"The structural inequality stemming from the changes to TAFE have already deepened the divide between the haves and the have nots."

-Michelle, NSW

"The quality work done by TAFE is being destroyed by government cuts. This will impact the futures of the younger generation. Isn’t this very short sighted?"

-Wendy, Victoria

"A well built house, a nice coffee before work, and a cold beer after work. These are some of the basics that many Australians enjoy on a daily basis, made possible through a well resourced TAFE with qualified teachers. Take away TAFE and you will get lower quality housing, bland coffee, flat beer and fewer employment and career opportunities. TAFE is and should remain at the centre of our nation building strategy."

-Mark, NSW

"A public owned and operated TAFE is what Australia needs. It’s not for profit, it provides quality training, has good resources and has set checks and balances that private providers don’t have. TAFE needs to be supported by our government so it can support our young (and older) people into work."

-Colleen, WA

"Our governments should not be making it more difficult for our children to achieve a qualification. Re-institute proper funding to TAFE and make course fees reasonable!"

- Melinda, Queensland

"Education is a public good and not compatible with a "for profit" system."

-Trevor, SA
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FROM THE PRESIDENT

Preparations for this issue took place against the backdrop of the Federal Budget.

Our 2017 Federal Budget Wrap-Up takes a closer look at the disappointing policy agenda and funding cuts from the Turnbull Government. In brighter news, we look at the ALP’s TAFE funding pledge in ALP guarantees at least 2/3 funding to TAFE – Stop TAFE Cuts campaign must continue. The budget analysis doesn’t end there as Anne Jones tackles the changes to sub-bachelor programs in the Higher Education Reform package in her piece Seismic changes in TAFE. We also take a look at the government’s PaTH scheme and recent cuts to the Adult Migrant English Program in TAFEs.

This edition we also look forward, and consider potential public policy for the sector in the future. In The Future of the TAFE System John Spierings makes the case “for the inherent virtues of comprehensive public education models that meet individual, community and industry needs.” Valerie Braithwaite heads back to her hometown of Ipswich in TAFE gives people identity and communities new hope: Competencies are only part of the story and argues that “the value of TAFEs lies in how their communities see them and use them, in the relationships that they forge and the opportunities they create for members of their communities. Andrew Trounson in Narrow Training Sells Students Short looks to Leesa Wheelahan’s recent work and speaking tour in Australia and her analysis of market failure in VET and the need to invest in TAFE.

We also share two student focused stories. A vital part of the recovery process focuses on TASTAFE Special Achievement Award winner Deb Gyles, her recovery from drug addiction and success at TAFE. In TAFE cuts: through the eyes of a family Cathryn Fisher writes about the devastating impact of her local TAFE’s campus closure on her son, and how re-enrolling at a different campus proved to not only be beneficial to his health, but the pathway to a dream apprenticeship. We love to share these stories that get to the heart of what TAFE is about for so many — an opportunity to learn and succeed. As Cathryn says in her piece “I want to thank and acknowledge TAFE teachers for their absolute dedication to your students, particularly in light of such a rocky and uncertain time facing cuts and closures.”

We want to thank TAFE teachers, and encourage you all to celebrate the achievements of our TAFE system. This issue of The Australian TAFE Teacher magazine coincides with National TAFE Day — Tuesday 13 June. National TAFE Day is a chance to reflect on our collective achievements, and to celebrate the successes of TAFE. It’s also a day to take action. Our article on page 6 provides some quick and easy suggestions to get involved in the Stop TAFE Cuts campaign on National TAFE Day.
The announcement follows a commitment by the NSW ALP before the last state election that a minimum 70% government funding would go to NSW TAFE, and a commitment by ACT Labor in 2016 that 70 per cent of territory funding would be reserved for TAFE.

The significance of the announcement is far reaching, and it is a testament to members and supporters of the Stop TAFE Cuts campaign around the country.

The key message which comes from the funding guarantee is that the campaign to rebuild and restore TAFE is only just beginning – but that there is now a real prospect of rebuilding TAFE after close to a decade of “reforms” which have left TAFE devastated, and which have significantly damaged the reputation of the whole vocational education sector.

To be clear, the announcement by the ALP is a clear acknowledgement that market models of organisation do not work in education, and that significant work now needs to be done to restore TAFE across the country.

In the last ten years, funding for TAFE and vocational education has been cut by more than 24%. Enrolments in TAFE and in vocational education have collapsed – so much so, that in 2015, there were fewer students in TAFE than there were in 1995. In 1995 there were 1.1m students; in 2015 there were 944,000.

In this period the Australian population has increased by 1/3.

TAFE is now a minority provider in Queensland (30% market share) and Victoria (35%). It is close to minority nationally (50.3%). More than 10,000 TAFE teachers have lost their jobs over this period.

As the private for-profit sector rose and fell on the back of the discredited VET FEE-HELP scheme, billions of dollars were wasted, and super profits created for business which moved in to take advantage of freely available government funding. We do not know how many disadvantaged students were tricked into signing up for programs which were not delivered, but which have now left many with thousands of dollars of debt. In the last week alone following the collapse of yet another for-profit provider, Acquire, students were estimated to have taken out loans in the order of $52,000 each.

The 2017 Federal Budget, with its funding cuts, and the establishment of a faux fund (the Skilling Australia Fund), much of which will go to private for profit providers, or employers in the form of employer incentives, stands in stark contrast to the ALP announcement. It was accompanied by two other really damaging and significant announcements from the Turnbull Government – the opening of Commonwealth Supported Places for sub degree programs at university, and the reduction of the repayment threshold for income contingent loans. Both these announcement will have an impact on TAFE and TAFE students.

The extension of Commonwealth Supported Places to sub-degree programs at university will damage TAFE Diploma and Advanced Diplomas because effectively students will be better funded, and carry less debt if they undertake these courses at university rather than TAFE. Indeed, they will carry less debt if they go to university than they would if they took out a VET Student Loan, which is full fee for service, and for which they may well be out of pocket for that part of the course which exceeds the funding cap. The reduction of the threshold will disproportionately impact on TAFE students because substantially more of them will be on lower incomes, even where they have successfully acquired a qualification. We have covered both these issues in this edition of the TAFE Teacher.

The Federal Government, and state and territory governments around the country must meet the Federal ALP’s commitment to 2/3rds guaranteed funding for TAFE, and a programme of funding increases which will rebuild the TAFE system around the country. It is only a funding guarantee which will provide TAFE with the funding it needs to rebuild, and the certainty to plan for the future.

Our campaign has been successful – but we must do more, and we must continue. There is a long way to go until the next Federal Election, and the ongoing funding cuts to TAFE are continuing to hurt students, and hollow out the sector.

Australian trust TAFE, and have made it clear that they want a TAFE system. We have much hard work ahead of us!

Pat Forward is the AEU Federal TAFE Secretary
National TAFE Day has been celebrated in June for a number of years. It’s a great opportunity for TAFE teachers, students, unions and the community to reflect on the achievements of our TAFE system.

TAFE occupies a special place in our communities. It is a trusted brand, and its reputation for quality education spreads across the country, and even overseas. While many people think of TAFE as the domain of apprentices and tradies; TAFE offers a myriad of courses from traditional trades, to health care, sciences, performing and visual arts, hospitality and food related industries and so much more. TAFE graduates are everywhere — they’re the people cutting your hair, making the wine you drink, running small businesses, fixing our roads and caring for our children.

It is important that as a community we take National TAFE Day as an opportunity to celebrate! Whether your campus is celebrating by having a morning tea, a BBQ or a concert — we can’t wait to see the creative ideas the TAFE community will come up with to mark the day.

And while National TAFE Day will always be a celebration, we want to encourage everyone to take the time to call their local Federal MP — if not on National TAFE Day, then at another time during the week of 12-16 June.

If your local Federal MP is a member of the Coalition:
- Let them know you are disappointed with the 10% cut to vocational education spending announced in the Federal Budget
- Tell them that 70% of VET funding needs to be guaranteed for TAFE, and that funding cuts need to be reversed
- Share with them a personal TAFE story as to why you think TAFE is too good to lose. It could be a memorable student, or your own experience at TAFE. Let them know how valuable TAFE is to the community.

If your local Federal MP is a member of the ALP:
- Let them know you are pleased with their budget announcement of two thirds guaranteed funding for TAFE, and a reversal of funding cuts
- Ask them to continue their work in fighting back against the Turnbull Government’s cuts to vocational funding and failure to guarantee funding for TAFE.
- You could also consider calling the Minister for Education (Simon Birmingham) or the Assistant Minister for Vocational Education and Skills (Karen Andrews) and letting them know how disappointed you are with the Coalition’s 10% cut to vocational education spending, and failure to guarantee funding for TAFE.

