and has outlasted it.

There is a line of people coming to me as a Shadow Minister with stories of poor quality training, and equating this to the business models that are operating in the sector.

Operating in the training market is a lucrative business if you don't care about quality.

There are private for-profit RTOs forging qualifications, taking large sums of money for training they don't deliver, turning out untrained people, and destroying trust in VET qualifications.

Even when ASQA closes low quality or shonky RTOs — after the couple of years it takes to catch up with them — there is nothing to stop another such provider taking their place. In the five years to 2015 the annual combined rate of provider exits and entry was 13% — so barriers to entry

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*It is my view that the rise in inequality has been exacerbated by the misuse and misapplication of competition policy – the slavish adherence to increasing competition, privatisation and outsourcing has done considerable damage.*

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are low.

Low quality provision is a pervasive problem in the system if RTO compliance measures are anything to go by. According to ASQA's last annual report only 1 in 4 RTOs are compliant after their initial audit. Even more troubling, after RTOs are given the time and information to rectify the problems, half of them are still non-compliant.

The problems in the system have not been fixed by changes to the student loans regime; the problems have not been addressed by the endless tweaking of regulations — arguably they have exacerbated them; because the problems are written in to the design of the system. It is a

system that fails to assure quality.

## **The whole system needs reform.**

TAFE is the anchor for a quality vocational education and training system.

Once you lose a critical social institution like TAFE it is very hard and very costly to get it back. We cannot afford for TAFE to be a 'sitting duck' while private firms make their profits of between 30-50 percent.

There is an immediate and urgent need to protect, stabilise and rebuild TAFE.

That is why Labor have already announced we will return the \$637 million the Coalition stripped from VET in the last budget and why we have committed that at least two thirds of all government funding for vocational education will go to TAFE.

The balance will go to not-for-profit community educators and only the very best of the private providers with demonstrable links to specific industry requirements.

In every Labor VET delivery program TAFE will be given a key role.

The vocational education and training gravy



train will end under a Labor government.

We have also committed \$100 million to the Building TAFE for the Future Fund to commence a program of revitalising campuses across Australia.

It is also abundantly clear that we cannot afford for the education and training market to continue as it is currently designed. That is why Labor has announced a once in a generation commission of review into the post-secondary education system to commence within the first 100 days of a Shorten Labor government.

There hasn't been a national inquiry into TAFE since the Kangan Review in 1974. It is well overdue. There has never been a national review that considers the full gamut of post-school education. It is time to have one.

In its consideration of how quality and trust can be returned to the vocational education system it should start by examining the critical role TAFE plays as an educational and social institution – in our communities and in local, national and global economies.

The review must seriously and rigorously consider alternatives to the competitive training market model. And it must also consider alternatives to the current pedagogical framework being delivered under the auspices of competency based training.

We are living in a time of rapid change driven by globalization, artificial intelligence, robotics and digital transformation and the Internet of things. It is impacting on all aspects of our lives.

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*... Labor have already announced we will return the \$637 million the coalition stripped from VET in the last budget and why we have committed that at least two thirds of all government funding for vocational education will go to TAFE.*

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Now more than ever we need a post-school education and training system that responds to those changes, and works for every Australian.

We need a system built on quality, collaboration, depth, reliability and transferability that:

- equips people with knowledge and education for good working lives;
- skills the workforce for existing and emerging jobs;
- produces skills that power innovation and good jobs;
- provides greater social engagement and inclusion by guaranteeing access to quality lifelong learning and further education;
- in apprenticeships, provides a contract for employment and a contract for training with

nationally recognised portable skills; and

- recognises the importance of highly skilled TAFE teaching professionals.

While the progress we need isn't being delivered in the system that is operating we have a great opportunity before us to change that – not for the sake of change but in the national interest. Finding the best way forward will be complex. It will be both intellectually and practically challenging – but it needs to be done. It is also abundantly clear that the only way it will happen is under a Labor government.

I would like to pay tribute to the people who make up the TAFE Network – all of the dedicated educators and teachers. Your professionalism – your capacity and willingness to collaborate and innovate - will continue to help students and communities navigate the challenges that lie ahead. Just as you always have done.

You deserve our unreserved and enduring gratitude for enriching the lives of so many Australians.

You have been the custodians of the idea of TAFE – and its great potential – as well as the practitioners of TAFE – and all it can and should be.

