Proposed Federal Government takeover of Vocational Education and Training will raise fees and destroy TAFEs



A proposed Federal Government takeover of VET being considered in secret by State and Federal Governments would mean poorer quality training, higher fees and the end of the TAFE system, the AEU said.

AEU Federal TAFE Secretary Pat Forward said the proposal, being prepared for the Council of Australian Governments, should be abandoned or rejected by state governments.

“This is a proposal which would lead to the full privatisation of vocational education and a totally user-pays system starting in 2018,” Ms Forward said.

“It is unbelievable that this is even being considered while the flawed VET FEE-HELP scheme is funneling billions in taxpayer dollars to dodgy for-profit private providers.

“VET FEE-HELP is delivering huge profits to poorly-regulated for profit private providers who are offering low-quality courses and in many cases simply ripping off students and taxpayers.

“The Federal Government needs to fix the VET FEE-HELP mess and ensure that TAFEs get the funding they need – not keep going down the path of privatisation.

“State Governments need to resist a takeover which would do irreparable harm to TAFEs and increase fees for students.

“Under this proposal funding for VET would come from student loans, which shift costs on to students.

“While States could maintain ownership of TAFEs, they would need to be treated the same as non-government providers. This would mean that State Governments could not reserve money for TAFEs to guarantee they remain the bedrock of our VET system.

“This would mean an extension of the privatisation and competition policies which have driven the VET FEE-HELP disaster and seen debt balloon to $4 billion for 2015 alone.

“Education Minister Simon Birmingham said last year that the VET FEE-HELP scheme is a ‘disaster’ and *‘one of the worst get-rich schemes I’ve ever seen’.*

A Senate Inquiry found that controls on providers have been *“unacceptably loose”* and there is *“no effective price control”* in the private VET system.

“TAFEs cannot be expected to compete against these shonky operators and maintain quality.

“We need VET FEE-HELP to be shut down while a full inquiry is carried out.

“Governments must move away from privatisation and ensure that at least 70 per cent of funding for VET is reserved for TAFEs to ensure that they can remain at the heart of the training system.

“It can already cost a student $40k for a Diploma in Design with a for-profit provider – twice as much as a university degree. Under this proposal, there would be no control over fees,

“If we lose the quality, capacity and experience of TAFE, the standards of vocational training in Australia will fall.

Authorised by Sally Dennis, General Secretary, The State School Teachers' Union of W.A.
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