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John Ross
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In February, the ALP announced their proposal to hold a National Inquiry into Post-Secondary education, should they be elected at the next Federal election. This is another positive step from the ALP; following in the wake of their commitment to guarantee two thirds of vocational education funding to TAFE. You can read more about the Inquiry on page 12.

In October last year, the AEU held a conference in Sydney The future of TAFE: new social policy to begin the process of reimagining TAFE’s future and to contribute to the development of new social policy in this important sector of education. To share that work with you, we have included articles from most of the conference’s speakers in this issue. Leesa Wheelahan looks at what it will take to save TAFE; John Pardy examines how TAFE has survived, and the importance of understanding exactly what TAFE does; Valerie Braithwaite discusses the fairness of income contingent loans; Jim Stanford reflects on the transformation of the world of work and the importance of TAFE in a changing world; Anne Jones writes about why vocational education matters – particularly for innovation and research; and Craig Robertson shares a fable for our times – A sector with no clothes. The conference was a great success – and we hope reading these articles will give readers a sense of the breadth of debate, discussion and ideas raised on the day.

We were also lucky to catch journalist John Ross between assignments, and to get his unique perspective on vocational education. John has been writing about tertiary education for over a decade, and in Turning the ship around he looks at the sector — reflecting on the worst of the scams and rorts; the regulatory and policy agendas; and his own educational experiences. John concludes that “on the bright side, the plight of public VET has clearly entered the public’s consciousness” and that it may not be too late for the sector to change course.

This issue also takes a closer look at the debate around TAFE teacher qualifications, and the intersection between our broader campaign work in the sector and the industrial conditions of members. This intersection is of vital importance, because “the quality of TAFE teachers is crucial to the future of TAFE and vocational education. Investment in TAFE teachers, long overlooked by the sector, is an investment in the future of vocational education… a highly qualified, high quality TAFE workforce must become the benchmark for the whole vocational education sector. This single thing is the best hope for the survival of public provision and for guaranteed provision of quality education in TAFE.”

I would like to draw your attention to three upcoming activities for AEU members. Firstly, as part of an ongoing project of Education International and the AEU, we are asking all members to keep an eye on their inboxes as a survey to help inform this project will shortly be sent to all members. The project is about social justice and vocational education. The survey will take about 15 minutes to complete and asks questions about what TAFE should be like, and what it is like. You can read more about the survey on page 27. Secondly, for women members, applications for the Rosemary Richards Scholarship are open until Friday 11 May – more details on page 28.

Finally, we are pleased to announce that National TAFE Day will be held on Tuesday 19 June! Please make sure you are following us on social media and signed up on www.stoptafecuts.com.au so you can hear more about National TAFE Day in the lead up to June. We would love AEU members to make the day their own, and think of creative ways to celebrate the day at campuses across the country. The back cover of this issue of TATT is a TAFE Day poster, so when you’ve finished reading this jam-packed edition you can rip off the back cover and put it on your noticeboard at work. ●

FROM THE PRESIDENT

MICHELLE PURDY, AEU FEDERAL TAFE PRESIDENT

I

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Securing the future

The decision by the ALP nationally to establish a National Commission of Inquiry into post-secondary education in their first hundred days of government is a welcome development for the embattled TAFE sector. This, combined with the commitment to guarantee TAFE a minimum two thirds of government vocational education funding announced in 2017, and to restore funding removed from the sector in the 2017/18 budget offers some hope for the future.

These have been the key focusses of the campaign for the last year, and securing these commitments means that while there is considerable work to be done in advocating for the centrality of public TAFE institutions in any reconceived post-secondary sector, we can continue to build the Stop TAFE Cuts campaign leading up to the next election with the certainty that the work of our activists and members has been critical.

There remains considerable work to do, however, in framing and advocating the policy that will give substance to the funding guarantee, and lead to increased funding for TAFE. Increased funding is critical for TAFE to survive. But one of the most positive aspects of the announcement is its breadth. In including curriculum and pedagogy as well as quality and funding, the inquiry can fundamentally reconceive the architecture of the system – critically scrutinising the role of competition and market reform, competency based training and Training Packages. These components of the marketised system have destroyed TAFE teachers’ professionalism, undermined their working conditions and hollowed out the system. They have fundamentally damaged the TAFE system.

The AEU has worked to have input into the framing of the inquiry – asserting the fundamental role of public education institutions in the sector into the future. There will be many who who will argue for just a tinkering with the market, a resetting of the competition agenda, and complete reversion to employer domination – and astoundingly, a continuing role for the greedy and voracious for-profit private sector.

Whilst there is a growing acknowledgement across the system that market reform has damaged the sector, there remain many who argue that competition merely needs to be re-balanced. There is, however, the opportunity to influence policy in a way which will allow a process of rebuilding TAFE to commence. We must continue to argue for an alternative vision for TAFE.

The focus of the Stop TAFE Cuts campaign for the next period will be on promoting the 70% guarantee and the inquiry, and increasing pressure on the Turnbull government to match the Labor commitment. The Labor Party in four states/territories has committed to the 70% funding guarantee (NSW, ACT, SA and Tasmania). Two state Labor governments are not committed to a funding guarantee. These are Victoria and Queensland. We have to continue to build and maintain pressure on these states.

Our campaign must also continue to highlight the impact of marketisation, privatisation and contestability including the dodgy practices of private for-profit providers. As scandals and collapses of private for-profit providers continue to occur on an almost weekly basis, awareness of their behaviour is at an all-time high. The campus closures, course cuts and job losses continue across the country, hollowing out the sector, and damaging the lives and opportunities of the next generation of young people.

Despite the damage, TAFE remains a highly regarded Australian institution, and the campaign continues to focus on, and promote positive TAFE stories.

Following the AEU TAFE conference in 2017, presentations from which are included in this edition of The Australian TAFE Teacher, we must continue to focus on rebuilding public policy in TAFE, that has returned its attention to professional issues, including strengthening our policies in respect of qualifications. As we move into this next phase of the campaign, we need to strengthen our arguments around the centrality of a highly qualified, industrially secure and well remunerated TAFE teaching workforce at the centre of the rebuilding of the public TAFE system for all those students who so desperately need TAFE.

For these reasons, we are committed to redoubling our efforts in the Stop TAFE Cuts campaign, and securing the future of the public TAFE system in Australia.

There remains much to be done.

Pat Forward is the AEU’s Federal TAFE Secretary and Deputy Federal Secretary
SAVING TAFE: what will it take?

Federal Labor has made two key promises if it wins the next election. The first is that it will reinvest in TAFE, and the second is that it will establish a national inquiry into post-secondary education in Australia. The inquiry will examine the role of TAFE and universities with the aim of developing a coherent tertiary education sector in which TAFE and universities are equally valued.

BY PROFESSOR LEESA WHEELAHAN

THIS is just in time. TAFE is a shadow of its former self and it needs massive reinvestment if it is to recover from the systematic disinvestment by multiple governments over the last decade. We also need a national review that will re-establish public TAFEs as the centre of a strong public vocational education system, to overcome the damage that has been caused by casting TAFE as ‘a provider’, one among many, in a for-profit VET system.

TAFE is reeling from 30 years of reforms to create a VET market and system in which it is forced to deliver low quality, fragmented competency-based qualifications in competition with for-profit providers. The scorched earth marketisation policies of the last 10 years in particular have resulted in a low trust, scandal plagued, fragmented system, and the decimation of TAFE.

The problem that the inquiry will need to confront is: how can Australia move from the wreckage of the past to a high trust system with trusted qualifications that individuals, employers, unions, governments and communities have reason to value? A high trust system needs to be based on trusted institutions, with TAFE as the anchor of that system, supported by enabling institutions, policies and frameworks.

What might this look like? A first step would be to articulate a positive mission for TAFE and its role in our society and economy. The last major review of TAFE was in 1974, and then the Kangan Committee defined TAFE as doing what universities and schools didn’t do — that is, it defined TAFE residually. Instead, we need to articulate a positive mission for TAFE that is different from the other two sectors.

TAFE is about far more than skills. Because TAFEs are deeply enmeshed in their local communities and regions, they will be a key institution contributing to renewal through sustainable and socially inclusive regional social and economic development. TAFEs don’t just respond to ‘demand’ for skills; they are key local institutions which have responsibility for working with local communities and industries to develop solutions to problems and to creating opportunity.

TAFE is an institution, it isn’t a provider. There is a big difference between the two. The notion of a provider implies one among many, and it doesn’t much matter if it is this or that provider which is providing the ‘service’. Providers come and go, and wax and wane in response to market demand. In this vision, the invisible hand of the market results in the provision of training for skills when and where as needed, with no need to invest in institutions, institutional capacity or teacher development. Governments only need invest in markets, not institutions. Competition is seen to be a self-evident good, with profit as the incentive. The problem is that in a for profit market the point is (as we have seen) to make profits, and monstrous profits have been made by driving down quality and bringing the system to breaking point.

In contrast, institutions are underpinned by social relations of trust in local communities. They are able to mediate between national and
state governments and local communities by developing, in partnership with their communities, locally responsive and contextually appropriate solutions, while ensuring that the requirements of national policies are met.

Anyone who has ever worked in a TAFE knows that this is what TAFE does, even if it has never been recognised in policy or funding. TAFE directors and senior managers are part of the local economic and social development committees; TAFE teachers and outreach staff (when we had them) work with disadvantaged communities to build supportive pathways into education and training. Learning support staff (again, when we had them) help those students who need additional support to develop the literacy and numeracy skills they need to function as citizens in our society. TAFE teachers work with local employers to improve their products or processes, and to develop effective workplace learning strategies. This is why damage to TAFE is also damage to local communities. The decimation of TAFE is the decimation of local community infrastructures.

