Good riddance to VET FEE-HELP, governments now must invest in TAFEs



AEU

The AEU has welcomed the Federal Government's decision to scrap the disastrous VET FEE-HELP loans scheme, but has warned all governments now need to invest in TAFEs to ensure Australians have access to high quality vocational education.

AEU Federal TAFE Secretary, Pat Forward said VET FEE-HELP had reduced the quality of courses, ripped off students and saddled taxpayers with huge debts.

"We will wait and see the details of what Minister Birmingham is proposing, but the decision to scrap VET FEE-HELP is a first step to restoring sanity to the way we fund VET in Australia.

"We do not support a loans scheme in the VET sector which allows for-profit providers to get access to government funds.

"On top of that, there are still major questions about how the new loans scheme will operate. While banning brokers is a positive step we still need to ensure that private providers are required to meet rigorous standards, including minimum hours for courses.

"What is certain is that all governments now need to admit that privatisation of vocational education and training has failed and make properly funding TAFEs a priority.

"The flawed VET FEE-HELP scheme went hand in hand with cuts to government funding for TAFEs.

"With VET FEE-HELP gone we need state and federal governments to restore funding to TAFEs to ensure Australians have access to quality vocational training.

"Minister Birmingham's decision to allow TAFEs automatic access to the new system is a recognition that public VET is providing high quality courses for students, while the private sector has failed to do so.

"We need to take that a step further and ensure that at least 70 per cent of all government funding is reserved for TAFEs.

“TAFEs’ share of government funding has fallen by 24 per cent in the last eight years, as they have been asked to compete for funding with low-quality, and in some cases fraudulent, private operators.

“We have seen enrolment in vocational education crash by 11 per cent in the last year – due to the loss of trust which has been created by dodgy private operators.

“Vocational education remains the worst funded sector of our post-school education system.

“The attempt to hand responsibility to private operators through VET FEE-HELP has failed miserably.

“Governments need to abandon the idea that private VET operators can substitute for proper funding of the sector. It is now time for them to invest in TAFEs so they can continue to provide skilled graduates for industry, and ensure all students have access to a quality vocational education.”

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