HOW GOOD IS TAFE?
Climate change impacts all workers. Limiting global warming to 1.5°C will make a tangible difference. Here are five reasons why 1.5°C is trade union business!

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### 1. Climate change impacts all workers

All workers are affected by climate change. This is due to extreme weather – days of extreme heat, increased frequency of deadly storms, and bushfires – as well as increases in the cost of food and essential services, the spread of disease, increased political instability, conflict, war and forced migration. The IPCC Report of October 2018 shows we have no time to lose – it is situation critical! Read the IPCC Report.

*Climate Change and Labour: Impacts of Heat in the Workplace, ILO April 2016*

### 2. The impact on workers is not even

Low paid, vulnerable, informal and women workers across the Asia-Pacific region are impacted the most. Climate change makes their livelihoods more precarious, erodes human rights and causes inequality to skyrocket. Research has shown that women bear the brunt of extreme weather events where housing might be destroyed – families lose their income and children suffer complex diseases. Another example is informal labourers who lose available work hours due to consecutive days of extreme heat.

Low paid, casualised outdoor workers end up taking home even less of their already meagre earnings.

*Climate Change and Labour: Impacts of Heat in the Workplace, ILO April 2016*

### 3. Limiting global warming to 1.5°C will make a tangible difference for workers

Scientists have made it very clear that holding global warming to 1.5°C is…

...still possible through rapidly eliminating carbon emissions from the global economy to zero before 2050 (we are currently sitting at 1°C of human-caused warming!).

...the best outcome for the planet. Compared to 2°C, limiting warming to 1.5°C will greatly reduce the devastating impacts on workers’ livelihoods, biodiversity, public health and out-of-control weather events.

...critical! If we push warming towards 2°C we are in dangerous territory. Feedback cycles such as the melting of the permafrost in the Arctic will release huge amounts of potent methane gas into the atmosphere. This will fuel warming even further to the point whereby humans can no longer make decisions to control global warming, and where warming spirals out of control with catastrophic implications to all life and eco-systems.

#### 4. Neoliberalism has fuelled the climate crisis

Lack of action on global warming over the last 30 years has a strong correlation to the rise and imposition of neoliberalism. Instead of strong regulation and public good approaches to eliminating carbon pollution and moving towards clean economies, action by governments around the world has been eroded through the ideological imposition of privatisation of energy systems, corporate influence on governments for profit, and solutions which promote further the market. The ongoing growth in global emissions and the state of the current climate crisis is testimony to the great failure of this approach.

#### 5. Unions can combat dangerous global warming and build a safe, just and fair climate for all workers

Unions are key leaders in the movement beyond the cruelty of neoliberalism. The climate crisis is a potent organising tool if we work effectively. Vibrant examples are emerging across the Asia-Pacific region, of unions building power through climate organising. This can be seen in India, Nepal, the Philippines, Australia and New Zealand. Unions are harnessing the collective power of workers to change the rules and find fair and just solutions and systems. This addresses the urgent need for decarbonisation, along with demands for a just transition, decent work, union rights, connected communities and healthy environments. Workers have a safe climate to win and unions are the vehicle for this transformation!
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TAFE: TOO GOOD TO LOSE

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S P R I N G  2 0 1 9  T H E A U S T R A L I A N T A F E T E A C H E R 3
I was encouraging to see the Prime Minister putting TAFE on a level with university recently, but disappointing that this wasn’t followed up by a commitment to restore funding to TAFE and return it to the primary provider of vocational education in Australia.

We still have a long way to go to convince Commonwealth and state and territory governments to work together and commit to building a strong, vibrant and fully funded public TAFE.

That’s why I’m especially glad to see that so many of you took the time to fill out the Stop TAFE Cuts post-election email survey recently. We were overwhelmed by the response which is a tribute to the strength of feeling for TAFE. Many of you used words like “appalled”, “angry”, “distressed”, “sad”, “sick”, “outraged” and “disgusted” to convey feelings about the damage to the TAFE system.

I’m encouraged that nearly a quarter of people who responded want to turn their feelings of anger into action and committed to becoming more involved in the campaign, with 57% of those wanting to attend local meetings with campaign activists in their area.

We had over 1100 responses and the feedback will help guide the next steps for the Stop TAFE Cuts campaign – which will also benefit from the vision and direction of our new Federal TAFE secretary, Maxine Sharkey. For those that haven’t seen Maxine out and about on the hustings, I spent some time interviewing her for this magazine so you can get to know her better – she is one of the most passionate campaigners I know and we are lucky that she has stepped up.

As we plan the next stages of the campaign, we haven’t stopped lobbying and advocating. We met with Labor’s new Shadow Assistant Minister for Skills, Ged Kearney, last month to get her up to speed on the issues in the TAFE sector – not just funding, but workload and professional issues too. I’m pleased to see that she used this briefing session to inform her first speech to Parliament, which you can read on p7. Now that Doug Cameron has retired we will be working closely with Ged Kearney to help her hold parliament accountable for TAFE at every opportunity. The National TAFE Council also met with the National Youth Commission recently to brief them for their inquiry into youth unemployment and transitions, more on p13.

Finally, a reminder to take five minutes to recognise AEU members who are making an outstanding contribution to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education by nominating them for the Arthur Hamilton Award (see page 28). There’s some great initiatives out there, let’s celebrate them!
One thing leads to another...

TAFE President Michelle Purdy sat down with the newly elected Federal TAFE Secretary Maxine Sharkey to find out her top agenda items and how she stays so motivated to Stop TAFE Cuts!

MICHELLE PURDY: How did you get your start in the TAFE sector?

MAXINE SHARKEY: I was working in child protection in the Riverina in NSW for the Department of Community Services when I saw an advert in the Sydney Morning Herald for a TAFE teacher.

I had put in quite some time in child protection and was ready for a change. I was a single parent working with violent families in a small country town and my primary school aged daughter was starting to be affected by my job – I was on call 24hrs a day at times and was the subject of death threats on more than one occasion.

I applied for the job and promptly forgot about it as I took a well-earned holiday. Some months later I was contacted by TAFE and offered the job. I became the first Full Time Community Services teacher in the Riverina Institute of TAFE. I was lucky enough to be employed at a time that TAFE teaching was valued in NSW, TAFE paid for me to go to university and provided half release in my first year of teaching so I could complete a Bachelor of Adult Education.

MICHIELE: You’ve been in the union movement for 20 years – you’re currently serving as Deputy Secretary, Post Schools of the New South Wales Teachers Federation. What first inspired you to join and then work for the union?

MAXINE: I come from a union family. My father was a union organiser and then General Secretary of his union then National Secretary. Following amalgamations, he became the first National Secretary of the newly formed CFMEU. So, obviously, I’ve always been a union member.

In my first year as a TAFE teacher the Federation was taking stop work action in NSW. I couldn’t find anyone in my college who knew much at all about what that would mean for the tiny town of Cootamundra where I worked, so I rang the union directly. They took my name and told me where the stop work was being held. From that, I was soon contacted by the union TAFE organiser who then visited my campus, eventually convincing me to be the Federation Rep.

I went to lots of trade union training – which I highly recommend to anyone who wants to learn more about our profession and the role of our...
union. I met a lot of great people and had a LOT of fun. Every time I was asked to take that little step up, or take on a new role, it seemed like no big deal. One thing led to another and here I am!

MICHÉLLE: We're glad you're here! How does that experience influence your work today?

MAXINE: I'm a huge supporter of ongoing training — funny that! Every step along the way, I was encouraged to attend trade union training to learn about the new role I was taking on and now I try to encourage that in others. It's so empowering to feel confident in a role. So many people have been willing to pass on their experience and to give me their time, so I feel obligated to give that back to others.

MICHÉLLE: You have been one of the fiercest campaigners with the Stop TAFE Cuts campaign that I know. We're now facing three more years of Liberal cuts to funding, how do you find the strength to maintain your energy in the campaign?

MAXINE: I believe in the importance of public provision of essential social services such as education, housing, and transport. I believe that education is an inherent social good and TAFE is a unique asset to our communities, therefore I have no option but to keep going in the fight for TAFE.

It's a cliché, but if you don't fight you lose, so again, we have no option but to keep going.

Of course, you can't deny the setbacks, and neither should we. Just as we celebrate the wins, we must learn from the momentary losses. The losses hurt, but I figure you just pick yourself up, dust yourself off and get back on the horse or whatever. I also subscribe to the regenerative powers of the occasional pyjama day (or weekend). Nothing gives you back your energy like slothing around in your pyjamas all day, enjoying your favourite foods and doing nothing more physical than changing the channel on the remote or turning the page of the book you're reading.

It's a truism that you need to look after yourself before you can look after anyone else and on the really hurtful days (like the day after the federal election) you need to take care of yourself first. I think I went and sat by the ocean and contemplated the beauty of nature and reminded myself of the positive things in the world.

MICHÉLLE: You have a great team of organisers and members who have worked hard beside you through the long campaign. What strategies do you use to keep everyone motivated?