I look forward to working with you to make sure Australians get the education and training system that they need. ●

*Senator the Hon Doug Cameron is Shadow Minister for Skills, TAFE and Apprenticeships, Shadow Minister for Housing and Homelessness and Senator for New South Wales.*

# Hui-ā-Motu – TEU's Māori Voice

Kia ora! Imagine meeting 50 new people on a cool Friday morning in March and spending the next two and half days together, day and night on the marae at Hamilton University in Palmerston North on New Zealand's North Island.

I WAS lucky enough to attend the Tertiary Education Union's Hui-ā-Motu 23-25 March 2018 which is the annual meeting of Māori delegates to conduct their business and feed that up to the TEU's National Conference. The Hui-ā-Motu involves delegates from their Institutes of Technology and Polytechnics (ITP's) which are the closest to our TAFE's. Also covered are universities and other tertiary providers. Of the 32 branches in the TEU (each university and ITP have their own branch) there are 16 ITP's and only half that number in universities.

The Hui commenced with due ceremony with women required to wear skirts covering their knees. Shoes were removed before entering the marae and not worn in the building during the three days. We were sung onto the marae with formal speeches and replies in Māori following traditional custom.

There followed a diverse range of speakers on this year's theme *Tā Kotahi, Titiro Whakamuri, Anga Whakamua – Stand Together, Review Our Past, Move Forward United*. Delegates were focused on coming to a common understanding of how the TEU had evolved, particularly in relation to Māori matters and advancing the objectives of the union as well as issues relating to each branch. Appreciation was expressed on completion of each presentation through communal Māori songs that the delegates joined with voice and movement. This created a feeling of togetherness and strength in working together.

At the end of the first day the large meeting room was converted into a dorm with delegates, male and female, setting up mattresses side by side around the room. While there was a symphony of sleepers during the night ear plugs were a must.

The remaining day and a half was completed with more speakers, and planning for upcoming union actions and recruitment. There was also brainstorming to identify the issues delegates felt important for several submissions that were due soon after the Hui finished. I was impressed by the number of members who presented or led discussions around membership and TEU Māori interests. Presentations included Racism and the way the media portrays Māori people in



NZ, Building the Union, Knowing your collective agreement and the Māori world view.

There is a high expectation in the TEU that elected delegates on campuses will actively recruit new members and hold activities or gatherings to engage with members on a regular basis. Recruitment strategies varied from presenting new staff with membership forms with an expectation that they will join. This seemed to work on locations where there was high union membership density. More creative activities including informal gatherings were encouraged. Campuses ranged from very low to quite high Māori academic and general staff numbers.

In the Industrial Strategy and Implementation Plan section National Industrial Officer Irena Brorrens reported on the 58 collective agreements which are on a three year cycle across the tertiary sector. The TEU are aiming for a coordinated approach to bargaining to protect core working conditions, priority claims and gains made for members over the last 12 months. These include raising the living wage of just \$20.20 with offers of flat rate increases of just \$500-\$1700 for low paid workers and in others cases low salary increases of just 1%-2% with some employers seeking reduced conditions or performance pay to agree to even these small gains.

The new NZ Government has signalled that it wants the tertiary sector to be more flexible

and responsive to better meet New Zealand's changing labour market. Does this sound familiar? A project team will in fact be looking at Australia for ideas, which does not sound promising as our members can attest to. ITP's have been facing falling enrolments over the last 10 years of around 30% and some are feeling the financial pinch with fears that their future may not be sustainable. New Zealand following Australia's lead will be a disaster in the making.

The TEU have a strong commitment to inclusivity of Māori culture, languages and values of their members. This was evident in the documents and meeting structures throughout the three days. All Pākahā (non-Māori) attendees spoke in language to some degree and followed the same protocols as delegates. This is much more attainable than in Australia where our First People's originally had many hundreds of different language groups and an infinite range of customs. With approximately 16% of New Zealand's population being Māori in comparison to around 3.5% of Australia's population identifying as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander it was clear throughout the Hui both Indigenous peoples share common issues culturally and in the vocational education sector.

