Privatisation of vocational training will hurt students, research shows

NSW must guarantee minimum funding levels for TAFEs and avoid the unchecked privatisation that has destroyed vocational education in Victoria, the AEU and NSW Teachers Federation said today.

Speaking prior to today's NSW launch of the University of Sydney Business School's report "The Capture of Public Wealth by the for-profit VET Sector" the AEU said the future of TAFE was a key issue in the NSW election campaign.

AEU Federal TAFE Secretary Pat Forward said the University of Sydney research showed the damage caused to vocational education and the big profits delivered to private providers when the sector was privatised.

"This report shows that opening up Vocational Training to the private sector simply turns public funds into private profits, while doing nothing to increase transparency or the quality of vocational education," Ms Forward said.

"In Victoria TAFE's share of funding has fallen to 27 per cent of the market, and could fall further.

"We have seen the decimation of TAFEs, the loss of irreplaceable capacity to deliver quality training, and the growth of for-profit companies milking government subsidies and delivering sub-standard courses to students.

"This is not the future that we want for NSW, but it is what will happen if privatisation of vocational training is allowed to go unchecked.

NSW Teachers Federation President Maurie Mulheron said that up to 1200 jobs had been lost in NSW TAFEs as a result of funding cuts by the Baird Government.

"This has a huge impact on the range of courses which TAFEs can offer, and their ability to serve local communities, especially in regional NSW," Mr Mulheron said.

"This is on top of changes to funding which are seeing course costs and debts rise for students at TAFEs.

"We need to stop TAFE cuts and avoid going down the privatisation path which has almost destroyed TAFEs viability in Victoria."

"The people of NSW believe in TAFE. Research shows that 93 per cent of voters saying that keeping TAFEs strong was important and 75 per cent opposed funding cuts. "Students who miss out on quality training, or who rack up huge debts for useless courses, are the real losers from these reforms."

"We need to learn from Victoria's mistake and put a cap on the amount of funding that can be contested by private providers, ensuring that TAFE has a guarantee of funding so it can remain as the centre of our vocational training system

"Vocational training is essential both for giving people the opportunity to gain work skills and for ensuring that our economy doesn't suffer from skills shortages in the future. We must not compromise this in the interests of a few providers who want to milk profits from government subsidy schemes."

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