But TAFE can do much more than this – TAFEs can be a powerhouse for local socially inclusive and sustainable social and economic development. Rather than limit its work to responding to existing requirements for skills, TAFEs need to be funded to consider the knowledge and skills that will be needed for work in the future, and to develop, codify and institutionalise this knowledge.

This is important scholarly activity that will support innovation, and it should explicitly be built into TAFE’s mission. For example, the teachers of electrical trades apprentices should be supported to consider how the latest insights from engineering will change the work of electrical trades apprentices five or ten years in the future. Or, teachers of aged care workers should be supported to consider, and develop appropriate curriculum, to ensure that the aged care workers of tomorrow understand the implications of the latest research on dementia for working with elderly people with Alzheimer’s.

If TAFE is to support its communities, then it needs to be funded to offer a sufficiently comprehensive range of programs that will enable students to realise their aspirations. A particularly pernicious consequence of existing policies is that students who go to TAFE can only get public funding for their studies for courses in areas in which employers claim there are skill shortages. In contrast, students who can afford to go to university can choose anything they want. Moreover, this is pointless policy because most VET graduates do not work in occupations directly associated with their qualification.

TAFE should, within a national qualification assurance framework, be entrusted with developing local qualifications that meet the needs of students, communities, local industries and regions. Training packages are now 20 years old – it is time we recognised that they are bad qualifications based on bad models of curriculum that result in rigid, one size fits all qualifications for all Australia. We have had review after review that tinkers at the edges of training packages in vain efforts to fix their many deficiencies. We need a new model of qualifications, one that places the development of the student in the context of their broad intended occupation at the centre of curriculum and pedagogy.

Achieving these goals for TAFE will require investing in TAFE teachers and in TAFE teachers’ qualifications. Strong institutions require well prepared, qualified staff. As well as being industry experts, TAFE teachers need to be supported to become expert teachers. Being an expert teacher in TAFE means something different to being an expert teacher in schools or universities. Expert teachers in TAFE should be able to engage in the scholarship of teaching and learning so they can consider the transformations to work in their field and what that will mean in the future, implement a repertoire of responsive pedagogic strategies to work with the most disadvantaged students, and support sustainable social and economic development and innovation in their communities.

TAFE is the anchor of its communities. It needs to be funded to support sustainable and socially inclusive social and economic development. It can work in partnership with schools and universities to achieve these goals, based on an understanding of its distinctive contributions and locally responsive and locally focused missions.

Leesa Wheelahan was the Associate Professor at the LH Martin Institute for Tertiary Education Leadership and Management at the University of Melbourne. She is now the William G Davis Chair in Community College Leadership at the University of Toronto. Leesa has taught in tertiary education for approximately 22 years, which includes time as a TAFE teacher.
I’ve been a tertiary education journalist for about a decade, but I’ve been a tertiary education consumer much longer. Ever since the early 80s I’ve sampled the range of post-secondary offerings: a degree at an institution that now calls itself a university; lots of community college courses; a couple of introductory TAFE certificates; some so-called professional development programs of highly variable quality.

By far the best thing I did was a four-week certificate in teaching English to adult speakers of other languages, which I undertook at a Sydney private college almost 20 years ago. It was well thought out, expertly taught, personable, rigorous and demanding.

I never really used the qualification professionally – when I got to Spain, I ended up writing my great unpublished novel instead – but it has served me in many ways. It’s made me a better writer, choosing words with more precision and thinking more analytically about tenses. It’s helped me understand the craft of education.

It’s even influenced my parenting. One of the ideas underpinning English teaching is that because it’s such a ubiquitous language, foreigners often know the words for things. But they don’t know they know them. So, if students ask for vocabulary translations, teachers shouldn’t immediately dish up the answers – they should try to elicit them first.

The eureka moment students experience, when they realise the word was there in their heads all along, helps build their skills and confidence. Consequently, when six year-old Jem asks me “what does ‘discovery’ mean?, my invariable response — to his extreme frustration — is “what do you think?”.

That course cost me about $2000, way back in 2001, and it was worth every cent. Perhaps there’s an argument that a course of such quality should be subsidised by the government. Why not? It provides a clear job outcome — even if it didn’t for me — and international education, as we all

Turning the ship around

BY JOHN ROSS
There’s a view that funding for vocationally oriented courses should be premised on student choice. People should be supported to study wherever they want, regardless of whether it’s a public or private college. Others maintain that only public education institutions should receive public money, and private colleges should be privately funded.

I’m not sure exactly where I stand in that debate. I suspect that, as in most things, some sort of balance is probably desirable. But I’m certain of one thing: a rich liberal democracy like Australia warrants a viable and effective public vocational education system.

People should have access to training that gives them work skills or a leg-up into further learning. And, as with schools and universities, that opportunity should be available to everybody. Cost should be no barrier.

While people bellyache interminably about our public schools, as a society we take it for granted – in fact, we insist – that every child can gain a place in one. We don’t allow cost to stop hard-up kids from going to school.

Fees are low and discretionary. We expect schools within a reasonable distance of where people live, teaching an adequate spread of subjects. If we didn’t get that, there’d be riots. And if a regulator hung the sword of Damocles over an entire state schooling system, because of perceived shortcomings in the way it was doing things, we’d be appalled.

Yet that’s exactly what’s happened in public vocational education and training. When I started full-time journalism back in 2008, there were about 58 TAFE institutes across Australia. People living in metropolitan areas did not have to travel too far to find courses in anything from business to building, bricklaying to basket weaving. Courses were not too expensive – a damn sight less than university degrees – and concessions were widely available to disadvantaged people.

Now there are about 33 TAFE institutes. The reduction is mainly because of mergers, but they’ve been driven by budgets that have been stretched to the wall. Some campuses have closed outright. Thousands of TAFE teachers have lost their jobs.

Courses have been slashed, and most are now only subsidised if they’re directly associated with hard-to-fill jobs – even though most vocational education graduates don’t end up working in the areas in which they’ve trained.

Even courses for occupations with plenty of job vacancies, such as hospitality, can attract little or no government support. Students can be forced to travel miles to access classes for trades like plumbing and plastering, despite job opportunities triggered by the metropolitan construction booms.

TAFE diploma courses, which typically cost about $1000 to $1500 a decade ago, now charge up to 10 times as much. Once a low-cost alternative to university, TAFE can now cost more. Lots of exemptions and concessions for people from low socioeconomic backgrounds have been scrapped, and advanced vocational courses in at least one state now attract no government support at all.

In a shock development last year, South Australia’s public vocational education provider comprehensively failed a random audit by the Australian Skills Quality Authority. Now the regulator is threatening to stop TAFE SA from running 10 courses and is set to scrutinise a whole lot more.

Ominously, the regulator says the performance at other states’ TAFEs is likely to be worse. It says that while 67 per cent of its audits of TAFE SA activities have revealed problems, the “noncompliance” rate across Australia’s other TAFEs is an extraordinary 80 per cent.

How did it come to this? In my mind, the regulatory mindset in Australia has flipped from trust to paranoia, courtesy of the bare-faced rorts that have undermined repeated attempts to turn vocational education and training into a quasi-market.

As a reporter, I’ve been gobsmacked by the sheer brazenness of frauds I’ve uncovered. The fly-by-night Melbourne college that awarded footy club members certificate IVs in outdoor recreation for a few nights spent ‘learning’ on their own premises. It gave participants $1000 kickbacks, bankrolled from state government subsidies, and called them “scholarships”.

The soon-to-be-bankrupt Sydney-based college whose directors paid its shareholders — including themselves — $15 million in dividends, on the same day the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission launched
proceedings to recover tens of millions of dollars in improperly obtained student loans.

Swindles of this sort are light years removed from the business model of non-profits like TAFEs, and exemplary private colleges like the one where I trained to be a language teacher. But in the scramble to shut down the rorts, regulators tar everybody with the same brush and raise the audit bar accordingly.

It’s hard to say whether TAFEs’ fundamental capabilities have been eroded by years of starvation funding, or the regulatory regime has been amped up so much that you can fail an audit because of a typo in your assessment documentation. I suspect it’s a bit of both. Either way, the TAFE SA debacle won’t be the last of its type. Interstate TAFEs know the same fate could befall them when the auditors come calling.

TAFEs are the bedrock of a proud Australian vocational education system that used to impress the world, if not the people back home. Even back in the 90s and naughties it seemed they were under constant reform. But the slippery slope really began with a series of ill-conceived attempts to turn vocational education into an open market, beginning with Labor’s Productivity Places Program in 2008.

The scheme was designed to shake up TAFEs by offering private colleges funding on an equal footing. This was supposed to make training more “flexible” and “agile” and responsive to student and industry demand.

Instead, it was monopolised by private colleges predictably maximising their profits by teaching courses that required little infrastructure — security and sales, for example — rather than the training society needed in areas like aged care and health.

A mid-term review found that the $2.1 billion scheme was so badly administered that evaluators couldn’t tell how many people had participated. It was eventually scrapped halfway through what was supposed to be a five-year term.

You’d think that would have set the alarm bells ringing. Instead, the PPP became the prototype for a string of failed state attempts at marketisation. The Victorian Training Guarantee, which was cut to the bone in 2012 after the training budget blew out by $400 million. South Australia’s Skills for All, which was subjected to constant tinkering and eventually axed after a similar overspend.

Every state tried similar schemes, while vowing not to repeat each other’s mistakes. And while the latter schemes weren’t plagued by the bare-faced rorting experienced in Victoria, TAFEs bled market share, money, courses and teachers while students coped massive fee hikes.