If your local Federal MP is a Green, Independent or from a minor party:
- Let them know you are disappointed with the lack of funding for vocational education in the Federal Budget.
- Let them know that you support Labor’s two thirds funding guarantee for vocational education funding for TAFE.
- Share with them why you think TAFE is too good to lose, and any personal TAFE stories that demonstrate the importance of TAFE to your community.

We have a number of fact sheets available on our website (www.stoptafecuts.com.au/resources) that will give you all the information you need to feel confident making a call. We have also produced a fact sheet of tips and tricks for calling politicians. Check it out before you make your call.

Other ways to get involved in National TAFE Day
- Take a selfie with our “Guarantee 70% VET Funding to TAFE” poster (download from www.stoptafecuts.com.au/resources) and send it to us on social media
- Gather your colleagues together at your TAFE Campus and take a photo of all of you with your campus sign and “Guarantee 70% VET Funding to TAFE” posters
- Share your TAFE story on Facebook or Twitter — post to our pages or include the #StopTAFECuts hashtag so we can find it
- Ask your colleagues and friends to make sure they are signed up as supporters on the Stop TAFE Cuts website — www.stoptafecuts.com.au
- Request an activist kit via the Stop TAFE Cuts website so you can keep being active in the TAFE campaign!

Please let us know how you celebrated National TAFE Day. Drop us an email at rscroggie@aeufederal.org.au to send us photos, tell us about your events and fill us in on your calls to politicians. It’s helpful for the campaign, and we love to hear about how people have gotten involved.
No matter who you are, everyone deserves to feel safe.

Right now, thousands of people seeking asylum in Australia including children, are at risk of homelessness.

The Asylum Seeker Resource Centre (ASRC) already support and empower over 3,000 people seeking asylum and refugees. But within the year, there will be 1,562 more people at our doorstep, in desperate need of home and hope.

We urgently need your help to keep them safe. Take action now at asrc.org.au/appeal
THE FUTURE of the TAFE system

May was a big month for the vocational education sector.

JOHN SPIERINGS

FIRST, the Commonwealth Government has indicated it will scrap the National Partnership Agreement with the States and instead establish a skills fund dependent on host worker visa fees. This implies another significant funding cut for TAFE.

Second, Federal Labor announced that if elected it would make Commonwealth funding conditional on states and territories directing at least two thirds of public funding for vocational education to TAFE. Given the rapidly growing share of funding going to private providers, this move is significant. The step indicates that bi-partisan political support for the de-regulation and large scale privatisation of the sector may be eroding.

And then yet another high profile private provider, Acquire Learning — a firm that specialized in mashing up telemarketing and training — went into voluntary liquidation.

While it may not be obvious, these developments underline the fact that in the battle over the privatisation of vocational education in Australia, the public provision of vocational education has won. The repeated failure of start-up private providers, both commercially and educationally, is now driving policy.

What is missing though is a unifying rationale for the strong public provision of vocational education. We need this because on its own the deficits in the private model of provision will not be enough to sustain a robust, dynamic, healthy TAFE sector.

We need to constantly make the case for the inherent virtues of comprehensive public education models that meet individual, community and industry needs rather than observe the limitations of a just-in-time training regime taken from the latest management manual.

educational inequities with deep cuts to university funding and a barrage of attacks on the Gonski school funding agreement negotiated by the Gillard Government.

The long-standing policy principle meant to drive public funding to private schools — facilitation of school choice — is now less important to Treasuries than the role of private school subsidies as a budget measure to constrain overall public spending on education. The logic is that part funding private schools is a more fiscally responsible way to meet educational demand than meeting the total cost involved in public provision.

A similar logic helped to drive expansion of VET-FEE-HELP as those loans both transferred risk to students and were treated by Treasury as assets rather than liabilities on the Commonwealth balance sheet. It appeared that ambitious COAG targets to lift vocational educational attainment could be achieved while minimising direct cash outlays.

These funding regimes however are arise from a more general crisis in the purpose of education as it is pulled into a more instrumental frame across primary, secondary and tertiary sectors.

The popularity of return on investment ratios, the use of NAPLAN and other tightly conceived tests flows from a desire to justify and determine spending. However they only measure tightly prescribed skills and attributes, often using the lens of employability as the dominant frame. They are less useful if our goal is to encourage students to become liberated, to inquire, learn, communicate and acquire knowledge. As a society, we now seem to be turning more to social media rather than education in order to do that.

A word about language

In advancing the vital role of public provision in vocational education, positioning TAFE as a ‘system’ is perhaps not the best word to drive future policy. It implies ‘command and control’ methodologies and work organisation at a time when faith in those models has evaporated. Perhaps it’s better to speak of a TAFE ‘network’ — educators with a common mission and approaches that advance the public good and the capabilities of individuals and communities.

Policy-makers central to the privatisation project have sought to shape the vocational education sector around ‘flexible and responsive’ as its defining feature; the implication being that pre-reform TAFE was not adapting to the shifts and currents in industry, work patterns and in the labour market.

Historic investments by TAFEs and State...
Governments in heavy duty technologies, buildings and specialist, high cost staff were seen by those driving privatisation as impediments in a fast-paced, highly dynamic labour market with workers experiencing multiple career changes with episodes as contractors as well as waged employees.

In doing so, these policy-makers viewed vocational education as a service to industry rather than understanding TAFE’s unique role in helping to shape labour markets, wage outcomes and economic mobility.

The point is that countering the mantra of ‘flexible and responsive’ - as beguiling (and simplistic) as it is - will be necessary as without alternative constructs it will be difficult to truly reset policy and funding.

The language of ‘innovation’ is helpful but deploys a word that is perhaps too over-exposed and too woolly to cut it.

Positioning TAFE as ‘the national engine of economic mobility’, resonates with its past and signals its continuing potential. This may have more cut through at a time of stagnating wages, rising housing costs and growing educational inequalities. This speaks to its unique role rather than the generic character of its pedagogy.

**The policy game**

Framing TAFE as the national engine of economic mobility also enables the sector to grow and exert its latent power. And it needs to do so because self-evidently it has few champions inside the policy game – within the policy bureaucracies, within the political class or within the media. That might be acceptable if TAFE had a loud, constituent, boisterous, bothersome constituency on the outside but it does not.

There is no fear factor at the table when funding decisions about TAFE are being made in Cabinet or at the Expenditure Review Committee. Ministers and policy advisers do not currently factor a backlash or a wave of appreciation when considering funding decisions. The obvious contrast is with universities (especially those in regional Australia) and schools, that have a capacity to mobilise parents and local communities.

This needs to change if better policy outcomes for the TAFE sector are to be achieved. Consequently, there is an urgent need to mobilise the muscle of students, employer allies and graduates as well as existing stakeholders such as the AEU.

This is especially so as TAFE networks are policy and funding orphans squeezed between very large public education sectors ‘owned’ by the Commonwealth and the States. States will be reluctant to make the investments needed in TAFE while they face ongoing funding emergencies in their school sectors.

This is an important reason to explore shifting responsibility for TAFE into the Commonwealth’s orbit. Labor should outline a process at the next election to consider this, and to consult with the States, with Institutes, with teachers, students and industry.

**A policy agenda for the future**

Assuming important elements are put in place – including a strong, vigilant set of constituencies and supporters; and a compelling frame for support – there remains the question of what the mission and vision of a public TAFE sector will be into the future.

There are lessons from Australia’s success in promoting and developing a strong apprenticeship system. At the core of an apprenticeship is an implicit social contract about a mutual responsibility for the growth and maturation of young people – as workers and as future contributors to our common well-being. A responsibility shared by individuals and their family, employers, educators and the state. It’s not just a responsibility around development of technical skills, it is also about the social and cultural formation of apprentices as they are mentored and as they mature into a community of trades, skills and people. We need to take that insight into the comprehensive model of learning embodied in an apprenticeship and apply that more generally.

TAFE needs to build on its unique advantage of being embedded in communities rather than markets. It’s a defining point of difference with private providers. Rather than mimic private operators TAFE should aim to be a fulcrum in communities, especially those experiencing significant economic transition.

TAFE has a remarkable workforce; its teachers are some of the most amazing, adaptable, can-do, problem-solving people in the country. Why isn’t this at the heart of its appeal and promotion to students and industry? And this quality needs to be leveraged to strengthen curriculum and to develop a pedagogy free of the rigidities of training packages.

It is difficult to define excellence in vocational education. It is one reason why we have settled for competence. It is going to be difficult to unpick that area. But a TAFE network could lead the way with independent assessment of qualifications; with investment in a national centre for vocational education pedagogy and curriculum.