MAXINE: It really helps to be surrounded by brilliant people! I really am lucky to be part of such a great team. We all have different skills and abilities that just seem to complement each other. I've always thought it's best to let people do the things they enjoy — you'll always be good at something you like doing and so the team just naturally divides everything up that way. We've never argued over who does what because we kind of chose our own role and are really clear about what the expectations of each other is. You have to have some fun along the way; I think that's really important. And when others see a bunch of people having fun, they want to be a part of it. Bringing new people along is very motivating. It's really important to make sure there's social time together built in to the hard slog, so we can have something to laugh at.

We had a saying, "If I'm awake I'm working" and that's pretty true. Opportunities can pop up at the most inconvenient time and you can never let an opportunity go by when you’re campaigning, so you never really “clock off”. It helps if you love what you do!

MICHÉLLE: Remind us of some your favourite highlights of the campaign, so often they can be forgotten.

MAXINE: The moment the NSW Labor party agreed to campaign for guaranteed funding for TAFE was an absolute breakthrough. I’ll never forget that day. This led to the ACTU policy calling for guaranteed funding for TAFE and ultimately, federally, Labor asserted 2/3 of all government funding should go to TAFE. They were each pivotal moments in the campaign. The growth of the Stop TAFE Cuts campaign website was amazing — the way it took off took a lot of us by surprise. But of course, it was a lot of hard work keeping it updated and relevant, and that happened due to the amazing work of Rosie Scroggie.

We started 2014 running a three day stall at the Tamworth Music Festival and then drove down to Sydney to hold a stall at the Big Day Out the next day. What a contrast! We didn’t know what to expect of the crowd, but they loved us. They were really enthusiastic about TAFE, many sharing stories of how good TAFE was before the marketisation experiment damaged it. Others shared sad stories of their encounters with private for profit providers. It was surreal to experience the universality of the campaign in just that one week, but it was really affirming as well. What we were doing was in the best interests of so many people leading such varied lives. That week was definitely a highlight for me.

MICHÉLLE: Going forward, what are some of the key issues you want to focus on as Federal TAFE Secretary?

MAXINE: Obviously, regrowing the TAFE workforce and therefore our union membership. Permanency has to be a key priority — all TAFE teachers need stability and that starts with a secure job. Also, status — for the Institution and the profession. While TAFE is seen by governments as “just another provider”, we will have no status. But of course, none of this can occur until we smash the marketisation, contestable funding model.

I have no doubt we will prevail, our society will eventually demand a fairer and more stable system and it’s just a matter of time. But we need to keep building our membership base. 😊
THE Executive shared their experiences and concerns, before updating the shadow assistant minister about the Stop TAFE Cuts campaign. The meeting formed the basis of her speech to Federal Parliament a few weeks later, which she entitled ‘The Government’s Record on Education – A big F for Fail.’

“As the shadow assistant minister for skills, I can say with some authority that the government, who have been in power for over half a decade, are not only failing school students; they are failing students in the vocational, education and training sector as well. Since they were elected, they have severely damaged VET, cutting more than $3 billion in funding, presiding over a drop of 150,000 apprentices, closing TAFE campuses and allowing dodgy for-profit providers to gouge the system. TAFE and vocational education funding and the number of supported students are lower now than they were over a decade ago. This is despite an increasing number of jobs requiring vocational skills. For students enrolling in VET, it has meant an unaffordable cost shifted to them, fee increases, limitations on access, and unequal treatment across the post-school sector, not to mention poorer quality courses. The threshold for student loan repayments has been reduced while young people are struggling to find decent, secure work with a wage they can live on.

Like so many things this government has turned its hand to, the assumption that a market-driven, privatised approach will build a better, more efficient sector has been proven completely false.

Last week I met with an incredible bunch of TAFE educators and AEU members. They spoke to me about what it’s like to watch the great institution of TAFE suffer through years of a neoliberal government, the death by a thousand cuts, privatisation by stealth, declining hours teachers have, unstable work environments and anxiety created by precarious jobs in the sector.

Unlike those who sit opposite, Labor knows that a well-functioning VET sector has TAFE at its heart, setting the benchmark for quality and standards. The minister for skills, Michaelia Cash, said she wants to see the VET and university sectors on equal footing, but we are yet to see the Liberals commit to the funding and reform required to achieve this important outcome. The answer to the ongoing demise of the VET sector is a $525 million skills package, but that is only $54.5 million in new funding for the sector. We need to see a commitment from this government to our youth. We need to see a commitment to public and TAFE education.”

Ged Kearney, the new Shadow Minister for Skills met with the AEU National TAFE Council Executive for a briefing following her promotion to the portfolio. The meeting informed her speech to Parliament a few weeks later entitled ‘The Government’s Record on Education – A Big F for Fail’ Extract below:

Ged Kearney MP with the TAFE Council Executive, from left to right: Philip Chadwick (NSW), Gary Hedger (WA), Maxine Sharkey (Federal TAFE Secretary), David Terauds (QLD), Elaine Gillespie (Vic), Simon Bailey (TAS), Ged Kearney MP, Karen Noble (ACT), Michelle Purdy, Federal TAFE President and Tony Sutherland (SA).
Global trends in TVET: A FRAMEWORK FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE

Technical and vocational education and training (TVET) could be reinvigorated by building better links between education, work and life, a new report argues.

The disastrous market-based ‘reforms’ experiment that has dismantled Australia’s TAFE sector and put a wrecking ball through technical and vocational education and training (TVET) is not isolated to this country. Privatisation and conservative agendas have beset TVET around the world.

Now a new report, investigating the experiences in eight countries including Australia, looks for lessons from the failures of the past and discusses how to revive TVET in a way that promotes social justice and supports students in their lives and communities.

Other countries studied were Argentina, Côte d’Ivoire, England, Ethiopia, Germany, South Africa and Taiwan.

The report, Technical and Vocational Education and Training as a Framework for Social Justice, by researchers Gavin Moodie, Leesa Wheelahan, and Eric Lavigne from the University of Toronto, was commissioned by Education International, a global federation of education unions that represents more than 32 million educators.

The report challenges the belief that education and training for specific skills for specific jobs leads to higher productivity and therefore increased economic growth.

Markets not people are driving decisions

Human capital theory has shaped TVET globally in the past decade or so. The theory assumes TVET courses need to serve business interests by developing skills that generate economic value. Effectively, it places the needs of the market above those of individuals and society and relegates education to a role in supporting the economy and markets.

It has been a “complete and utter failure”, says Professor Leesa Wheelahan, who leads the Pathways to Education and Work research group within the Centre for the Study of Canadian and International Higher Education at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, University of Toronto.

Wheelahan calls out the latest example of human capital theory in action: the offer of subsidies for specific courses. She says the idea doesn’t make sense because — with the exception of regulated professions such as nursing and electrical trades — people often don’t end up...
A formula for a strong public TVET

The Technical and Vocational Education and Training as a Framework for Social Justice report’s case studies, which investigate TVET in eight countries, have provided some lessons for TVET everywhere.

The researchers have highlighted one issue present in each country to help illustrate what a strong public TVET system would look like and what it will take.

A capacity for collective action
The OECD has recommended that Argentina improve the quality of lifelong learning institutions through better coordination between the different institutions and provinces. The report says the capacity for collective action is eroded by taking decision making outside government control, for example by privatisation.

Physical integrity and safety
In South Africa, a study of a college in Cape Town found a key issue for students was how to get from the train station to the college safely. The college provided public buses that were attacked and taxis, which were making profits out of transporting students.

Physical integrity and safety include the availability of good food and water, healthy living conditions, shelter, warm clothing and good health care.

Minimal infrastructure requirements
From Cote d'Ivoire, it was clear that the protection of physical infrastructure and resources was necessary. Cote d'Ivoire has been ravaged by war and lack of investment. With education infrastructure destroyed many young people are missing out on education.

Strengthening the informal economy
Around half of Ethiopia’s workers are employed in the informal economy outside agriculture including unincorporated and often unregistered business and family enterprises. For jobs outside the formal economy and its regulations, informal training and apprenticeships often don’t provide proper training and skills development. TVET has a substantial role in supporting workers in the informal economy to transition to formal employment, the report says.

Developing institutions, systems and teachers
In Australia, marketisation and privatisation have seriously weakened vocational education with providers competing by lowering standards. Thousands of teachers and education support workers have been sacked, campuses closed, course fees have risen, and programs have been cut.

Adequate resourcing
From England the researchers drew the lesson of the need for adequate resourcing. England has seen a “complete collapse” in adult education and further education because of the funding policies and disinvestment by governments in that level of education, the report notes.

“TVET in many other case study countries suffer from lack of resources, and some have substantially fewer resources than even the poorest resourced English college. That a country as wealthy as the UK does not resource its TVET adequately indicates the extent of challenges faced by TVET.”

Trust and coordination between social partners
The importance of trust and coordination between the social partners is illustrated in a positive case study from Germany. Germany’s strong vocational education sector and its dual apprenticeship system are based on strong coordination and mutual trust between the social partners: employers, trade unions and government, at several levels from national to local.