Some states had no choice. They were obliged to follow suit by an April 2012 agreement with the Gillard government, ominously signed on Friday the 13th. States that tried to minimise the damage to TAFEs — i.e. NSW — ended up sending decent private colleges broke.

The doozy of open market schemes, of course, was the federal government’s VET FEE-HELP loans scheme. A modest program under its original design, it snowballed after the Gillard government relaxed the rules in 2012. The scheme’s appalling design and negligent oversight saw allocations mushroom from a little over $300m in 2012 to $2.9bn in 2015, before it was finally pared back and then replaced.

Around $8bn was squandered this way, and the government has already surrendered any hope of getting at least a quarter of it back. Much has been written about the personal toll on naive outer metropolitan students taken for a ride by predatory scamsters.

The toll on the wider system has been equally catastrophic. The money lavished on VET FEE-HELP and the other debacles is now lost to the vocational sector.

Victoria University’s Mitchell Institute recently found that VET’s share of education spending had plummeted by 30 per cent in a little over a decade, as opportunistic states used VET FEE-HELP as an excuse to rip funds out of the sector. Meanwhile, universities circled like sharks, snapping up students who would have done better at TAFE — and pocketing the funding that came with them.

The ideologues behind this ill-fated marketisation push weren’t stupid. They saw problems in TAFE that warranted fixing. I have no doubt they were right. I spent about 15 years as a public servant and witnessed any amount of waste, so doubtless TAFEs could have pulled their socks up.

But so too could schools. And don’t get me started on universities. Why single out TAFEs? Obviously, because the ideologues could get away with it. TAFEs lacked the political clout wielded by schools and unis.

And the reformers clearly underestimated the capacity of the profit motive to skew colleges’ behaviour. The market cure for TAFEs and VET has turned out to be a whole lot worse than the disease.

So, what now? On the bright side, the plight of public VET has clearly entered the public’s consciousness. Business groups are releasing position papers about it. Newspapers, which once confined their VET coverage to the latest scam, are running stories about broader policy. Even university vice-chancellors are acknowledging VET as the biggest issue in tertiary education.

The federal Coalition is at least making a stab at putting some money back into VET, albeit through an unconvincing fund. Labor and the Greens are elevating VET as an election issue and promising to curtail or eliminate market-based funding.

Here’s hoping a new policy narrative can turn the ship around.

John Ross is Asia Pacific editor of Times Higher Education magazine, and a former tertiary education journalist with The Australian and Campus Review. This article, written when he was between jobs, contains his personal reflections.
The Labor Party in four states/territories (NSW, ACT, SA and Tasmania), as well as the Federal ALP, have committed to the 70% funding guarantee. Labor governments in Victoria, Queensland, Western Australia and the NT are yet to commit to a funding guarantee.

We need to build and maintain pressure on all states and territories, and on the Federal Government. And we need your help.

We are asking members to make an appointment with a local politician (MP or Senator) and ask them to sign our funding guarantee poster, and send us a photo.

If you head to our website www.stoptafecuts.com.au/pledge you can see which politicians have already signed the pledge, and download and print the funding guarantee poster.

For those politicians whose party has committed to a 70 per cent or two thirds funding guarantee, signing an individual guarantee demonstrates they understand the importance of guaranteed funding for TAFE.

Where there is not yet a commitment to the guarantee, it is still important to speak to or write to your local MP and ask them what their plan is for TAFE. Let them know that TAFE is important to you and the majority of the electorate.

TAFE is too good to lose, and we need to remind all politicians of that. Guaranteed funding for TAFE is the first step in securing its future.

In addition to the funding guarantee, there are a number of campaign activities to get involved in. All the resources are available to download from our website, or email Rosie Scroggie on rscroggie@aeufederal.org.au at our Federal Office and she will send you an activist kit with everything you need to participate. Include your t-shirt size in your email, and we’ll include a Stop TAFE Cuts t-shirt!

- Take a selfie with our “Guarantee 70% VET Funding to TAFE” poster and send it to us on social media. You can find us at Stop TAFE Cuts on Facebook and @TAFECampaign on Twitter.
- Gather your colleagues together at your TAFE Campus and take a photo with your campus sign and “Guarantee 70% VET Funding to TAFE” posters.
- Share your TAFE story on Facebook or Twitter – post it 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

NATIONAL TAFE DAY 2018!

We are excited to share with you that National TAFE Day will be celebrated this year on Tuesday 19 June!

Every year, National TAFE Day provides us with an opportunity to celebrate the achievements of our public TAFE system and to remind politicians that TAFE is too good to lose!

We would love for AEU members around the country to get involved and hold an event in your campus, school or community to mark the day!

Please make sure you have signed up as a supporter on our website (www.stoptafecuts.com.au) followed us on Twitter (@TAFECampaign) and liked us on Facebook (Stop TAFE Cuts) to hear more about National TAFE Day closer to the date.

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The Stop TAFE Cuts campaign continues in 2018!

Our major focus in the next period of time will be promoting the 70% funding guarantee.
In announcing the inquiry, Shadow Minister for Education, Tanya Plibersek, said:

**TAFE and vocational education is in crisis.**
The number of students attending TAFE has collapsed due to funding cuts and unhealthy competition from private providers accessing government subsidies. The system is both fragmented and rigid. Partial reviews have not fixed underlying problems. So we must act now. Labor will put TAFE at the centre of Australia’s vocational education system. The review will look at the special role TAFE has, including helping Australian business become more competitive at home, and internationally.

This is another positive step for the ALP, following their May 2017 commitments to increase funding to TAFE and guarantee a minimum two thirds of VET funding to public TAFE institutions.

There has not been a review of this magnitude into the sector since the Kangan Review of Technical and Further Education in 1974. They argue that this will be a “once in a generation” opportunity to examine and make recommendations about how vocational and higher education systems address the country’s economic and societal needs. Labor will convene a panel of experts, sector leaders, union and business representatives to advise on the scope and terms of the inquiry.

The AEU believes a root and branch review of the system is long overdue. A national review, unlike previous partial or single jurisdiction reviews, should deal with issues across the whole sector and examine the underlying architecture. It is critically important that the National Commission of Inquiry’s scope include funding sources and levels; curriculum; pedagogy; assessment and quality assurance.

Currently, the TAFE and vocational education sectors are without any leadership nationally. The Turnbull Government has cut more than $177 million from the sector in the 2017 budget alone. It has overseen one of the worst examples of rorting in the history of the sector under the failed VET FEE-HELP Scheme. The legacy of the Turnbull government will be a generation of young Australians left with massive debts for worthless qualifications. Privatisation of skills and training has failed.

The vocational education system is in crisis across the country. The Turnbull government has failed to negotiate any agreements with the states and territories around their deeply flawed Skilling Australia Fund. Funding has been cut in successive budgets, and there has been little done to restore confidence in the sector, nor to address the damage done to individual students as a result of the VET FEE-HELP debacle. A bipartisan approach to the National Commission of Inquiry would acknowledge the urgency of the situation the sector is currently in, and go a long way to restoring trust and confidence in the sector.

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**THE DEFINITIVE INTRODUCTION TO PROJECT MANAGEMENT**

Stephen Hartley’s *Project Management* is based on the recognised global standard for project management, the Project Management Body of Knowledge (PMBOK Guide), and it incorporates aspects of Agile, PRINCE2, Lean and other popular methodologies. It offers a thorough overview of the principles of project management, combined with tools and guidelines to manage projects of all sizes, from inception to evaluation.

Illustrated with examples and case studies, and accompanied by a suite of supplementary material including downloadable templates and tools, the fully revised and updated fourth edition of *Project Management* is written to cover competencies required for the Business Services Training Package.
TAFE teacher qualifications and professional issues

The privatisation of Australia’s TAFE system has been going on for close to thirty years, and some of the key components of the privatisation agenda have included the undermining of teachers’ qualifications and professional status, the attack on industrial conditions, and the casualisation of the workforce.

Our greatest challenges as a union during this period have been to defend the multiple fronts upon which this attack on the TAFE system and TAFE teachers have occurred. At the core of the union’s work has been the attempts to address chronic underfunding and under resourcing, through campaigns against the attempts to privatise the system. Our work in defending professional and industrial conditions of TAFE teachers has always been fundamental to our campaigning, and as we approach another crucial stage in our campaigning, the importance of fighting for high level teaching qualifications and professional development has never been more important.

There are many ironies in the way TAFE teachers, and professional education and training are approached in Australia. These two are perhaps the most perplexing:

• At the core of TAFE is vocational education, and yet the system undervalues this work by showing such little regard for teaching and educational expertise in the workforce.
• The currency of the TAFE sector is qualifications, and yet this currency is publicly devalued by denying TAFE teachers’ access to, and support for, high quality teaching qualifications for themselves. For almost twenty years, teaching qualifications in TAFE and vocational education have been undermined and attacked by governments. Reduced government funding and competition for scarce resources, and the primacy of employers in the determination of policy in the sector have dominated the debate. But one of the constant themes of the last twenty-five years has been the treatment of TAFE teachers. The introduction of CBT and Training Packages threw into sharp relief the critical importance of teachers in the learning process in vocational education, but teachers were actively excluded from involvement in the development of CBT and Training Packages in Australia.

At different times, mainstream vocational education has been dominated by debates about the importance of on-the-job training and recognition of prior learning and these things are crucial to the emergence of the contem-
This process of undermining the system, and teachers’ professional knowledge and skill also fundamentally undermined the capacity of the system to play a role in addressing disadvantage, and therefore in the development of a more cohesive and equitable nation.