*Michelle Purdy is the Federal TAFE President of the Australian Education Union. She is also an Aboriginal VET Officer at TasTAFE.*



# National TAFE Council AGM looks to the future

In April, the National TAFE Council held its Annual General Meeting. Over two days delegates had the opportunity to see presentations from academics, policy makers and other unions, updates on the AEU and its campaigns, as well as an address from Senator Doug Cameron (see page 19). The AGM also provided plenty of time for discussion and debate. At such a crucial moment for TAFE's future, the AGM's statement called for an end to harmful marketisation and competition policies, and outlined some ideas about what the renewal of TAFE might look like. Here is an excerpt from the AGM statement:

Modern publicly funded TAFE institutes have a history in a number of different education and vocational traditions. TAFEs are sites of trades training, vocational training in the service and knowledge industries, English language, literacy and numeracy programs and further education. Campus based delivery of this full mix of programs is unique to TAFE. It is intuitively understood and valued by the community. TAFEs are the custodians of the knowledge, skills and traditions of a broad range of industries

TAFEs have always been deeply connected to the communities within which they are located. TAFEs are inherently place based, drawing their distinctive character from their locations, and often developing organic industry specialities as a result of their adaptive capacities.

TAFE institutions of the future must continue to be responsive to the needs of a society challenged by social and economic inequality, and environmental crisis. They must be responsive to society's needs for a well-educated, articulate and autonomous population which can participate fully and critically in society's conversations, and negotiate the demands of a challenging and changing world of work, economy and community life.

TAFE has never just been about the assessment of and training for the

skills for just one job. It has always played a larger role responding to the needs of people throughout their lives.

That TAFEs are charged as public institutions with acting for the public good is a crucial basis for TAFE to be forward thinking, innovative and creative. They are positioned to be focused on the jobs of the future. They can prepare adults for a lifetime of transitions between industries and between work and other caring roles. They can provide the full range of skills that are needed by all industries. They can be focused beyond the "job at hand" to the skills and understandings for more highly skilled work with a new employer, self-employment or the jobs of the future. They can become critically engaged with the imperatives around initial entry into work for young people, and the transitions between schooling, work and tertiary education. And they can continue to be responsive to cultural diversity and to the place of Australia in the region.

TAFEs are ideal sites for investment by governments into research into new and emerging industries. TAFE has played a significant role as an incubator and proliferator of new practices in a whole range of fields — offering a meaningful place for those who live a precarious life to enter a public space that through the education offered gives their life orientation and in so doing also continually makes new contributions to a whole range of different fields.

TAFEs are educational institutions which also develop new theories and methods of adult and applied teaching and learning including the uses of new learning technologies.

A program for the renewal of TAFE must recognise, value and create anew a highly professional teaching culture. The AEU has always argued that appropriately qualified, permanent teachers - some with relevant university degrees and specialist post graduate qualifications and others with specialist trade qualifications and industry expertise, all with teaching qualifications – must be the bedrock of the system, and the best and most concrete way in which quality can be assured. Teachers in TAFE have striven to build collegiate networks who mentor, support and interrogate each other's teaching practices. This has engendered a culture of commitment amongst TAFE teachers which, at its best, does not value personal advancement over outcomes for students, the institution and the community. In short, the real quality of TAFE has rested on the quality of teaching it both draws upon and is fostered within it.

TAFEs support the education of all workers. The TAFE model has always included combinations of workplace based training with campus based provision. This neutral campus space is necessary for genuine learning and is not replicated by workplace training alone. Workplaces are sites where employers exercise power over workers. Workers need “neutral” places where they can freely and critically explore ideas, and where their inquiry is freed from the employment consequences of making mistakes. TAFEs are needed to ensure that all workers can have access to vocational education.

Employers are over-represented on each of the boards or councils of the national bodies that most directly influence public policy in vocational education. Employers dominated the Industry Skills Councils which created the competencies upon which the bulk of funded training is based. Employers and bureaucrats frequently characterise the interests of all other social partners, and all the broader practices of vocational education pejoratively.

And despite the level of control they have of vocational education, any attempt to leverage funding from industry has been met with highly organised resistance. In fact, marketisation of vocational education has led to widespread transfer of funding from taxpayers into individual enterprises, but increasingly now, onto individual students. Training which was previously delivered in workplaces and paid for by employers, is now paid for by the government and “delivered” by enterprise RTOs on the job.

All governments have attempted to shift the costs of vocational education from themselves onto students through income contingent loans. The costs of these unpaid loans is borne initially by the Federal Government, but ultimately the public.

