TAFE is the solution to nation's skills woes



The Australian Education Union has welcomed a new report by economist Alison Pennington and the Centre for Future Work, titled *Fragmentation and Photo Ops: The Failures of Australia's Skills Policy Through COVID.*

"The AEU campaigned strongly against the mass de-regulation of vocational education and training in 2012. At the time we said it would lead to lower course completions and more low-quality, privately provided short-term courses," AEU Federal President Correna Haythorpe said.

"The impact of de-regulation has been exacerbated by the neglect of the Morrison Government, leaving our national skills pipeline in complete disarray.

"This report shows that enrolments in accredited vocational education and training courses are down by more than half a million.

"There are 173,000 fewer apprentices now than in 2012, and apprenticeship completions have collapsed, down by 64 per cent. The report also shows that programs like the Morrison Government's JobTrainer incentivises apprentice "churn", exacerbating low completion rates.

"Worryingly, much of the decline is in care industries like aged care and early childhood education where there is growing demand for qualified staff. These traditionally feminised industries have been deprioritised in favour of traditional male, high-vis tradie photo opportunities for the Prime Minister. The impacts for women are compounded by the fact that over the year to June 2021 three in every five new apprentices and trainees were men.

"The report highlights how private providers are abandoning regional Australia as well as focussing in on short, micro-credentials and non-accredited training programs.

"Under the Morrison Government, VET funding is being funnelled to these private providers at the expense of accredited TAFE teaching and learning programs designed to ensure graduates are ready for the workplace.

"The Morrison Government has neglected TAFE and it is students and their future employers who will pay the price unless immediate action is taken to invest in Australia's public TAFE institutions.

"TAFE should be the anchor point for vocational education and training. TAFE provides strong education-to-jobs pathways and more comprehensive, higher quality and accredited qualifications. It is TAFE that is best placed to rebuild Australia's skills pipeline.

"Proper funding for TAFE will increase available courses, see students benefit from state-of-the-art facilities and increased teachers, and ensure high quality vocational education that will improve the lives of millions of Australians.

“The Morrison Government is missing in action on TAFE. Australians will need the next Federal Government to take real action to restore TAFE as the heart of Australia’s vocational education and training system.”

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