New positive campaign launches

Alarming funding reforms ahead

Rebuild with TAFE
TAFE builds skills for our future

rebuildwithtafe.org.au
President’s column

From the president

Rebuild with TAFE for a positive future. That’s the message of our new positive campaign that we will be taking to the next election.

I’ve just returned from Canberra where we launched the campaign (see page 5) and I’m ready to grab every opportunity to talk to as many people as I can about what rebuilding with TAFE for a positive future means to them.

I’ve worked in TAFE for over thirty years and I’ve seen how it can build a positive future for students. Working in support services I know that students sometimes need an extra helping hand and that’s what is so special about TAFE. We welcome all students and support them to get the most out of their education and secure the meaningful future they want.

For me, it’s the extra services that TAFE offers that makes it a national treasure and one that should have a special place carved out for it in any policy or future funding agreement.

That’s why it is deeply upsetting to see policy makers continue to insist that TAFE is ‘just another provider’. It allows the funding debate to continue to be framed in terms of efficiency, meaning that funding is allocated to the provider that can offer courses at the lowest price. Forcing TAFE to compete for funding alongside providers that can strip education back to its bare bones, dooms TAFE to fail.

Racing faster to the bottom

Despite numerous submissions to the Productivity Commission – not just from the AEU – that spelt out how the marketisation agenda has failed TAFE, their recent final report which will shape government decision-making for years to come ‘did not find a system in crisis’ and insists that a high-quality vocational education will be best achieved by increasing competition.

It makes me wonder if anyone from the Commission has stepped foot in a TAFE in recent years. Their recommendations are startling. To quote Maxine Sharkey, Federal TAFE Secretary; ‘It’s contestable funding on steroids’.

It will inevitably result in lots of short courses for quick profit, instead of focusing on meeting the longer term needs of society, which is particularly vital when we are rebuilding after bushfires, a pandemic and economic recession. Not to mention it will continue to deny vocational education to Australians in regional and remote areas where it just isn’t cost-effective to supply courses.

Worryingly, the report also recommends expanding the student loans scheme to push the cost of training onto students and putting a stop to Free TAFE as it distorts the market conditions.

At 500 pages it is a very long read, so we asked Independent VET expert, Claire Field to write about the specific impact for TAFE. You can read her findings and get across the details quickly on pages 10.

Rebuild with TAFE

If, like me, you are angry about the future direction that is being proposed then I urge you to go out and talk to as many people as you can about rebuilding with TAFE for a positive future.

I know that as TAFE educators we are all stretched for time, but if we don’t step up and spread the word, no-one else is going to do it for us. It doesn’t take long to put up the posters in this magazine and start a conversation about the issue. From taxi drivers to neighbours there are plenty of opportunities to talk about the importance of investing in TAFE.

That’s the beauty of this campaign, it opens the doors to so many positive conversations, from the need for more apprentices to rebuild the economy to the need for more care workers to rebuild our support services. Find out how just how much TAFE means to people and let them know they can get involved in the campaign to ask government to invest in a positive future for all of us at www.rebuildwithTAFE.com.au
Rebuild with TAFE for a Positive Future

A strong and vibrant TAFE sector must be a vital part of Australia’s response to the economic challenges we face.

Last month, on the lawns of Parliament House in Canberra, the AEU launched its bold new campaign ‘Rebuild with TAFE’ to convince the Federal Government that TAFE is key to Australia’s economic recovery and deserves guaranteed funding.

As the MPs arrived for work, bright and early in the morning, we unveiled a huge yellow banner and piled up bright yellow building blocks that spelt out ‘#RebuildwithTAFE for a positive future’ to make sure they would all see the message.

Our stunt caught the eye of the media and AEU Federal President Correna Haythorpe made it clear to them that if the Federal Government is serious about making skills a key focus area then it must be matched by adequate funding. “The campaign is reminding governments that if we want to rebuild the economy, if we want to rebuild the skills of Australians, that we should do that by rebuilding with TAFE,” she said.

Anthony Albanese, Leader of the Opposition, donned a yellow tie to match the branding and joined us for the launch to publicly back the campaign. In a short speech he stressed the importance of TAFE to the national reconstruction efforts saying: “TAFE is where people learn
Rebuild with TAFE

the skills that will build our future. Jobs like social work, aged care, metalwork and engineering. We’ve got more than 2 million people unemployed or looking for more work. And we’ve got skills shortages. Australians will learn those skills at places like TAFE.

Labor backs the call to Rebuild with TAFE. There are 140,000 fewer apprentices and trainees than when the Morrison Government came to power. Labor believes in getting more apprentices back into factories and worksites”.

Adam Bandt, Leader of the Australian Greens was joined by Mehreen Faruqi, Education Spokesperson who was staunch in their support saying: “To rebuild from the pandemic as a more equal society, we need our TAFEs. Decades of underfunding and neglect from governments puts that all at risk.

Pictured: The AEU launches the #RebuildWithTAFE for a positive future’ campaign on the lawns of Parliament House in Canberra.

It’s time for well-funded and free TAFE for all”.

Australian Council of Trade Unions president Michele O’Neil reminded the media that TAFE had $3 billion cut from it by the Liberal Government. “We need money that goes into rebuilding TAFE and making sure we reverse some of the worst cases of privatisation”.

While the campaign launch was very successful, generating lots of media coverage and bringing the issue to the attention of MPs, it is just the start.

Spread the word
We need as many people as possible to spread the word and send a message to MPs that TAFE holds a special place for Australians and deserves to be funded properly.
“We need money that goes into rebuilding TAFE and making sure we reverse some of the worst cases of privatisation.”

With an election looming, we need to make RebuildwithTAFE a priority issue. If you haven’t already, jump on the website – www.RebuildwithTAFE.org.au or the dedicated Facebook and Twitter pages to show your support and share the resources.

In addition to raising TAFE issues in the media the AEU will explore running advertising on radio, newspapers, social media, and on public and mobile billboards so it will be hard to miss.

**Positive focus**
Creating a new brand campaign was a challenging process. Every state and territory faces different and unique circumstances when it comes to TAFE and that can lead to difficulties in developing a national brand that resonates with everyone.

We held extensive focus groups with TAFE members who told us that they want a campaign that is positive about TAFE. One that will promote the many reasons why TAFE should be supported by governments, particularly in the light of the pandemic.

The RebuildwithTAFE brand enables members in every State and Territory to use the overarching message alongside messaging unique to their circumstances. The brand can be used with State, Territory and Federal Government and lends itself to a conversation not just about demanding more and guaranteed funding, but explaining why that funding is needed and how that funding could be used.

Our commitment to our key demands haven’t changed.
Rebuild with TAFE

The Rebuild with TAFE campaign has a clear message for all political parties:

- Rebuild with TAFE, the public provider of vocational education because TAFE is best positioned to help Australia rebuild socially and economically post-COVID-19.
- Rebuild with TAFE by guaranteeing a minimum of 70% total government funding to TAFE to ensure that TAFE can continue to deliver the high quality vocational education that it has provided for generations of Australians.
- Rebuild with TAFE because industry and the community trusts TAFE and it provides the best opportunity for students to achieve a high quality vocational education.
- Rebuild with TAFE to address Australia’s national shortage of 200,000 apprentices since 2012.

“And now we’re incredibly excited to build on the work of that campaign to launch Rebuild with TAFE – for a positive future.”

- Rebuild with TAFE to provide qualified teachers, a wider range of vocational education courses and more campuses across Australia, particularly for students in rural, regional and remote locations.