VET have taken their toll. The AEU estimates that between 15,000 and 20,000 TAFE teachers have lost their jobs in the past five years. The paucity of funding and resourcing has exacerbated the current crisis in the sector in relation to the teaching workforce. These in concert with the imposition of a market agenda have undermined the capacity of the whole sector.

It is crucial in the present context is to argue for the centrality of education in TAFE, and the importance of teacher qualifications and professional development as the most effective measure of quality in the public system. A discussion around the quality of teaching in TAFE must take as its starting point this central shift in thinking. It is this shift which will allow us to re-focus as the impact of three decades of marketisation and underfunding force us as a society to face the very real question of whether public provision of vocational education in TAFE, as a public good, will survive.

The CIVTAE must be replaced with a degree-level teaching qualification for TAFE teachers. The TAE Training Packages, and CBT more generally deny teachers access to the knowledge and theory which underpins vocational education practice, and which is essential if teachers are to become effective practitioners. It is, in many cases, poorly delivered by opportunist private providers who have conceived of it as a commodity in a training market, a money making venture, rather than an educational activity.

The TAE Training Package was not developed in consultation with the profession. It is the product of an exercise in excluding TAFE and VET teachers, and universities who previously held the ascendency in vocational teaching preparation.

Reconceiving and rebuilding TAFE teaching qualifications is the only pathway to positioning TAFE to achieve what should be its two greatest aims — a highly skilled, adaptive workforce, and a more equitable and socially cohesive society.

Currently, the sector offers very narrow, employer-determined skills for specific tasks. Training Packages deny students access to knowledge, and therefore to power in society. Ironically, the push to include generic skills, or employability skills within Training Packages is about acknowledging the fundamental weakness of CBT and Training Packages. It is about artificially trying put back into training those things that CBT has excluded. But employability and generic skills are not about education — they are...
about employers wanting a compliant, job-ready workforce.

Where there is (and there is) high quality teaching practice in the sector, it is arguably because teachers are able to overcome the restrictions of CBT by applying the knowledge and skills of their own educational expertise to teach to accommodate the deficits of CBT. Qualified and experienced teachers can do this because their own educational preparation through curriculum based courses has prepared them for this task.

And this is why the conundrum of the present situation is potentially so devastating for the sector. The VET and TAFE teaching workforce is, as we know, increasingly unqualified, increasingly casualised and increasingly aged. Many of those with curriculum based teaching qualifications have been sacked, or are retiring. They are the teachers who have carried the CBT revolution in the VET sector and made it work.

What will remain is a workforce whose core is CBT-trained, casualised, overworked and under-valued. They will have much greater difficulty mediating and remedying the flaws in the current CBT-dominated system. This will have a detrimental impact on the whole VET system, but for TAFE, the story is far worse. Public providers will have much greater difficulty arguing for the much higher quality they can provide in the inevitable competition for diminishing government resources with the private sector in the attenuated standards regime which we are in. Where quality teaching exists in TAFE, it is in spite of, not because of CBT and Training Packages.

And this is why a new settlement around TAFE teaching qualifications is crucial. TAFE must remain the standard setting repository of quality education against which all other providers must measure themselves. TAFE must mount the argument that its own teaching workforce has to be prepared both to offer high quality vocational education, and to ameliorate the flaws of CBT and Training Packages.

The AEU offers a far more sophisticated proposition for high level and high quality teaching qualifications, based on educational and professional research in its TAFE teachers’ qualification policy. It proposes a qualification based learning model with embedded standards, agreed with the profession and reflective of the developing professional learning needs of vocational teachers. Instead of attempting to reform a failed and failing qualification, the AEU argues that both state and federal governments need to investigate the re-introduction of high quality teacher qualifications in TAFE and VET, based on a three phased initial, consolidating and advanced approach. Such an approach far better recognises the dynamic nature of the contemporary vocational education environment, where qualifications for teaching are often acquired following initial employment, and where the importance of both education and vocation are acknowledged.

The quality of TAFE teachers is crucial to the future of TAFE and vocational education. Investment in TAFE teachers, long overlooked by the sector, is an investment in the future of vocational education — an investment which will pay dividends to the Australian community.

A highly qualified, high quality TAFE workforce must become the benchmark for the whole vocational education sector. This single thing is the best hope for the survival of public provision and for guaranteed provision of quality education in TAFE.

Pat Forward is the AEU Federal TAFE Secretary and Deputy Federal Secretary
TAFE in Australia: BEYOND SURVIVAL

TAFE colleges and campuses across Australia have been significant key public education institutions for over four decades. The educational mission and breadth of the important work that TAFE does is unfortunately not well understood or recognised.

BY JOHN PARDY

Most people think about TAFE as the education sector that does trade and apprenticeship education and training. People do undertake trade apprenticeship education and training at TAFE, but this represents just over 10% of the education work of TAFE.

There are somewhat clearer understandings in the community about primary schools, secondary schools and universities. This in many ways ensures they are then able to more fully valued. If something is not well understood, it is often difficult and near impossible for people to value and appreciate its worth. Unfortunately this is definitely the case at this important historical moment of TAFE in Australia.

For young people TAFE education provides a way to continue with their schooling when they find that secondary schools cannot or do not meet their learning needs. For older people, who want to increase their language, literacy, numeracy abilities TAFE offers them education options that are at the same time connected to work and employment options.

Equally, unemployed people, or those who have been retrenched through industry restructuring and change are able to learn the knowledge and skills in ways that allow the to make a living through a different livelihood. University graduates also access TAFE education to develop those important connections with employers, industry and develop occupationally relevant capabilities.

TAFE was created as part of the far-reaching and historical enduring reforms of the 1970s Whitlam government. As an outcome, TAFE has grown and developed to became a key institutional basis for sustaining Australia through social, economic and technological change. Over the past decades TAFE has been at the forefront of equipping thousands of Australians with the knowledge and capabilities to work with changing technologies in a range of industries, including but not limited, to transport and logistics, cable and internet servicing, agriculture, mechanical and robotic engineering, and renewable energy, including the wind and solar energy fields.

It is not an accident that TAFE has been doing this work, because this was exactly the intention behind the formation of a national network of TAFE institutions. In every major Australian city, in many regional centres and in suburbs and country towns, TAFE is a major resource that assists communities and individuals to adapt. TAFE is important as a type of infrastructure that assists the nation, communities and individuals to deal with change. The report, TAFE in Australia released in 1974 argued that, "The concept of recurrent vocationally oriented education is especially relevant to technical and further education. It offers the best hope whereby the community can cope with shifting job specifications resulting from technological and social change, and especially with new employment opportunities that open up. Technical college type institutions
constitute the widest networks available in Australia for the formal vocational education of adults, and hence are particularly well suited to extend recurrent education practices and procedures."

(Kangan: TAFE in Australia, Volume 1. p7)

Four decades later, TAFE all over Australia is facing a crisis, made by devastating policy failures, that have come from both major political parties and that have been initiated and enacted by various national and state governments across the country. The reasons for these failures are as numerous as the number of TAFE campuses that exist across Australia. But one of the definitive reasons for these policy mistakes has been an impoverished policy imaginary, that does not fully recognise the important work that TAFE does and has been doing since its establishment.

Any time a politician goes to a TAFE to make an announcement they will often want a promotional media picture standing in a trade education workshop, surrounded by apprentices with their tools and equipment. Very rarely will you see them in classes or laboratories where future aged care workers, linesmen, nurses, electronic technicians, or nail technicians who are gaining the knowledge and capabilities to build a work life.

Often these announcements over the past decade have been about reviews, system reviews, policy reviews, institutional audits or for one-off capital grants for new buildings. There has been so much tinkering, and policy imposition in TAFE that has almost always been characterised by a lack of coordination at the national level let alone at the state or territory level. Governments come and go nationally and in the states and territories leaving legacies of just-in-time policy damage.

The collateral damage of the recent policy failures has been students who have since the introduction of the student loan scheme, VET FEE HELP, been lumbered with unfair debts for courses undertaken at a private provider. The worst and most dire consequence of these policy impositions emerged from the excesses of not truly knowing what TAFE does so not being able to accurately value it. In its worst excesses these recent policy positions that have equated private providers with state government owned and public TAFE institutions.

In spite of these policy failures, TAFE institutions have struggled on, albeit, with depleted resources, severe lack of funding support and as a discounted and demoralised sector of education. For TAFE to move beyond survival, the political and policy will at the national and state level needs to change. This change can only be underpinned by a true and accurate recognition of the breadth of TAFE education activity, so that it can be valued more fully into the future.

The hope of the ‘market’ as the great organiser with its close partner, ‘competition’ as the driver of TAFE and its education offerings is reflective of the impoverished policy imaginary that has infected TAFE.

Recently the announcement by the Australian Labor Party federally that, if elected would instigate a national Inquiry into Post-Secondary Education, is welcome. Such an inquiry, unlike the one hundred and one that have been conducted over the past decade needs to be coordinated to be credible and politically focused to redress the policy failures that have so severely undermined and damaged the standing of TAFE.

Reviews will come and go, just as politicians do, and the reason TAFE has been so important in the lives of many people and in the communities where it exists is because it makes a difference. The difference that needs to be made to ensure that TAFE moves beyond survival from 2018 will only occur when the political will exists and is premised upon an accurate account of the breadth of what TAFE does and how it does it. Recently there has been a damaging discounting of what TAFE is and its value, with people who have not been to TAFE and who have very poor understandings of TAFE, making decisions and pronouncements that reflect this lack of understanding and ignorance.

