On National TAFE Day, TAFEs need 70 per cent funding guaranteed

SSTUWA
State School Teachers' Union of WA



Today's National TAFE Day sees public vocational education in Australia still under threat and emphasises the importance of guaranteeing TAFEs the 70 per cent share of VET funding they need.

AEU Federal TAFE Secretary Pat Forward said politicians needed to face up to the disaster of VET privatisation, guarantee funding to TAFEs and shut down the failed VET FEE-HELP scheme.

"We cannot keep going with the flawed system of privatisation any longer. We need to ensure that TAFE is guaranteed at least 70 per cent of VET funding so it can remain at the centre of our vocational education system," Ms Forward said.

"We need to close the VET FEE-HELP scheme, which has seen billions in taxpayer dollars go to shonky for-profit providers, which are ripping off students with low-quality courses.

"Labor has promised to put a cap on VET FEE-HELP subsidies for individual courses and develop a plan to provide ongoing funding for TAFEs, with the overall percentage yet to be determined.

"These are small steps in the right direction but fall far short of what we need to address the crisis in vocational education.

"The Coalition appears set on continuing with the privatisation agenda, hoping that yet another round of regulation can stop dodgy operators.

"The Coalition has actually cut $8 million from the Australian Skills Quality Authority, the VET regulator, in the recent Budget, showing it has no commitment to cracking down on the profiteers who are ripping off the VET Fee-HELP system.

"We need to ensure that TAFE is preserved by ensuring it is guaranteed 70 per cent of VET funding.

"Nationally, more than $2.4 billion (around 46 per cent) of government funding is now allocated contestably. More than $1.5 billion of this funding goes directly to private for-profit providers; an increase of 222 per cent since 2005.

"On top of this, private providers are milking the disastrous VET FEE-HELP scheme which has blown out from $25 million in 2009 to an astronomical $4 billion in 2015, 80 per cent of which is going to the for-profit sector.

“Some of the biggest private for-profit colleges are now making taxpayer-funded super-profits which recent University of Sydney research shows is in the order of 30-50 per cent.

“They are only able to do this by cutting corners in the quality of training they provide. They reduce hours, contract out teaching and use unethical and misleading methods to sign up students.

“TAFE cannot, and should not, be required to compete for funding with these operators.

“TAFEs have a proud history of accessible, and high quality education but this has been threatened in recent years by an agenda of privatisation and the disastrous subsidies being handed to for-profit providers.

“At this federal election we need politicians to back TAFE and ensure that it gets the funding it needs to continue offering Australians the skills they need for work.”

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