We’re very proud of the previous Stop TAFE Cuts campaign. It raised public and political awareness and helped secure strong policy commitments from the ALP and Greens in the lead up to the last federal election. And now we’re incredibly excited to build on the work of that campaign to launch Rebuild with TAFE – for a positive future.

MAXINE SHARKEY AEU Federal TAFE Secretary
Take action to help
#RebuildWithTAFE
for a positive future

Share your story of how TAFE helped
you or someone you know using the
#RebuildWithTAFE hashtag

Sign up to add your voice and receive
regular updates and information at the
rebuildwithtafe.org.au website

Download printable and shareable
images, frames and information at
rebuildwithtafe.org.au/resources

It’s time to invest in
a positive future

It’s time to step up
and build our future

TAFE provides high quality
vocational education and has
changed the lives of millions
of Australians.

With hundreds of campuses all around the country,
TAFE can help Australia rebuild in response to the
COVID crisis.

In fact TAFE is perfectly positioned to provide skills, jobs,
purpose and opportunities to millions more Australians,
and help to create a positive future for all of us.

But TAFE has suffered government funding cuts –
so while right now is the time Australia needs TAFE
more than ever before, it’s also the time TAFE needs
funding more than ever before.

If you or someone you know has benefitted from an
education with TAFE, please add your voice at:

rebuildwithtafe.org.au
As the Australian economy and individual communities look to rebuild after the pandemic as well as prepare for a more technologically enabled future, the VET sector and TAFE in particular will have a critically important role to play. The demands that are placed on TAFE and how it will meet them will be determined to a large extent by the details of the next Commonwealth-State VET funding agreement.

The Productivity Commission’s review for the Commonwealth government of the current National Agreement for Skills and Workforce Development and former Federal Minister Jenny Macklin’s review of Victoria’s post-secondary education and training system will shape the content of the new National Skills Agreement. Other key documents informing the negotiations are the 2019 review by former New Zealand Minister, Steven Joyce, and the draft VET Reform Roadmap developed by VET officials across States, Territories and the Commonwealth.

A heads of agreement has already been signed and the detailed agreement is due to be finalised by the end of August 2021, with the new arrangements to be implemented from 1 January 2022 and they will then run through until 2026-27.

The heads of agreement includes nine priorities. The most fundamental for TAFE can be summarised as:

- a new funding model that improves national consistency (through efficient pricing)
- enhancing transparency and accountability through increasing data collection, analysis and public reporting
- contestability to ensure high quality training and student choice, and
- increasing real investment in VET.

The Australian Productivity Commission released its Final Report to Government on VET sector reforms in January. The recommendations are alarming. We asked Claire Field, advisor to the tertiary education sector, to explain the impacts for TAFE.
Funding reforms

While the VET sector should see more funding in the new agreement, not all of it will flow to TAFE. In fact it is likely that TAFEs will face more competition for funding over the coming years.

The Productivity Commission recommends jurisdictions publish more details on the funding they allocate specifically to TAFE and identify what TAFE does with it. The Commission also recommends ‘market testing’ more contestability of TAFE’s community service obligations. While Jenny Macklin does not support this market testing, she does suggest that other not-for-profit and community providers could deliver CSOs, not just TAFE.

And while the Productivity Commission does not support ‘Free TAFE’ places, Macklin does, saying they should continue to be used to meet emerging labour market needs. Given States and Territories will not be forced into nationally consistent funding arrangements in the National Skills Agreement it is likely that Free TAFE places will continue. However the National Skills Commission will publish efficient prices for VET qualifications, and the fact it will do so based on input from all jurisdictions, means that over time States and Territories are likely to move towards the NSC’s pricing model, as the NSW submission to the Productivity Commission review pointed out.

The Productivity Commission recommends reforms to the VET Student Loan scheme to expand the loan caps available for different courses (from the current four different loan limits), as well as expanding the loan scheme to more Diploma level and higher courses, expanding it to Certificate IV courses, and possibly trialling the loan scheme for some Certificate III courses. Given the sector’s experiences with the VET FEE-HELP scheme it is hard to imagine there will be much enthusiasm for loans at Certificate III level, and any loans for Certificate IV courses are likely to be rolled out in a tightly controlled manner.

The Commission also supports States and Territories continuing to closely monitor the providers they fund and notes that between 2015–2019:
- the number of funded providers in Queensland dropped from 720 to 460
- 45 providers had funding contracts withdrawn in Victoria, and
- 100 providers had contracts withdrawn in NSW.

The other sizeable change to VET funding, which might be included in the new Agreement, relates to micro-credentials and skillsets. Macklin supports a lifelong learning account modelled on those in operation in France and Singapore. The Productivity Commission instead suggests trialling a lifelong learning loan scheme focussed on ‘mature-age’ Australians, allowing them to undertake units from different courses and possibly different providers (ie non-RTOs).

Both the Productivity Commission and Macklin recognise a need for ‘evidence-based reforms’ and call for more public provider-level data to be made available on student fees and provider performance (student and employer satisfaction and course completion rates). In other words the MySkills website should look more like the higher education’s ComparED site. With the TAFE and independent provider sectors having similarly high levels of student satisfaction, it will be interesting to see where provider-level differences emerge. It should be noted that while TAFEs collectively rate higher with students from disadvantaged backgrounds, independent providers collectively rate higher on employer satisfaction – so the data which is collected and reported will be important.
The key reform documents which will shape the National Skills Agreement do not focus solely on how to fund VET. They also discuss and make recommendations on teaching and learning.

Some of the most important of these include the recommendation from the Productivity Commission that the NCVER should conduct a census of the VET workforce to investigate, amongst other things, the relationship between teacher characteristics (focused on pedagogical skills and contemporary industry experience) and student outcomes. In essence the Commission is not convinced the Certificate IV Training and Assessment produces better VET teachers. They want governments to use this information (and other data) to inform the VET Workforce Quality Strategy currently being progressed.

The Productivity Commission also recommends that VET needs to move to independent assessment (through a suitable process involving trials and thorough consultation). They note that pilots of independent assessment have so far achieved little but argue that it is needed to strengthen confidence in the VET system amongst employers and VET graduates. Macklin does not go quite so far but, like Joyce, recommends that independent moderation of assessment decision making is needed. Joyce sees independent moderation in turn as a step towards future independent assessment.

If independent assessment is agreed to by governments its implementation will be critically important. While there have been a small number (so far) of concerns expressed that independent assessment would lead to more complexity in training packages, in fact the experience of other countries with highly regarded VET systems and independent assessment is the opposite.

The Canadian, German, Swiss and UK VET systems (amongst others) use independent assessment, and in doing so they remove the need for prescriptive detail in their training ‘inputs’ and free their teachers to teach. For example the German equivalent of the Australian unit of competency is less than two pages in length. Instead of the very prescriptive details in Australian units, the Germans instead rely on the pedagogical skills of their teachers and their industry knowledge to teach as they believe is appropriate, and independent assessment confirms students have achieved the requisite skills.
As Terry Moran, one of the architects of Australia’s Training Package model identified in his 2018 review of TAFE SA, assessment now has a “dominant role” in regulation of the Australian VET system and has in turn “squeezed out” teaching and learning, Moran went on to say that “TAFE SA’s audit by ASQA, and the way it focussed on process and assessment detail, highlighted this. Teachers and stakeholders were sceptical that undertaking the remediation required by ASQA would improve the outcome for students graduating from TAFE SA courses.”

