TAFE students can't afford more course fee increases



The State Government is trying to hoodwink the public and students into thinking it is being generous by capping TAFE fee increases at CPI, according to the State School Teachers' Union of WA.

SSTUWA vice president Samantha Schofield said any increase next year was still too much, since fees had already increased by around 600% in some courses since 2013.

"The State Government is trying to pass itself off as Santa Claus, when in fact it's acting more like Scrooge by imposing further fee increases on students who are already under immense financial pressure," she said.

"As a result of the previous fee increases, we have seen courses cut and student numbers plummet by over 11,000 enrolments over the past three years.

"These issues are not going to be addressed by capping fee increases at CPI alone, what we really need to turn this situation around is a reduction in course fees across the board and a commitment to sustainably funding TAFE."

Miss Schofield said the union welcomed the reduction in course fee costs for concessional students, but said they did not go far enough.

"This concessional fee rate only applies to Certificates 1-4, and does not apply to Diplomas, which carry the highest course costs," she said.

"Effectively what the Minister has done is reduce fees for a very small number of courses, for a select group of students.

“She has done nothing to bring down costs for the most expensive Diploma level courses, which have seen some the biggest fee increases over the past three years.”

Miss Schofield said the Minister had finally acknowledged what the union had been saying for the past few years – that TAFE should be made more affordable following the downturn of the mining boom.

“The government has been undermining the TAFE system by allowing these enormous fee increases and cutting funding to the sector by $120 million over three years,” she said.

“While it seems to have finally recognised that TAFE needs to be affordable, the government’s announcement today is just an election offering and doesn’t reflect a commitment to TAFE and public education.

“Many people previously employed in mining are needing to re-skill, however, these people are not likely to be eligible for concessional course fees, and many will be unable to afford TAFE at the current rates.

“At a time when our unemployment rate is the highest in the nation, it’s critical that the government ensures that anyone in need of training can access TAFE so they can contribute to our economy through meaningful employment.

“We are calling on all political parties to commit to bringing course costs down for all students.”

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