Educating the whole person
TVET in Taiwan is strongly shaped by the emphasis in Confucianism on whole-person education, the view that the ultimate aim of education is to cultivate a person who knows how to appreciate life and pursue happiness, and who understands that professional skills are just one part of a whole person. Accordingly, technical and vocational institutions include studies in the humanities, arts, languages, and education.
the funding rates up a little bit here and there, funding per hour is still a lot lower than it was a couple of years ago,” she says.

Funding for each hour of publicly funded training dropped by almost 13 per cent in the eight years to 2016. One of the greatest drops was in Victoria, where funding declined by 29 per cent in that time, followed by Queensland, where funding dropped by nearly 27 per cent in the same period.

TVET is the only education sector where a reduction in the costs of teaching is regarded as an efficiency rather than a threat to the quality of provision, Wheelahan says.

Qualifications alone don’t fix shortages

As the report points out, there is no direct link between investment in specific skills and good labour market outcomes.

“Some employers use qualifications not to signal relevant knowledge and skills but to screen for employment potential; qualifications prepare high proportions of graduates for skilled work outside their educational field; qualifications have intrinsic educational value as well as generating cultural and social benefits; and education institutions contribute to their communities’ educational, social, cultural and economic development beyond educating skilled workers,” the TVET report says.

In any case, says Wheelahan, TVET students rarely invest in a course because of an expected rate of return. “They invest in things they want to do; they invest in a life for themselves. People don’t get up every morning and think ‘I’m going to go and invest and be part of a market today’. They go to work to support their families and also to make a meaningful contribution to their community or society.”

Qualifications should develop people’s knowledge and understanding to be citizens in their field, she says.

This broader view of vocational education was a hallmark of the TAFE system until the 1980s when governments began introducing the markets-based strategy, embracing human capital theory and designating TAFE as just another provider in the market.

“So, we’ve lived with that for 30 years now and it clearly hasn’t worked,” says Wheelahan.

Putting social justice at the heart

It’s time for a revamp of TVET systems, says the report, to put to rest human capital theory and instead advance social justice.

After all, human capital theory does nothing for TVET institutions’ role in developing communities, occupations, industries and individuals.

Instead, this role would be properly facilitated using a ‘productive capabilities’ approach that helps to develop students’ capacity to understand and manage themselves and their environment; to contribute to their community and participate in the governance of their society; and to realise their goals through work they value.

The TVET report says capabilities depend on peoples’ agency in work, their freedom to choose what work they do and how they do it. They include the capability to develop a career, choose a job, and the way tasks are completed.

In addition, people need the knowledge and skill to choose the work they value.

“For example, people need to have the...
‘We want to change the world’

Global education unions have reaffirmed their defence of the vital role of teachers and education support personnel in education.

Almost 1200 delegates representing 32 million educators from more than 170 countries attended the recent Education International 8th World Congress in Bangkok and vowed to promote democracy, human and trade union rights, equity and social justice, and ensure the right to free, quality, public education for all.

Unions are the largest and most powerful democratic organisations globally, and perhaps the most viable force for social justice, Education International president and AEU federal secretary Susan Hopgood (pictured above), told delegates.

“Strong unions under inclusive leaderships send a message to our communities, our governments and very importantly, our opponents,” she said.

The Congress restated that access to education is a human right, education is a prerequisite for democratic citizenship, and education is essential to social justice.

Acknowledging that it was a “major task” to stand in the way of those who wanted to turn public education into a commodity, Hopgood said: “we’re up for it”.

“We want to change the world,” she said.

Vocational and Technical Education Caucus

The caucus once again highlighted the shared experiences of education professionals across the globe and across education sectors. The insidious effects of commercialisation and marketisation, as manifested in the further and higher education space, continue to serve as a ‘canary in the mineshaft’ for education generally.

The caucus brings together employees from higher and further education was opened by former Education International (EI) General Secretary Fred van Leeuwen. He illustrated the global situation for higher education through the case of the University of Groningen, which opened a campus in China illegally using taxpayers’ money and had to pull back when this came out in public. Van Leeuwen underscored the role of education, research and of the education profession as pillars that protect democracies, and regretted that not only privatisation and market forces were threatening universities, but the far right and authoritarian forces who are also attacking academics and institutions worldwide in countries such as Italy, Hungary, Philippines and Brazil.

Sham Riggs (NTEU, New Zealand) discussed the situation in the Asia-Pacific region. She described how neoliberal policies were being rolled back at the national level but highlighted that within institutions, market thinking was still dominant. This trend is also noticeable among education personnel – a reaction that according to Riggs derives from the fact that they “have been working under a neoliberal way of thinking for so long”. She regretted that in both higher education as well as in technical and further...
education (TAFE), education personnel suffer from precarious working conditions and put forward her union’s demand that public money should go to the provision of public education. Without this the situation was likely to deepen the work insecurity and overwork of teachers, both of which take a big toll on their lives.

Other problems that were highlighted were the lack of academic freedom in many places, and the marketisation and privatisation of education, which are common threats in the region.

Rob Copeland (UCU, UK) focused on the European region and highlighted some issues that were affecting the higher education institutions of the continent:

1. Inadequate levels of funding and financing and inappropriate forms thereof.
2. Political authoritarianism, which is undermining academic freedom especially in the case of subjects such as gender studies.
3. The low status of teachers and the little recognition of their role in the shaping of their students’ success.
4. A strong focus on performance-based funding.
5. The casualisation of employment.
6. A decline in collective bargaining and social dialogue at the national level and within institutions, pushed for by employer organisations that aim to narrow the scope of workers’ voice.

He explained how collective bargaining and social dialogue systems in Europe were suffering and quite narrow in the education field and identified worrying trends such as the continuous erosion of salaries, the attacks on pension rights and the failure to address the issue of fixed-term employment. Copeland invited participants to reflect on two big future questions: how unions can represent an increasingly diverse workforce in education and how they can respond to the growth of high-stakes performativity in schools, and a result of job-intensification, a climate of work insecurity.

LGBTI rights in global spotlight

Support for LGBTI teachers and students will be boosted following a vote by educators from around the world.

The Education International World Congress agreed to actively support LGBTI campaigning organisations in securing equal rights for LGBTI people; take action to ensure that all teaching curricula are LGBTI-inclusive; and to support member unions to provide information support and training to challenge homophobia, biphobia and transphobia.

LGBTI discrimination, victimisation and hatred has a profound, lifelong and adverse impact on the mental health, well-being, careers and life chances of teachers and students.

The fight to improve mental health among teachers

Lack of investment in educators and adverse management practices in schools are major causes of mental health issues among teachers, a meeting of global education unions has heard.

Delegates attending Education International’s recent World Congress voted to take action aimed at reducing the incidence of mental health issues among teachers.

The mental health and wellbeing of teachers has been affected adversely as a result of job-intensification, a climate of high-stakes performance and increasing precariousness of employment and working conditions, a Congress resolution noted.

Poor working conditions, excessive workload demands and other adverse management practices are also having an effect on teachers’ morale and job satisfaction.

“Evidence confirms an increased incidence of depression, anxiety and teacher suicide exacerbated by poor/adverse management practices and the lack of support for teachers,” the resolution said.

Quality teaching and learning can only be delivered by healthy educators, said Thirona Moodley from the National Professional Teachers’ Organisation of South Africa, where high numbers of teachers are on leave due to anxiety and depression-related disorders.

“Teaching is an emotionally-charged job. What makes emotional labour gratifying rather than burdensome is a functioning care system. We must never compromise the health of our teachers,” Moodley said.

In Australia, a 2017 AEU Victoria study found that TAFE teachers were working on average 6.8 hours of unpaid overtime per week. Teachers reported significant concern about high teaching workloads and excessive administrative duties. Other key concerns included lack of job security and low levels of pay.

“A five day week is now taught over four days. There are few resources to support the teaching load, which means teachers have to start from scratch with their own materials. There is no money for curriculum support,” said one survey respondent.

Meredith Peace speaks in support of Securing LGBTI Rights Resolution at Congress, “We must continue to raise awareness to ensure that both students and staff are able to be who they are without fear or discrimination or harassment.”
Building change for young people

Faced with a government that pledges to create ‘jobs and growth’ but doesn’t have a national strategy to tackle rising youth unemployment, the National Youth Commission has stepped up to run their own national inquiry.

Today’s young Australians are in danger of being the first generation in recent history to have lower living standards than their parents. While being accused of wasting their money on smashed avocado breakfasts, in reality they are hampered by an industrial relations system that sets lower rates of pay for younger people, the dominance of precarious work and a government that continues to cut penalty rates.

In addition, they face wage stagnation, rising underemployment and a youth unemployment rate that continues to hover around 12.5 per cent, more than twice the national rate.