Industry groups are profiting from government vocational education funding, consultants are benefiting from the subcontracting out of anything which resembles research by government, and universities are continuing to prey on the sector in order to maintain their student numbers. VET FEE-HELP was insidious and has orchestrated a significant change in the



architecture of the sector. Large sections of the Australian vocational education system have become “User Pays”, with restricted access to government subsidised places, and increased fees and charges as a direct result of the gaming of the system by private for-profit providers’ use of VET FEE-HELP.

A generation of young people have been excluded, because of cost, from the TAFE system. For many, it is cheaper to go to university than it is to go to TAFE.

The impact of the failed VET FEE-HELP loan scheme has been and will continue to be profound for individual students, many of whom are the most vulnerable in the community, and a significant number of whom will not even know that they have a debt until their income reaches the repayment threshold. This debt, however, will have an impact on them throughout their lives.

The core of the problem is that markets are not the way to organize social goods like education. Advocates of market design cannot point to a single piece of research that shows that it works in education. Public funds for education should never be handed over in the form of profits to individuals and institutions. Once the process of learning is captured by the imperative of making profit, then it can no longer be for the social good. This has become more difficult because the development of a private sector leaves us with a powerful lobby which itself captures both political parties and becomes self-justifying.

A new vision and policy for the public vocational education institutions manifested in TAFE needs to be developed collaboratively and democratically with the whole Australian community. Part of this is a genuine discussion between students and teachers, workers and unions and the broader Australian society (partly represented by government).

People value TAFE. They recognise its importance to our economy and society. They know that their own and their children's future is not assured in such a volatile globalised labour market without it.

People should be able to access publicly-funded vocational education through TAFE which empowers them in the world of work and beyond; assists them to collectively shape the world of work; reorient themselves for the future; transform crisis into new opportunities; and expand their horizons. ●

# DEFENDING TAFE



BY IAN CURRY

**M**ORE than anyone, TAFE teachers know the transformational power of a good vocational education, and I can say with certainty that our members appreciate that as well as most of them are the products of your good work over decades.

But we also know the enormous damage that's being done to the system by relentless ideological attacks on public education and the prioritisation of private profits over public good that are the hallmark of government policy.

I'd like to concentrate on these issues through the prism of Manufacturing & Engineering and in the interests of our members and the industries that employ them.

The AMWU is a union of skilled workers. The skills of our members directly affect their standard of living through skill related classification and pay arrangements embedded in Awards and in our Collective Agreements.

For us, skills are an industrial currency. For employers in our industries, skills are a significant risk factor, the difference between

staying in business or not.

The major opportunities on the horizon for manufacturing and engineering workers and employers revolve around continuous naval shipbuilding, defence engineering, infrastructure, niche manufacturing, engineering services, rail, renewable energy, so-called *Industry 4.0* and *Advanced Manufacturing*, all of which require workers with sophisticated skills in the near future.

And as it stands, we are concerned that there won't be enough skilled workers to go around.

We appear to have learned nothing from the disaster that was the mining boom, when rapacious mining companies used their financial strength to secure the workers they wanted, often at the expense of more mainstream industries.

Skills shortages were a significant drag on the economy and uncertainty about skills hampered investment and commitment to the employment of Australians.

It was a period that taught employers that they could abandon local employment and the

government would subsidise their bottom lines by importing labour at an unprecedented rate.

The resource sector consumed around 5% of Australia's engineering trade workforce but only trained 2%.

Decent employers became risk averse about training workers in the fear that they would be gobbled up by poachers.

The rogue employers learnt the art of exploiting temporary skilled workers

As a result, the system is demonstrably weaker now and the risks associated with skills shortages are more pronounced than ever.

It is now somehow the role of the taxpayer and Peter Dutton to supply employers with the skilled labour that the economy needs.

A frightening statistic I heard just yesterday was that Australia produces around 6,000 engineering graduates per year, but imports around 12,000 engineers on temporary worker visas of one kind or another.

We need to interfere in that business model.

We, along with other unions, are in discussions with the key players in the defence

# – perspectives from manufacturing

The future we want is dependent on us successfully defending public education and particularly, defending public Vocational Education & Training –TAFE.



engineering and shipbuilding space about strategies to assist with both the design and the delivery of training to produce the skilled workers they will need.

Having campaigned so hard to secure the work on these projects, it would be a criminal shame if we were unable to deliver the skilled workforce required to exploit the opportunities.