**TAFE governance**

Both Macklin and the Productivity Commission recognise that for TAFE Institutes to adapt to a VET funding system which focuses on competition and student choice, which incorporates more public reporting on provider performance, and which responds to an increasingly digital future (and more demand for short courses and micro-credentials) the sector and providers need a clear set of objectives and greater coherence to avoid the current conflicts between policy, funding and regulation.

The Commission goes further and notes that despite many TAFEs being statutory authorities, there are concerns about their lack of independence from State and Territory governments. The NSW Audit Office made similar findings in their recent review.

The Commission therefore recommends that TAFEs should be given greater operational autonomy, specifically with “control over their assets, industrial arrangements and financial performance.”

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Community

TAFE teachers rally over sale of Scone TAFE

Teachers, students and community members rallied outside the office of Upper Hunter MP Michael Johnsen in February calling on the state government to stop the sale of Scone TAFE college and consult with the community about the site’s future.

Article by Phil Chadwick

Scone TAFE is a purpose-built facility in the Hunter Valley, constructed to service the Agriculture, Veterinarian Nursing, Equine and Land Care industries. It features modern stables, a riding area and farrier’s workshop with the same equipment and latest technology used by the horse breeding and training industry.

In January TAFE NSW sent correspondence to the NSW Teachers Federation advising of the sale of the campus. Their advertisement states it is ‘to be sold at less than replacement cost’ and it would appear the state government’s preference is for the college to be sold to a private RTO. Earlier this year, Michael Johnsen Nationals MP for Upper Hunter Media publicly endorsed the sale saying; “I have no objection to this... I strongly believe the facility should remain as a local educational place for equine and agricultural courses, delivered by a registered training organisation. We have an opportunity to enhance the equine training capabilities in the horse capital, and cement our place as a global player in equine excellence.”

This is despite Mr Johnsen saying last year “Scone TAFE is already offering world-class training to students”. At a Senate Estimates Hearing in March it was revealed that Racing NSW had written to the Minister for Skills and Tertiary Education Dr Geoff Lee offering to buy the Scone campus six months before it was even listed for sale.
Scone Connected Learning Centre Rings Alarm Bells

In June last year, the Scone Connected Learning Centre (CLC) opened its doors. A CLC provides the ability to link students at different locations with teachers anywhere in the state. The idea is, if there are insufficient student numbers at one location to run a class, the combination of students at the various locations allow the course to run. CLCs that are built on existing TAFE college sites can be seen to complement both the theory and practical aspects of Vocational Education.

However, the Federation has become aware of an alarming trend when a CLC is built offsite of the local college, shortly after that CLC goes online the existing TAFE college is either closed, repurposed, or finds its way onto Realestate.com.au. A CLC differs significantly to a TAFE college in terms of teaching delivery, as there is no capacity to do hands on practical learning. When practical equipment is required, it is transported to the location by a mobile training unit (MTU) i.e. a large dual axle trailer. In the case of Scone TAFE students, these arrangements for practical activities are considerably inferior.

Some courses will be relocated to Kurri Kurri - approximately 1.5 hours drive away. In either case the students and the community deserve better.

There is repeated behaviour by members of the NSW state government to deny the sale of any TAFE college, and mislead the local community that the CLC will provide the same or greater level of service to the community as the existing campus. The campus is then closed and sold off because it is underutilized.

Bob Sim has been teaching the Certificate IV Farrier course at Scone TAFE for 25 years. He expressed his frustration to ABC News saying: “This is not just a thing you can teach online. You can’t shoe a horse out of a book”.

A 2015 leaked cabinet document indicated the NSW government intended to divest of 27 TAFE properties, Scone TAFE was on that list and it appears that Scone will not be the only college on the market this year. The case for the sale of Scone and other TAFE colleges is based on the assumption that they are underutilised. The 2015 introduction of the NSW state government’s ‘Smart and Skilled’ funding model has had serious impacts on the government funding available to TAFE. The TAFE budget has flattened, and in real terms has been backsliding over the life of the current NSW state government.

Courses are being pushed into online blended delivery models to cut cost. Under these terms, most regional TAFE colleges would be considered underutilised and therefore no longer financially viable. The same could be said for some of the smaller metropolitan colleges as well.

For example, the former Dapto TAFE campus has become an anti-terrorist training facility for the NSW Police. Quirindi TAFE is now lying dormant and neglected and Bega TAFE is set to be sold, after protracted denials from the local member that it would not be offered for sale.

The local community are deeply concerned that Nationals MP for Upper Hunter Michael Johnsen has failed to defend his local TAFE college. In February, following an address from a delegation of Federation representatives, Upper Hunter Shire Council passed the following replacement motion five votes to one:

That council:
1. call upon the NSW Government to immediately cease any proposal to sell Scone TAFE;
2. call on Minister Geoff Lee for a full and comprehensive consultation with the community about the impact the sale of the TAFE will have on the future of jobs and skills in the Hunter; and,
3. report the findings of this transparent community consultation back to Council and the community.

Since the notification of the sale of Scone TAFE, the Federation has been developing and growing a campaign to Stop the Sale of Scone TAFE. The campaign has received substantial media coverage so far and is gaining support from other unions and the wider community.

PHIL CHADWICK NSWTF post-schools organise
Members speak out

Our new campaign calls on the federal government to Rebuild with TAFE for a positive future. We asked TAFE teachers around Australia how can TAFE build a positive future?

**MARK DIBDIN**
Automotive lecturer and chair of the AEUSA TAFE Divisional Council, TAFE SA

I HAVE TWO answers, and they may not be what you think. I could claim that we need more funding, which we do, or we need more teachers and smaller classes, which we do. Perhaps TAFEs should be a government educational department and not privatised or a strange hybrid statutory authority, which they should.

No, to rebuild with TAFE we need high quality education to be the driving factor in all decisions, and the removal of all political wrangling. And they are both directly linked. The ideology of commodification of Vocational Education & Training has not produced an increase of investment; actually government investment has fallen almost 25 per cent.

That’s created an environment where decisions are financially motivated, causing educational quality to fall, not rise. Decisions born out of political wrangling and ideology places education anywhere but first. Whereas TAFE teachers’ top priority is providing high quality education.

**SIMON BAILEY**
Advanced Skills Teacher, Metals, South TasTAFE

THE PREMIER’S ECONOMIC and Social Recovery Advisory Council (PESRAC) delivered its Final Report to the Premier in March, providing advice on long-term recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic. And it was right to point out that ‘training and skills are critical in the context of COVID-19 recovery, and to Tasmania’s social and economic prospects.’

TAFE teachers all teach to national standards that are developed by industry and that’s how we are building a positive future for Tasmanians.

Don’t just take my word for it. The TasTAFE leadership recently informed staff that TasTAFE – the 2020 Large Training Provider Winner – was in a stronger position than it’s been in for years. We were also told Tasmania has the highest student satisfaction rates nationally and the top apprentice completion rates.

TAFE teachers bend over backwards to meet the needs of industry – courses start onsite at 6am, we work night shifts. Yet, nothing in the proposed PESRAC will improve our ability to deliver the flexibility employers want. It is a slap in the face to teachers and regional communities.

The Government should be investing more, not less in education, but the proposed model of turning TasTAFE into a government business enterprise will shift the full cost of education onto students and employers.

I went through the PESRAC report, one by one, looking for disparaging comments on TAFE. Only one submission documented that TAFE was not fit for purpose.

