Federal government must ‘Rebuild with TAFE’ to create a positive future for all



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The Australian Education Union (AEU) is calling on governments across the country to make TAFE their first priority as Australia looks to rebuild from the COVID-19 pandemic and tackle the country’s skills crisis.

The AEU launched the *Rebuild with TAFE* campaign in Canberra this month and used the launch to call on governments to properly fund TAFE and maximise the system’s potential to assist with the economic re-build, re-skill and upskill workers; address the apprentice shortage; reduce youth unemployment and provide career pathways for all Australians.

AEU Federal President Correna Haythorpe said the TAFE system is a hugely valuable asset that is being neglected by the Federal Government and many state governments.

“We’re launching the *Rebuild with TAFE* campaign because we’re sick of governments and politicians putting TAFE last and letting a critical part of Australia’s economy and education sector waste away,” she said.

The Federal Government has cut $3 billion in funding from vocational education since 2013 and pursued a relentless privatisation agenda, increasing the amount of low-quality private training providers at great cost to TAFE.

“All over Australia TAFE institutes are struggling with the impact of these funding cuts and poor policy decisions resulting in the loss of jobs and the cutting of courses. This is disastrous for the communities they support and must be addressed urgently,” Ms Haythorpe said.

Australia is facing many challenges due to the COVID-19 pandemic and as the public provider of vocational education TAFE is best placed to address those challenges if it is properly funded and supported.

“Australia currently has a shortage of 200,000 apprentices while at the same time we also have plenty of Australians who are out of work," Ms Haythorpe said.

“Rebuilding with TAFE will help our unemployed to re-train, upskill or get an apprenticeship and gain meaningful employment.

“The National Cabinet itself has determined that skills is one of the six key priorities for the government, yet the federal government won’t properly fund the public provider of vocational education. That doesn’t make any sense."

TAFE is responsible for $92.5 billion per year in annual economic benefit to Australia, 16 times more than the annual cost to maintain the provider, but these longstanding and ongoing benefits would be permanently lost if governments fail to rebuild with TAFE.

A 2020 national survey found that 94 per cent of Australians want to see more federal funding for TAFE and research has consistently found that Australians see TAFE as a vital part of Australia's education sector that can provide career, social and economic opportunities for people from a wide range of backgrounds.

Proper funding for TAFE will increase available courses, increase the number of campuses, and ensure high quality vocational education that will improve the lives of millions of Australians.

"Australians trust and support TAFE and know the system can help re-build our economy, but we need our governments and politicians to show that same support by investing in TAFE to rebuild Australia socially and economically," Ms Haythorpe said.

"TAFE touches so many aspects of our society and economy from the arts and fashion, to construction, health and early childhood education, to opportunities for young people in rural and regional areas, and we cannot afford to lose it.

"As we head to the next federal election, all political parties must commit to rebuilding with TAFE and we'll be campaigning to make sure they understand how important this issue is to our communities."

Watch the AEU's new national 'Rebuild with TAFE' advertisement here.



Rebuild with TAFE campaign launch in Canberra, 17 February 2021

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