Reading between the lines, I suspect that the lack of certainty regarding the supply of skills to the economy is playing on the minds of many of those companies who are wondering where the welders will come from to weld up frigate and submarine hulls, where the technicians will come from to install and commission sophisticated navigation and integrated weapons systems and the myriad other sophisticated workers that are required to capitalize on these emerging economic opportunities.

The word I am hearing repeated most often these days is ‘certainty’, but not in a good way.

- There is a lack of certainty in what the VET system is producing.
- The system is trying to serve too many

masters.

- Industry, student and community confidence is declining.
- Evidence is emerging that we are returning to an economy constrained by skills shortages and a lack of employment and skills mobility.
- The number of people that complete their experiences with VET continues to stagnate.
- Confidence in trade apprenticeships and technical cadetships is diminishing.
- Increasing calls for flexibility and specialisation designed to meet the narrow interests of individual employers and training providers, rather than the broader interests of the ‘industry’, are blurring the scope of the traditional trade and technical vocations.
- The result is a race to the bottom on cost and quality that is forcing high quality public and NFP industry providers to join the race.
- Students and employers have little chance of developing into the informed and

demanding consumers our VET system desperately needs while the current levels of disconnect and incoherence prevail.

The poor quality of training and assessment is such that the decline in industry and community confidence has led to a bizarre regulatory response that is process, rather than outcomes, oriented and heavily weighted towards auditing training and assessment tools rather than the capability of the graduates against the standards specified in Training Packages.

The result is a race to the bottom on cost and quality that is forcing high quality public and NFP industry providers to join the race. TAFE has become a casualty of that race and the poor leadership and management thrust upon it by governments, compounded by the funding environment that it operates in.

If we are to rebuild community confidence in the system, we need absolute certainty about what problem we are trying to solve and what role we expect of the VET system and TAFE as the public provider.

But rebuilding confidence has to involve



dealing with the weaknesses of the system.

The VET system suffers from the lack of a clear and simply stated purpose.

Despite the fact 83.7% of people engage with the VET system 'for employment related reasons' only 16.7% are employed at a higher skill level after training.<sup>1</sup> The system is failing to produce workers with the higher level skills the economy needs.

The central role of industry in determining the shape and nature of jobs and work no longer translates into determining the occupational standards upon which VET teaching should be based.

Training Packages have become confused, and there are too many misguided interventions into their design and application including persistent tampering with the design model for administrative or vague 'quality' reasons that do not serve the interests of students, industry and the community.

The minimum qualification (Certificate IV) for VET teaching has become the norm despite it being hopelessly inadequate when the professionalism in education design and learning that is required demands at least an Associate Degree or Degree.

We fund 'deposits of teaching' in a transactional approach rather than competency units designed to be integrated into broader capability

which results in a whole that is less than the sum of its parts.

We do not fund the things we know that the community expects:

- High quality preparatory programs
- High quality pre-apprenticeship courses
- Fit-for-purpose foundation skills support programs
- High quality Adult & Community Education programs
- Second chance education for those who need it
- Learning experiences that produce graduates that are the well-educated, socially capable and resilient workers we need as a developed country.

The direct connection between the occupation and the vocational qualification is being lost and training has become a tradeable commodity.

Something has to change.

We have embarked on a mission to establish AMWU endorsed occupational profiles for each of the key occupations in our industries. It is our intention to link them directly to our industrial agreements, and ultimately to the Award.

We want to link them also to the training system and support them with endorsed qualification profiles, endorsed progression profiles and endorsed learning and assessment plans to be delivered by our preferred and endorsed provider, TAFE.

But we will need your help with that.

We want to work with you on developing the learning and assessment models, including foundation training, learning programs designed to support learners confronting challenges, curriculum and project-centred formative

assessment tools that would be required to give life to restoring vocational learning to its rightful place.

With your indulgence, I'd like to finish with a little reminiscence.

About 17 years ago I gave a speech on globalization to the AEU State Council in South Australia. The theme was 'economy v society' and focused on the damage being done by globalization and the fixation the world was developing on measuring everything in economic terms.