Teachers won’t hesitate to defend our public TAFE and fair working conditions, but we would rather be working together with government on a strong training and education-led economic recovery.

Help us stop the Liberal party’s misguided plan to privatise TAFE.

Sign our petition at: savetastafe.org.au/
THE DEVELOPMENT OF skills and the knowledge that underpins those skills is inherent to lifelong learning for people. TAFE has always been, to our communities and for our communities, significant in achieving this end. TAFE is providing Australia a positive future in a myriad of ways. Whether as a dual sector or stand alone, TAFE institutions provide for articulation between school and VET education. TAFE facilitates multi-faceted pathways in the forms of prevocational, VET in Schools, Start TAFE now, and Engineering pathways programs to provide all ages to gain employment. TAFE allows for upskilling and reskilling to provide for greater employment opportunities regardless of demographic. Furthermore, TAFE’s great range of short course opportunities provides for people of all ages to develop interests they would like to pursue. TAFE can and does contribute to provide Australia a positive future by delivering quality education, across a range of qualifications, inclusive of all peoples. That is why all Australian governments need to rebuild with TAFE.

The AEU is asking the Government to #RebuildwithTAFE. How can TAFE give Australia a positive future? The Victorian community values our work and knows TAFE makes a difference. I suspect most think the TAFE system is ticking along OK, but the reality on the ground is still tough. The Andrews government’s introduction of free TAFE courses has been positive, bringing in thousands of additional students to the TAFE system, along with creating a demand for many extra teachers, provided some stability.

TAFE provides a positive future by being the place where all Australians can access the widest range of quality education and skills needed by each community to rebuild Australia post covid, developing areas from agriculture to baristas that need to be rebuilt.

TAFE supports and nurtures students from all backgrounds, ages and stages in their lives to start, restart, upskill or reskill to help them achieve their fullest potential. This is all made possible by our incredibly capable industry current teachers who provide real hands on learning, equipping students with the skills they need to reach their full potential and to access decent, secure employment.
Call for 2021 nominations

Rosemary Richards Scholarship

Rosemary Richards was a proud feminist, unionist and educator. A trailblazing leader, she was committed to advancing gender equality across the AEU. In her memory, the Rosemary Richards Scholarship continues her legacy by building the capacity of women as activists and leaders.

This scholarship is an opportunity for an AEU woman member with an idea for an innovative project, research or study experience that will increase her skills and experience in the union’s work at state/territory, national or international level. By extension, it should also support the AEU’s women members.

The Scholarship is valued at $10,000 and is intended to cover all project expenses including, but not limited to, travel, attendance at conferences, workplace visits, training and developmental opportunities, work-shadowing, research project design and implementation.

All women AEU Branch or Associated Body members are strongly encouraged to apply.

Contact your local Women’s Officer for more information.

Application forms and further information is available on the AEU website: aefederal.org.au/noticeboard

The submission deadline for application forms is Friday, 7 May 2021.
Rebuilding with TAFE for a positive future

We take a look at how TAFEs around the country are rebuilding for a positive future and proving that TAFE is more than ‘just another provider’.

VICTORIA
More Support for Aboriginal Learners at all Victorian TAFEs

THREE SPECIALIST KOORIE staff members will be employed at every Victorian TAFE in the biggest expansion of support services for Aboriginal TAFE students in the state’s history.

Koorie Liaison Officers are employed by TAFEs and dual sector institutes to provide advice and support to learners during their TAFE journey and promote opportunities in the community. Koorie Student Support Officers are trained to understand the support offered by the Institute and Department support systems.

Both roles contribute strategically to Aboriginal inclusion, cultural safety and perspectives in the curriculum to ensure providers deliver culturally inclusive training. They also provide support and advice to the TAFE workforce.

This initiative is an important part of the Victorian Government’s Marrung: Aboriginal Education Plan 2016–2026 and is designed to increase the engagement and participation of Aboriginal learners in vocational education and training.

Simon Fewings, Manager of the SuniTAFE Dulka Yuppata Koorie Training Centre said: “These changes are long awaited by the VET sector and Koorie community and will help us to raise enrolments, grow our qualification offerings and improve retention, completion and post VET pathways for Koorie learners.”
Rebuilding TAFE

**TASMANIA**
Bicycle education program supports TasTAFE students from migrant and refugee backgrounds

STUDENTS FROM MIGRANT and refugee backgrounds in TasTAFE’s Young Migrant Education Program (YMEP) are getting extra help to ride to classes thanks to a bicycle education program being delivered by an alliance of cycling interests.

Funding from local resident, Dr John Hunter, has been used by Hobart Bike Kitchen, Cycling South, Bicycle Network Tasmania and My Ride, Sandy Bay to get students their own bikes and helmets, learn about their bikes and road safety, and basic bike handling skills.

About 40 students aged between 18 and 25 are part of the project. Students have been in Hobart between one and six years and come from countries such as Nepal, Bhutan, Afghanistan, Ethiopia, Eritrea, Burma, Iraq, Syria and Thailand.

Many live close to the Intercity Cycleway, making riding a cheap and easy transport option for them as well as removing the fear of having to ride on roads.

Students indicated that they wanted to learn to ride for fun, exercise, to save money and have more transport independence and to help fight climate change.

TasTAFE YMEP student, Rufta Gebrit, from Ethiopia, grew up in a refugee camp and said she’d had little opportunity to ride a bike before coming to Tasmania.

**SOUTH AUSTRALIA**
TAFE SA partners with the Master Butchers Cooperative (MBL) to train a new generation of workers

THE MOVE IS designed to combat a shortage of skilled workers in the industry and reflects the strong working relationship between MBL and TAFE SA.

Through the program, MBL will contribute to the start-up costs, after subsidies, of an apprentice’s training and their wage on the days they are at TAFE SA.

MBL CEO Jamie Higgins says the program will help members in the short term and the industry as a whole in the longer term.

Apprentices will complete the Certificate III in Meat Processing (Retail Butcher) at TAFE SA’s Regency Campus, where they will receive comprehensive training, including making smallgoods and sausages.

TAFE SA lecturer Shayne O’Dea says Regency’s purpose-built training centre includes a butchery and meat processing facility and students get to work alongside industry experts including recognised chefs.

“Regency’s purpose-built training centre includes a butchery and meat processing facility and students get to work alongside industry experts including recognised chefs.”

Matthew says finding the time and money to train apprentices is a challenge for many small business owners, and he expects the MBL’s support will be welcomed by other butchers.

TAFE SA lecturer Shayne O’Dea says Regency’s purpose-built training centre includes a butchery and meat processing facility and students get to work alongside industry experts including recognised chefs.

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**ACT**

Heavy Vehicle technology offers a world of opportunities for women at CIT

SUSAN IS A first-year apprentice whose work experience last year led to a job with Asset Construction Hire. She works on boom and scissor lifts and heavy diesel vehicles, and she describes her experience enthusiastically saying, “I’m loving every minute of it!”

Like Susan, Rachael is also studying a Certificate III in Heavy Commercial Vehicle Mechanical Technology (AUR31116) and works with Southern Truck Centre in Queanbeyan. She is building her experience both at work and through hands on training at CIT. “Eventually I want to become a manager within the trade or even start my own workshop one day. I’m working my way up,” Rachael said.

Emma works as a fleet mechanic for the Snowy Monaro Hydro maintaining and repairing chainsaws, excavators, graders and rollers and is studying a second qualification, Certificate III in Mobile Plant Technology (AUR31216). Emma is living her dream and encourages other women to follow theirs. “Don’t let anyone hold you back because you’re a female,” she said.