John Pardy is Senior Lecturer in the Faculty of Education at Monash University
Income contingent loans and justice: is the system fair?

Tertiary education, once considered to be an opportunity for self-improvement that governments should make freely available to citizens, has become a costly enterprise for students and government alike. The Australian government has attempted to ease the financial burden through income contingent loans, such as HECS, HECS-HELP and VET FEE-HELP and VET Student Loans. Through these schemes, students share in the cost of their tertiary education, repaying the loan once they earn above a threshold.

ONE would expect that by 2018 resistance to the policy first introduced in 1989 would have subsided. After all, the GST opposition settled down relatively quickly after its introduction in 2000. But recent Senate enquiries in Australia show dissatisfaction with income contingent loans has persisted. This dissatisfaction is global, with protests in British universities over the crushing debts that students are carrying, and New Zealand turning back to free university education, after using income contingent loans for almost as long as Australia.

The story of student loans in Australia and elsewhere is one about justice, and through whose eyes we see it. It is not about good and bad policy. So often in policy debates, aggregates are used to capture human experience and to conclude that this policy will deliver desired outcomes and is fair in doing so. Justice, however, is not only about outcomes, but also about processes and journeys. Justice is far more personalised than what is on average a fair result for a demographic group. Justice is like personalised medicine. What happens to individuals will differ and different experiences matter. Arguably the international shift away from large political parties reflects disenchantment with policy making based on aggregations of individuals. Voters yearn for political representation that connects politicians with the justice experience of real people.

Governments frame income contingent loans as a fair, cost saving and cost sharing measure. They see the loans as part of a user-pays system with three special justice measures. First, rich and poor students alike can undertake...
study without financial burden. Second, with more students contributing to their own education, more money is available for more students to obtain a tertiary education. Third, justice extends to those without the benefits of a tertiary education. Fewer taxpayer dollars from those without tertiary education are directed toward supporting those with a tertiary education. When challenged by arguments that society benefits from having high numbers with a tertiary education, proponents argue that those who are better educated end up in better jobs earning more money in the longer term. And they argue that there is no evidence that those with student debt suffer disproportionately through early adulthood markers of "success" such as buying a house or starting a family. And yet, claims of disadvantage and dissatisfaction with the scheme persist.

So why do we have politicians, policy makers and economists on one side saying income contingent loans are opportunity enrichers, improve equity and are good policy, while students and their supporters regard such loans as unfair burdens?

Justice for everyone involves comparison - sometimes with an ideal standard, other times with members of another group — family, peers, neighbours, citizens, or human beings. Which comparison group is salient depends on person and context. It is to be expected that the comparators for students on the justice of HECS will not match that of government officials or economists or policy makers. Their vantage points differ for very obvious reasons.

Students at a university or a TAFE do not compare themselves with the general population or with their age cohort 20 years in the future — these are the justice comparisons made so often by policy makers. Their most salient justice comparisons involve others inside the institution, that is, other students. The justice comparator that looms large for students carrying a HECS debt are students without a HECS debt, those who could afford to pay their fees up-front. Similarly, those who paid up-front make a comparison with their fellow students who carry a HECS debt. These student-to-student comparisons render the government arguments about fairness unconvincing: they see other members of their cohort experiencing a much easier transition out of tertiary education, unburdened with repaying a loan.

Research conducted by Eliza Ahmed and myself in 2000 showed how government failed to win students over to income contingent loans. Those who have supposedly benefited were not grateful to government: they were more likely to oppose HECS, believe it was unfair, and were less likely to acknowledge benefits. Moreover, the core of citizen obligation to the government — believing one should repay debt and pay one’s tax was lower among those with a HECS debt. Indeed, those with a HECS debt were more likely to evade tax, particularly if they did not trust government and had a low personal income. The injustice of HECS policy was expressed in open written comments such as these:

"The government should realise that individuals who put the effort into gaining an education contribute a lot more to the wealth of the nation than those who leave school [and] get jobs straight away. Education is an investment, not a cost."

"After all when it comes to taxpaying employees, people with a higher education generally pay more tax anyway. Plus they often contribute more to the country’s "economics" through technology & product developments."

"I used to believe that HECS was a good way of enabling individuals to make a partial contribution towards the cost of their education (appropriate because that education benefits the individual and the society) without discrimination between those who can easily afford to pay and those who cannot. I believe the current system is not so easily accessible to people with limited financial resources, and that repayment rates for those on (relatively) low incomes are now too high."

Both debt carrying students and those who had paid their contribution felt the injustices of the scheme. A common view of both groups was to “redress principal grievances of this scheme from the viewpoint of those who have to pay it.”

Almost thirty years later, a 2014 Senate enquiry was presented with comments that echoed those of thirty years ago. Parents were the carriers of the message this time:

"We should not be punishing or burdening our kids, and the next generation, for poorly thought out and unfair policies. The only reforms we should be contemplating is increasing education funding."

"Some of my daughter’s friends have even questioned whether it is worth pursing higher education at such a cost. How will this help us? The short answer is it cannot! People must be educated if we are to succeed and prosper as a country and society."

None of this is to negate the arguments made by consecutive governments and policy makers. The message is that their arguments are but one perspective on justice. The student perspective is another equally authentic perspective. It cannot be suppressed or silenced. Somehow the political process must reconcile these competing perspectives. To quote one respondent from the 2000 study.

"If the system is fair, taxpayers will be more inclined to help it work.”

Valerie Braithwaite is a Professor in the Regulatory Institutions Network at ANU. Valerie is an interdisciplinary social scientist with a disciplinary background in psychology.

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The future of work, and the future of skills

The world of work is being transformed by powerful and unpredictable forces, and many Australians worry about their future ability to support themselves and their families through paying work. The incredible capacities of new technologies, computers and robots have sparked fears that many workers will be replaced by machines.

BY JIM STANFORD, PH.D.

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ND technology is not the only force transforming work. Changes in work organisation and employment relations are also disrupting working life — and more quickly than robots and artificial intelligence. The traditional ideal of a stable, permanent, full-time, paid job with normal entitlements (like sick and holiday leave, and superannuation entitlements) is increasingly out of the reach of many Australians — especially young people. Indeed, less than half of Australian workers now work in a traditional full-time permanent paid position. Instead, temporary, part-time, casual, irregular, and nominally self-employed positions are now the norm for most workers (and the overwhelming share of young workers). In the extreme, jobs are being replaced by “gigs”: digitally mediated, on-demand, piece-work tasks allocated and compensated through faceless digital platforms.

In response to these challenges, politicians and policy-makers often dispense familiar advice that Australians can best protect themselves is by acquiring more skills (or “human capital”). The need for more public investment in training, and for repairing the vocational education system in particular, is obvious. But the knee-jerk assumption that training alone will protect workers from the coming disruptions is quite wrong. And the parallel assumption that it’s solely up to individuals to make the right choices about their own skills, feeds into the mantra of privatisation and market delivery that has so damaged Australia’s vocational education.

Offering patronising advice that workers should go and get retrained, certainly constitutes a glaring contradiction with Australia’s vocational reality: namely, a training system that is crumbling under the weight of austerity and privatisation. If training is so important, why do governments consistently treat vocational education as an afterthought when budget time comes?

Worst of all, advocating training as a magic bullet for facilitating adjustment is often used to implicitly blame the victims of unemployment and underemployment for their own problems: if only they had bothered to acquire more skills, it is suggested, then workers wouldn’t experience economic hardship. By blaming workers’ supposed failure to attain enough education, or the right kind of education, for their failure to find and keep good work, responsibility is shifted away from employers and government.

The reality is that Australia’s economy is not fundamentally held back by any general “lack of skills.” And acquiring new skills is never an automatic ticket to a better job: millions of Australians have learned that the hard way. They worked hard to attain training and credentials, yet fund themselves filling menial jobs that do not remotely utilize their skills and capacities to the fullest.

In fact Australians, especially young workers, are better educated than any previous generation, and better educated than workers in almost any other country. According to OECD Education Statistics, some 44 percent of Australia’s core labour force (ages 25-64) possesses tertiary education: 5th highest among all industrial countries, and 8 percentage points higher than the OECD average. Yet those superior skills have not prevented the continuing deterioration in job conditions so evident in today’s labour market. It is a shortage of good jobs, not a shortage of skills, that truly holds back our labour market, and our quality of life.

To be sure, accelerating technological change, and the advent of new business models
(like digital platforms), certainly enhances the need for high-quality, well-funded, and publicly-accountable vocational education. But that need was already there — unmet by politicians who make ritualistic appeals to training as a salve for labour market displacement, while slashing training funding further with each successive budget. Our arguments and campaigns for investing in training, and repairing the TAFE system, should indeed tap into the public’s concern about the impact of technology, digital platforms, and other disruptors on the future of work. But we must also highlight the contradictions of government economic policies as we make our case: such as how their rhetoric about training is never matched by adequate real resources, and how they have failed to ensure the creation of good jobs to actually utilise the skills they want Australians to acquire.

After all, training alone does not create jobs to utilise the skills that it imparts. (Of course, investing in training does create jobs in the broader education sector, which has been one of the most important source of job creation in Australia over the past decade; that’s another good reason to boost education spending!) An effective training strategy needs to be matched by a parallel effort to place trained workers into good, secure, rewarding jobs. This means a stronger emphasis on job-creation in macroeconomic and fiscal policy (to increase the quantity of work), as well as much stronger labour rules and standards (to improve the quality of work).