I was attempting to set out the contrast between living in a society and living in what was rapidly becoming an economy. I'd like to finish this contribution today with the same words I used in that contribution 17 years ago:

*"... Schools, and by definition, teachers are placed in a unique position to shape the society of the future.*

*It is their responsibility to give our youth tools with which to participate in the transformation of society, not merely to churn out factory fodder, or more likely call centre fodder.*

*The interests of manufacturing workers in my view are tied in no small way to the relative independence of our education system and the values that underpin it.*

*Those values are rapidly becoming driven by economic not societal values and we must join together to grasp back our rights to live in a society – not an economy."*

*Ian Curry is the National Coordinator for Skills, Training & Apprenticeship Policy at the AMWU*

<sup>1</sup> Productivity Commission Report on Government Services  
page 5.21

# VET PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

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The VDC Professional Development (PD) Program provides an extensive range of continuing professional learning for the TAFE workforce through highly engaging and interactive webinars, half and full day workshops and special events. Our newly fitted training facilities are also available for hire.

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# TAFE: a fundamental cornerstone

For far too long, TAFE and the broader VET sector has been neglected by State and Federal Liberal governments. The push to privatise essential education services through contestable funding models, and the rampant and systemic roting through the VET FEE-HELP loans program has bred a lack of confidence in the system.

BY MARK BURGESS

Unfortunately, through no fault of their own, this has also had an undesired effect on some TAFE institutions caught up in the ideological agenda. It's time for change, it's time to fix the system before irreparable damage is done.

The Electrical Trades Union (ETU) stands with the AEU and supports the Stop TAFE Cuts campaign for a quality vocational training sector, with TAFE as the fundamental cornerstone that the sector so desperately needs.

Of course, it is well documented that this along with other poor policy settings has led to a substantial decrease in the number of students undertaking vocational training. According to the National Centre for Vocational Education Research (NCVER) from September 2011 to September 2017 there has been a decline of 195,196 students undertaking vocational training. This represents a whopping 43% across all industries and AQF levels.

At Certificate III apprenticeship level in the electrical trades, the decline while still substantial, has thankfully not been as dramatic. Over the same period, we have seen a drop of 3,612 apprentices in training or 10% less than 2011 levels.

Diminished confidence in our TAFE system comes not only from skewed funding models and private provider rorts, but also to the \$2.5 billion cut in funding. Add to that an unwillingness from employers to invest in the system, inadequate policy settings and dangerously low wages for workers undertaking study through an apprenticeship and you can see how wide the crisis has spread.

One inherently flawed policy setting is the non-existence of a National Partnership Agreement on Skills, which expired in June 2017. A new "Skilling Australians Fund" was meant to replace the expired agreement, however to date not one State or Territory has signed up to it. Government policies are not only defective; they

are grossly neglected.

The Skilling Australians Fund's objective is to provide 300,000 new training places across the system through a \$1.5 billion fund, which would be matched by the States.

However, there is no minimum amount of money attached to the fund and the fund itself is reliant on the amount of visa workers entering the country. This creates a perverse incentive for the Australian Government to increase the volume of visa entries into Australia at the expense of Australian workers and students.

The decline in apprenticeships, particularly in construction related trades, is further exacerbated by the introduction of the Code for Tendering and Performance of Building work ("The Code") and the reinstatement of the Australian Building and Construction Commission (ABCC). The code outlaws the ability of employers and unions to negotiate ratios of apprentices to tradespeople or to set minimum targets for First Nations Australians, women or mature-age apprentices.

The current model for training package development is also flawed. Systemic restructures have had the intentional effect of smothering union influence at certain levels within the system have proven somewhat successful. There is currently no dedicated union representative on the peak Australian Industry and Skills Committee (AISC), and while some students and workers have had representation on many Industry Reference Committees (IRCs) through their unions, in many cases this is limited to a single member.

It isn't all bad news though. The electrotechnology industry is excited about the radical changes taking place across the sector. Renewable energy, advanced programming, the "Internet of Things", robots and mechatronics will require electricians to upgrade with new and specialised skills while new apprentices will have to meet higher competency standards.

These advances in technology will shape the electricians of the future. It's up to us to ensure

these skills remain portable in nature, so workers are not held captive within narrow tracts of one business. Enterprise specific skills should be the responsibility of that particular enterprise. After all, they are the ones benefiting directly from the labour which our members supply.

We must ensure that TAFE is ready for the technological advancements our industry faces and our electricians are trained with the necessary skills they and our nation will need. Although TAFE has copped some knocks in recent times, it still remains as a trusted institution with the capabilities to deliver what is required. I certainly look forward to working with you over the coming weeks, months and years to ensure this happens.

