Morrison Government continues to undermine TAFE

A new report revealing that the Morrison Government cut $325 million in funding from TAFE budgets last year is yet more evidence Prime Minister Scott Morrison does not value TAFE's crucial role in the provision of high quality vocational education.

The report, released by the National Centre for Vocational Education (NCVER), showed that the latest Morrison Government funding cuts were equivalent to almost 11 per cent of total federal funding to the sector.

The $325.8 million funding cut is just the latest move by the Morrison Government in its agenda to deprioritise TAFE. Since being in government the Federal Coalition has:

Overseen 140,000 fewer apprentices now than when it was elected, and cut $3 billion from vocational education funding.

Slashed $3.9 billion from the Education Investment Fund in October 2019, money intended to be invested in desperately-needed infrastructure improvements in the TAFE and Higher Education sector.

Failed to spend nearly $1 billion budgeted for a series of TAFE apprenticeship, skills and training initiatives between 2014-15 and 2018-19.

Australian Education Union Federal President Correna Haythorpe said that the Federal Coalition had already slashed $3 billion in funding from TAFE, and that this latest funding cut proved that the Morrison Government was determined to undermine TAFE, the public provider of vocational education, in favour of profit-seeking private providers.

"This is a shameful record of neglect of TAFE, the public vocational training institution which has proudly given generations of Australians their chance at a career or an opportunity to retrain," Ms Haythorpe said.

"Despite the clear and undisputed benefits that a fully funded high quality public TAFE sector provides our economy and our society, there has been a concerted and continual drive from the Morrison Government to marginalise vocational education and deprioritise TAFE."

Ms Haythorpe said that TAFE must remain a strong public provider of vocational education in Australia. She called upon the Morrison Government to:

- Guarantee a minimum of 70% government funding to the public TAFE system. In addition, no public funding should go to private for-profit providers, consistent with other education sectors.
- Restore funding and rebuild the TAFE system, to restore confidence in the quality of the courses and qualifications and the institution.
- Abandon the failed student loans experiment, and cancel the debts of all students caught up in private for-profit provider scams.
- Re-invest in the TAFE teaching workforce and develop a future-focused TAFE workforce development strategy in collaboration with the profession and unions.
- Develop a capital investment strategy in consultation with state governments, to address the deplorable state of TAFE facilities around the country.
- Support a comprehensive independent inquiry into TAFE.

"All governments have a fundamental responsibility to Australian students to ensure that TAFE remains public, strong, vibrant and fully funded," Ms Haythorpe said.

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