Germany’s vocational education and apprenticeship system provides an outstanding example of how a dual focus on world-class training, and the creation of decent, productive jobs, can generate outstanding results. The German model is organised around several hundred officially designated trades and occupations. Well-funded, high-quality vocational institutions (partly funded through compulsory levies from private employers) graduate a steady flow of well-trained young workers, actively matching them with employers who need their skills. No wonder Germany’s high-tech exports perform so well in world market. And no wonder youth unemployment is just 7 percent — barely half Australia’s rate.

In summary, investing in high-quality skills and training must certainly play a role in any broad effort to create more and better jobs. It’s not a “magic bullet,” but it can make a positive difference. Australia’s overall labour market is not held back by a general lack of skills; but there are certainly some specialized occupations where the supply of qualified labour is inadequate to meet expected demands in coming years. Furthermore, upgrading workers’ general capacities with language, STEM skills, and other transferable skills enhances the overall flexibility and productivity of the workforce. Workers with especially challenging job search prospects (such as workers with disabilities, those who haven’t finished school, migrants, and others) can particularly benefit from targeted, job-relevant training.

Australian workers face enough uncertainty regarding the future of work. That uncertainty shouldn’t be made worse, by an inability to access trustworthy, top-quality, affordable vocational training. Rebuilding Australia’s once-world-famous TAFEs, to serve as the anchors of a modern, well-funded, high-quality, public vocational education system, would help all Australians prepare for the change that lies ahead.

Dr Jim Stanford is an Economist and Director of the Centre for Future Work.
Why vocational education matters  

Now more than ever

Many countries recognise the need for high quality, high level technical education to underpin the delivery of technologically advanced products and services.

BY ANNE JONES

There are also strong arguments that we can design such education to nurture the capabilities needed for active and equitable citizenship in a digital society (Pfeiffer, 2015). Yet Australian innovation policy, including the National Innovation and Science Agenda, ignores historical and contemporary evidence for the importance of vocational education in our country's digital future; focusing instead on the contribution of school and university education.

Historically, industrial innovation has depended on technical capabilities such as those now acquired through vocational education. For example, many historians have attributed Britain's leading role in the first industrial revolution to the greater availability of capable technicians and tradespeople in that country compared with other places such as Germany. These technicians took the inventors’ ideas and provided:

The high-quality workmanship needed to implement an innovation, that is, to follow the blueprint with a high level of accuracy, carry out the instructions embodied in the technique, and to have the ability to install, operate, adapt, and repair the machinery and equipment under a variety of circumstances (Meisenzahl & Mokyr, 2011).

Mokyr and his colleagues have referred to the technicians in the first industrial revolution as tweakers and implementers and these terms are still useful today. Tweakers create the countless small innovations needed to get the bugs out of the big inventions, implementers construct, install and operate the technology. There is good contemporary evidence that tweakers and implementers are critical to a country’s participation in the current digital revolution (also known as Industry 4.0).

In an Austrian Parliament commissioned report, Pfeiffer, reviewed the evidence for the value of vocational education in an Industry 4.0 economy. Her analysis confirmed that Germany’s standout success in digital manufacturing relies on the availability of large numbers of people with strong, higher level technical qualifications. Pfeiffer argues that whilst the long-term impact of the digital revolution on the organisation of work, the division of labour between humans and machines or numbers of jobs is unknown, it is important for societies to negotiate these matters, to make choices about how to share equity and prosperity. Pfeiffer considers that Germany’s significant technical workforce not only supports digital innovation but positions its economy for an equitable distribution of work and rewards.

Closer to home, Phillip Toner and his
colleagues from the University of Sydney have conducted substantial research into the contribution of workers with trade and technical qualifications to Australia’s innovation effort. They have shown that such workers make up ‘46 percent of the business research and development (R&D) workforce and 30 per cent of the total R&D workforce.’ One of their studies found that majority of researchers agree that tradespeople and technicians are an important source of ideas and innovation in their workplaces assisting to convert concepts into reality. In another example, the Melbourne Institute’s 2007 Australian Inventor Survey looked at all Australian patent applicants from 1986 to 2005, finding that ‘over half of the inventors did not have university qualifications’ (Beddie & Simons, 2017).

Dalitz and Toner have demonstrated that ‘the Australian pattern of innovation is, arguably, more dependent on VET skills than other OECD nations… the dominant form of innovation is incremental and particularly oriented to the adoption and adaptation of products, processes and services developed locally by other firms and industries or sourced from overseas.’ In other words Australian industries need tweakers and implementers. Nonetheless ‘…in Australia skills, particularly VET, are almost entirely excluded from government innovation policy reports and bodies’ (Dalitz & Toner, 2016).

Lack of recognition of VET’s role in innovation means that we have neglected to build the capability needed to optimise that contribution. Rather, we have reduced the capacity of VET institutions and their graduates to contribute to innovation through:

- Limiting national qualifications to narrow preparation for current job roles, rather than developing creative adaptive future problem solvers;
- Failing to invest significantly in building new knowledge about innovative applied, technical and workplace-related learning;
- Enabling the cannibalisation of the VET sector by universities and schools without any resulting increase in the availability of high quality, high level technical skills;
- Reduced funding to vocational education in industry-and-research/research/success-stories/innovation/.

TAFE institutes, as permanent public institutions, ought to be the natural leaders for developing and sustaining applied VET research and innovation in Australia. Despite limited resources, some are working towards this. For example, TAFE Queensland has opened RedSpace and Holmesglen Institute, the Centre for Applied Research and Innovation as dedicated applied research units. Other institutions are building applied research into their delivery in imaginative ways. However, lack of resources, means that TAFE institutes and the VET sector generally are not making their potential contribution to innovation. Significant investment in applied research and innovation infrastructure and staff capability is needed to enable Australian TAFE institutes to support future tweakers and implementers.

Anne Jones is an Emeritus Professor at Victoria University


The *limits* to competition

— understanding why free markets have failed in vocational education and training

Everyone seems to have a solution to the travails facing vocational education and training in Australia.

BY CRAIG ROBERTSON

It’s fair for governments that have seen billions of dollars pocketed by a few unscrupulous providers to think twice before restoring funding. And, maybe the regulatory clampdown is warranted.

But it seems that market ideology and the notion of competition are still seen as the solution.

The issue at the heart of the failings in recent years has not been markets, but the fact that that the products in VET, and the rationale for the sector, are not suited to a market approach.

In a commercial world, where there are products that we can touch and a range of suppliers that we can see, the concept of choice generally works well. If there’s a risk of it being taken away we’d be up in arms. We all want access to the corner store as well as the supermarket, and the shopping centre — and the flexibility and competition that provides.

And in a sophisticated open society, we all like to exercise choice — that sense of independence and making our own way.

My clothes sense and the money I spend, whether it’s on high street or in the bargain store, reflects my personal preferences and financial priorities.

These are tangible products that we can handle. We usually do a fair job of selecting the right outfit for the circumstance. And we readily accept that some items will last a short term while others will be classics, as they say. Retailers adjust and roll with the taste of the day and fall by the wayside if they are not able to do so.

It seems that all governments had the same idea when they signed up to the national approach of training entitlement. States and territories were encouraged to open their funding to a range of providers, and for all courses up to Certificate III. In return, the federal government agreed to open up VET FEE-HELP to assist students in financing higher level training at the diploma level and above.

“Consumers are king,” they thought. “They know what they need, they just need better information and choice, and lots of it”. Responsive providers would thrive and innovate toward quality and deliver everything that Australian industry needs — or so the logic went.
The fact that training is an intangible product that is meant to meet industry standards was overlooked. The very nature of education and training entails the acquisition of new skills and new knowledge. A person starting their training journey cannot always be expected to know the attributes of the industry they want to join, or what employers are chasing, let alone the skills and knowledge they should expect from a provider.

While we might expect to change our grocery store or fashion outlet as circumstances dictate, in the case of a training provider, once it’s been selected, it’s illogical and difficult to change. There are wasted fees and half-finished courses, and the inconvenience of enrolling again, and probably starting the course over.

The sector’s roots lay in delivering candidates with high calibre technical skills and an understanding of the industries they will work in. We also aim for those skills to be consistent across Australia, to a standard determined by industry, so at the very least, consumers are protected (think building and construction) and workers are safe (think electrotechnology). Encouraging providers to innovate and adjust courses to suit the consumer doesn’t always align with key expectations of the sector.

Markets and user choice are often key instruments — sometimes the sole instrument — in the toolkit of policy makers and governments. Those of this persuasion will argue that the product is set and assured through national industry-based training packages — that innovation is delivered by providers against the standards outlined in each qualification.

However, it’s worth remembering that the competencies within many qualifications are interchangeable — designed around the idea of flexibility to meet the unique needs of learners, industries and regions. Many unscrupulous providers pushed this to their financial advantage and did little to respond to the customer. When competition from these providers grew and money became tight across the whole sector, experimentation occurred, but in how to cut corners and deliver the bare minimum against the competencies in qualifications.

If the purpose of VET is to deliver job-ready workers with skills to a consistent standard specified by industry, then open markets, combined with a profit-driven imperative become a lethal mix. How could it ever have been that “responding to consumer demand” became the rationale for the design of a sector delivering core skills to the economy?

Policy makers are complicit in this debacle. They abrogated their responsibilities to provide basic protections to the consumer of training. Students, through the “choice” they were asked to exercise, were unwittingly handed the responsibility for being the arbiters of quality.

What is needed is a new breed of providers who are driven by industry knowledge and professionalism. TAFE has always fulfilled this role in delivering quality and innovation in the interests of students and industry. TAFEs need to be at the centre of the training system, and the vehicle for rebuilding confidence and trust in training in Australia.

Students must be able to enrol with the confidence that they will receive the training and knowledge needed by industry.

