TAFE needs guaranteed funding



The Australian Education Union today welcomed the announcement that a Federal Labor Government would guarantee a proportion of vocational education funding to TAFE.

AEU Federal TAFE Secretary Pat Forward said Labor's commitment to work with state and territory governments on a national plan for vocational training that recognised the central role of TAFE was also a positive proposal.

"TAFE has always been the backbone of vocational training and education in this nation and it must continue in that position," Ms Forward said.

"Unfortunately what we have seen from governments is the pursuit of a privatisation agenda, that on any measure, has been an abject failure.

"TAFEs have had their funding slashed and government funding for private for profit operators has soared. We have seen the proliferation of unscrupulous operators looking to cash in by charging exorbitant fees for poor quality training.

"This broken system is leaving students the victims: without the skills they need to get secure jobs and saddled with huge debts they will struggle to pay off.

"It is also having huge ramifications for our ability as a nation to provide the high skilled workforce that is required to allow Australia to remain competitive and prosperous."

Ms Forward said that there needed to be bipartisan support for reforms that would help guarantee the future of TAFE.

"The only way to maintain the quality of the sector is to limit the proportion of government funding tendered to the private sector to 30 per cent, to ensure TAFEs retain their capacity to provide quality training to all Australians who need it.

"The great concern is that once we lose the experience and capacity of TAFEs we will be unable to rebuild it and students will be left with a sub-standard system.

"We also need immediate action to regulate fees in the VET sector, and to more closely control the massive growth in student debt through VET FEE HELP.

"Standards must be improved urgently, including minimum hours for courses, a ban on contracting out training to unregistered third parties, and further restrictions on how private providers are able to market themselves."

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