**Why support a public TAFE network**

There are many possibilities to describe what the mission of TAFE could and should be. However, there are six core elements that should be part of any statement about TAFE and what it seeks to achieve, now and into the future. These are:

- Excellence and leadership in the provision of vocational education – supporting institutions, facilities and teachers delivering outcomes at least equal to world’s best practice in Asia and Europe
 Depth and quality in curriculum design, practice and assessment that sets benchmarks for the rest of the sector
• Outreach to families and individuals likely to be disadvantaged in achieving full economic citizenship
• Provider of choice for the primary skills and workforce development needs of emerging industries and sectors needing support as they transition through decline
• A comprehensive educational pathway for all young people as they leave school, imparting knowledge and skills and linking them to employment experiences and opportunities
• A high quality educational choice for learning, creativity, collaboration and personal development through all the stages of life.

And to achieve these elements, new funding models for TAFE need to be developed that relate to employment outcomes but that also recognize:
• Costs of Infrastructure — in machinery and technology, libraries, land holdings required by public vocational education providers
• Costs of Outreach - to disadvantaged communities, age cohorts, industry sectors and workers facing structural adjustment
• Costs of Staff — to recognize the benefits of employment and conditions of TAFE teachers and staff relative to the private sector
• Costs of Quality — to attract experienced and suitable instructors from the workforce and to lift the base qualifications of VET teachers to at least Diploma and preferably Bachelor level
• Designate preferred providers/Institutes for public training subsidies against clear criteria

The resilience and endurance of the TAFE sector should be admired and celebrated — no other educational sector in Australia has experienced such an existential crisis in recent times. From that strength of character, and from a deep understanding of what TAFE is capable of, a much more positive and hopeful era can emerge. There is still much to be done in order to achieve that. Let’s get to work.

John Spierings is Executive Officer of the Reichstein Foundation. This piece is based on a speech given at the 2017 AEU National TAFE Council Annual General Meeting
My eldest son completed VCE in 2012. At high school, he had vague ideas about becoming an architect like his grandfather, however I suspect this was because he thought it would be a bit like a more sophisticated version of playing with Lego. His real love was building “stuff” not buildings.

He had made some beautiful furniture at high school, which I consider heirloom pieces so it made sense that he would follow through into something like architecture. With a modest ATAR, he didn’t get into the architecture course but still, with his heart set on this path, he enrolled in Architectural Drafting at NMIT Greensborough — a beautiful campus, literally just a few kilometres from home.

My son is quite an anxious young person and the thought of University was somewhat daunting for him so the availability of a course at NMIT so close to home was a godsend and he took to the course like a duck to water. He came home after orientation week, really excited and positive and continued throughout the year, doing well and planning for the future and exploring pathways into architecture. He mingled with students of all ages and really seemed to develop a mature approach to study which I had not seen in High School.

At the end of first year, the students received the news that NMIT Greensborough campus was closing its doors. Almost overnight I watched my son’s anxiety return as he and his friends wondered where they would be sent to finish their course, and indeed if there was even going to be a course for them to finish. Their collective anxiety was shared by many of their teachers who were not informed of plans for relocation and unable to reassure their students. He spoke of teachers “trying to put on a brave face” but apparently having no answers to give their students.

My son quickly learned not to share his concerns with his friends or comment on social media because the feedback from his university friends was largely unsupportive and comments like “it’s only TAFE”, “first world problems” and “suck it up princess” loomed large on his Facebook account. Upon reflection I think it was a perfect storm — a combination of an anxious student, an uncertain future, lack of communication as well as the implicit message from the state...
government that “TAFE doesn’t really matter”.

The course was relocated to Epping. My anxious son was suddenly in an unfamiliar environment with a 2 hour commute and he started to struggle to get to his classes on time. Many of his fellow students began to drop out and as much as he tried, he really lost his momentum. His previous excitement and enthusiasm gave way to a growing apathy which culminated in him dropping out of the course towards the end of his second year.

He began to deteriorate before my eyes and over the next six months he became apathetic and depressed. For the first few weeks I was willing to accept his “needing some time to chill” but the weeks turned into months. As a mother, it was heartbreaking to see and as a mental health clinician, I became increasingly concerned about him. As well as my concern, I was becoming more angry and frustrated that I’d been busting my chops working really hard, getting up early and staying late only to find him sitting at his computer in his jocks after sleeping in until the mid-afternoon each day. Even greater was my anger towards the then Liberal Victorian State Government about the cuts to our TAFE system because I saw the first-hand what it did to my son and how a vulnerable young man was left demoralised and floundering.

The low mood and hopelessness went on for nearly six months. Encouragement gave way to pleading, which gave way to yelling and arguments. Then one April morning driving past Box Hill TAFE, I noticed a huge sign saying “ENROLMENTS CLOSE ON FRIDAY”. This was actually one of those amazing moments that I will always vividly recall because it was literally the answer to all my worries and concerns about my son. I came home from work, went into my son’s room where he was, as usual, sitting in his jocks at his computer and told him that tomorrow he was going up early to come in to work with me. I’d head off to work and he was going to Box Hill TAFE. We were not going home until he had enrolled in a course. And it was not negotiable.

Box Hill Institute has some amazing courses but I honestly didn’t care what he chose to study as long as he had decided on a course by the end of the day. Even before he came over to the hospital to join me for lunch I received an excited text message “OMG Mum, they’ve got furniture making!”

Enrolment was incredibly quick and he started the following week. We started to carpool together and he’d tell me all about his day and all the pieces they were required to build, about how he was learning so many new techniques. He said he’d shown his teacher some photos of the furniture he had built in the past and the teacher was really impressed. It was an incredible load off my mind to see my son suddenly so happy and purposeful.

I believe it was not quite a month into his course that my son met me after work with the news that one of his teachers had recommended him for an apprenticeship. We all know the relationship between self-esteem and the feeling of being valued and productive. It’s hard to put into words actually seeing this relationship played out in reality. This was like the last piece of the jigsaw. Within a couple of weeks, he had commenced a cabinetmaking apprenticeship and he has been thriving. He has been working hard; he’s developed physical strength and technical skills. He has a sense of purpose and he is making plans for the future. He has a modest income as an apprentice but he sees it as “being paid to learn”.

And he’s going to build me a new kitchen.

One standout thing that absolutely amazed me and impressed me no end was the way TAFE looked after my son in assisting him to enter the workforce. I want to thank and acknowledge TAFE teachers for their absolute dedication to your students, particularly in light of such a rocky and uncertain time facing cuts and closures.

Cathryn Fisher works in mental health, and is a proud Stop TAFE Cuts supporter
Seismic changes in TAFE

In 2017 TAFE is at the brink of seismic change. Over the last five years intensified marketisation of the vocational education sector, the uncapping of undergraduate degree funding and the decline of TAFE-based vocational education programs for schools have brought TAFE institutions to the brink of insolvency and incapacity. On the other hand, recommitment to TAFE in some states and prioritisation of TAFE access to the new VET Student Loan system have held out hope of a TAFE restoration.

Anne Jones

Now, the Higher Education Reform Package announced as part of the May 2017 Budget Statement proposes two changes to higher education funding that, if not blocked in the Senate, could change the nature and purpose of TAFE: (1) from 1 January 2018 the expansion of Commonwealth Supported Places funding to ‘…approved sub-bachelor level diploma, advanced diploma and associate degree courses at public universities’ and (2) from 1 January 2019 a new competitive funding model available to universities and other higher education providers for enabling courses, sub-degree courses that provide underprepared learners with the skills they need to commence higher education.

The first of these changes will challenge higher level vocational education qualifications delivered by TAFE institutes. University sub-degree qualifications will be required to be ‘…developed with a focus on industry needs and fully articulate into related bachelor programs’. These are likely to supplant VET AQF 5-6 qualifications, vulnerable to takeover since most of them neither fully articulate into bachelor degrees nor meet industry needs. VET outcomes data show that most graduates from higher level VET qualifications do not gain employment in the occupations for which they trained nor do they use them as stepping stones into degrees with full credit for their vocational education studies (Karmel, T. 2015; Stanwick, 2006; Moodie and Wheelahan, 2009). Even those few diplomas and/or advanced diplomas, such as Nursing, that are linked to professional registration are at risk since universities are already negotiating with professional bodies to obtain recognition for their own in-house diplomas and advanced diplomas. VET diploma and advanced diploma level delivery accounts for 25-30% of TAFE delivery and its loss, following other funding losses, would bring most TAFE institutes to their knees.

The second funding change may offer those TAFE institutes registered as Higher Education Providers an opportunity to obtain funding for delivery of higher education enabling courses. If not, it is likely that any increase in provision of higher education enabling courses will threaten TAFE delivery of qualifications such as the Certificate III in General Education for Adults and Diploma of Tertiary Preparation.

These challenges to TAFE institutes need to be considered in the context of broader societal needs. To prosper amidst the challenges of accelerated globalisation, automation, climate change and population ageing, Australia needs a strong, coherent tertiary education sector; supporting all individuals to develop the capabilities needed for lifelong participation in, and contribution to, sustainable twenty-first century communities and industries. All adults need to be able to navigate longer working lives, multiple careers, multiple employers and changing learning needs. Our national vocational education qualifications do not currently support these ends.