**WA**

WA Premier Mark McGowan commits to ‘rebuild with TAFE’

THE RE-ELECTED MCGOWAN Government will continue to restore WA’s TAFE sector by building on its success over the last four years in delivering huge cuts to fees and increases to enrolments.

A reduction in interstate FIFO was a key election promise. Premier Mark McGowan said: “By rebuilding our TAFE and training sectors, we will ensure Western Australians are well placed to secure these new local jobs.”

The government has pledged five major initiatives to continue to drive the restoration of WA’s TAFE system, including:

- $282 million to continue the TAFE fee freeze until 2025
- $95 million for vocational education and training (VET) career support in schools
- $32.4 million to employ 300 more apprentices and trainees as part of the WA Jobs Plan
- $29.8 million to create an additional 4,000 places at WA TAFEs for high school students
- $25 million to invest in new, modern equipment for WA’s TAFEs
- $5.2 million to encourage businesses to employ 200 more mature age apprentices.
Rebuilding TAFE

THE MANAGING DIRECTOR of Mogo Wildlife Park has welcomed a new TAFE NSW Moruya course aimed at upskilling the next generation of zoo-keepers in the region.

TAFE NSW Moruya has just launched the Certificate III in Captive Animals after extensive consultation with zoos in the Illawarra, South Coast and beyond, including Mogo Wildlife Park.

The unique course, which is enrolling now, is the minimum required qualification for zoo-keepers and enables students to undertake work placement at a local zoo as part of their studies.

According to the federal government’s Job Outlook agency, strong growth is expected for zookeeper roles in the coming years, with employment numbers expected to rise to 5000 nationally by 2022.

Mogo Wildlife Park Managing Director Chad Staples applauded the TAFE NSW decision to run the new course, saying it would help stimulate home-grown interest in the industry. “It’s amazing for young people to have this opportunity to get involved in the zoo industry,” Mr Staples said.

“Having a qualification in captive animals, combined with work placement at a zoo, is the real entry point into a zoo-keeping career and it’s great to have a local TAFE NSW campus offering this course to true locals.”

ONE OF THE major challenges facing the production of military vehicles in Australia is the local engagement of suitably qualified welders that meet international certification standards required by defence markets.

This partnership will bridge the international welding certification qualification gap in Australia by enabling the supply chain of defence and advanced manufacturing industries to attract appropriately skilled welders, and upskill existing and transitional entrant welders to meet the minimum international welding standard (ISO9606).

TAFE Queensland has already been training experienced welders to the international standards demanded by defence following the purchase of 15 augmented reality welding simulators last year so it is perfectly placed to deliver a full range of skills development programs to suit Rheinmetall’s needs.

NSW

Unique new TAFE NSW course to help rear next generation of zoo-keepers

Queensland

TAFE Queensland is partnering with the largest supplier of military vehicles

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120 Clarendon Street, Southbank, Victoria, Australia 3006

Celebrate TAFE Day Wednesday 11 August 2021

Images: courtesy Rheinmetall

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CELEBRATE NATIONAL TAFE DAY

WEDNESDAY 11 AUGUST 2021

#RebuildWithTAFE
FOR A POSITIVE FUTURE

rebuildwithtafe.org.au
VET overhaul needed to create a training system that works for all

For years, Australian industries recruited the skilled workers they needed through the migration program. COVID-19 has thrown a spanner into that easy fix, forcing government and business leaders to think about how to better develop our homegrown talent.

As it happens, COVID hit a few months after the Victorian government ordered an independent review of vocational education and training (VET), with a particular focus on the role of Tertiary and Further Education (TAFE).

For years, the position and status of VET has been fragile, as few of our political, business and community leaders know it or understand it. Yet a VET qualification is the highest held by one in three Victorians, and TAFE in particular is a trusted brand in our suburbs and regions.

Yet TAFE has also been derided as a second-rate option, competing with the higher education sector on the one hand, and private training providers on the other.

“The risk for TAFE institutes is that they go the way of the Commonwealth Employment Service (the public employment services provider that was abandoned by the government in 1998),” says economist Rod Glover. “And that would be a tragedy.”

Professor Glover and his policy team at Monash Sustainable Development Institute contributed to the recently released review Future Skills for Victoria, chaired by former federal government minister Jenny Macklin.

“The risk for TAFE institutes is that they go the way of the Commonwealth Employment Service (the public employment services provider that was abandoned by the government in 1998)”

— Rod Glover
Economist

“Most of the review was conducted in the COVID period,” he says. “So we saw providers quickly pivoting to new models of delivery, to new ways of working that for years had been too hard, widely adopting digital technologies and embracing online teaching.”

“We saw institutions collaborating, and the rapid development of product – there’s been innovation throughout the system.”

He describes COVID as a “disruptive crisis”, which he contrasts with the “creeping crisis” that better describes the long-term problems facing the VET system.

“If you look at the current system, it’s not delivering what government and taxpayers need it to deliver,” he says. “It’s not delivering the skills that business needs to adapt to change. And, most importantly, it’s not delivering what students need to get ahead in the labour market.”

Today’s VET students can’t tell whether the course that interests them will lead to a job, for instance. The link between the fees they pay and the quality of training provided is unclear.

Some potential students have even complained that the process of making sense of this is so confusing that they’ve given up on study altogether.
"We need to be able to explain how this system works," Professor Glover says, "to give people confidence that the courses being developed, the students being employed, and the government and taxpayer money being spent, have an evidence base and logic behind them."

**Connecting with the economic imperatives**

The review proposes a restructure that better connects training with what the economy needs.

The plan recognises that targeted, quality training is crucial if we’re to rebuild an economy damaged by extended lockdowns and closed borders. It proposes a path forward that better prepares Victorians with skills that align with three work categories that are expected to grow – digital; the clean (or green) economy; and the care sector.

The report recommends:

- An independent body, FutureSkills Victoria, be set up to provide skills policy advice to government. Business, unions, communities, students and TAFEs would all be represented, reflecting the shared stewardship that the VET system needs to embrace.

- The skills Victoria will need over the next decade, and the education and training this will require, will be set out under an annually updated Victorian Skills Plan.

- Future Skills Labs are proposed for the digital, clean and care sectors. These labs would work with industry to anticipate growth needs in their sector, particularly the skills and training opportunities. The labs will contribute to the Victorian Skills Plan.

- A new website for students, businesses and communities to learn about what jobs and skills are in demand (and what courses will allow them to acquire those skills). The aim is to streamline information in a way that’s useful to individuals, businesses and communities planning their future.

"The Australian economic model has been heavily dependent on migration flows," Professor Glover says, acknowledging that "this has been a great strength."

But post-COVID, it’s time to consider "what the next economic model for Australia looks like – what’s the growth model we’re going to build from within, based on the skills of our people and the capabilities of our businesses?"

"There’s an opportunity for us to think about how we connect our skills and innovation systems differently.”

Typically, VET has been seen as focusing solely on the “technical and practical aspect of doing a job”, he says. But future work will require broader skill sets.

"You do need digital literacy. But you also need to be able to engage and interact with people who might come from different sectors or disciplines to you. You need to be able to solve problems that there’s no rule book for.”

Much of this kind of training once took place on the job, he acknowledges, and hands-on experience will always be important. "but you can learn about entrepreneurial, collaborative and creative skills” as part of vocational training, too.

**Data to inform industry and community needs**

The proposed new system will gather data about what skills industry needs, what skills community members have, and how the gaps can be filled in regions and communities. It also proposes a role for unions in FutureSkills Victoria, alongside industry and education providers.