In recent years, we are finding that there has been an increase in the number of apprentices who are being mistreated at work. This includes things such as bullying, underpayment, lack of supervision and employers not being able to fulfil their requirements of the training contract. Not surprisingly, many apprentices are not equipped with the life skills to be able to handle this sort of conflict in the workplace, which results in many leaving the trade. The only people that will stand up and protect apprentices in these situations is their union.

TAFE teachers are well respected and often hear these stories of mistreatment on a daily or weekly basis. I would encourage you all to point them in the direction of the appropriate union. The ETU is committed to apprentices and they are valuable members of our union. They are the future of our industry and we will always stand up and fight for them.

Over recent years the ETU and AEU have been collaborating on a number of issues and we look forward to this the relationship further strengthening in the coming years, including National TAFE Day. ●

*Mark Burgess is the National Apprentice and Training Officer at the Electrical Trades Union. This piece is an edited version of a speech given to the 2018 AEU National TAFE Council AGM.*

# Around Australia

## NEW SOUTH WALES

MAXINE SHARKEY

NSW Teachers Federation continues to support the national *Change the Rules* campaign, one aspect of which is changing the country's broken industrial relations rules. These broken rules are directly impacting on the work of TAFE teachers.

The rules are broken in favour of big businesses and the ultra-rich, and unions are fighting back to return the concept of fairness to Australian workplace laws.

On May Day, Sally McManus ACTU Secretary met with teachers and students at Ultimo TAFE, as well as representatives from other unions who are encouraging everyone to join their union and join the fight to change the rules. The young people present were particularly aghast at the unfair disparity between the tax paid by big business and the average worker.

Unions NSW Secretary Mark Morey reminded the crowd that an increasing number of people don't even understand what a union is, or what they do, and that it's important for members in every workplace to talk to their colleagues and make sure they know which union covers their workplace.

TAFE students appreciated the opportunity to discuss workplace industrial issues with knowledgeable representatives from their trades unions, but particularly appreciated the 70 plus free pizzas they demolished in the space of 10 minutes.

The NSW TAFE Teachers Association recently held their 99th AGM at which Life Membership was bestowed on long serving member Geoff Turnbull. Geoff was President of the Association for 24 years as well as being on Federation executive for 38 years, 24 of them as Vice President. I'm sure there are many readers from across the country who worked with Geoff on various AEU committees.

Finally, NSW Minister for TAFE Adam Marshall announced 253 new TAFE teachers would be employed in the first significant recruitment drive for TAFE in many years.

Responding to discussions between the union, TAFE management and the Minister, the majority of this recruitment will be permanent and temporary teachers, who will take up positions across the state.

The largest group will be recruited to Western Sydney, which Federation agrees will go some way to redressing the heavy teacher redundancies undertaken by the previous South Western Sydney Institute management.

Federation looks forward to continuing to work with the Minister to restore TAFE NSW to its pre-eminent position within the Australian vocational education system. ●

*Maxine Sharkey is the NSW member of the National TAFE Council Executive*

## VICTORIA

GREG BARCLAY

MAY has been a busy time for TAFE in Victoria.

We have a new Enterprise Agreement (nearly) and we have a shift in the policy position of the government towards TAFE.

TAFE teachers across the state are reportedly saying that they feel more positive about teaching and TAFE on the back of the budget announcements and the new Enterprise Agreement.

Negotiations for a new Enterprise Agreement reached an 'in principle' position that will see TAFE teachers receive a 23.7% salary increase over the next 4 years and the proposed agreement will also have a massive impact on the rate of casualisation of the TAFE teaching work force (currently in excess of 50%) through the enforcement of a stronger definition for casual work that

will limit it to a maximum of 13 weeks x 21 teaching hours per week for the year i.e. 273 hrs per year down from 720hrs currently.

A new definition of teaching and the introduction of mandatory work plans and access to work load reviews will provide teachers with more opportunities to have their work acknowledged and accounted for.

The Victorian Government has also announced some significant policy initiatives in relation to TAFE. We have a government that is now able to publicly say that it supports TAFE with funding directed specifically to TAFE and not as part of the contestable funds.

\$172 million to make 30 course "fee-free" in both trade and non-trade areas and another \$303.5 million to fund new enrolments in other specific courses.