What does all of this mean for the future of TAFE? The most likely scenario is that as universities colonise AQF 5-6 and tertiary preparation courses most TAFE institutes are reduced to delivery of apprenticeship qualifications and lower AQF level courses that do not lead to tertiary entry. The transfer of most AQF level 5 and above qualifications to the university sector would create a more coherent tertiary education
sector with more navigable qualifications pathways. However, it would also be a dangerously homogenous tertiary education sector underpinned by traditional higher education discourses and ways of thinking about the world. Australian society would lose the benefits that excellent vocational education brings to its industries and communities: practical knowledge, the understanding of practice and the innovative application of technical skills.

Things could be different, as they are in many countries that benefit from diverse tertiary education sectors valuing strong vocational institutions alongside universities. Countries such as Germany, Singapore, Denmark and New Zealand support their polytechnics and other vocational education institutions in a way that Australian does not. In Denmark, for example, 50% of the upper secondary cohort participates in vocational education with curriculum based on customised academic subjects as well as technical skills development. Vocational education teachers in Denmark are trained in pedagogy to at least bachelor degree level with a work-based teacher training model available for teachers entering education from industry. The new dual system proposed in the United Kingdom’s 2016 Post 16 Skills Plan is designed to strengthen vocational education with qualifications pathways extending to degree level apprenticeships and other higher level technical qualifications.

Australia is at risk of losing the value that vocational education knowledges and traditions bring to its communities and industries. Toner and his colleagues have demonstrated that people with VET qualifications are ‘…among the principle sources of ideas for technological innovation. Skilled production, trade and technical occupations are essential for the generation, design, installation, adaptation and maintenance of new technologies’ (Toner, Marceau, Hall and Considine 2004). It is difficult to see how a reduced and residual TAFE sector could support such technical creativity.

The alternative scenario is to include strengthened TAFE institutes in a diverse and coherent tertiary education sector; to value and nurture the practical knowledge traditions and pedagogies that characterise high quality vocational education; to provide parity of funding as well as parity of esteem to vocational and higher education. If universities are funded to freely deliver sub-degree qualifications, there will need to be significant rethinking of the role and funding of TAFE to ensure Australia’s tertiary education sector includes thriving public vocational education institutions. New Zealand provides a model. In New Zealand the institutes of technology and polytechnics (ITPs) are funded in the same way as universities to deliver qualifications from foundation courses up to postgraduate level. The ITPs are differentiated from universities by their technical education purpose, history and traditions. The availability of equal funding for equivalent qualifications has resulted in a very different distribution of qualifications amongst institutions than in Australia. For example, in NZ almost all degree level nursing courses are delivered by ITPs.

This scenario would be more difficult to achieve relying as it does on collaboration between Federal and state governments. It would require government and bureaucrats, policy makers and commentators, the media, industry and community to overcome their longstanding failure to understand and value vocational education, let alone public vocational education. The effort would be great, but the benefit to Australia’s future would be greater.

Anne Jones is an Emeritus Professor at Victorian University

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S PENDING on vocational education will be cut by close to 10% in the next financial year, with ongoing cuts across the budget forward estimates.

The National Partnership Agreement for Skills Reform has been cut, and replaced with the National Partnership Skilling Australia Fund. This represents a cut of $177 million to the state and territories in 2017/18, and annual cuts thereafter.

The government claims that the Fund will deliver 300,000 new apprentices and trainees, but gives no information on how this will occur. The Fund can be used for a range of things, including employer incentives and support for improvements in retention and completion.

The Skilling Australia Fund will be funded in part by the levy imposed by the government on employers using temporary and permanent migration programs. It requires matched contributions from the state and territories and the amounts available to them will depend on how much they contribute to the fund and will also be contingent on them meeting certain criteria – yet to be made public by the government.

There is no detail about how this fund will be managed, and no guarantee about the future funding allocated in it.

There is also no guarantee that the funding will actually be used for training.

And there is no guarantee in the package that funding will go to TAFE, or be used to support TAFE students. In real terms, on a state by state basis, the package will cut funding over the next financial year across the country. This comes on top of a decline in funding over the last 10 years of close to 15%.

In contrast to the continued attacks from the Turnbull government, the Opposition’s budget reply speech delivered by Leader of the Opposition Bill Shorten provides a real glimmer of hope for our TAFE system.

The speech acknowledged that public TAFEs are the key to providing high quality vocational education for Australians now and into the future. Labor has committed to ensuring that at least 2/3rds of the public money allocated to vocational education and training is guaranteed for TAFEs.

Labor has pledged that they will reverse the Turnbull Government’s $600 million cuts to vocational education. In addition to reversing these cuts and guaranteed funding for TAFE, Labor has further pledged to:

1. Invest in a new $100 million Building TAFE for the Future Fund – to re-establish TAFE facilities in regional communities, meet local industry needs and support teaching for the digital economy.
2. Setting a target of one in ten apprentices on all Commonwealth priority projects and major Government Business Enterprise projects.
3. Investing in pre-apprenticeship programs which will prepare up to 10,000 young jobseekers to start an apprenticeship.

The 2/3rds funding guarantee and a pledge to reverse funding cuts is a welcome move from the ALP, and would result in a positive first step back for TAFE.

<table>
<thead>
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<th>$million</th>
<th>NSW</th>
<th>VIC</th>
<th>QLD</th>
<th>WA</th>
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<td>Cut 2017-18</td>
<td>-$54m (-32%)</td>
<td>-$40m (-31%)</td>
<td>-$43m (-38%)</td>
<td>-$16m (-30%)</td>
<td>-$13m (-35%)</td>
<td>-$6m (-46%)</td>
<td>-$3m (-31%)</td>
<td>-$3m (-45%)</td>
<td>-$177m (-34%)</td>
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The 2017 Federal Budget delivered nothing for TAFE or TAFE students. This budget is a continuation of the Coalition’s attack on the sector, and its failure to provide policy leadership or support.
Unfortunately, with a Federal Election unlikely before 2018, we need to continue to apply pressure to the Coalition. They need to understand that these funding cuts will have an effect on TAFE; and that will have flow on effects to the economy, industry, and the community.

**BUDGET 2017-2018**

**FAST FACTS**

- Spending on vocational education will decrease by 9.7% in real terms from 2016-17 to 2017-18 and by 2.1% in real terms from 2017-18 to 2020-2021. The decrease from 2016-17 to 2017-18 reflects the ending of the National Partnership Agreement on Skills Reform.
- Spending on vocational education will be $70m lower in 2020-21 than it is in 2016-17.

**They’ve got form:** recent cuts to vocational education by Coalition governments:

- 2014– Tools for Your Trade grant for apprentices replaced with a loan scheme.
- 2015-2016 – $8m cut to ASQA.
- 2016 – Industry Training Fund axed in December MYEFO.

**Labor will reverse Malcolm Turnbull’s $600 million cuts to skills and training and invest in TAFE and apprenticeships by:**

- Guaranteeing at least 2/3rds of public vocational education funding for TAFE.
- Investing an additional $637.6 million into TAFE and vocational education – reversing the government’s 2017 budget cuts in full.
- Investing in a new $100 million Building TAFE for the Future Fund – to re-establish TAFE facilities in regional communities, meet local industry needs and support teaching for the digital economy.
- Setting a target of one in ten apprentices on all Commonwealth priority projects and major Government Business Enterprise projects.
- Investing in pre-apprentice programs – preparing up to 10,000 young jobseekers to start an apprenticeship.
- Establishing an Advanced Entry Adult Apprenticeships program – to fast-track apprenticeships for up to 20,000 people facing redundancy or whose jobs have been lost.

**National Partnerships Skilling Australia Fund**

- $1.5 billion aiming to deliver an additional 300,000 pre-apprentices, trainees, apprentices and higher level skills training over the next four years.
- States and territories to match funding – amounts available to them will depend on how much they contribute to the fund and will also be contingent on them meeting certain criteria.
- Priority to apprenticeships and traineeships in occupation in high demand – occupation lists will be negotiated between the federal and state governments.
- Preference will be given to occupations that currently rely strongly on skilled migration pathways and industries that are deemed to be areas of future growth.
- A focus on rural and regional areas.
- Target pre-apprenticeship training, focusing on improving retention and completion rates.
- Additional support for higher-level apprenticeships.
- Includes $350 million allocated as part of the government’s recently announced reform of the 457 visa program.

**BuDget 2017-2018**

**FAST FACTS**

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**WINTER 2017 • THE AUSTRALIAN TAFE TEACHER 17**
Ipswich is a city of 200,000 people, some 40 kilometres south-west of Brisbane central. It is my hometown, where my parents, my sister and I were born.

