The devastating impact of Morrison Government's failure for TAFE

New data released today highlights that the Morrison Government's failure to take responsibility for TAFE has entrenched underfunding, excessive workloads for staff and greater uncertainty for students.

The data, drawn from the Australian Education Union's most recent State of our TAFEs survey shows the devastating impact of a decade of cuts to TAFE funding.

Key findings include:

- 75 per cent of TAFE teachers are experiencing increased workloads.
- 65 per cent of TAFE teachers say their workload is unmanageable more than half of the time.
- 83 per cent of TAFE teachers report that their institution had closed courses in the past three years, with lack of funding as the most commonly cited reason.
- 70 per cent of TAFE teachers report decreases in their department's budget in the past two years.
- Almost half of all TAFE teachers report increased class sizes in the past two years.
- 64 per cent of TAFE teachers say that they had had hours "shaved" from the courses they teach with no reduction in course content.
- 80 per cent of TAFE teachers report that they do not believe students studying today are receiving the same quality of education as they did two years go.
- 57 per cent have felt pressure from management to pass students that might not be competent.

Australian Education Union Federal President Correna Haythorpe described the findings as damning.

"These findings are shocking and show that Australia's TAFE sector is under enormous strain from a decade of funding cuts perpetrated by the Morrison Government." Ms Haythorpe said.

"We have TAFE teachers working excessive workloads under increasingly difficult conditions, grappling with larger class sizes and being expected to deliver content within slashed teaching hours.

"The data also shows how the COVID pandemic has exacerbated the detrimental impact of the underinvestment in TAFE, with TAFE teachers reporting working up to the equivalent of a whole day unpaid each week and with little to no support from their institutions.

"Ultimately, it is TAFE students who are impacted as their courses are cut and campuses closed at a time when the demand for vocational education is at an all-time high due to the critical skills shortages in many industries."

The findings are based on responses from 1,563 AEU TAFE Division members, and with responses received from every TAFE institution in Australia.

"TAFE plays an incredibly important role in our nation. Not only does TAFE help prepare students for future employment, ensure businesses have access to a highly trained workforce and help industries address skills gaps, the sector also contributes an estimated $92.5 billion to our economy every year," Ms Haythorpe said.

"But years of the Morrison Government's funding cuts, privatisation and contestable funding settings have failed TAFE and that is having a detrimental impact on staff and students across the nation.

"TAFE is a highly quality public provider of vocational education and it must be supported by government to do what it does best, teach the nation's students and prepare them for work and life."

The next Federal Government must guarantee a minimum of 70 per cent of total government funding for the public TAFE system.

"By restoring investment and rebuilding the system, we can ensure TAFE teachers are properly supported to deliver high

quality courses to students with state-of-the-art equipment and fit for purpose facilities.

“That is what is possible if TAFE is recognised in its rightful place as the anchor institution for vocational education in Australia.”

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