"How we understand the working class has shifted dramatically with changes in the structure of the Australian economy," Professor Glover says. "It’s no longer just..."
blue-collar blokes in manufacturing or trades. It’s an incredibly diverse group of people from different sectors, often in the services sector, and they’re often characterised by insecure work.

”While part of that insecurity relates to the rise of the gig economy and the growing flexibility granted to employers, it also relates to a structural weakness in our VET system’s ability to counter such forces.”

”There’s an opportunity for us to think about how we connect our skills and innovation systems differently.”

Learning begets learning. It’s a sad fact that those most in need of training are least likely to pursue it. Many insecure workers don’t seek further training – some can’t afford it, some don’t know where to look, and some see themselves as having more pressing needs.

”We see an awful lot of people fall through the cracks,” he says. In Australia, the “training market conversation” has been dominated by the language of “efficiency” and “competitive neutrality”, he says. “In the report, we really try to reject that language.”

Efficiency is important, he acknowledges, but so is effectiveness. “And we’re not just talking about a market here, we’re talking about a system that has to serve a whole range of public needs, and policymakers have lost sight of that”. The proposed restructure would see TAFEs working more like a network, rather than always competing with each other for market share, which has proven “incredibly inefficient”. Instead, they’d be a key part of the system that partners more directly with communities and industries.

Another suggestion is for the Commonwealth Government to set up a system of “lifelong learning accounts”, enabling all Australians to access training over the course of their working lives, as their skills evolve and the workplace changes.

The accounts would operate “like superannuation, as a saving system, which are contributed to on an ongoing basis. This would be integrated with the HECS system, but it wouldn’t just be a debt component. It would be an asset component as well,” Professor Glover says.

”You think about an asset in a different way,” he explains. “So if you think of the barriers to training, sometimes it’s affordability, but sometimes it’s also behavioural and cultural. Often, unless there’s a prompt for you to think about your training, you don’t do it.”

“One of the great tragedies of our skills and our economic debate is that the voice for TAFE and VET is not a loud one”

Rod Glover
Economist

Lessons from Singapore and France
Singapore and France have similar models in place that Australia could learn from.

“One of the great tragedies of our skills and our economic debate is that the voice for TAFE and VET is not a loud one,” Professor Glover says. “Vocational education and training is responsible for the highest qualification for one in three Victorians, but its voice in the national economic debate doesn’t speak to that.

“We have to elevate the status of VET, and TAFE within it, to ask ourselves, what would the best public training system in the world look like? And why do we not have that?”
As Teachers and Trainers we often come across students who have poor language, literacy and numeracy skills. There is a whole range of complex issues which may cause their inability to spell correctly or have maths competency. For example, a student may have a disability; may not have had solid foundations of learning from primary school; come from a different cultural educational system; or be influenced by their home background.

We are also well aware of the different learning style of students, for example: visual (spatial) – where the student learns better using pictures and images; aural (auditory) – the student prefers to learn by sound, music; verbal (linguistic) – when they learn more effectively with speech and writing; physical (kinesthetic) – learning through using their body, hands, and touch; and, logical (maths) – where the student prefers to use logic, reasoning and systems. All students use a variety of these learning styles, and the students who study Building and Construction are no different as they work through an apprenticeship.

When a Building and Construction student operates in the real world, they may be asked to quote for a project. For example, a carpenter would need to know how to present images of what is to be done, talk to a client, listen to the client requests and instructions, write out a quote using correctly spelt words, calculate the exact amount of material and the cost of their labour and be able to build the structure. While they may learn predominately using one learning style they are all interrelated. Not being competent in one of the above areas may mean the difference between getting a job or not, which can affect their livelihood.

The importance of teaching language, literacy and numeracy skills to Building and Construction students can’t be overlooked. Realistically, these students may need extra help as often there are common errors in spelling and maths. While many teachers and trainers do advise students to get extra help if they choose to go down this path, some do not take up the opportunity to get assistance from special education tutors. Other avenues may need to be used to support the learning of these students, and this is often the responsibility of the educators.

To assist in some of the above skill development, our department in Building and Construction have put up literacy and numeracy posters with the correct spelling of the most common Australian words used in carpentry (ie: wood not lumber) in alphabetical order. Also included is the correct mathematical formulas and conversion charts for working out area, perimeter, volume of many different shapes for such jobs as ordering concrete, quantity of material. We hope that students may read these posters and this will aid them in increasing their skills and rectifying their mistakes. The visual posters are used to reinforce the correct spelling and formula in the learning environment in the theory and practical classroom while they are being instructed in their projects.

These key words and maths formulas can all be found in their text book or online. Our students are also given a LLN Module Booklet of these words and formula in a separate working booklet so they can continue to build up a personal data base of new and correctly spelt words and maths as they study the different modules in building and construction. As they study they can add to this data base more technical language terms and words and maths used in specific building projects eg: birds mouth, truss station, dove tail, gang nail and other terminology.

Students should focus on cementing the correct spelling and maths into their brain to make life easier. As educators we should use all avenues available to reinforce, language, literacy and numeracy skills into our student’s mind. We should make use of all spaces in the practical and theory classrooms to reinforce correct spelling and correct formula. If we as teachers and trainers can achieve this objective we can feel proud that we are doing our job to the best of our ability and looking after the welfare of our students for their future careers.

**TRICKS OF THE TRADE**

**The importance of language, literacy and numeracy skills in Building and Construction**

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**RESOURCES**

If you have teaching ideas that you would like to share, please get in touch.

Email Sarah Jones at sjones@aeufederal.org.au for further information.

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**TEACHING TIPS**

If you have teaching ideas that you would like to share, please get in touch.

Email Sarah Jones at sjones@aeufederal.org.au for further information.
Around Australia

ACT
KAREN NOBLE

AS WE MOVE through Semester 1 many teachers are very tired and have a ‘carry forward’ workload from 2020 which is not resourced, just absorbed. Many students have loose ends and placements, which were delayed in 2020 and are now slowly taking place which require additional support. Coordination and assessment system upgrades continue to roll out, all needed, but upgrade fatigue is pervasive and the disruption of systems and services is very frustrating.

‘Stay online or off campus. If you can’ has been encouraged, although feedback about 2020 off campus training and assessment is inconclusive.

Some student feedback, mid 2020, supported the growth of online learning, but this was the only option at the time. Teachers are reporting gaps in student knowledge and skills with a high volume of assessment resubmission, again additional teacher work that is just absorbed. More recent student feedback is clear – they prefer face to face training, on campus.

COVID response includes using the required check-in tools and a paper sign-in system, exam style desks, room reconfigurations, and lots of alcohol spray and hand sanitiser. Constant reminders about spacing and cleaning are needed.

For JobTrainer CIT raced to fill 800 places which was achieved by early March, getting the big tick. There was little forward planning for additional teachers, classrooms, equipment and support staff needed for these places, but we pushed forward creating an intensive and unpredictable workload for many at the beginning of the semester. For teachers this means some very large classes; including students who have mixed interests in the study and may have high learning support needs. Various support LLND options are on offer, but it is not enough to support students across all campuses and programs. More bootcamps and skill sets are being developed, needing new models with tighter hours for training and assessment. These are not likely to be successful models for many people recruited through JobTrainer.