Living there through the fifties, sixties and seventies means that it will always trigger feelings of belonging and pride in its history.

Once it was the biggest provincial city in Queensland. Once it was to be the capital of Queensland.

TAFE gives people identity and communities new hope

Competencies are only part of the story
In 2002 Swanbank E commissioned a state of the art combined cycle gas turbine. Needless to say, coal mining faded as the backbone industry of the city. On the outskirts of Ipswich, Amberley expanded to become Australia’s largest operational Air Force base and Wacol prison became Brisbane’s largest correctional centre with roughly a thousand men, women and youth incarcerated within its perimeter.

Adapting an economy, attracting new industry, and holding onto local businesses is without doubt the prime preoccupation of politicians at every level of government in the post-industrialisation era. But as politicians steadfastly attend to the hopes of business leaders, the hopes of communities become non-distinctive and secondary. The logic of our politicians is one we know well. Attract business and everything else will fall into place. People will adjust to new livelihoods, they will settle and buy houses and have families, commerce will flourish, towns will thrive and we will all be happy.

Politicians and business leaders alike quickly forget the human dimension of industry closure. Maybe they just count on the fact that humans are adaptable and surprisingly compliant when faced with dictums from employers and government. That does not mean, however, that adjustment comes easy. Adjustment is a social process. Shared fears, hopes and identities define communities. Fears, hopes and identities need to be expressed and redefined when industries close. Allowing this process to flow in the best way possible requires effort and resources. It is not as simple as individuals pulling themselves together and struggling on. Our unacceptably high rates of mental illness, suicide, homelessness, youth unemployment and family breakdown attest to the fact that shifting industrial landscapes create unmet human needs and that the consequences are non-trivial for society when help is not at hand to support communities through change.

Adapting successfully requires a social infrastructure that guides and supports us as we redefine who we are and reassess our prospects for the future. When our direction in life changes, we use social infrastructure to derive new settings. Hope may be automatic for humans, but hoping well is not. We need to hope with realistic goals, confidence in ourselves, and pathways for achieving these goals. Others are an important part of our doing this well, of hoping well. They are also vital to our sustaining momentum, of coming to terms with mistakes, trying again, and feeling we have social worth. Social worth is provided through the affirmation and encouragement of others, it is not something we do by ourselves. Social infrastructure that regulates our hopes and sustains our sense of social worth is every bit as important as the material infrastructure that we assume will be there for our communities, enduring and solid, infrastructure that we can rely on and plan by.

Social infrastructure in some quarters is assumed to be the province of civil society not the concern of government. Government is right in some circumstances in thinking that social infrastructure is informal and need not be duplicated. Certainly it should not be crushed by heavy-handed government interference. As we know, families can help shape our dreams into realistic hopes, but sometimes the load can be too heavy for families to bear. Whole families, indeed whole communities can be weighed down emotionally and cognitively, all their energies spent because they too have been adversely affected by mass closures of industries and loss of livelihoods.

Sometimes our support base, like ourselves, can find it difficult to lift their sights above the despair that engulfs us. Governments have a role to play here in recharging a community’s batteries and lifting spirits so that collectively a community can hope well and re-design future goals.

Education is an important institution in this regard and one that is strategic for governments to support to manage economic upheaval and avoid its socially disastrous consequences. In a civilised society, education is an institution for starting over, for expressing loss and grief over a past life, and moving on to reinvent oneself and build a new

This is the story of how vocational education and TAFE in particular is critical to this reinvention, repeated across rural, regional and urban communities across Australia.
Education is not just about acquiring sets of skills and competencies. It presents an opportunity to be someone else who also happens to have a set of skills and competencies that others will value. It is in the context of human reinvention that Australia’s TAFE system has so often come to the rescue. The purpose of vocational education is not just to provide people with competencies and skill sets. Just as important is the way in which it can give people a sense of social worth and capacity to develop and adapt. This gift applies to both individuals and communities. TAFEs can’t be fairly evaluated through templates that benchmark them against universities or other training organizations. The value of TAFEs lies in how their communities see them and use them, in the relationships that they forge and the opportunities they create for members of their communities.

Among the most impressive heritage-listed buildings in Ipswich is the 1901 Queen Victoria Silver Jubilee Technical College, a forerunner of the modern day TAFE. As the first of the technical colleges established outside Brisbane, it had its own independent board with oversight of a set of courses to develop learning capacities (e.g., history, geography, algebra and geometry, Latin and English) and meet the needs of the community (e.g., coal mining, book-keeping, cookery, dressmaking). Like Ipswich, the Tech College has changed its form, governance structure and name many times. It even changed its location, handing over its central position and symbolic architecture of stability and dignity to a brewery no less. Yet the building has symbolic value still. It housed hope for those who had lost their jobs. It housed hope for youth who were lost in the transition to adulthood. It housed hope for women from families that had lost their breadwinner. The Tech College through its teaching staff and student body offered knowledge, encouragement, human connection and shared pathways to a new life for those who wished to take advantage of the opportunity to retrain and start again. The symbolic value of the Tech College building to Ipswich dwellers was an open invitation to come downtown and take the first step: Enrol in a new beginning and relegate crushed identities and lost souls to history. Sentimental attachment aside, the Tech College in Ipswich is nothing special in the bigger scheme of national vocational education policy. Its special quality is quite simply that it was ours, it was part of our community and we knew it was there to help us. The reality of this aspect of TAFE is evident at a number of levels. TAFE teachers across the country who reflect on their professional contribution with pride do not do so in terms of the training packages that they taught for Australian industry groups. Rather they reflect on the people whose lives they touched and changed for the better. Students similarly do not reflect on the specific bits of knowledge they gleaned, no doubt obsolete after several years in the workforce. Rather they reflect on those who taught them and gave them a life changing opportunity, on a place where they learnt the value of social infrastructure, developed friendships and networks of support, and confidence to learn new skills and start again. Parents and families too express gratitude to the TAFE system, not so much in terms of adequacy of training packages, but rather in terms of giving their family member a new lease of life, an opportunity to learn, permission to make mistakes, a social network that offers support, and guidance to get their lives back on track.

Any discussion of TAFE and vocational education more generally is incomplete without open recognition of how communities suffer psychologically and socially in times of economic upheaval, and how important tertiary education is for re-igniting hope for a better future. Some individuals may be privileged with financial resources to enrol in boutique college courses. For others it is just about getting started on something: to put one step in front of the other, to manage anxiety and depression, to find meaningful activity and to think positively about the future. A caring TAFE sector with well-trained, committed and appropriately remunerated teaching professionals meets this need. It always has. Supporting communities through a well-resourced, local TAFE is a smart government investment when economic and social turmoil strikes regional towns and cities.

Valerie Braithwaite is a Professor in the Regulatory Institutions Network at ANU. Valerie is an interdisciplinary social scientist with a disciplinary background in psychology.
PaTH: confusing acronym, shoddy programme

With little fanfare, the Turnbull government formally launched their Youth Jobs PaTH program in April. The program was a 2016 budget initiative, and it promised to “assist 120,000 young Australians into internships to help them gain real world, practical experience in a business.”

ROSIE SCROGGIE

It has attracted criticism on several fronts — the likelihood of it being rorted by employers; the equivalent $4 per hour wages; and the way the program ignores the real problem of youth unemployment — a lack of jobs. PaTH attempts to replace a core component of what TAFE does — preparing young people for the workforce. However, its model for doing this is full of short cuts, includes employer subsidies, and ignores individual student needs and broad, meaningful vocational education. In many respects, PaTH is just another Coalition strategy to undermine TAFE.

PaTH stands for Prepare, Trial and Hire. It targets young job seekers, and claims to assist them into paid employment. The model works by providing pre-employment training (Prepare); followed by “internships” (Trial), which could, possibly, lead to an ongoing position (Hire) and a tidy $10,000 incentive payment to the employer.
The second part of PaTH – Trial – has probably had the most public scrutiny. In Trial young job seekers complete a “voluntary” “internship” to “gain real work experience”. These are the much criticised $4 per hour internships. The job seekers who complete these “internships” will continue to receive their welfare benefits, as well as a small supplementary payment. For some workers, this will work out to a $4 per hour payment, well below the minimum wage. Meanwhile, the business received an upfront payment of $1000 “in recognition of the costs of hosting the internship.” The upfront payment makes it hard to fathom how the government will manage to ensure that these “internships” are quality placements where job seekers will actually learn useful skills, rather than free labour. The Australian Council of Trade Unions recently circulated some job ads for the PaTH program that had been sent to them – the roles included a Café Allrounder, a Subway “sandwich artist” and

The first part of PaTH - Prepare - is focused on providing pre-employment training. Training only started to be delivered in April, so it is hard to know at this stage the quality or efficacy of this training. The PaTH website claims that the training will “help young people understand the expectations of employers in both the recruitment process and as a new employee in the workplace” as well as “focus on job preparation... job hunting skills, career development, interview skills.”