The National Youth Commission Inquiry into Youth Employment and Transitions aims to inject fresh thinking into the creation of policy to tackle the challenges faced by young people preparing for and seeking work now and into the future. It is an independent, non-partisan grassroots inquiry that is seeking the expertise and lived experience of young people, educators, employers and communities to help create innovative policy solutions. The Commission is holding hearings around the country and will release a report in July 2020. As a strong public TAFE sector is an absolute necessity if we are to ensure that young people are able to access high quality qualifications leading to good jobs, the AEU has engaged with the Commission in multiple ways.

National TAFE Council Executive member, Simon Bailey presented at the hearing in Tasmania which has the highest youth unemployment rate in Australia at 36%. Mr. Bailey called for proper funding for TAFE programs that met
the needs of students, industries and communities as a key driver of a future reform agenda. He pointed to evidence of a reduction of the number of pathway / CERT II programs across the state due to either a lack of staff to deliver the programs or because the programs had been moved to other locations.

His examples included:

• 120 people wanting to do the construction CERT II (pre-employment) in Hobart however as the teachers were reduced from two to one most of these students had to be turned away.

• Construction & Allied Trades no longer offering a Cert II in Plastering, Bricklaying, Tiling, Painting & Glazing (pre-employment).

• Certificate II in Electrotechnology (pre-employment) no longer being offered in the North or North West even though there are teachers available to deliver the course. In addition, the south of the state is turning away students due to not having any capacity to meet demand.

• At Burnie / Devonport TAFE there were a number of courses which did not commence at the beginning of the year:
  Certificate II in Engineering Pathways (pre-employment)
  Certificate II in Plumbing (pre-employment)
  Certificate II in Hospitality (Housekeeping)
  Certificate II in Automotive (pre-employment)
  Certificate II Information Technology course

Mr Bailey said at the hearing “It is hard to understand that, when we have growth in the building, hospitality, tourism and agricultural sectors and high youth unemployment rate why these pathway programs are not being offered. The logic behind the reduction in programs seems to be linked to a lack of foresight and planning which has meant that in many cases there are no teachers to run the courses as well as a lack of funding required to deliver the programs in the first place.

“TAFE needs to be recognised as a public provider of VET education and not a business which is expected to provide programs based on financial viability rather than student outcomes. Unless the TAFE sector gets the support required to
run these programs we will not see the educational outcomes of our youth improved nor our communities and industry prosper.”

Thanks to Mr Bailey’s presentation and similar evidence provided by other stakeholders, education and training has now become the Inquiry’s central concern.

Building the case for change in the Fourth Industrial Revolution

The National Youth Commission was invited to attend the last meeting of the National TAFE Council Executive to deepen their evidence gathering. The executive advocated for the central role that TAFE could play in successful youth transitions and employment and explained that when TAFE is diminished so are opportunities for young people. Without action soon, Australia’s youth risk being left further behind as the fourth industrial revolution takes hold and we see an increasing reliance on emerging technologies including artificial intelligence and robotics to fulfil jobs.

The meeting followed the release of the Government’s Vocational Education and Training Review led by Stephen Joyce which was commissioned to ensure that more young people have the real-life skills to match the changes to our rapidly changing economy — the same remit as the Inquiry being undertaken by the National Youth Commission. Yet, the Government’s review not only omitted to mention TAFE, but it also didn’t include the voices of any young people, further highlighting the urgency of an independent inquiry.

Mental health issues were also discussed at the National TAFE Council Executive meeting, with the executive building a case for change for access to mental health support for both teachers and students. The Council outlined that a higher number of students are now presenting with mental health issues and noted the increased risk of suicide, particularly amongst apprentices, with students from regional and rural areas more likely to suffer than those in the city.

Mental health issues significantly affect a student’s short-term and long term success and students who face the most disadvantage are most likely to need mental health support, yet are least likely to receive it.

Federal TAFE Secretary, Maxine Sharkey spoke for the students who are falling through the gaps explaining that “as public educators, TAFE teachers take on pastoral care responsibilities in addition to their workload while trainers in private training organisations don’t see it as part of their remit, however this increased practical and emotional support can often be the vital extra help that young people who are struggling need to make successful transitions”.

The National Youth Commission Inquiry is accepting submissions until 30 November — see https://nycinquiry.org.au/. The National TAFE Executive urge members to make individual submissions.
Tara Rohl works for TAFE Qld Online and teaches Human Relations

TAFE Queensland Online teachers face increasing workloads on multiple fronts. Firstly our students expect 24/7 assistance and we have students 52 weeks a year. With no backfilling when we take recreation leave, it is up to other teachers in the team to cover the work as well as their own. Students ring and email, needing support 7 days a week, meaning that many teachers work well beyond ‘standard hours’. Many of our students work full-time, so we can only run online classes after hours.

Secondly the increase in administration and compliance tasks means that we are working longer and longer hours.

Working purely in the online space is difficult as TQ has not as yet developed a valid method for determining what an appropriate workload is for an online teacher. So what this means is that teachers work increasingly long hours because in the end we are all committed to our students’ success and don’t want to see them suffer because of our workload issues.

We currently have a project going to collect valid and objective evidence which will provide the basis for determining the workload allocation for online teachers. But at the moment we just continue working longer hours.

Geoff Westmore is an electrical teacher at Bendigo Kangan Institute, VIC

MY NUMBER one work issue is expectation – expectation that you will teach between 28 and 38 hours a week because of your loyalty to your students.

Expectation that you don’t need time to plan or prepare for classes.

Expectation that you will come in and result your students when you are not required on campus.

And the expectation that you will teach well above the hours in the agreement and not complain.

To deal with it, initially you do put your students and workload ahead of your own health and wellbeing and own progression, then you get smart and you work with your colleagues and the union to push back, to work within the conditions of the agreement and fight for fairness.
Ben Wright. Teacher of Construction & Allied Trades, TasTAFE

For the teachers in the construction area in Tassie the biggest issue with work load is working in mixed mode, and the increase in administration duties and the paperwork to remain compliant.

We are finding now that when we complete our daily face to face delivery that the time we used to have in our DOTT to catch up with apprentices who may be struggling, to touch up resources, to research and find new information is becoming swallowed up by managing a portfolio of apprentices who are assessed on the job.

There is no new data on how long and what it takes to fully assess a unit on the job, which usually means that the portfolio is too big.

This means that teachers are relying on other forms of evidence to determine competency such as MyProfiling and Supervisor testimonials to sign off on rather than observations by the teacher on the job.

Elizabeth Ingram, HT Early Childhood Education and Care Tamworth TAFE, NSW

My biggest workflow issue relates to the introduction of the new Electronic Business System (EBS), particularly having to do things over and over again as the processes keep changing. This is made more frustrating by the ongoing issues in e-checklist.

The burden of these escalating admin tasks is enormous and whilst I am lucky to have an Education Administrative Support I am still feeling over-whelmed. It is hard to know what to focus on as the goal posts are constantly changing.

Admin tasks take away from RD time when I should be focusing on quality teaching for students, mentoring and ensuring the quality teaching of staff. They come on top of having to travel across locations and teach 10 or 14 hours a week.

I would invite anyone to ‘spend a day in my shoes’ or sit with me to see that this system is broken. Until then I’ll continue to be the ‘squeaky wheel’!
DR JOHN PARDY

These accountabilities and their associated hazards received widespread media attention when the predatory practices of the privatised training market were revealed. The TVET policy architecture that federal governments have initiated and implemented over the past decades has been imagined narrowly in wholly financial terms resulting in policy solutions focused on income contingent loans programs such as VET FEE HELP and, since 2017, VET Student Loans.

The VET FEE HELP scheme is one of the biggest policy scandals in recent government history. With no caps on tuition fees, the scheme blew out from millions to billions of dollars of taxpayer money within three years.

This policy failure was compounded by funding policy solutions centred on apprenticeships and employer subsidies, and by allowing private providers to gain unregulated access to government subsidies for enrolling students.

These out of control federal policies caught thousands of students in a web of student debt and very poor quality technical and vocational education with limited employment outcomes.

Reorienting TVET provision

The billions of dollars of taxpayer funds distributed to private TVET providers at the expense of TAFE institutions reoriented TVET provision in favour of the private sector. VET FEE HELP benefited private technical and vocational organisations by increasing their share of government contributions and directly resulted in a reduction in funding to TAFE. This was not just to the detriment of students both financially and educationally, it undermined TAFE as a key education institution in the national education systems of Australia.

Federal governments have a key responsibility in funding TVET and providing the conditions for national policy agreement about how the sector can work. The challenge for TVET in Australia is not to implement a new or reinvented national system, built upon a sentiment that TAFE and universities need to be seen as equal. It is more pressing that any new policy changes interrupt the derision and erosion of the foundational public TVET institution – TAFE – as occurred through the last waves of ‘VET reform’.

The status of TAFE needs to be elevated to redress the current lop-sided nature of Australian education where the track from school to university is widely considered the principal measure of educational success. Its dominance exacerbated by the expansion of Higher Education provision through the uncapping of student places.

