Rebuild early childhood workforce through TAFE



The release today of the *Shaping Our Future; A ten-year strategy to ensure a sustainable, high-quality children's education and care workforce 2022–2031* highlights the critical need for greater investment in TAFE.

"As *Shaping Our Future* states, declining enrolments in approved educator qualifications along with increasing demand for qualified early childhood staff have created urgent workforce challenges for the early childhood sector," Australian Education Union Federal President Correna Haythorpe said.

"This highlights the pressing need for the federal government to invest in TAFE and help ensure a sustainable supply of highly skilled early childhood educators.

"Without this, the early childhood sector will become increasingly unable to function, making it harder for parents to go to work and leaving children without the benefits of a high quality early education."

TAFE is the centre of our national vocational education system. It is ideally placed to educate the workforce needed to address the shortage in the early childhood education and care (ECEC) sector.

Importantly, TAFE's regional footprint would enable governments to target local needs more effectively, ensuring students can study and potentially work in their local communities.

"The TAFE system is a hugely valuable public asset and it is being neglected by the federal government," Ms Haythorpe said.

"The federal government has slashed more than $3 billion out of TAFEs since 2013.

"Instead of proper TAFE investment, the Federal Coalition has used taxpayers' funds for poor quality private providers that are failing to deliver the workforce the sector needs for the future.

"Restoring this funding would create a triple dividend for Australia; a skilled, capable early childhood workforce, increased parent workforce participation to boost the economy and improved early learning outcomes for Australian children.

"The federal government must commit to rebuilding the ECEC workforce, by investing in TAFE as the public anchor institution of vocational education. That will ensure that TAFE can educate the highly skilled workforce we need to deliver the early learning services we all rely on."

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