I was fortunate to be present at the AEU forum, The future of public TAFE institutions — new social policy in Sydney last October. Following a series of excellent presentations from thought leaders in the VET sector, I presented an ‘English fable’. It was presented at the time training ministers were to consider the future of qualifications in the sector. See what you think. The issue of training qualification design and content is still being considered by ministers.

A sector with no clothes

Two-score years ago in a far-flung land the clothes its people wore were in disarray.

Clothes were important. They showed what someone could do, and those with the best of clothes got the best of jobs.

The cleverest wore long flowing black gowns, with brightly coloured sashes and quant floppy hats. They loved to parade these clothes in special processions.

For everyone else the clothes were in various states of disrepair, different shapes and sizes. No one looked smart. No one got good jobs.

They needed new clothes
because the ones they had were suited for jobs that were being sent overseas. New clothes for new smarter jobs were needed.

So, the emperors of the far-flung land bought a new way of tailoring clothes for all its citizens.

It was a special approach - it was Competency Based Tailoring – or CBT for short.

All that was needed was to set the tailoring patterns and citizens could buy the clothes. “Each style will get you into jobs across the land,” the emperors promised.

The emperors needed assistance to get the job done, to make sure patterns were made for each type of job across the land. So, they established the Antipodean National Tailoring Authority – or ANTA.

The patterns were designed by special committees. Through tri-partite arrangements, or the fashion partners in the European tailoring tradition, committee members represented employers, the citizens and the emperors. Those representing the employers wanted only the most basic of clothes. “Who needs a thinking-hat when the boss does all that?” they said.

Those who looked out for the workers fought for the best of clothes. But they took care not to copy designs from other committees, lest there were demarcation disputes among the comrades. This was called pattern bargaining, which the Emperors eventually banned.

Soon patterns were designed for almost ninety per cent of jobs across Australia. ANTA called on their clothes production houses to start making clothes for all the citizens. They started with the ones which were the most experienced and skilled - Tailoring and Fitting Experts, or TAFEs.

The emperors were most proud.

Over time, in-fighting started. Some of the committees thought they had better, smarter clothes and workers with their clothes should be paid more.

A very smart man solved the problem. Affectionately known as Bert, he established a benchmark. All patterns would be compared to a benchmark in the Fashion Award, called C10. Clothes smarter than C10 would get the workers more pay. Clothes not as smart as C10 got less pay.

They called this the new settlement or the accord. And the land was at peace.

Australia compared well with other lands. The Organisation of Empirical Clothes Data (OECD) in its report - Fashion at a Glance - showed that more Australians had special clothes compared with other lands.

Still, the cleverest in the land kept their beautiful black gowns and floppy hats. They did research and epistemological analysis of the clothes the rest of the citizens wore.

But the workers worried that it was costing too much to make the clothes.

They discovered a new way. “It will lead to quality and innovation,” they said. It was new public tailoring or tailoring rationalism. The citizens just called it fashiontestability.

The emperors closed the Antipodean National Tailoring Authority ‘because they thought they could do a better job.’

They also wanted to transform the Tailoring and Fitting Experts - TAFEs.

They welcomed new clothes makers into the sector – Registered Tailoring Organisations.

Many were owned by the employers or employee organisations from the committees. They knew best about the clothes their members needed!

So pleased that the clothes were of such value, the emperors thought it only fair that the citizens pay for them. They offered loans to buy the clothes. The emperors called it VFH Loans - Very Fashionable Haute-couture Loans.

Entrepreneurs saw profit potential and quickly set up clothing outlets under funky labels like Careers, Acquire and Vocation!

They sent sellers to all parts of the country. Thousands of citizens were sold the fashion dream. Some were given special accessories – called i-purses.

Many paid $20,000 or more for the promise of the very best in clothes for the best of jobs anywhere across the far-flung land.

The tailoring and fitting experts (TAFEs) raised concerns. “This doesn’t seem right,” they warned.

“Don’t worry,” the fashion partners said, “we’ve made patterns for all the jobs in the land, and then some. All you need to do is follow the patterns and all will be right.”

Meanwhile, the bosses and citizens were wondering if the clothes were worth it.

Many bosses complained that the clothes didn’t meet what they needed. So, the emperors allowed the tailoring organisations to mix and match the patterns.

The bosses were happy, but the workers were not. “The clothes don’t fit and don’t suit me!” they said. “And when I change jobs I have to get new ones, at my cost.”

So now we come to the present day. The fashion houses have closed and left many in little more than rags, but the TAFEs have taken them in.

Most citizens are unhappy about the clothes the emperors have designed for them. “Patchwork and unflattering at best, incomplete and immodest, or nothing at worst,” they said.

“But only if you had exercised better choice,” the emperors chastised them.

The OECD is warning that the fashions is falling behind world standards.

The emperors will assemble in the capital of the land to think about what to do next.

Many Australians (oops, citizens of that far-flung land) will be wondering what clothes they’ll be offered in the future.

Most are not hopeful.

Some have been heard to ask – “why is this a sector without any clothes?”

And the cleverest in the land still parade in their flowing black gowns and floppy hats. ◇

Craig Robertson is the CEO of TAFE Directors Australia

My topic was 10 public policy questions:

1. What should drive vocational education – values that serve student interests or value for money?
2. Why is the policy dialogue about market and not about pedagogy and engagement?
3. What outcomes represent success – a skilled worker for their next job or a capable individual who has power to act in the labour market?
4. Why does the opportunity offered to Australians who are suited to an applied learning model cost more than those who pursue higher learning?
5. Who protects the interest of students if qualifications are designed solely for the needs of employers?
6. Why has education been taken out of VET?
7. What faces Australia’s prosperity if we are not preparing engaged and active workers coming from our VET sector?
8. Why do we insist on keeping students in school when they’d be better served in a vocational and general education adult learning environment?
9. Why can’t TAFEs be trusted just as much as universities to establish courses and qualifications?
10. How do we reach a new consensus?
We are trying to find out the views of AEU members on how TAFE can support social inclusion in Australia. The survey asks questions about what you think TAFE should be like and questions about what TAFE is like.

This survey is part of a broader international project that is researching how vocational education can contribute to social justice, social inclusion, and sustainable development in different countries in the world. The project is being led by Education International, which is the international federation of teacher education unions.

The project has two objectives. The first is to explore the nature of vocational education and how it can support individuals to develop the knowledge, skills and attributes that they need to make choices about how they will live, and to live lives they have reason to value.

The second is to explore the type of institutions that are needed to support students and to develop strong, resilient, and socially inclusive communities. Local institutions like TAFEs are the key to a vocational education system that can support economic and social development. We need to establish a good basis for arguing about what institutions such as TAFE do.

Your help will ensure that the project is a success. You can help by filling in the survey, and by encouraging your colleagues to do so as well. The survey takes about 15 – 20 minutes to complete.

The survey will be sent to you by email from the union in the next few weeks. Please keep an eye on your inbox, and complete the survey when you receive it.
ROSEMARY RICHARDS was a proud feminist, unionist and educator. She was a respected leader, colleague and friend who played a crucial role in shaping the AEU as an organisation which reflects feminist principles. Sadly, Rosemary passed away in November, 2006 after a long battle with illness.

This scholarship, now in its twelfth year, is in recognition of the significant contribution that Rosemary made to the AEU as an organisation and to all its members, women in particular.

Across the AEU, women’s employment rights and women’s union participation has been steadily advanced due to an active, committed and predominantly female membership, but challenges still remain.

The Scholarship is aimed at providing the opportunity to a woman member to increase her skills and experience in the union’s work at a state/territory/national or international level and, by extension, supporting the AEU’s women members. The proposal may include (but is not limited to):

- The establishment of a work-shadowing arrangement or a mentoring arrangement;
- Research or study experiences;
- Formal and/or informal training and development opportunities (e.g. attendance at an appropriate conference); or
- The design and implementation of a discrete project.

The scholarship is valued up to $10,000 per year.

Women members of the AEU and its Branches and Associated Bodies are encouraged to apply for the 2018 Rosemary Richards Scholarship.


The deadline for applications is Friday 11 May, 2018.
“TAFE still does great work but lack of support from government is eroding its capacity to deliver. Education should be about quality, not profit. Why do we allow profit driven private colleges into the system?”
-Susan, NSW

“TAFE is an amazing educational institution with great teachers and it has impacted my life in so many positive ways.”
-Natasha, TAFE graduate

“TAFE students are the foundation of our nation, the hands-on people of our nation.”
-Philip, NSW

“TAFE belongs to the people of this nation and believes in the value of the students and trainees who will ultimately add value to the tapestry of this nation.”
-Rod, NSW

“TAFE is now and always has been a centre of high quality learning with highly qualified and dedicated teachers.”
-LMT, NSW

"Funding for TAFE has been cut for too long."
-Lubosh, Victoria
TAFE teachers in NSW are experiencing change fatigue. TAFE NSW has undergone continuous change with ongoing rounds of redundancy since 2013 and the new year has begun with a new round of redundancies. First, consolidation of sections became amalgamations of faculties. Then each of the 10 Institutes undertook “reviews” and created super faculties. Along the way many teachers’ jobs were lost.

2014 began the process of TAFE NSW separating from the Department of Education and this began the wholesale change of processes and the start of the SAP Electronic Business System train wreck. A change of Managing Director in 2015 led to a “decommissioning” of Institutes to become Regions and now one TAFE. With this new structure there seems to be an abundance of new non teaching positions filled with new faces but more teachers’ jobs lost along the way. This time experienced Head Teachers are the focus of redundancies.