Future policy arrangements

The first national review of the vocational education sector in forty years, the ‘Joyce Review,’ was conducted in an exceedingly quick timeframe by the former New Zealand Minister of Tertiary Education, Skills and Employment, Stephen Joyce. It represents the latest policy
chapter in the Abbott, Turnbull and now Morrison federal coalition policy changes to TVET.

In line with one of the recommended early actions of the Joyce Review, the Morrison Coalition government is establishing a National Skills Commission and National Skills Commissioner at a cost of $48.3 million to ‘determine and implement priorities for the VET sector’. There will also be a National Careers Ambassador scheme, a National Careers Institute and new Skills Organisations. In effect, the National Skills Commission will likely shape the policy and funding agreements between states and federal governments.

At the recent Council of Australian Governments (COAG), State Ministers were sent away to consider a future policy arrangement for TVET. An expert group was established to assure this, with Mr Stephen Joyce as Chair, along with TVET policy operative Professor Peter Noonan from Victoria University’s Mitchell Institute, and Dr Vanessa Guthrie, former chair of the Mineral Council of Australia. Together they will advise the federal government on the future directions of the reform.

Securing consistency in intergovernmental arrangements will be an important goal for the new Skills Commission to redress the imbalance between TAFE and university options. Federal government funding and resourcing of Vocational Education and Training represents an important share in resourcing the national skills systems. The majority of funding for TVET, and TAFE more particularly, comes from State governments.

That state governments own and operate TAFE systems, is not dissimilar to their provision of school education. And like school education, TAFE relies on Federal government funding to succeed.

The conundrum for TVET and for TAFE more specifically is that there continues to be a lack of appreciation or regard for the important role of TVET and the significance and value of TAFE as a public institution for skills education. Agreement by the two levels of government about the future
of TVET, cannot proceed without an understanding of the institutional importance of State TAFE institutions and colleges. The distribution of government (both federal and state contributions) funds between government-owned TAFE institutions and private training institutions needs to be front and centre of any new national agreements between the two levels of government.

While no definite reform path has yet been fleshed out and determined, what is clear is that any redirection in policy is often incremental and always slow. The consequences of this for vocational education — a key policy area for enhancing productivity and job growth — will result in untapped talent, so important to Australia’s continuing prosperity, remaining unutilized.

**Balancing Industry Intervention**

Any reforms, through the establishment of the National Skills Commission, must not repeat policy misadventures from the past. The sector has suffered through too many waves of policy “fixes”.

It is interesting to note that since the election of the Morrison Government, federal policy responsibility has moved from the Department of Education to the charge of Minister Michaela Cash and the Department of Employment, Small Business and Skills, Quality and Industry. It’s a clear signal of the direction of TVET in Morrison’s Australia, yet TVET is more than an economic experience; it is educational. A fact often overlooked by governments and industry.

TAFE’s core relationship with industry makes it different from any other form of education. Apprenticeship education is the most recognised form of this and it is a speciality of TAFE learning. However, an overreliance on industry advisory arrangements resulted out of the policy reforms of the 1990s, where industry training boards, and skills organisations advised on employer needs in terms of course content in training packages. This resulted in the focus on development of rigid national qualifications, designed in large part by industry rather than education providers, which fulfilled only the narrow and specific needs of individual employers.

It is important that, going forward with the Joyce Review inspired reforms, the quality of education offered is done with an appreciation of the value and intricacies of technical and vocational teaching and learning. Rather than repeating tired industry advisory arrangements and market logics from the policies of the 1990s, it is time that TVET policy moved toward industry having responsibility and commitment to offering opportunities for structured workplace learning for TAFE students. A national partnership agreement between states and the federal government could deliver on this, by funding states to engage employers to offer this in partnership with TAFE. Rather than criticising TVET quality from the sidelines, industry can be brought into TVET as a partner that offers more than advice, but provides opportunities for TVET students to gain real employment-based experiences.

Australia is experiencing an infrastructure boom due to rapid population growth making skills and labour planning more important to nation development than ever before. TAFE’s role as an integral institution for producing the labour and skills needed for a changing society and economy must not be overlooked. However, any national agreement going forward cannot afford to operate through an ideological policy imaginary that blurs the real tasks of being employed with building national infrastructure projects to stimulate employment growth. It is not just about finances and markets, it is about jobs and the wherewithal to do them in a rapidly changing twenty-first century that is reconfiguring our patterns of production of trade, knowledge transfer and cultural development.

We live in a time when social institutions, not excluding the national parliament, are being looked upon by the public with increasing distrust and concern. Maintaining public trust in key institutions depends on adequate and accountable funding, but more importantly is achieved and guaranteed by a clarity about their key roles and articulating policy principles that has a vision for TVET that goes beyond the “market question” to consider the uses and purposes of TVET for the national labour and skills base.

It is important for young people locked out of productive work, and for those facing employment insecurity that TAFE exists to provide real solutions to real needs. On this point it is more pressing than ever that any future policy reforms of TVET do not proceed with national funding agreements that undermine the key institutions of TAFE. Why state governments sign up to funding principles and agreements that erode and diminish TAFE is hard to decipher, what is clear now to the public is that it is unacceptable.
Scott Morrison used every opportunity to declare “TAFE is as good as uni” in August before the first meeting of the Council of Australian Governments following the election. He promised that vocational education reform was top of the agenda and that he would transform the sector to address Australia’s critical shortfall of skilled workers.

He declared:

“TAFE is as good as uni. Vocational education is as good as uni, and I’ve got to say some of the people that I’ve met who have been most successful in business, they’ve done it out of a trade and technical qualification”.

Yet, predictably, when the communique detailing the outcomes of the meeting was published, there was no mention of TAFE.

CORRENA HAYTHORPE, AEU PRESIDENT

JUST like the Federal Budget where again TAFE was not mentioned. It is clear that when the Prime Minister talks about vocational education he is talking about private sector provision. After all, if he really believed that TAFE is as good as university, why would he have stripped $3 billion in funding from TAFE – our world class public education provider?

Envy of the World

Australia’s TAFE System was once the envy of the world. It gave millions of Australians the skills they needed to thrive, and as a public institution, it provided education in non-profitable rural communities and regional Australia. It was a lifeline for those seeking employment for the first time, those who missed opportunities at school and sought a second chance at education as well as those seeking retraining and further education throughout their lives.

The Morrison Government’s obsession with private vocational education providers at the expense of TAFE is already hurting the career prospects and livelihoods of Australians who are not able to access affordable and high-quality vocational education. It has left hundreds of thousands of trainees and apprentices around the country at the mercy of private training companies.

Putting profit-seeking private training providers in charge of vocational education is all about helping big business line its pockets at the expense of working Australians. History has already shown us, through the VET FEE HELP debacle, that private training providers will go into a feeding frenzy in their drive to extract profits from students.

Even the government’s own regulator, The Australian Skills Quality Authority, said that parts of the training market are already in a race to the bottom. While the Productivity Commission recently described our TVET system as ‘a mess and struggling to deliver relevant competency-based qualifications sought by industry.’

There is no denying that it is a mess. But it is a mess of the Government’s own making. We are now facing a critical skills shortage, with 140,000 fewer apprentices learning their trade today than back in 2013 when the Government was first elected. Also, since then, the number of students in government-funded vocational education has fallen by 25% from 1.48 million to 1.1 million. In addition, the number of hours of vocational education delivered has fallen by 28% between 2013 and 2018 all according to the latest National Centre for Vocational Education Research figures.

Urgent need for TAFE

We have a perfect storm of a lack of apprentices, a youth unemployment rate that is twice that of the national rate and a national skills shortage where businesses are desperate to find Australians with the skills they need.

The Australian Government’s own ‘Jobs Outlook’ predicts that there will be 866,000 jobs to fill by 2023 and the top industries for jobs growth over those four years will be health care and social assistance, construction, education and training, scientific and technical services. Almost two in every three jobs created will come from those four industries and most will require TVET qualifications.

In fact, The Grattan Institute’s latest report into education found that vocational education in construction, engineering and commerce “typically lead to higher incomes than many low-ATAR university graduates are likely to earn”, making it
There is a clear and urgent need to re-establish TAFE as the strong public provider of vocational education. Yet, the Morrison Government remains unconcerned about the 25% fall in enrolments or the TAFE campus closures on its watch, or the job losses that have gutted the TAFE sector and have impacted not only students, but the remaining staff and teachers who are left to pick up the workload. In Victoria, 44% of the TAFE workforce has been sacked in recent years. In NSW, it is 35% and in Queensland, 25% have lost their jobs. This represents an irreplaceable loss of knowledge and expertise to the system and further exacerbates the crisis in the sector. But still the Morrison Government refuses to acknowledge the existence of TAFE, let alone do anything about the crisis.

Despite the undisputed benefits that a fully funded high-quality TAFE sector could provide to our society and economy, there has been a concerted and continual drive to marginalise TAFE by defunding it. It took years for the government to admit that through poor policy design, private companies were rorting the system and stealing taxpayer money. However, instead of reigning in private providers and rectifying the damage they have done to the sector in the past, Morrison plans on handing them the keys to the bank.