For enterprise bargaining we continue in ‘discussion’ phase with a draft log of claims focussing on:
• Pay increases
• Employer contributions on superannuation
• Maximising secure employment
• Expansion of provisions for family violence leave
• Mental health first aid allowance

• Review of teaching hours and work/life balance
• Strengthened local consultation
• New teacher support for those in their first year of work at CIT
Some of the details teachers will be looking for will relate to timely payment of overtime for all teaching categories, clarification of pay rates/hours calculations for teaching and assessment, review of class sizes, review of workload for large classes and online teaching, resourcing of program development and a review of approach to casual teaching hours.

Some quick comments from teachers about the start of 2021:
“JobTrainer has been a challenge, not in the overall intent just that there have been many people involved and this has caused repetition in messaging and information.”

“I think we need to put a focus on the ability of the teachers to quickly adapt to new training methods so quickly during the Covid shut down. Although it will never be truly acknowledged it was the skills of the teachers who make the switch appear seamless to students. We need to hang onto the flexibility we achieved in 2020: working from home and flexible learning approaches, where suited.”

“Being overworked and the TAE is a big concern. Our programs have fantastic growth as people want to get out of office jobs. I’d take a guess and say that COVID and the bushfires have quite a lot to do with this, which is a strange twist to get a positive out of those.”

NSW
PHILLIP CHADWICK

THE NEW YEAR sees an easing of the Covid pandemic in NSW and most classes have returned to face to face delivery under Covid safe working arrangements.

The requirements set by TAFE NSW for teachers to Demonstrate Vocational Competency and Currency (DVCC) continue to be of great concern to federation members. The process is complex and time consuming, members are reporting frustration as a result of inconsistencies in directions given to what is deemed to be compliant with TAFE NSW DVCC requirements. An arbitrary deadline of the 29 January 2021 was set for all full-time teachers to submit an Individual Delivery Profile (IDP) outlining how they demonstrate vocational competency and currency against each of the Units of Competency (UOC) they are programmed to deliver in semester 1, 2021. The entire process will need to be repeated in semester 2 if teaching a different UOC.

TAFE NSW has advised that full time teachers who fail to submit an IDP by the January deadline will be required to partake in a performance conversation with their line manager to develop a DVCC compliance strategy.

The workload and the stress arising from conflicting advice on the process has forced some teachers to reconsider the viability of employment with TAFE NSW.
Federation is working to address members' concerns and reduce the teacher workload in this process. Since the notification of the sale of Scone TAFE, the Federation has been developing and growing a campaign to Stop the Sale of Scone TAFE. The campaign has received substantial media coverage so far and is gaining support from other unions and the wider community. Federation will continue to organise community actions. A community forum will be held at the Scone RSL to allow the Upper Hunter community to hear from a range of guest speakers and to voice concerns related to the sale. For the full story see page 14.

QUEENSLAND
DAVID TERAUDS

THE QUEENSLAND TRAINING Ombudsman (QTO) has released a report regarding allegations of inappropriate job vacancy advertising that resulted in applicants being offered places in subsidised and fee-for-service training courses. The executive summary of the QTO report states:

"Maintaining quality in the vocational education and training (VET) sector is a shared responsibility between government, regulators, industry, training providers and students. However, it does not stop there. Other stakeholders that have a role in the VET market must also behave appropriately to maintain the quality and reputation of the overall VET sector. (Queensland Training Ombudsman, 2020, p. 2).

The QTO review explored issues that had been raised by a number of complainants and made six recommendations to the state government which have been accepted. These include directions to the department such that they review current practices to:

- consider the timelines of actions taken for alleged contract breaches
- identify and take decisive action in relation to funding qualifications it identifies as high risk
- focus audit and compliance activity to high risk areas
- review all guidelines, frameworks and directives to ensure they adequately identify the behaviours required of contracted suppliers.

Further, the department is to consider placing additional requirements on contracted suppliers to enhance quality outcomes where appropriate and improve transparency of actions to ensure all stakeholders are aware of the importance placed on quality.

The final two recommendations call for the establishment of a new Queensland VET Quality Forum which should review existing referral mechanisms and student communication channels and implement enhanced processes.

The TAFE Queensland Educators Certified Agreement 2019 established a new classification of foundation educator, the details of which (role, duties, qualifications and experience prerequisites) can be found at Appendix 2 of the instrument. Its aim is to establish a position from which prospective educators can be trained in-house by TAFE Qld with the aim of appointment to higher level educator roles upon successful completion of the Cert IV TAE.

Mentoring and observation will be structured through direct supervision and monitoring of the foundation educator by appropriately qualified and experienced teachers. The formal instruction will be delivery by TAFE Qld of the Cert IV TAE (as the minimum qualification required by National regulation). TAFE Qld Ed Quality has been intimately involved in the design of the program, to ensure an appropriate structure with adequate timelines for completion. The QTU has been involved, as party to the agreement, in negotiating appropriate conditions of employment to ensure successful completion to be described in a joint statement.

Late in 2020 the QFU acting as the AEU(Q) finalised the development of the Central Queensland University (CQU) EB log of claims. CQU is the dual sector university responsible for the public provider delivery of VET in the central queensland region. Negotiations are due to commence no later than the end of March 2021. Members working within CQU are proud of their status as the public provider and are striving to maintain parity with their colleagues in TAFE Qld.

SOUTH AUSTRALIA
ANGELA DEAN

WHAT STARTED AS alarming reports from members that up to half of all courses at TAFE SA could be cut, ended up in a direct move from Premier Marshall’s Government to privatise the vocational education and training sector in South Australia.

Mid 2020 saw educational staff in TAFE SA rise to the challenges of educational program delivery amidst the COVID-19 pandemic. This challenge was made all the more difficult by reports from various workgroups that TAFE SA educational leadership were looking to downsize the TAFE SA educational delivery footprint across South Australia.

After media pressure brought about from questioning by the AEU, the TAFE SA Chief executive officer David Coltman announced that the Department of Innovation and Skills (DIS) would be cutting TAFE SA’s access to the state government subsidised training funds to a variety or metropolitan courses in the business administration and community services program areas.

Following the initial announcement that DIS has prevented TAFE SA from accessing government subsidised funding for students these courses, DIS has also informed TAFE SA that they are no longer able to offer these courses under any other funding type. This includes a full fee paying funding course type. So even if the student or workplace is willing to pay full fees for the course, they cannot access this course at TAFE SA under this government policy, effectively putting TAFE SA out of the contestable market for these courses.

In addition, we are dealing with TAFE SA’s own course cuts to meet the efficiency measures as outlined in the state government budget for this year. TAFE SA has outlined seven principles that all courses in the TAFE SA training profile will be assessed against before they are given the green light to be offered in future:

1. The subsidised training profile aligns with government policy
2. It is developed and informed by industry advice
3. Vocational education and training remains accessible
4. TAFE SA achieves sustainable financial viability
5. TAFE SA recognises that it operates in a contestable market
6. The subsidised training profile will integrate across all education sectors
7. TAFE SA meets quality standards per the Standards for RTOs 2015.

Much to the dismay of educational staff, ensuring quality educational outcomes for students at TAFE SA is not listed as one of these
principles, raising serious concerns that the current government’s privatisation agenda is overpowersing the need to ensure the future of quality VET in South Australia. These plans also highlight that the cuts to TAFE courses will continue to be based on business profit margins required, not by quality educational outcomes for students.

To highlight the importance of TAFE in the future of quality VET for our community, the AEU launched the ‘Stop Marshall’s TAFE Cuts’ campaign. This campaign, launched with the support of the Public Service Association, calls upon the Marshall Government to stop the move to privatise TAFE South Australia, by re-investing in TAFE.

