Budget reply exposes Turnbull's war on public TAFEs

The Opposition sent Australian apprentices and vocational education students a glimmer of hope last night by making commitments to address chronic underfunding of public TAFEs, and addressing key issues around funding to private training organisations.

Pat Forward, Australian Education Union TAFE Secretary said that Australia's public TAFEs have been ripped apart by successive budgets and last night's commitments acknowledges the important role TAFEs play in our future.

"For years our TAFE system has been attacked with millions ripped out of Australia's most trusted public training provider and syphoned into private colleges, many of which leave students without the skills they need to get to work," said Ms Forward.

Last night's Budget Reply acknowledged that public TAFEs are the key to skilling up Australians now and into the future. Labor has committed to ensuring at least two thirds of the public money allocated to vocational education and training is guaranteed for funding public TAFEs.

"In contrast, Turnbull's plan for TAFEs includes a $177 million cut to TAFE funding which adds up to a 15 percent decline in funding over the last ten years.

"Public funds for VET should not be used to line the pockets of employers or training providers – tax dollars must be used to fund a strong, quality training system that delivers real benefits to the broader community.

"Our public TAFEs are proven to deliver the programs that we need to meet our skills needs. Australians trust our TAFE system – and only TAFEs can successfully deliver the quality education and training programs that will make our students job-ready.

"We already know from this week's budget that Turnbull's plans will eradicate the current agreements with states to replace it with a deficient policy that will not give students results, or communities and workplaces apprentices they need.

"We urge the Turnbull Government to guarantee funding for TAFEs and abandon its agenda of cuts to our public TAFE system," said Ms Forward.

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