The Commonwealth and the states and territories must put the interests of students first and acknowledge the damage that the push for privatisation has inflicted on TAFE. Yet As Federal TAFE Secretary Maxine Sharkey said: ‘The private sector’s idea of VET competition is to drive down costs and drive TAFE out of business. Then it can jack up its prices and force students to pay through the nose’.

National Skills Week held in the last week of August saw the Minister for Employment, Skills, Small and Family Business, Michaelia Cash celebrating TVET as a chance to recognise the value of apprentices and trainees across Australia as well as to raise the status of practical and vocational learning. But it is hard to celebrate without considering the current plight of TAFE.
Urgent need for funding

An injection of funding is the answer. Yet, of the $525 million allocated in the budget for skills, only $70 million is new money. The rest is the money that was not spent on the Skilling Australians fund.

TAFE must remain the strong public institution of vocational education in Australia. If the Prime Minister really wants TAFE to be “as good as uni” then his government will need to heed our calls, as outlined in the AEU TAFE Manifesto to:

• Guarantee a minimum of 70% government funding to the public TAFE system. In addition, no public funding should go to private for-profit providers, consistent with other education sectors.
• Restore funding and rebuild the TAFE system, to restore confidence in the quality of the courses and qualifications and the institution.
• Abandon the failed student loans experiment, and cancel the debts of all students caught up in private for-profit provider scams.
• Re-invest in the TAFE teaching workforce and develop a future-focused TAFE workforce development strategy in collaboration with the profession and unions.
• Develop a capital investment strategy in consultation with state governments, to address the deplorable state of TAFE facilities around the country.
• Support a comprehensive independent inquiry into TAFE. Any proposals that undermine the importance of Commonwealth and state and territory governments working together to build a strong and vibrant, fully funded public TAFE will continue to be fiercely opposed by the AEU.

Act now

There are some easy ways you can get involved and help the Stop TAFE Cuts campaign. Go to http://stoptafecuts.com.au/act-now and download resources.
HAVE YOUR SAY! State of TAFE survey returns

In October/November this year, all AEU members working in TAFE will be emailed a link to complete the 2019 State of TAFE survey.

The survey is an opportunity to share your experience and to help shape our policies and campaigns by providing your views on all aspects of working in TAFE, including workload and working conditions, pay, administrative burden, resourcing and hours shaving, professional development and autonomy, third party providers, regulatory compliance and the many other issues that confront the TAFE sector today.

All members are urged to complete the survey and to encourage colleagues to complete it too. The results will help us to develop our future TAFE campaigns and a report will be available to all members in early 2020.
How good is choice in the VET market? ‘Not very’ says big data.

This article recaps the results obtained by using large data sets to identify the consequences of the singular focus on choice of provider that has been built into governments’ creation of contestable markets for VET delivery. Links to fully-referenced papers containing more information on the method and detailed results are provided below.

PROPONENTS of marketisation and privatisation attribute competition with a generalised ability to increase quality, responsiveness, efficiency, access and produce more equitable outcomes. Large data sets generated through provider registration, Australian Business Numbers and the various VET collections held by the NCVER can be used to determine if these benefits have materialised by examining trends from before and after the widespread introduction of contestable VET markets in the two most populous states.

Geographic location, socio-economic status, training package enrolment, Indigenous status and type of provider are tracked. If the benefits attributed to provider choice in contestable markets have transpired, it is expected there will be more students studying in a wider range of occupations due to more equitable access to training organisations.

Nationally between 1998 and 2017 there were significant shifts in training provision with TAFE losing 54% of their 1.16 million students, community education providers experiencing a 71% decline to 68,200 students and other providers increasing by 314% to 475,000. In the same period the total number of government-funded students fell by 21.6% to just under 1.2 million while the total Australian population increased by 132% or nearly six million persons.

Training package enrolments

In 2004 84% of government-funded students were enrolled in the top 20 training packages nationally and this has progressively increased to 92.7% in 2017. Total VET Activity similarly reports the top 20 enrolments at 92.1%. VET FEE-HELP loans were even more concentrated with over half of all loans made for just six courses. The intended expansion of the range of occupations and qualifications as part of providing increased choice for students has not materialised nor is the VET market reflecting new occupations being created in the modern labour market. It is likely the explosion of private provision has been driven more by the qualifications that are profitable to deliver rather than those that meet local needs and preferences.

Geographic enrolment patterns in Victoria

In a 2009 national lead, the Victorian Training Guarantee explicitly promised residents of regional communities access to increased choice of training provision in their local communities. While student enrolments decreased in all
areas of the state between 2009 and 2017, due to cost blowouts, with reductions of 25.9% in major cities and 40.1% less in inner regional, the major impact was felt in outer regional areas (-61.1%) and remote areas (-80%). The further students were located from the major city region the greater was the reduction of access to training rather than the promised benefits of the market. The Victorian metropolitan concentration of VET provision was similar to the national figures that show a reduction of -20.6% in major cities progressively increasing to -52.3% in very remote areas.

Access and equity
At the national level the near doubling of the number of Indigenous students to 84,500 between 1998 and 2017 has been cited as a market success story in terms of equity. And the Victorian experience is similar with Indigenous student numbers increasing from 3,900 to 6,400 in the same period. However, a more plausible explanation of the change in the face of a huge decrease in the total numbers of government-funded students in the system is the long-term census data trend of increasing self-identification of Indigenous persons. This increase is most noticeable in the eastern states and is heavily concentrated in major cities and inner regional localities. It seems unlikely that the contestable market, on its own, has increased Indigenous participation in VET while reflecting the increased access in the metropolitan areas.

More broadly the Socio-Economic Indexes for Areas (SEIFA) produces an index of relative disadvantage that describes five groups ranging from quintile one (most disadvantaged) to quintile five (least disadvantaged). In the relatively mature VET market between 2013 and 2017, the national reduction of 136,100 students from quintiles one and two was significantly greater than the 91,100 less persons being trained in quintiles four and five. Quite simply, students in the most disadvantaged areas suffered a much greater loss of choice and access to training when compared to the most advantaged groups. Victoria mirrored this result with the most disadvantaged two quintiles losing 80,100 students against a reduction of 60,600 for the least disadvantaged quintiles.

Provider location
The Halsey review into regional, rural and remote education confirmed that state governments had withdrawn TAFE delivery in the non-metropolitan regions of the nation. Despite the expectation that increased choice of providers would materialise in regional areas, the reality is that providers have retreated to the cities. In late 2018, Victoria had 1014 RTOs headquartered in the state of which 889 (88%) were in the major city zone of Melbourne and Geelong. Only 15 (1.5%) were in the outer regions and none were located in remote Victoria. Of the 777 private, for-profit RTOs only 65 (8.3%) are located outside the major city area. Unless one lives in the metropolitan area or possibly one of the larger regional cities, the VET market is not offering the choice of provider that has been the foundation stone for marketised VET since the early 1990s.

New South Wales
It is commonly reported that New South Wales (NSW) purposely waited to introduce more privatisation into the VET market in order to learn from the Victorian experience and produce a better set of outcomes. The total number of government-funded students in NSW remained constant at around 450,000 after the introduction of contestability in the Smart and Skilled program. This is despite rapid population growth and the likely impact of funding skill sets rather than full qualifications. In terms of market share between 1998 to 2017, TAFE NSW moved from 84% to 62.4%, Adult and Community Education providers fell from 22.9% to 4.4% and other providers increased from 3.8% to 32.2%.

From 2004-2017, NSW VET delivery has been progressively shifted from remote and regional areas to the major cities and their nearby surrounds in line with the national trend. Smart and Skilled continued this trend with major cities and inner regions gaining 10,000 students (+8.7%) and the outer regions, remote and very remote losing 6,700 students (-8.7%) between 2013 and 2017. A 2015 NSW Legislative Council inquiry into VET reported that the committee received ‘compelling evidence’ that the contestable training market under Smart and Skilled was ‘not working for regional, rural and remote communities’; it somehow concluded that the ‘contestable training market will benefit all sectors in VET’.
Government-funded students in NSW are heavily concentrated (94.5%) in the top 20 training packages, mirroring total VET activity (93.6%). Indigenous student numbers have increased in a linear fashion from 1998 (13,300) to 2017 (36,900) reflecting the increase in self-identification in census reporting. While not as extreme as the national change, the pattern of shifting training from the most disadvantaged (-2,300) to the most advantaged quintiles (+ 2,700) is also evident between 2013-2017.

In February 2019, NSW had 1142 registered training organisations headquartered in the state. 98% were based in major cities and inner regional areas while none were located in remote or very remote areas. Out of 972 private, for-profit training providers, 91% were in major cities and inner regions and only 10 are in outer regional areas with none located in remote or very remote localities. Despite NSW using different timeframes and having evidence provided by Victoria’s marketisation, the introduction of user choice of provider in contestable VET markets produced a similar set of outcomes.