While some young job seekers may find this sort of training useful, past experience tell us that often pre-employment training will lecture, patronise or demonise young job seekers. The idea that young job seekers need to be taught about “employer expectations” in order to get a job ignores the fact that youth unemployment figure is just over 13% (almost the highest it has been in the past decade). Not all young job seekers are unemployed because of a lack of understanding of what employers want. There are 6.3 jobseekers per vacancy being advertised. There are simply not enough jobs to go around, and of course younger and less experienced job seekers will be less likely to get the few jobs that are available. Pre-employment training, particularly the sort that lectures young people about wearing a clean shirt and being on time is not going to help people into jobs.

The other concerning aspect of Prepare is who is providing this training. A cursory look at the list of approved providers who will be developing and delivering the training does encouragingly show that many TAFE institutes are involved. However, they are far from the majority provider. Private providers appear to have flocked to this initiative, including Max Employment Services. Max also acts as a Jobactive provider for the government and gained a lot of media coverage in 2015 around alleged rorting of the government’s Job Services Australia programme. Four Corners allege that Max Employment enrolled 141 people into a training course, despite the fact its training room could only fit 15 job seekers at a time. There is also a lot of anecdotal discussion about Max forcing job seeker’s into the courses they run, whether or not they are aligned with the job seeker’s interests, existing skills or employment aims. Many of these massive, foreign owned companies rarely have an individual job seeker’s best interests in mind – they are purely driven by profit. The fact that providers such as Max Employment Services are participating in PaTH when they have such an uncertain history in employment services is concerning.
WHY NOT TRY TAFE?!
The recent Federal Budget clearly demonstrates the Coalition’s contempt for TAFE. They do not, or will not, see the value in public vocational education.

Instead of paying subsidies to employers and fees to private sector employment services and training providers, imagine if the government instead supported TAFE.

At a properly funded public TAFE, for a modest fee a young job seeker could go and do a Certificate in something they were interested in. Retail. Hospitality. Aged Care. Building. They could decide what sort of working life might suit them.

At a properly resourced public TAFE they would have access to industry professionals in their teachers and lecturers who could teach them broadly about the industry – not narrow, workplace specifics that suit only one boss. Students would gain a real idea of what the whole industry looks like, and how they could work in that industry.

Through TAFEs’ connections with industry and local employers they may be able to find an apprenticeship or a traineeship. A trusted teacher might be able to recommend them for a job, or at least be a valuable referee on an application.

If the Federal Government would properly fund TAFE, and concentrate on creating jobs; TAFE could concentrate on not “preparing” and “trialling” young job seekers – but teaching and nurturing the next generation of workers.

this is Union bUsiness

Every aspect of the PaTH programme favours employers. It creates a class of underpaid and demonised workers. The whole union movement must loudly condemn this programme.

Young people should have the right to access vocational education so they can make decisions about how they want to spend their working lives. Young people also have the right to be properly paid for work.

PaTH punishes young people for the current economic climate and high youth unemployment they find themselves grappling with through no fault of their own. The Federal Government should concentrate on job creation, not punishing youth. The union movement must stand with these young workers and help in the fight to protect not only fair working conditions, but public vocational education.

Rosie Scroggie is an Administrative Officer in the AEU Federal Office
When we talk about our TAFE students and the barriers they may need to overcome, Deborah Gyles’ story just goes to show what can be achieved with a little bit of luck, a lot of grit and a will to turn her life around.
AN ADDICTION to Ice and a life that revolved around drugs was a dark chapter that focused on how to pay for the next fix, surviving in an abusive relationship, how to pay off what she owed to her drug dealer, not being able to care for her children and at times contemplating suicide. Deb was in a very bad place and then it got worse when Child Protection removed her children.

‘My life was violent, lonely, scared and addicted. I was a meth addict and was stuck in a violent and abusive relationship,’ said Deb. ‘I had people in my backyard handing over hundreds of dollars to my ex-boyfriend to buy drugs while I was inside the house writing out an IOU letter from the tooth fairy for my son to put under his pillow that night.’

In 2009 while pregnant with her fifth child she read a brochure about Anglicare’s Good Beginnings program while waiting to see one of their Financial Counsellors. This volunteer run program felt safe and supported Deb through giving up drugs, changing her life and getting her children back.

In the first half of 2016 Deb completed the Certificate III in Community Services Work at TasTAFE and then went on to enrol in the Diploma of Community Services that August. The Diploma students are working in a new learning model for TasTAFE where they have entered an informal partnership with Volunteering Services Australia to establish and run an outreach service from the Burnie campus. The students are approaching local organisations who use volunteers and helping them develop position descriptions for their volunteers if they don’t have them, register vacancies, recruit and screen potential volunteers with VSA’s screening tools and then matching them with vacancies on the website.

Deb’s teacher Rod said that this is an opportunity for the students to be part of a real time service in the context of the learning environment; learning real life skills in how a service is structured and operated. Deb and her fellow students are gaining valuable networking, marketing and public speaking skills as they progress through the course. They are also gaining hands on skills to add to their resume and job applications when they walk out the door.

Deb has had a lot of experience volunteering in recent years as a Community Parent in Good Beginnings, now the Kind Individuals Delivering Support (KIDS) program with Anglicare. Deb spoke of her experience as an addict and the domestic violence that had plagued her life at the 2016 Anglicare Australia’s annual conference in Darwin and later in their Tasmanian Building Families conference in Launceston. As part of her studies in community development Deb chaired the student committee to organise and hold a Youth Drug and Alcohol Awareness Forum at a local high school. The forum was such a success that it was attended by six schools, over 300 hundred students and hosted 20 exhibitors.

With less than a year of Diploma study completed so far Deb and her fellow students have had many opportunities to lead or actively participate in events with other service providers. Deb reported that she has just enough industry experience to put her learning into perspective and she is finding it really rewarding. ‘I can see how I am going to put my knowledge into practice.’

Deb didn’t mention that she also has to deal with dyslexia but her teacher pointed out that she doesn’t let this stop her from producing high quality work. He also said that ‘Deb has demonstrated through her various volunteer roles and her commitment to the community that she is a ‘ready-made’ and willing ambassador for the sector and for the people she studies and works with.’ This is why she was nominated and won the Special Achievement Award at the TasTAFE Student Excellence Awards in Hobart in March this year.

Deb Gyles’ persona is one of calm, kindness and quiet intelligence. It is hard to imagine that there was ever a period in her life where drugs and domestic violence held such sway that it tore her family apart. Now Deb is grateful to be able to work with such awesome and compassionate teachers and support staff whose passion for their work is contagious. She admits that studying while bringing up six boys has had its challenging moments but said that it was important for her sons to see what you can achieve when you have goals, support and engage with the people around you. Deb Gyles is well on the way to achieving her dream to become a community services worker.

Michelle Purdy is the Aboriginal VET Officer at TasTAFE, Burnie. She is also the Federal TAFE President of the AEU

Ice to inspiration, Anglicare Tasmania

https://www.anglicare-tas.org.au/page/ice-inspiration
VOCATIONAL education is traditionally supposed to train people in the skills they need for specific jobs, but what happens in a fast-changing world when those jobs disappear and we can’t even know for sure what the future jobs will be?

According to Associate Professor Leesa Wheelahan, an international vocational education and training expert, Australia’s narrow focus on specific workplace skills is short-changing students and is a key reason why our scandal-ridden training sector is in crisis.

In a startling statistic, she points out that last year a full two-thirds of vocational education and training graduates were working in occupations that weren’t directly associated with their qualification. Associate Professor Wheelahan says it is a clear signal Australia’s market-driven training system, in which private and public providers compete for funding to deliver off-the-shelf training course as cheaply as possible, isn’t working.

“What is the point of tying training to workplace tasks and roles when graduates don’t work in those roles? It means the first objective of VET, which is to align with the needs of the workplace, simply isn’t being met,” Associate Professor Wheelahan, the William G. Davis Chair in Community College Leadership at the University of Toronto, told a recent seminar at the Melbourne Graduate School of Education.

An expert on the Australian system and an honorary senior fellow at the University of Melbourne’s LH Martin Institute, Associate Professor Wheelahan said Australia’s VET sector was “broken.” Trust had been undermined, she said, noting that last year the Commonwealth’s own Education Department had admitted to a Senate committee that one-third of new VET students who had obtained student loans weren’t getting a quality education.

“The point of VET isn’t to create a market for profit. The point is to create nationally trusted qualifications and to do that we need strong institutions that can create and deliver these qualifications,” Professor Wheelahan said.

