Budget cuts continue Turnbull's attack on TAFEs, stunting Australian skills

Australian apprentices and vocational education students are losers in Turnbull's ongoing attack agenda on our public TAFEs. An analysis of the 2017 Federal Budget shows significant funding cuts to TAFEs that will hurt apprentices seeking to become job-ready.

Pat Forward, Australian Education Union TAFE Secretary said spending on vocational education will be cut by almost 10 per cent from July, followed by further cuts in the budget forward estimates.

"Australians trust public TAFEs, but instead of putting money in skills programs that are designed and proven to deliver real skills for real Australians, Turnbull continues his attack on the sector – stripping millions of dollars kicking off from 1 July," said Ms Forward.

"With increasing uncertainty about our futures and our employment, the Turnbull Government continues to punish working people, now extending his attack onto apprentices and students of vocational education and training, slashing $177 million from the system.

"Turnbull's plan of smoke and mirrors aims to cut the current National Partnership Agreement for Skills Reform with a shonky National Partnership Skilling Australians Fund that will do nothing to undo the chronic underfunding of Australia's public TAFE system.

"The new fund is a farse - and it shows Turnbull has no plan about how it will work with very little detail being made public.

"To suggest visa levies will fund over 300,000 more apprentices and trainees not only demonstrates the Government's naivety, but will be dangerous for our workforce, potentially leaving us with significant skills gaps, irretrievably damaged for generations, resulting in an ongoing need for reliance on overseas supply.

"How has the Government reached the number of 300,000 new apprentices and how can they guarantee the income from visa levies will be maintained at levels to fund these new apprentice numbers? They can't.

"Alarmingly, the fine print outlines funding for Turnbull's scheme can be used for 'employer incentives'. This is a clear indication any funding will go nowhere near funding public TAFE programs that deliver outcomes to make Australians job-ready and could very well end up lining the pockets of employers.

"After an ongoing decline of funding to TAFEs over the last ten years of close to 15 per cent, there is absolutely no guarantee any new funds will be used to support TAFE or its students," said Ms Forward.

Below is a breakdown on funding cuts to Australia's public TAFEs for the 2017-18 financial year by state, and the rate of decline from the current 2016-17 financial year:

State	**NSW**	**VIC**	**QLD**	**WA**	**SA**	**TAS**	**ACT**	**NT**	**Total**
$ cut in millions	$54m	$40m	$43m	$16m	$13m	$6m	$3m	$3m	$**177m**
Decline fr 2016-17	(-32%)	(-31%)	(-38%)	(-30%)	(-35%)	(-46%)	(-31%)	(-45%)	**(-34%)**

MEDIA CONTACT: ELISA FERNANDES, 0438 021 203

Authorised by Sally Dennis, General Secretary, The State School Teachers' Union of W.A.
ABN 54 478 094 635 © 2026