**Conclusion**

In terms of public policy several initial goals were achieved by the creation of contestable VET markets driven by the offer of Australian Government funding through national partnership agreements. There was a massive increase in the number of providers operating in the market, ostensibly increasing choice for students. There was an increase in efficiency as the cost per hour of delivery fell as did total public expenditure in the sector. However, these gains came at a substantial cost.

The results from big data sources show that the national pattern of reducing the notion of choice to the singular choice of provider in order to facilitate contestable markets for VET delivery has not met the range of expectations promised by advocates of user choice. Instead, not only have access and equity goals been seriously diminished, but an equally valid range of other choices have also been reduced or ignored. These include choice of career, occupation, quality, location of training, method of study, price, post-school study options and course of study. Local communities and employers have similarly had their choices reduced, or in several cases, removed altogether because public provision has been withdrawn and private RTOs did not set up in areas of socio-economic disadvantage or outside of major population centres. Unlike the expectations promised by the proponents of contestable markets, the VET system is producing a smaller number of qualified persons in an increasingly narrow range of occupations by reducing access and equity.

The full conference papers can be accessed from VOCEDplus: Student choice and lifelong learning: who you gonna call? http://hdl.voced.edu.au/10707/512116
Student choice and lifelong learning in NSW: minding gap between rhetoric and reality http://hdl.voced.edu.au/10707/511323
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MICHIELLE PURDY, TAFE PRESIDENT

MON all you TAFEies! Nominations for the Arthur Hamilton Award for Outstanding Contribution to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education 2019 are open again and it’s time we had another TAFE winner.

Over the last twenty years, since the name of the award changed, there has only been one TAFE winner. That just happens to be my own team – Aboriginal Training Programs, TAFE (TAS) back in 2008. My colleagues and I were thrilled to hear back from the AEU that we had won especially as we all knew Arthur Hamilton who was a Palawa man, educator and unionist from Hobart. He had long been a strong advocate and a lifelong contributor to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education in his own state and nationally.

I can remember the year the AEU annual Federal Conference was last held in Tasmania. Arthur and all of the delegates commemorated the AEU’s commitment to the right for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students to access a high quality public education by signing a huge Aboriginal flag (I recently found my own signature and other people I recognised) on the flag, which proudly hangs on the wall of the foyer in the AEU Federal office.

With nominations closing on Friday, 1 November, 2019 I encourage you to give this some serious consideration and then ACT! Everyone is busy but don’t let this opportunity pass you by. We need to hear more good TAFE stories and just think what has worked at your TAFE may just help a teacher at another TAFE find a way to improve educational outcomes for their own Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students.

There have been some brilliant winners from the school sector over the remaining 19 years but I am certain that there are individuals or teams at TAFE’s around the country who are making a real difference in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander vocational education, students lives and their communities. If this sounds like you, someone you work with or your team is doing exemplary work and they are AEU members why not tap them on the shoulder and suggest they nominate for this award.

There are four award criteria that can help you to determine if someone should be nominated. Our union is looking for one or a group of educators who are committed to providing high quality education to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students in one or more of these categories:

- a) Implementing a whole school/TAFE Institute approach to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education;
- b) Improving outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students;
- c) Improving the engagement of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander parents and members of the broader community in school decision-making processes; and
- d) Developing and implementing an innovative product or program relevant to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education.

Maybe your whole TAFE campus has significantly changed its approach to working with local communities or are actively enabling their TAFE teachers to engage with and find the best approach for providing vocational education to achieve improved outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples? Alternatively you or your teaching team may have developed a new strategy, product, program or partnership with a local community that has significantly improved recruitment and retention or has a high success rate and is leading to employment outcomes or meeting their community goals.

Am I eligible? If you or the group of people being nominated are financial members of an AEU Branch or Associated Body then you can be nominated for this award.

I can hear you asking what do I need to do to nominate? Just download the nomination form at aefederal.org.au/our-work/indigenous and get started. You can write and provide supporting information of up to five pages or if you prefer you can submit your presentation on video or DVD but make it no longer than 10 minutes. To see the 2018 winners and learn more check out the advert for the award opposite. If you win you will be flown to Melbourne to be presented with the award and a $1500 prize at the AEU’s annual Federal Conference in February 2020.

HAVE YOUR SAY

IN OCTOBER, the AEU will survey Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander members in order to better understand their perceptions and experiences of racism in the workplace.

Yalukit Wulungurr (the AEU’s Federal Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Committee) initiated the survey in response to the range and prevalence of these issues being raised by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander members. Whilst there are a number of studies outlining the experiences and impacts of racism on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, it is our belief that this will be the first national survey which focuses on the experiences of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people working in public schools, TAFEs and early childhood settings across the country.

All Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander members (who have identified with the union as such) will receive an email link to the survey during the week beginning 14 October. The survey closes on 8 November.

For more information contact the AEU’s Federal Aboriginal Education Officer, Darcel Russell, drussell@ aeufederal.org.au or the contact person for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education your Branch/Associated Body.
Recognising and rewarding

Nominations open for the

Arthur Hamilton Award

This is your chance to celebrate AEU members who are making an outstanding contribution to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education.

The Arthur Hamilton Award commemorates the achievements of Arthur Hamilton, a Palawa man who was active in promoting cross-cultural awareness, recognition of Indigenous peoples and the right for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students to access a high quality public education.

The winner will receive a $1500 prize and be flown to Melbourne to accept the Award at the AEU’s annual Federal Conference in February 2020.

All nominees will receive a certificate from the AEU.

Get nominating!

Download your nomination form at: aeufederal.org.au/our-work/indigenous or, request a nomination form from

Suzanne Lowndes: (03) 9693 1800 slowndes@aeufederal.org.au

CLOSING DATE FOR NOMINATIONS IS FRIDAY 1 NOVEMBER 2019

The 2018 Arthur Hamilton Award went to the Aboriginal Education Team at Briar Rd Public School.

The Award was presented by Correna Haythorpe, AEU Federal President (centre), to Jessica Scott (left) and Samantha Rangaiya (right) from the Aboriginal Education Team, at the 2019 AEU Federal Conference.
**NSW**

**PHILIP CHADWICK**

Morale amongst TAFE teachers in NSW is at the lowest point it has ever been, with many experienced teachers leaving the profession in despair. Anecdotal the numbers of teachers and senior educators accessing leave has sky rocketed, as they grapple with their decision to leave an organisation they once loved.

On top of the dysfunctional, but ever-growing ONE TAFE management structure and the onerous tasks of demonstrating vocational competency and currency as a part of the new ASQA requirements, TAFE teachers in NSW continue to grapple with the unworkable Electronic Business System foisted upon them in 2014.

The initial student administration and learning management system was implemented with the Department of Education in 2014-15 at a cost of $40.2 million. Previous managing directors and ministers declared it not fit for purpose, and announced it would be scrapped and replaced by a new student management system to be introduced in 2018-19 at an estimated cost of $89 million.

In the financial year 2015-16, TAFE NSW incurred approximately $10 million of extra direct costs to deal with issues in this flawed system and to establish integrity in TAFE financial data. In 2016-17 approximately $6 million and at least an extra 100 staff were required to deal with the issues with the flawed system. To date, there is no indication of when – or even if – the replacement system will be implemented.

The Auditor-General’s 2017 report highlighted that key problems with the system related to the accuracy and completeness of student revenues and came at a “great cost” to the organisation.

The union can only guess at how much more money has been thrown at propping up this flawed system and building its replacement, as successive budgets and annual reports have been rather opaque regarding this issue.

We can also only guess at where the additional cuts have been made to meet this ongoing cost. The upshot is that teachers have been dealing with the ongoing frustrations of systems that don’t work, for too long now.

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**QUEENSLAND**

**DAVID TERRAUDS**

QUEENSLAND Audit Office recently released a review of VET in the state. Entitled Investing in vocational education and training the Audit report found state funding increased but price per unit completion had dropped from $701 to $614 over the decade. This is problematic for public providers as private RTOs continue to undercut them through unfair pricing practices and by undercutting regulated completion times.

The audit found co-payment of fees by students provides cost recovery for RTOs, but some providers generally charge lower (some as low as $5) co-contribution fees than public providers do. Some other states make minimum co-contributions mandatory.

Both TAFE Queensland (TQ) and Central Queensland University (CQU) as public providers of VET were examined. TQ has increased student and employer satisfaction from 89.7% to 94.1% over four years, graduate employment has decreased slightly but this corresponds with national trends. Costs are escalating in an environment of declining student fee revenue.

CQU as the dual sector provider has similar issues as TQ and is running its VET operations at a loss, being funded at 46% through State Contribution Grant. Audit report findings clearly infer the urgent need to reform VET funding to guarantee 70% funding for public provision.

On the bargaining front TQ negotiations have continued and the QTU’s focus remained on:• Salary levels comparable to interstate• Decreasing casualisation and increasing permanency• Addressing workload intensification• Addressing gender employment inequity• Including Educational Team Leader and HE roles in industrial instruments.

QTU TAFE Division members in TQ voted overwhelmingly to take industrial action in support of their EB claims taking a two-hour stop work on 30 July and a subsequent 24-hour stoppage on 28 August.