She argued that the solution is to refocus funding away from the private sector and invest more in publicly-funded TAFEs, which she said are among the only institutions with the capacity to develop their own courses, as universities do, that can be better tailored to future workforce needs.

Associate Professor Wheelahan said current training courses focused on narrow competency based training that educates workers for largely routine and supervised roles, rather than training them to be proactive and versatile. She said the...
sells students short

system is wasteful and expensive as it leads to thousands of different qualifications, many of which only attract handful of students. Unbelievably, she said over half the publicly funded VET courses in Australia each attract less than 50 students a year.

“Competency based training fragments knowledge and skills and provides students only with access to specific applications of knowledge, leading to an emphasis on procedural knowledge and supervised workers.”

Instead she wants training to refocus on enhancing the capabilities of students by developing courses attuned to broader fields rather than narrow occupations. For example rather than having specific courses in aged care, disability care and drug and alcohol care, students should do training in care work more broadly, equipping them to move easily between areas.

“What we need are vocational streams linked to occupations that share common vocational practices and knowledge that can allow graduates to move around occupations,” she said. “The teachers of electrical trade apprentices should be thinking about what the latest insights in engineering mean for the way electrical trade work will change in five years time.”

She said the Canadian province of Ontario had a strong and trusted network of vocational colleges partly because the colleges have responsibility for developing their own courses, in consultation with business, local communities and professional accreditation bodies.

“We need qualifications that are based on minimum standards, but beyond that institutions must be required to develop their own qualifications, which can then be accredited by professional bodies or by industry.”

Associate Professor Wheelahan says a move could force about 2,000 small private providers out of the system “overnight” because only large providers like TAFE would have the capability to produce their own trusted courses that the sector now needs. “That would be a good thing.”

She said the policy push nationwide to open up public VET funding to the market had “decimated” TAFE and led to massive government funding cuts.

Associate Professor Wheelahan pointed out that real government recurrent expenditure on actual per student teaching hours in VET fell by a massive 31.5 per cent between 2005 and 2014. Over a similar period, total government spending on VET had been almost flat at $6.3 billion a year, when spending on schools had risen from $33 billion to $41 billion, and spending on universities had rise from $16.5 billion to $23.4 billion.

“Vocational education is the only sector of education in which funding cuts are regarded as an efficiency gain and not a crisis in quality,” she said. “Just imagine if these cuts had been imposed on the schools sector or the higher education sector? There would have been uproar.”

She noted that since 2009, TAFE’s share of the student market across the country had fallen from over 80 per cent to just 50 per cent, while the share of private providers had soared from less than 15 per cent to almost 46 per cent.

Speaking at the seminar, LH Martin Institute Director, Professor Leo Goedegebuure, backed Professor Wheelahan’s call for Australia’s VET policy to refocus more on TAFE and to give them more power to develop their own qualifications.

“The only thing that is going to work when the future is unpredictable and involves enormous change, is having strong autonomous institutions,” he said.

Professor Goedegebuure said there was overwhelming evidence that open markets simply don’t work in education and that the push to marketising VET had been driven by ideology rather than evidence.

“For a market to work in education you need to have government playing a role as the regulator of the market, and that has been absent,” Professor Goedegebuure said.

Andrew Trounson is the Senior Journalist at Pursuit, the University of Melbourne research and commentary publication. You can read the original article at pursuit.unimelb.edu.au
THE Adult Migrant English Program (AMEP) provision in NSW has, after nearly 20 years, come back to public education almost in its entirety and the NSW Teachers Federation applauds its return.

The AMEP is a federally funded immigration education program and was established in 1948 under the then Immigration (Education) Act 1971. The AMEP provides 510 hours of free English language education to eligible new migrants and humanitarian entrants.

The AMEP aims to promote and support the acquisition of English in order to produce outcomes in relation to social participation, independence and financial and personal wellbeing. The program focuses on English language skills which enable the newly arrived migrants to access services in the community and provide for a pathway to employment and/or further study.

It will now also assist in allowing its students to access the English they need to pass the new Australian Citizenship Test, a high stakes test indeed!

TAFE NSW has secured the tender for the provision of the AMEP, due to commence on July 1, 2017, across 11 of the 13 regions, as well as the contract to deliver AMEP distance learning services nationally.

The Hunter and Illawarra, South Coast regions, currently delivered through TAFE NSW, have been awarded to Navitas for the period of this tender and this has rightly angered our members in these areas.

Navitas estimates their loss of the 11 regions to TAFE NSW is at between $12 to $14 million dollars next financial year.

When the Federal Government announced the AMEP contract on the 18th April, it has since been reported that MAX employment has been sub contracted to deliver the AMEP, securing the view that Navitas is only interested in regions which constitute high profits for their shareholders.

Illawarra and Hunter TAFE teachers are concerned about the welfare of their AMEP students as they have never delivered the AMEP in the Hunter or Illawarra and were not directly awarded any AMEP contracts across Australia.

Student protests have already occurred at Wollongong TAFE.

The loss of TAFE as the AMEP provider, coupled with the loss of the Skills for Education and Employment (SEE) contract, will impact on Illawarra, Southern Highlands, Monaro, South Coast, Newcastle, Maitland and Upper Hunter Valley communities.

Across these local regions in excess of 100 teachers and support staff, including permanent, temporary and casual employees, are now under threat of losing some or all of their employment.

TAFE provides extensive support to students including childcare, counselling, libraries, tutorial assistance and more. The teachers had AAA compliance rating in the previous Commonwealth contract and are questioning why they have lost both contracts.

While we celebrate the return of the AMEP into public education, the AMEP tenders have a painful past in NSW. The Adult Migrant English Service (AMES) was the largest public provider of the AMEP in Australia, having been established in 1951 and teaching over one and half million people through this program.

The privatisation of the AMEP provision in 1998 saw Navitas take hold, a private for profit corporation which currently boosts a $90 million profit last financial year. They were awarded the tenders for the most profitable regions in NSW with the highest settlement areas. This painfully cementing the demise of AMES NSW and resulting in the loss of jobs for hundreds of highly dedicated, qualified and skilled English language specialist teachers. It too was the beginning of the obsession by successive governments to privatise educational provision in the post school sector in NSW.

While history should never be forgotten, this is welcome news for public education and TAFE teachers will serve these communities with excellence, as they benefit from the hundreds of additional positions as a result of this decision.

Amber Flohm is the Multicultural Officer/Organiser at the NSW Teachers Federation.

Rob Long is Post Schools Organiser at the NSW Teachers Federation.
Siti’s Story

Siti worked for 23 years in a textile factory in Jakarta which used chrysotile asbestos for its materials. Siti says that when workers were interacting with the asbestos, some wore gloves and others didn’t. When asbestos fibres pierced the skin, it was difficult to remove and it hurt. Workers were given one simple cloth mask to use each week and they took their work clothes home to wash.

In the early years, Siti felt okay. But after 10 years, she started coughing. Her company performed medical exams for workers and held onto the results. The company said they were okay.

In 2010, results from an independent medical examination were sent to Korea and Siti was diagnosed with asbestosis. Speaking in Geneva, Siti stated that it is her hope that no more people suffer from asbestos.

Asbestos in Indonesia

Asbestos is a persistent problem in Indonesia with a thriving industry. The asbestos importation, manufacture and trades are still massive and legal and without providing any information of its hazard to the people.

Indonesia is ranked 10th in the world for asbestos consumption.

Union Aid Abroad in Indonesia

Union Aid Abroad extended its asbestos disease prevention work into Indonesia in late 2015 by working in partnership with an OHS organisation called LION (Local Initiative OHS Network) – www.lionindonesia.org. Since then LION has been working to help organise workers in 26 asbestos factories in conjunction with local union, FSERBUK (People Workers Federation). Our key strategies include: working to provide an alternative to asbestos as a raw material; worker and union organizing in supply chains; asbestos removal; victim organising.

We ask you to JOIN US TODAY in supporting our asbestos campaign and international solidarity work. You can join for $15 per month or more (tax deductible). Over 80% of your contribution goes directly to our project partners in-country – a higher ratio than most other Australian aid agencies.