The initial step of the campaign saw over 20,000 Stop Marshall’s TAFE Cuts postcards delivered across South Australia. We also brought the fight to Premier Marshall’s Office with supporters volunteering to spend days outside Marshall’s office to call on public support for their issue.

Our campaign has built support across community and industry with regular media reports since the campaign commencement late last year. So much so that in the new year, pressure from our campaign pushed Minister Pisoni to write directly to private RTOs, calling upon them to lobby Labor leader Peter Malinauskas over his party’s vocal opposition to the TAFE funding cuts, which some see as a move to make the cuts to TAFE funding an early election issue.

To keep the campaign building, the AEU and PSA held a snap rally on the steps of State Parliament during the Budget and Finance Committee on the 15 February. Addressing the crowd, TAFE SA Chief Executive outlined that some industry figures have raised concerns about the current government’s decision to push training to private providers, citing the quality of training provided as the issue. Despite these revelations, the Marshall Governments’ push to privatise the VET sector continues at full steam.

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**TASMANIA**

**SIMON BAILEY**

AEU MEMBERS RETURNED to a new CEO, Grant Dreher who hails from the Victorian TAFE system. We are told that; “Grant has many years’ experience of working in regional areas, including as general manager education and training, Bendigo Regional Institute of TAFE. Currently Grant is deputy vice-chancellor, vocational education and pathways at Victoria University, having previously led the establishment of their renewed TAFE Division.”

Hopefully this rings true, as we are desperately in need of some leadership focussed on improving student outcomes and supporting its employees to work in a supportive positive environment.

For 2021 TasTAFE introduced an online enrolment system which seems to have worked so well that teaching staff were advised that unless it was urgent, they were not to contact client services for at least two weeks because staff were busy dealing with issues and increased workload associated with the new system. It will be interesting to see what the retention rates are like in the first semester. With the exception of a few courses, teaching staff were unable to review any applications made for courses and students were not required to complete any type of suitability test.

Teachers are now given a student class list and told that all students had been accepted into their course and that they are to support any student who needs extra assistance.

Recruitment of teaching staff continues to be an ongoing issue as the organisation is unable to compete with wages offered by industry and/or because of the organisation’s requirement that applicants must have as a minimum the TAESS00014 presenter skills set to be interviewed.

We have advocated that ideally applicants should be employed and supported through a structured pathway to complete the skillset, the full TAE and then diploma.

**VICTORIA**

**ELAINE GILLESPIE**

THE SKILLS FOR Victoria’s Growing Economy report conducted by former federal minister, Jenny Macklin into vocational education and training, was released in early February. It highlighted many of the issues that the AEU and TAFE members have campaigned to change. Important recommendations which, if implemented, would enshrine TAFE in the centre of a more unified VET system. At this stage the Andrews government has not responded to the report.

A key recommendation is an overhaul of the funding arrangements for our TAFEs, including changing funding arrangements so that they are based on the cost of delivering a qualification which the current funding arrangements do not. In addition work needs to be undertaken to develop an understanding of costs, subsidies, process, loadings and concessions to enable the Victorian government to produce a fairer VET funding model.

The recently released Productivity Commission Report on Government Services data, reported that the Victorian hourly funding rate for VET was once again the lowest of any state and $3.43 less than the national average.
In addition, TAFE annual reports for 2019 showed the majority of TAFE Institutes in deficit, without even factoring in the impact of COVID-19 in 2020. It is abundantly clear that there is a desperate need for a full funding review and additional funding required for the ongoing sustainability of the TAFE system.

The review recommends significant steps to unify the TAFE system, consistent with the AEU Victorian Branch’s submission. Macklin’s report acknowledges that the competitive market model too often pits training providers against each other to deliver training courses that generate short term profit without long term benefit for learners or the economy.

The report also outlines that the contestable funding model and the behaviour of some private providers sorting the system have damaged the standing of VET, including TAFE.

A range of recommendations include proposals for a remodelled, more cohesive and collaborative VET system, with TAFE at the centre as the quality benchmark for the entire VET system.

It is imperative that the Andrews’ government continues to support TAFE but also is prepared to recognise that the contestable funding model Labor introduced in 2008 resulting in competition has contributed to the undermining of the system and driving down quality. If the Victorian government bows to the agenda of the Morrison government, focused on continuing with the failed policies of the past, we will not have the education and training system so vitally needed to support the community and rebuild the economy.

To achieve a more unified, less competitive system Macklin recommends the creation of Future Skills Victoria, an independent body to ‘act as a champion and steward of the skills system’. Government would still determine policy, regulation and funding; however, Future Skills Victoria would coordinate collaboration on issues such as monitoring skills supply and demand, planning for future needs, understanding and monitoring cost of course provision, commissioning and sharing high quality curriculum and teacher professional development and leading collaboration to meet the needs of students and community through expanded skills and jobs centres.

This recommendation resulted from the many stakeholders, including the AEU, calling for a more collaborative and unified approach to lead the sector. There are also a range of strategies which importantly focus on the workforce, including opportunities for collaboration, development of strategies for recruitment and retention, and support for teacher professional learning.

\[\text{WA}\]

GARY HEDGER

THE WELCOME TO the New Year for TAFE lecturers and students in WA was a case study in a disaster, which was exacerbated by a nonresponsive inflexible student management system. The lockdown in the Perth and southwest region was declared on 31 January.

It was a total lockdown with people only being able to leave home for essential requirements (shopping, medical and essential workers) all schools and TAFE colleges were closed for one week.

Staff were directed to work from home, and this is where the turmoil began. In the previous lockdown staff could work from home, or work in isolation at a college in a classroom or office. This system worked, however, since the initial lockdown nine months previously, changes were made to the IT network. These changes resulted in a serious reduction in the number of TAFE staff across the state that could log into and access the system remotely.

Students also had limited access to the TAFE network and relied on being able to contact the colleges to find out what was occurring in relation to course start dates and attendance. A decision was made to push back the start of TAFE and schools by one week.

When the colleges opened up for students and staff on the following week there was once again pandemonium, as the IT system again was extremely slow and repeatedly dropped out.

Students had difficulty in enrolling, finding timetables and sorting out course requirements. Lecturers were also extremely disadvantaged with the shift of information and course resources to a digital mode, which impacted on delivery in the classrooms, laboratories and workshops. It remained the same for two days while the system was sorted out by IT staff working in the background to right the problems caused across the TAFE network.

Once the dust had settled it started to become obvious that over the college shut down several new factors were at play affecting lecturer’s workload. The number of students enrolled in classes had increased, without the lecturer’s knowledge and no increase in the physical resources to support the increased class sizes. For example, 25 students in a computer class with only 18 computers, 20 students enrolled in a class that was allocated a room that only had enough tables and chairs for 16. Some classes were that large that they had to be split into two classes make them manageable and ensure student and staff safety.

When lecturers were able to find out their delivery schedules/timetables it was discovered that there had also been a reduction in student contact hours for units. With reductions of more than 20% in allocated time consistent across some delivery areas. This has caused undue pressure on lectures to try and manage workloads and try and deliver a high-quality education to students.

In the run up to the state election, the Labor government made an election pitch about the importance of skilled jobs and training for people to obtain the skills required for jobs across the state. At the centre piece of this training is TAFE. The focus has been on reduced and fee free courses which is great for students, but they have been very short on announcing any increase in funding for additional staff and physical resources to cope with the extra demand.

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