TAFE QLD made an initial offer on 5 July which the QTU rejected. A revised offer was provided on 2 September addressing outstanding components of QTU claims. At the time of writing the QTU has put the revised offer to members with a recommendation from the QTU TAFE Executive to accept it.

QTU TAFE members thank their national colleagues for all messages of solidarity and support received.

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**VICTORIA**

**ELAINE GILLESPIE**

The AEU remains focused on ensuring that the new staff agreement is properly implemented in TAFE institutes, especially regarding workplans and managing teacher workload. We are still hearing of instances where teachers have been expected to teach for up to 1,350 hours. Anything above 800 hours is a breach of the agreement and we are in the process of using every avenue to bring those institutes into line.

Prior to commencing our negotiation for a new TAFE Teacher agreement five years ago, we surveyed our members to understand the key priorities that needed to be achieved in the agreement. Our members top priority was a manageable workload, which we achieved by the inclusion of compulsory workplans in the agreement. While the implementation of the workplans has not been without challenge, many teachers now have a workplan.

Unfortunately however, this is not the case for our teachers at Bendigo Kangan Institute (BKI).

We are working to resolve the significant problems caused by the actions of BKI management in regard to provisions in the TAFE Agreement, and are concerned that they have committed serious contraventions of the Fair Work Act as a consequence of the failure to implement the workplan provisions of the Victorian TAFE Teaching Staff Agreement 2018.

For the first time the AEU Vic Branch exercised the right of entry provisions of the Fair Work Act which enables union officials to attend workplaces to obtain relevant documents from the employer, on a TAFE Institute and if necessary, we will seek legal remedy to ensure BKI complies with the proper application of the agreement.

The second priority for our members was to have more secure employment, and for them not to go cap in hand each year to the employer and ask to be converted. The onus is now on the employer to assess, at least once a year, how many ongoing and contract positions are available and the number of employees eligible to convert and report this to the union. At the first reporting period for conversions in April, 660 employees were successful in achieving secure employment.

**Dual Sectors**

At the start of 2019, the Vic Branch were in negotiations with two dual sectors and preparing to attend the Fair Work Commission to dispute a non-union agreement with another. Through the collective work and commitment of our AEU representatives, elected leadership, organisers and industrial officers, we have achieved agreements with RMIT, Victoria University and Federation University which reflects the key benefits achieved for teachers in the standalone TAFEs.

**Free TAFE**

We welcomed the Victorian government’s investment of an additional $11.7 million in the TAFE system to help meet the demand created by the introduction of free courses. At the end of June, there were 25,000 enrolments in free courses. The AEU is now calling on government to make further significant investments to ensure we have enough fully qualified teachers to meet the increase in student numbers.

The 2019 Free TAFE list is especially focused on meeting the job and training needs of regional Victoria. We understand the department will be reviewing completions and provision at the end of each year to match industry demand and avoid flooding the market with graduates for jobs that don’t exist, as occurred under the former Liberal government’s privatisation agenda.
THE SA Liberal Government continues to seek budget savings in TAFE SA with the Department of Treasury & Finance extending the offer of Target Voluntary Separation Packages until the end of December. This is a major concern to the AEU with packages enticing staff to leave rather than targeting those positions that are being abolished. A number of casual staff have already been employed to cover the losses of those who accepted packages and left in July.

Reduction of staff in both teaching and administration areas has resulted in excessive workloads for those who remain with impacts on their wellbeing and work/life balance.

With TAFE SA signing an agreement to share their facilities with private providers, they now see themselves acting as landlords rather than deliverers of training. This is seen by members as a big step towards full privatisation of the VET system in this state.

The Employer and Government have still not responded to letters of intention to bargain since May this year. The Union is about to embark on an enterprise bargaining (EB) campaign to inform our members and build our strength in the workplace. It will launch on 11 September and will be themed around respect.

After the debacle of the failure of ASQA audits in 2108, the hard work to rectify the situation has paid off. TAFE SA achieved re-registration as an RTO for the first time. This is the maximum time that can be granted and a great show of trust in TAFE SA.

WESTERN AUSTRALIA

GARY HEDGER

NEGOTIATIONS for a replacement general agreement began on 14 August with the first meeting between the Union and the Department. It consisted of the Union detailing and explaining the contents of the log of claims which had previously been served on the Department.

The key components of the log of claims are:

- Wage increases of 2% or CPI whichever is greater in the first year followed by 2.5% or CPI whichever is greater in the 2nd year and 3% or CPI whichever is greater in the 3rd and final year
- The first grade of the salary scale be removed and the fourth increment bar be removed
- Quotas for principle lecturer positions to be increased
- Academic leadership positions and classifications to receive increments
- A JDF be developed and included in the agreement for current positions created in colleges for course co-ordinators and course custodians with agreed time release and leadership level pay
- Improved consultation provisions to be extended and that the status quo be maintained until the employer and the Union agree that all matters have been agreed
- Increased job security where any lecturing position that is continuous over two semesters and is to continue be defined as a permanent position
- Explicit provision for reduction of teaching hours for Union and OHS representatives.

To support our log of claims the union is running a work intensification survey to all lecturing staff to gain feedback on how the workload of a lecturer has changed over the last three years.

Whist all this is occurring the union is still fighting with the colleges to have staff who have been working for up to 10 years plus as casuals and contract lecturers to be made permanent.

This matter is causing a great level of angst and stress to the lecturers who despite years of service to TAFE are not being treated with respect and made permanent as per the government’s instructions.

ACT

KAREN NOBLE

“We’ll always keep CIT in public hands” stated Rachel Stephen-Smith MLA recently while attending a Canberra Institute of Technology (CIT) student celebration. Rachel’s portfolios include: Health, Urban Renewal, Childrens, Youth, Families and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs while our Chief Minister, Andrew Barr has responsibility for CIT. We hope all of the ACT Government support this position and work, not only to keep CIT in public hands, but for its strengthening, expansion and increased value to the ACT region and beyond. It is encouraging that Rachel acknowledges the essential role of CIT for all her constituents and portfolios.

Currently, Departments are working on future plans and funding bids amidst uncertain agendas— are we planning for growth or constraint? Daily experience is of constraint triggering heavy workloads. The future planning activities are challenging.

Our EA is rolling out with ACT AEU providing Fact Sheets on matters such as: weekend work, flexibility and pooling of teacher workload. Future work will promote the use of ‘Riskman’ especially for reporting of psychological injury. Workplace distress is well known but generally underreported. Riskman is the key tool for triggering a response and data gathering.

Impact of the Training and Evaluation (TAE) upgrade is varied. Some experienced teachers are not working due to delays in processing their upgrade. Some new, keen but less experienced teachers are working under supervision while completing the TAE. And, new teachers are hard to attract as completion of the TAE is not a motivator. For a range of reasons CIT has lost some highly valued and experienced teachers and leaders in recent times. This travesty results in the loss of highly skilled educators who held extensive experience and knowledge of the Organisation, Community and Industries. Valuing all staff is consistent with CIT’s Cultural Traits and needs to be a higher priority.

TASMANIA

SIMON BAILEY

THE Executive and Council have found it quite frustrating that the EBA negotiations were sidelined by the government’s negotiation antics. AEU negotiators went three months without being able to meet with TasTAFE negotiators. Then, at the last minute, the government offered the following 12 month wage offer: 2.1% salary increase back dated to the last wage increase as well as one of payment equivalent or .05% of those on Band 1 and Level 1 to Band 1 Level 8 inclusive to be paid as a lump sum on the date of registration.

The agreement that members voted on only covers the wage component for less than a 12 month period. We are currently negotiating for a further agreement which covers both wages and conditions.

TasTAFE negotiators want to progress the remaining matters so that members are provided relief from workload stress and a pathway to higher educational qualifications.

TasTAFE achieved re-registration for the maximum period of seven years. However TasTAFE still refuses to release the ASQA report. We understand that ASQA threatened to suspend all delivery of the CERT III Electrotechnology program due to the organisation not having enough staff to deliver the program. The AEU has raised this issue numerous times and also worked with the CEPU to pressure the organisation to employ more teaching staff. TasTAFE was given a last minute reprieve due to them having finally recruited new teachers into the organisation. TasTAFE also received a written direction which was related to the Diploma of Leadership and Management and two other courses.

Wage theft is being talked about a lot in the media and union circles. Unfortunately AEU members are facing the same issues. From not being paid overtime or meal allowances to being started on the lowest salary scale with a refusal to review the starting wage, our members are being subjected to it all. The AEU has taken on these issues by representing members at the Tasmanian Industrial Commission. Approximately $50,000 has been recovered for members this year and we currently have another seven members who are being assisted to make overtime claims, which one dates back over five years. This is why everyone needs to be a union member and I implore all members to have a conversation with non-members about the importance of being a AEU members.
STOP TAFFECUTS.com.au

HELP GROW THE CAMPAIGN

SIGN UP A FRIEND

www.StopTAFEcuts.com.au