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WINTER 2017  •  THE AUSTRALIAN TAFE TEACHER 29
T he current process of recentralising TAFE into a state wide system is known as ONE TAFE. This has seen the previous 10 Institute brandings being replaced by a TAFE NSW logo. As ONE TAFE rolls out, we hope to see the evidence of all TAFE colleges having a consistent set of procedures and reporting lines. While Federation has welcomed the concept of centralisation, we acknowledge the potential this has to create a larger bureaucracy to further complicate management or obfuscate funding. If done well, ONE TAFE can have real benefits for teaching and learning. Members clearly see a benefit to divesting the duplication and waste created by autonomous Institutes but obviously expect the money saved will be put back into teaching and learning to have a real benefit for students. An integral part of ONE TAFE is the creation of 9 SkillsPoints to act as centres of curriculum development, innovation and delivery customisation for clusters of skills/trades areas and qualifications. Teachers quite rightly expect highly qualified, experienced teachers to be employed in these centres. There is concern that after four years of ongoing redundancies an already depleted teaching workforce will be put under additional pressure during the upheaval of such a large scale restructure. Federation will work with members to monitor and ensure TAFE manage any identified risks and continues to negotiate and consult with TAFE management during this process. ☺

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

E nterprise Bargaining continues at Central Queensland University (CQU). Parity of conditions and salary with TAFE Queensland (TQ) educators is the key issue for Vocational Educators who transitioned across to CQU from Central Queensland institute of TAFE in the 2014 merger. Given the quite reasonable raises TQ teachers achieved in late 2016 it’s concerning that CQU is aiming at far smaller uniform pay increases for staff across that organisation. With CQU VET Educators’ copied award and certified agreement based on an expired state agreement, there’s been only a 2% administrative pay increase since late June 2013. CQU VET Educators are feeling the pinch with a consequent real salary reduction over the four years.

Recently teachers at TQ and CQU working in English language and employment skills areas received welcome news. TAFE English Language and Literacy Service (TELLS) successfully tendered for renewed Federal contracts for Adult Migrant English Program (AMEP) and Skills for Employment and Education (SEE) winning all regions tendered for. Approximately 400 staff (educators and support) employed Queensland wide delivering AMEP and SEE gave a deep collective sigh of relief when it was reported. However needing to compete against private players like Navitas, the tender was for less than last contract. As a consequence consultation regarding delivery structure and necessary support has commenced prior to FY17/18 implementation.

Recent release of public service staffing numbers has caused the Hon Jarred Bleijie (LNP) Shadow Minister for Employment, Skills and Training to write to the Gympie Times lamenting 90- fulltime jobs being lost from TAFE Queensland in the December Quarter. It is refreshing to see Mr Bleijies lately developed concern. As a Minister in the Newman government he shares responsibility for the evisceration of TAFE presiding over the loss of over 3000 jobs in the organisation in their 2 years of Government. ☺

David Terauds is the Queensland member of the National TAFE Council Executive

SOUTHERN Region

C O L L E G E S  &  C O N V E R S E S

A U S T R A L I A N  G U I D E  T O  S E N I O R  T E A C H E R S

A R O U N D  A U S T R A L I A

NEW SOUTH WALES

MAXINE SHARKEY

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

SOUTH AUSTRALIA

TONY SUTHERLAND


T here is some light on the horizon at the national level with the Federal Labor party in support of Guaranteed VET funding for TAFE, but the South Australian State Labor Government heads towards a March 2018 State election with the policy of a 100 % contestability for VET funding by 2018/19 financial year.

I M P A C T  O F  I N C R E A S I N G L Y  C O N T E S T A B L E  M A R K E T  I N  S A

Since 2012 under the current State Labor Government, AEU TAFE members have been living with the impact of an increasingly contestable market which has:

- Significantly reduced both ongoing and temporary lecturing staff numbers
- Seen campus closures
- Reduction in the number of courses
- Slashing of delivery hours, and
- Increased student fees.

T A F E  I S  T O O  G O O D  T O  L O S E

A highly qualified and skilled workforce is essential in South Australia. With high unemployment levels, especially for young people, the need to ensure the State’s future prosperity through a dependable, responsive vocational training system is critical. TAFE is too good to lose. We need a high quality properly funded TAFE system.

A W E L L - F U N D E D  Q U A L I T Y  P U B L I C  P R O V I D E R

TAFE AEUSA members will hit the campaign trail in the lead up to March 2018 State Election to meet
with prospective State MPs, communities, industries, and students. We’ll be seeking support for a well-funded, quality public provider of vocational education.

**EA IMPLEMENTATION CONTINUES**

The AEU is driving the agenda to implement the new Enterprise Agreement outcomes including the new lecturer classification structure, the education managers’ review, and ensuring the appropriate modes of employment are used.

Empowering members through EA Implementation Workshops has seen good results with a number of workgroups successfully negotiating workload outcomes which enable a better work/life balance.

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

**WESTERN AUSTRALIA**

**GARY HEDGER**

In the recent state election the ALP picked up 41 seats (30 seats required to govern) which caused the LNP to lose 7 ministers and the leader of the Nationals to lose his seat.

Prior to the election the TAFE committee had met with the shadow minister and had a very frank discussion on the state of TAFE and what was happening as a result of the LNP slashing funding and increasing course fees by up to 600%.

After the election with the new cabinet revealed Training and Education have been combined under the former shadow minister for Education. TAFE committee are very keen to meet with the new minister and outline our concerns and find out the government’s view as how to sort out the mess that has been inflicted on TAFE.

The Premier Mark McGowan and Education and Training Minister Sue Ellery have announced TAFE fees have been frozen.

The TAFE fee freeze will allow more Western Australians to get the skills they need to get decent jobs and grow our State’s economy.

Under the previous Liberal Government, TAFE fees increased by up to 510 per cent. The fee increase put TAFE out of reach for many young people going to TAFE. The TAFE fee freeze means there will be no further increases to TAFE fees in the McGowan Government’s first term.

We will be following up on the ALP’s pre-election promise on permanency for TAFE lecturers. We will be meeting with the government to work out the conversion process and how to have it rolled out as quickly as possible across the system.

Gary Hedges is the WA member of the National TAFE Council Executive

**ACT**

**GERARD DWYER**

In the ACT, the two major areas that we are focused on are workload issues related to the Canberra Institute of Technology’s (CIT) ASQA reregistration and CIT’s enterprise bargaining agreement.

CIT’s ASQA reregistration has substantially increased workload. Teachers have been expected to cover the reregistration workload in their own time on top of their full-time teaching loads. The constant changing goal posts and inconsistencies across CIT has caused immense stress and long working days for teachers. In many areas, casual staff have been asked to do the work without being paid.

In the last six months, the AEU ACT has conducted two surveys. In both surveys, over 90% of members say the workload is seriously impacting their health. The AEU has raised these concerns at the People Committee, the WHS Committee and the CIT Consultative Committee. We have shifted CIT’s enterprise bargaining agreement to cover the reregistration workload in their own time on top of their full-time teaching loads.

In CIT’s enterprise agreement bargaining, the AEU’s log of claim focuses on what hours of work are considered part of the faculty load. We are negotiating for increased faculty load hours to recognise the ongoing compliance work that CIT expects teachers to complete. The AEU is asking for there to be hours allocated to new training packages, moderation and validation, compulsory workplace training and the work around recognition of prior learning. We are also bargaining for professional development hours and online teaching hours to be counted in the faculty load.

CIT has flagged that it wants to be more flexible, but has not indicated what this means. It is unlikely that this means protecting the current rights and conditions of teachers. The AEU is putting up a strong front at the bargaining table to improve working conditions against an employer that has flagged reduced protections for teachers.

Gerard Dwyer is the CIT Organiser at the AEU ACT Branch

**TASMANIA**

**DAMIAN VON SAMORZEWSKI**

TasTAFE has had an interesting first quarter with a “seamless” (as described by the CEO) rollout of its new Student Management System. Obvious we were a bit bemused by this comment, as students took up to 8 weeks to be enrolled and invoiced. Some student then took another 4 weeks to access their online courses, campus computers and ID cards.

EBA negotiations started just before Christmas 2016, with a tardy effort by TasTAFE management. Rather than a log of claims, the AEU received a list of points they wished to ‘feel us out on’. Many were unrelated to an EBA and focused on business practices. Some points were of interest to us, particularly looking at what ‘teaching’ looks like in 2017. With continual pressure to increase teaching hours, without appreciating the complexities of regulatory requirements and students’ needs, teachers can’t find the time to do what they came to TAFE to do: provide current, relevant and high standard industry based training. The EBA that our members will vote on in the Tasmanian Government generic 2% pay increase, plus no loss of conditions or entitlements. We have also gained some important industrial and non-industrial entitlements with zero tradeoffs. This new agreement is only an 18 month agreement and aligns with other Public Service agreements. We will be using the next 15 months to form working groups to explore what needs amending in the current agreement so that teaching staff are better supported in the workplace.

As 2017 continues we will all be busy learning a new online learning system called CANVAS. It appears that this will be the solution to all our woes, including delivering more training for less. Less money, less staff, less resources. We are looking at volume of students rather than TAFE’s main point of difference- quality education and training, by staff that have the time to make it personal, meaningful and relevant. Something our members will strive for, no matter their conditions.

Damian von Samorzewski is President of the AEU Tasmanian TAFE Division President
TAFE: TOO GOOD TO LOSE

GUARANTEE 70% VET FUNDING TO TAFE!

NATIONAL TAFE DAY
13 JUNE 2017

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