There are the obligatory capital grants but the bulk of the budget appears to be directed back to the core business of making Vocational Education accessible to students.

We appear to be moving from a focus on stabilising to one of Rebuilding TAFE. ●

*Greg Barclay is the Victorian member of the National TAFE Council Executive*

## SOUTH AUSTRALIA

TONY SUTHERLAND

ANew era begins in SA after working the past 16 years with a Labor Government we find ourselves doing business with a newly elected Liberal Government. What does this mean for the State's public preschools, schools and TAFE only time will tell but as promised in their election campaign they have removed the current TAFE Board and appointed the CEO of the Department of Education Mr. Rick Persse as the new Interim Chair of a new Interim TAFE Board for the next six months. The new Minister for Education and TAFE John Gardner



has indicated that this State needs a strong public provider which will provide quality training under the stewardship of the new Liberal Government. We wait to see how they aim to achieve this after making an election commitment to 100% contestability.

TAFE SA have now met their obligations of compliance following the ASQA Audits resulting in no sanctions being imposed on the Public Provider. The issues raised by ASQA were in the areas of assessment and were not critical of TAFE teaching or course delivery. TAFESA response to ASQA has resulted in a new Quality system with high quality assessment tools and resources within a rigorous quality framework. Teaching staff continue to work tirelessly to ensure all of TAFE's training programs are compliant under the new system which has led to a massive increase in workloads and teacher stress. The new assessment compliance criteria has increased the burden on both students and lecturers to concentrate on assessment checklist and observations and not learning for every aspect of performance criteria of a competency.

TAFE SA will play a significant role in the New Naval College being established to train SA workers for the ship building jobs for the 90 billion dollar warship and submarine projects according to State and Federal Governments. This is important recognition of the quality education and training that our TAFE sector delivers. ●

*Tony Sutherland is the SA member of the National TAFE Council Executive*

## WESTERN AUSTRALIA

GARY HEDGER

**W**E are currently waiting on the release of the WA Labor Government State Budget but are not optimistic that there will be any additional money for TAFE. It is however likely that the Government will hold to its promise and not increase student fees.

Negotiations are nearing finalisation with considerable movement on some matters achieved after the threat of industrial action. The major issue still to be resolved concerns job security. We are currently negotiating the details of a conversion process for fixed term contract and casual lecturers.

The introduction of a new Student Management System at one college has been fraught with difficulties despite an extraordinary preparation effort by lecturing and administrative staff. The new system requirements have placed additional work on all staff including lecturers and fears are that whilst some of this additional workload was only required to set up the new system much of it will remain. The system will 'go live' in the three regional colleges mid-year with the remaining metropolitan college going live at the beginning of 2019.

The introduction of the new student management system has added a fifth contributing factor to work overload and stress, the major factors now being: ever changing and more complex compliance documentation, cuts to student curriculum hours, high class sizes, poor managerial decision making and the student management system.

Activism on the ground remains high with new delegates in many branches and very high numbers of delegates coming to Union Representative Training. The major foci for delegates for the rest of 2018, once the agreement is finalised, will be gaining permanencies and tackling workload. ●

*Gary Hedger is the WA member of the National TAFE Council Executive*

## ACT

KAREN NOBLE

**O**UR main issues are enterprise bargaining, safety concerns and keeping members connected.

### Enterprise Bargaining

Bargaining continues with a range of CIT proposals about to be presented to members for discussion on provisions, such as, paid non-attendance, teaching and non-teaching duties, professional development and currency, home based work, teacher qualifications, pooling of teaching hours casual and sessional teaching arrangements.

Agreement is pending in regard to ACT Government core conditions, pay and superannuation increases. Bargaining has been extensive around the consultation clauses.

### Safety Issues

We are currently gathering experiences relating to class size and WHS concerns for both teachers and students in practical and theoretical learning situations. Safety in workshops and practical laboratories is concerning, as is the quality of learning in sessions where up to 40 students are enrolled.

Attendance at regular campus meetings is growing with discussions focussing on bargaining, workplace safety, workload and ongoing compliance issues. Membership is growing slowly.

Course cuts have occurred in Library Studies, Massage and Music. My Profiling is rolling out across the Institute for all trainees and apprentices.

Campus Modernisation and a range of innovation projects continue. The improvements could be very positive but workload associated with implementation is challenging. ●

*Karen Noble is the ACT member of the National TAFE Council Executive*

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