Many new TAFE Managers have had little experience of the TAFE NSW system and are not from an education background. In various powerpoint presentations, TAFE managers compare TAFE NSW to defunct businesses such as Blockbuster video while exhorting teachers to become more adaptive and to follow the lead of businesses such as Uber and Airbnb. Although one wonders how Uber or Airbnb would survive the constant demands of ASQA and TAFE auditing regime.

Alongside this, those teachers still in the system are trying to provide a meaningful dynamic education experience for their students because one change TAFE teachers take pride in is changing students’ lives. TAFE teachers are change agents; we change people’s lives every day, regardless of and sometimes in spite of, the changing guard of Managers.

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

Queensland

David Terauds

TAFE Queensland is due for a registration audit in the next 12 months and Central Queensland University is working through the results of one now. It is a particularly important time for TQ with its six original regional RTO registrations having been rolled into a single state-wide registration.

Workload of English language teachers delivering AMEP and SEE contracts has ballooned and is causing serious distress to members. Part of the problem has been unrealistic Commonwealth expectations in terms of compliance measures and a lack of tools to ensure compliance. The contracts were granted, and compliance required but the Commonwealth could not provide appropriate tools until nearly 12 months into the contract.

English language teachers have been utilising local consultative processes to address workload. Discussions with senior management have resulted in agreement to improve systems and tools to reduce workload. The union is monitoring matters for improvements in workload.

With institutes undertaking business process reviews in preparation for the implementation of the new Student Management System as well a reported downturn in student enrolments for early 2018 restructuring of Support and Educational roles is being affected state-wide. The SMS is to roll out late Semester 1 2018. Diploma enrolments are well down on this time last year.

In October 2017, the QTU, acting as the AEU(Q), was a reluctant signatory to the Central Queensland University Enterprise Agreement. Despite being lodged on 20 October 2017, the EA has yet to be approved. The FWC has provided three follow up communications to the EA. Although there have been refinements and explanatory submissions by the university on each occasion, there are still outstanding matters to be addressed. The CQU has indicated a willingness to implement an administrative pay rise to compensate for the lengthy delay in certification.

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

Victoria

Greg Barclay

FORMAL negotiations for a new Multi Enterprise Agreement (MEA) are yet to recommence following the AEU’s withdrawal late in 2017 in the face of the Andrews Government’s demands for TAFE teachers to increase their productivity by 25% and forgo other long established terms and conditions. The AEU does not agree with the view that a viable public TAFE sector in Victoria can only be achieved through TAFE teachers increasing their productivity.

An increase of 25% productivity would mean that there would be 25% fewer TAFE teachers.

Not only is it an insult to Victorian TAFE teachers to expect them to agree to make another 25% of their colleagues redundant to “SAVE TAFE”, it is also a perfect example (as if we actually needed one more) of the ignorance of the Premier, the Ministers and the education about the nature of TAFE teaching and learning and the ongoing impact of the policy of contestable funding in TAFE in Victoria.

TAFE in Victoria is funded at $3.50 per student contact hour less than the national student contact hour average (according to the 2018 Report on Government Services). If Victoria was funded at the national average then the Victorian vocational education sector would have received just under $452 million extra than it actually received.

The saving of TAFE in Victoria is the responsibility of the Andrews Government. It is not up to teachers to increase their productivity.

Shaved hours in teaching and learning; an average of around 8 hours unpaid overtime each and every week; and the massive casualisation of TAFE teachers work are but three examples of the heavy lifting that TAFE teachers have done for many years in order to support their students and the public TAFEs more broadly.

TAFE teachers in Victoria are more than prepared to campaign up until the November 2018 election to remind the Andrews Government that they promised to SAVE TAFE and high time they stepped up and did their share.

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

South Australia

Tony Sutherland

The AEU had its biggest campaign launch in more than a decade on Saturday 10th February RESPECT - It’s time to reclaim our professionalism and demand that we be heard by those who influence public education.

At the launch the AEU called upon SA’s political parties to ‘come clean’ with what they plan to offer the State’s public preschools, schools and TAFE. This is a great state and we need a government that will commit to a high quality preschool education program, well resourced schools - particularly to support those vulnerable students with additional needs, and a strong TAFE system to provide those skills needed for a diverse workforce.

With a the State Election only weeks away, March 17 the premier announced at the RESPECT campaign launch that a re-elected Labor Government will commit to a 70% Guaranteed VET funding for TAFE SA. This a
result of the Federal Stop TAFE Cuts campaign and the recent social media campaign TAFE too Good to Lose in SA applying pressure on the State Labor Government to guarantee funding.

TAFE SA was subject to an ASQA audit in 2017 which identified a number of non compliance matters in regards to 16 of the courses initially audited. Majority to these matters were in line with compliance on assessment documentation. This has resulted in a media trashing of TAFESA with many questions been ask about TAFE SA lecturers ability to deliver quality education/training.

The ASQA non compliance has seen Robin Murt, CEO of TAFE SA and the chair of the TAFE SA Board Peter Vaughan removed from their positions. TAFESA staff, especially the lecturer's have work tirelessly to ensure the compliance and any students affected have their issues rectified.

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

WESTERN AUSTRALIA
GARY HEDGER

AS WE move into a new year still without a replacement General Agreement, we are still negotiating with state government with a number of promises that they made as part of their election campaign.

Our General agreement expired on 15 December 2017 and the government provided their first offer to the Union on 14 December 2017. The majority of lecturers last day before Christmas leave was 15th of Dec, which has made the process being very messy with staff being unable to provide feedback or give direction in negotiations for six weeks.

We are having a hard time during negotiations as from the original letter with an offer they have placed more things on the table and they are unable/unwilling to commit to any of our counter offers that we place on the table. It would appear they are unwilling to move on anything that may place an onus on managers to manage.

Whilst that mess has been occurring we are actively campaigning to get another key promise from the election negotiated and put in place. The conversion to permanency promise in which the government acknowledged that it is an area that needs to be resolved, is still being negotiated with the government. In the letter that was sent to the Union by our now current state Premier, he acknowledges the training sector and the effects that permanency has on it.

In response to a tax rort that was being pulled by major employers to reduce their exposure to payroll tax by listing staff as trainees the government towards the end of the year announced that they were limiting the tax exemption to apprentices and trainees who were not earning in excess of $100,000 a year (nice traineeship).

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

ACT
KAREN NOBLE

WITH 2018 underway positivity continues from the Executive and Board about our success with the 2017 reregistration audit. While this is ‘good’ it glosses over the workload and day to day frustrations experienced by CIT Teachers, and their colleagues, tasked with keeping up all the processes needed for compliance. There is a persisting focus on workplace culture, business and innovation with lessening reference to education. We were reminded of our declining enrolments with no reference to the national context of TAFE. Our updated online platform is to be embraced over time, which is just as well, because the time and resources needed to work with it are only minimally available.

AEU representations late in 2017 highlighted the need for intensive education, support and resourced time for teachers to adopt the new platform which has not been forthcoming.

Member participation in AEU campus based meetings grew during 2017 and continues. We included CPSU members and a CPSU organiser in some of our meetings as the core ACT industrial issues effected members of both Unions. We will be stronger together.

Our employment agreements expired mid-2017. The ACT AEU provided a log of claims in January 2017 and participated, fully, in meetings with ACT Government and other unions about the ACT public sector core conditions. In mid-December 2017 CIT provided very general material as their preparatory work for bargaining on the CIT teacher specific matters. CIT seeks a two-year agreement which would end in 2019.

Detailed bargaining has barely begun.

The ACT AEU has obtained access to all the CIT Board minutes, now unredacted.

With the growth of casual and insecure employment the ACT AEU is examining CIT’s practices with casual teacher employment. Already several practices have been challenged resulting in members being offered more secure employment and/or continued employment which suits the employee and teaching department.

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

TASMANIA
SIMON BAILEY

AS I submit this column Tasmanians are coming to the realisation that the Tasmanian Liberal party have been elected to govern Tasmanian for another 4 years.

During the election TAFE Division focused on quality outcomes for its students, trying to shift the focus into supporting better quality and compliance monitoring and teacher support which has largely been stripped away from the organization. We lobbied all parties to commit to allocating 70% of all VET funding to TAFE, the State Labor party adopted this policy mid-2017 and during the campaign we were successful in getting the Liberal party to come on board and commit to the policy.

The independent audit into TasTAFE which was instigated after a request was made to the Tasmanian Government by the AEU continues. Despite our best efforts, including three Right to Information requests it seems we will have to wait to have access to the WLK external audit into TasTAFE. This appears to be purely a political decision, based on our belief that a state election was to be called which was proven right.

Ms Jenny Dodd became our CEO from the first of February 2018 and I recently met with Ms. Dodd to discuss how the relationship between TasTAFE and the AEU can be further strengthened. Ms. Dodd expressed a willingness to have frank and open discussions with the AEU about matters of mutual concern and acknowledged the important work that the AEU does in providing information to AEU members who are employed by TasTAFE.

EBA negotiation are to start soon and AEU TAFE members were canvassed towards the end of 2017 about the current teaching agreement with many expressing concerns such as loss of conditions, clarification of teaching duties and weekly teaching loads. A members’ log of claims is close to being submitted to TasTAFE once the TAFE Executive has voted in agreement of what is being proposed.

We know we have some common ground with TasTAFE but with the present Government once again only offering a 2% pay rise we will be in for some tough negotiations.

Simon Bailey is the Tasmanian member of the National TAFE Council Executive

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Authorised by Pat Forward, Federal TAFE Secretary, Australian Education Union, 120 Clarendon Street, Southbank, 3006.